





## FOREWORD

The request of the Che Guevara Studies Center to prepare a few brief notes for a foreword to the new edition of Che's *Guerrilla Warfare*, which he later updated during his stay in Prague after the end of his campaign in the Congo, represents for me an immense commitment.

Che's theoretical creativity, characterized by his multi-disciplinary approach and backed by his coherent practice in relation to his ideas, offers for progressive people throughout the world — and especially the young — unquestionable guiding values. This is why the desire expressed in the Cuban Pioneers' slogan to "be like Che" continues to be valid for almost all of humanity in its quest for full social justice.

Demonstrating the versatile nature of Che's creative activity, *Guerrilla Warfare* brings together the theoretical-practical experience of the revolutionary war in Cuba, synthesizing the strategy and tactics of the Cuban revolution during the struggle for power. The book also brings together the military thinking behind that process in the insurrectional stage, and the military activities of Fidel Castro as its leader, and its vanguard of Raúl Castro, Juan Almeida, Camilo Cienfuegos, and Che Guevara. It was Che who assumed responsibility for objectively analyzing and generalizing this experience, with the aim of providing the necessary theoretical framework that is indispensable for those who in the future might adopt this method of struggle.





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For many analysts of revolutionary war in different parts of the world, *Guerrilla Warfare* is one of the texts that discusses the topic most systematically.

Since its first publication, these qualities have not escaped the attention of US military analysts, who have incorporated it as a text to be studied and used in the preparation of counter-insurgency forces (such as the Green Berets). These forces were created and trained as a military response to the upsurge in revolutionary movements — and especially the guerrilla struggles that were developing in Latin America — following the victory of the Cuban revolution.

As is obvious, the validity of the ideas contained in this book was recognized by the empire's think tanks when they were analyzing the causes that generated this phenomenon in Cuba. They have also studied the strategic alternatives proposed by the leaders of the Cuban revolution in relation to changes that should be incorporated in light of new experiences of social transformation.

The imperialist enemy has tried to respond and offer possible ways to combat these ideas. One such initiative was the so-called Alliance for Progress, which was established in 1961 with the objective of preventing a repetition of the Cuban revolution elsewhere in the region, arguing that it was an isolated or exceptional case. The objectives established after the victory of the revolution in 1959 are still being pursued today with new treaties such as the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA), which has the identical goals of subjugation and exploitation.

This explains why Che felt compelled to analyze the Cuban experience in light of revolutionary theory and practice in a way that could be applied to other peoples' struggles. From this arose



the need for *Guerrilla Warfare* to offer a methodology, a guide, and a way to take political power in Latin America through the means of armed struggle.

The starting point for the ideas underlying this manual are the conditions of exploitation prevailing in the region and their social consequences, conditions which generate illiteracy and inadequate health care, unemployment, and overwhelming impoverishment in almost all the countries of the hemisphere. This is the result of the domination imposed by governing oligarchies that are the unconditional allies of the United States, and that are responsible for obstructing the appropriate roads to resolving these scourges, thereby impeding a more just society.

Given the weight of such negative and harmful conditions, it was clear that there was no other alternative but to resort to violence in response to the intimidation that was imposed. Therefore, for Che, employing the guerrilla struggle was the most appropriate and certain road, although it was also the one that required the most sacrifice.

It should also be considered that the response conceptualized by Che was not only the concrete result of a revolutionary theory and practice, but was also an attempt to incorporate and apply a specific methodology and didactic approach to this form of struggle. Che seeks to clearly define the advantages of the method to be utilized to achieve success, in what are known as the “seven golden rules” of the guerrilla struggle, as well as to define the risks and dangers that might lead to failure.

Military thinking, in its theoretical dimension, is defined in revolutionary terms as the range of concepts, ideas, and principles held by an individual or group regarding the way to conduct war. In general, these experiences are imparted in

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writing, as in Che's classic works such as *Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolutionary War* and *Reminiscences of the Revolutionary War: Congo*, "Guerrilla Warfare: A Method," and this book, *Guerrilla Warfare*.

Other methods are transmitted based on the experiences derived from practical activities, battles, military operations, and the conduct of war. In the concrete case of Cuba, the main example and maximum exponent of this is Fidel.

Many will ask, 45 years after *Guerrilla Warfare* was first published, whether the ideas proposed by Che retain their validity as the way to take political power under current conditions. To respond requires returning to the main lines of Che's thought; as a Marxist, he offered an objective analysis and a coherent approach in dealing with reality in time, form, and space, which was indispensable for the analysis and elaboration of his political-military theses.

The possibility of applying these theses and achieving success in irregular warfare through the guerrilla struggle was based on the limited possibility of finding other ways to realize the dreams and ideals of the masses. For Che, the role of the guerrilla fighter was to be a catalyst that could accelerate the conditions of struggle among the people, consistent with the principle that the role of the revolutionary is not to sit back and wait to see the cadaver of imperialism pass by, but to facilitate the conditions that lead to its collapse.

For Cubans, the need for revolutionary war and its combative spirit remains valid as the only way to defend ourselves against our potential enemy, Yankee imperialism, and to preserve the revolution and the social justice we have achieved. This is implicit in our military doctrine of the War of All the People, a strategy designed to provide each citizen with a way of par-

ticipating in the fight, by which guerrilla warfare continues to be a genuine mass struggle.

For Che, the people are to the guerrilla fighters what water is to a fish, that is, their means of existence. On the tactical level, the “seven golden rules” remain valid, in so far as if creatively applied they would guarantee victory:

- Do not engage in a fight that cannot be won.
- Move continuously, hit and run.
- Use the enemy as the main supplier of weapons.
- Hide your movements.
- Make use of the element of surprise in military actions.
- Form new columns once some power has been won.
- In general, proceed through three phases: strategic defense, balance between the possibilities of enemy action and guerrilla action, and finally the total annihilation of the adversary.

In short, all this is conducted using the tactics of the guerrilla: mobility, nocturnal movement, flexibility, ability to surprise, rapidity of attack, the care and rationing of supplies, and rapid alternation between concentrating efforts and decentralizing.

At the present time, as a result of the disintegration of the socialist camp, the dislocation of most of the forces of the left, and the consolidation of a hegemonic world order, the enemy has been forced, in the specific case of Latin America, to introduce superficial changes in its methods of oppression and colonial domination. Military dictatorships have been replaced by pseudo-democratic governments, subordinate, as always, to imperialism’s dictates and orders, making false promises to try to solve the serious problems that our people suffer as a result of neoliberalism and the consequences of underdevelopment

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— problems that the oligarchies and the transnationals have never been interested in solving.

In the case of progressive governments that have gained office through the electoral road, taking advantage of the so-called democratic opening, they have projected social programs with the aim of improving their peoples' situation. The immediate reaction of the imperialists has been to accuse them of being terrorists, of forming part of the "axis of evil," and so on. This has been accompanied by different types and methods of aggression employed with the intention of blocking plans that would benefit the popular sectors. Logically, this leads to confrontation, and does not exclude the possibility that under specific conditions, after exhausting the democratic road, it will be necessary to resort to violence and return to the fundamental principles of guerrilla warfare as the only alternative to build a better world.

With the reading or rereading of *Guerrilla Warfare* you can reach your own conclusions, returning to José Martí's principle of struggling to achieve as much social justice as possible, a principle for which Che fought throughout his revolutionary career.

*Harry "Pombo" Villegas*