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Guerrilla Warfare



Synopsis

The definitive, authorized version of Che's manifesto on revolution - including his final revisions - completed just before his death. It is both an incisive handbook and an invaluable historical source. "Home will be the open sky...each guerrilla fighter is ready to die not just to defend an idea, but to make that idea a reality." Ernesto "Che" Guevara remains one of the world's most iconic political and revolutionary figures. Fascinating to admirers and adversaries alike, he captured the minds of millions with his leadership and his belief in guerrilla warfare as the only effective agent to achieve political change. Here, in his own classic text on revolution, Che draws on his first-hand experience of the Cuban campaign to document all aspects of guerrilla warfare, from its aims to its organization and training. He analyses how in Cuba, against all odds, a small band of dedicated fighters grew in strength with the support of the people to defeat a dictator's army.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A very insightful description of what was like to fight a guerrilla warfare in Latin America in the revolutionary 1960s. However, I would say that instead of being the "bible" for revolutionary guerrillas, Che's book was more or less a set of guidelines that drew most of its theory from his experience in Cuba. Che thought the conditions for guerrilla warfare could be created, rather than resulting from a set of vital circumstances for a revolutionary army to evolve, such as widespread discontent with the status quo and a pattern of repression that comes prior to a popular armed struggle. Again, because Che takes his theory from the Cuban campaign, it only deals with rural warfare, in a predominantly rural country. Forty years afterwards, most of the population in Latin America live in Urban centers, and Che's theory is far outdated to deal with events nowadays.

"guerrilla warfare" Che still highlights an unavoidable truth: strong support from the population is vital to keep an insurgency alive, if not victorious. The "Shining Path" guerrillas in Peru lost popular ground because they alienated the peasants by repressing them as bad as the Army. In Colombia, the FARC have lost to the army vast areas formerly under its control because they have engaged in atrocities that have brought about considerable support in favor of a hardline government. In contrast, the Zapatistas in southern Mexico still are holding on, because they have not only support in their country, but also abroad. The reviewer who said that guerrillas (not 'gorillas') could no longer deal with a sophisticated counterinsurgency army, may want to give a look at the Iraqi fiasco.

Part theoretical treatise, part manual for guerilla tactics and strategy, Che Guevara, in his thesis, attempts to provide a formula for the creation and of a small, armed and disciplined guerrilla band which, he believes, would be capable of overthrowing a large organised army. The book is animated by an impassioned desire to whip up a hemispheric socialist revolution in the aftermath of his succesful invasion of Cuba in 1956, in which he, along with Fidel Castro, among others, set the stage for the overthrow of the Batista dictatorship. Guevara discusses the qualities needed by the successful guerrilla warrior, the organisation of the guerrilla band, the methods of indoctrination and training and the tactics that should be employed to guarantee the defeat of large disciplined forces. He stresses the mobility of the guerrilla band, which is a major geographical advantage over large government armies, who are limited to a relatively stationary position due to their bulk. While the enemy loses weapons, the guerrillas retrieve them, thus gaining strength by virtue of the enemy's weakness. He draws attention to the fact that, owing to their increased mobility and flexibility, the guerrillas can remain hidden, while the enemy has no option but to remain exposed. These are precepts of solid value, culled out from Guevara's own experience as organiser of a guerrilla force. His boldest theoretical claim, however, which may be called Marxist-Leninist in its orientation, is the belief that a socialist society can be realised by the peasants, Indians and rural proletariat of Latin America without any of the economic conditions that, as orthodox Marxists insist, are essential for a successful revolution against capitalism. The guerrilla forces, as such, become the vanguard of the revolution.

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