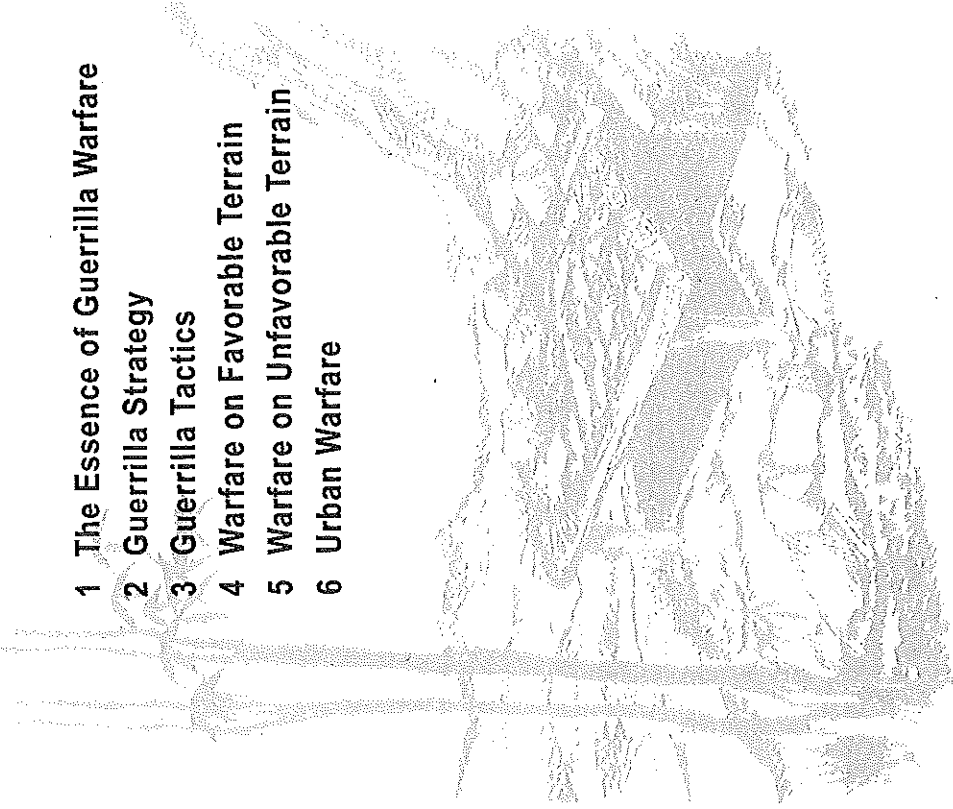


CHAPTER I: GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF GUERRILLA WARFARE

- 1 The Essence of Guerrilla Warfare**
- 2 Guerrilla Strategy**
- 3 Guerrilla Tactics**
- 4 Warfare on Favorable Terrain**
- 5 Warfare on Unfavorable Terrain**
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1 THE ESSENCE OF GUERRILLA WARFARE

The armed victory of the Cuban people over the Batista dictatorship has not only been the triumph of heroism reported by the world's newspapers; it has also forced a change in the old dogmas concerning the conduct of the popular masses of Latin America and clearly demonstrated the capacity of the people to free themselves through guerrilla warfare from an oppressive government.

We consider that the Cuban revolution contributed three fundamental lessons to the revolutionary movements in America.* They are:

- 1) Popular forces can win a war against the army.
- 2) It is not always necessary to wait until all the revolutionary conditions exist; the insurreccional *foco*** can develop subjective conditions based on existing objective conditions.¹
- 3) In underdeveloped America the countryside is the fundamental arena for armed struggle.

Of these three propositions, the first two challenge the defeatist attitude of revolutionaries or inactive pseudo-revolutionaries who take refuge in the argument that against a professional army nothing can be done, and who sit down to wait until

* Che uses the word "America" to refer to the Americas, in the tradition of Cuba's national hero, José Martí, who spoke of the continent of Latin America as "Our America."

** *Foco*: a small nucleus of revolutionaries.

1. Most of the changes and additions marked by Che in the original text were written in blue; they are represented in boldface in this edition. Che's use of other colors to make observations or remarks is made clear through footnotes.

all necessary objective and subjective conditions are attained somehow mechanically, without trying to accelerate them. Although now clear to everyone, these two undeniable truths were previously a matter for discussion in Cuba, and are probably still debated today in America.

Naturally, when speaking of the necessary conditions for a revolution, it should not be assumed they can be created solely through the stimulus of a guerrilla *foco*. It must always be understood that there are minimum conditions without which the establishment and consolidation of the *foco* is not practicable. Moreover, it is necessary to demonstrate clearly to people the futility of maintaining the fight for social gains within the framework of civil debate. When the oppressive forces maintain themselves in power against the laws they themselves established, peace must be considered already broken.²

Under these conditions popular discontent expresses itself in more and more active forms, and resistance finally crystallizes, at a given moment, in an outbreak of the struggle.

Where a government has come into power through some form of popular vote, fraudulent or not, and maintains at least an appearance of constitutional legality, the guerrilla movement will experience great difficulties, as the possibilities for civil struggle have not yet been exhausted.

The third proposition is of a fundamental strategic nature and must be noted by those who dogmatically argue that the mass struggle is based in cities, entirely ignoring the immense weight of the people from the countryside in the life of all the underdeveloped countries of America. This is not to underrate

2. There are some parts of the original text that Che proposed to expand on; these are marked in red or green. In this case red was used.

the struggles of the mass of organized workers; but simply to analyze the real possibilities for engaging in armed struggle where the guarantees that usually adorn our constitutions are suspended or ignored. In these conditions the workers' movement must function clandestinely without arms and face enormous dangers. The situation is less difficult in the open countryside, where the armed guerrillas can support the local people, and where there are places beyond the reach of the repressive forces.³

Although later we will make a careful analysis, to begin this task we want to emphasize three conclusions that are features of the Cuban revolutionary experience and which are fundamental to our argument.

Guerrilla warfare, the basis of the struggle of a people to redeem themselves, has various characteristics, different aspects, even though the essential desire for liberation remains the same. It is obvious — and writers on this theme have said it many times — that war responds to certain laws⁴; and whoever disregards them will be defeated. These same laws must rule guerrilla warfare as a phase of war; but because of its special features, a series of corollary laws⁵ must also be recognized in order to carry it forward. Although geographical and social conditions in each country determine the mode and particular forms that guerrilla warfare will take, there are general laws that hold for all such struggles.

Our current task is to find the basic principles of this kind of war and the rules to be followed by peoples seeking liberation;

3. Ibid.

4. Underlined in green in the original text.

5. In addition to underlining the word in green, in the margin Che wrote in the same color: See about the laws.

to develop theory from facts; to generalize and give structure to our experience for the benefit of others.

Let us first consider the question: who are the combatants in a guerrilla war? On one side we have a group composed of the oppressor and his agents, the professional army, well armed and disciplined, in many cases receiving foreign aid as well as the help of the bureaucracy that is beholden to the oppressor. On the other side are the people of the nation or region. It is important to emphasize that guerrilla warfare is a war of the masses, a war of the people. The guerrilla band, as an armed nucleus, is the combative vanguard of the people. Its great force is drawn from the mass of the people themselves. The guerrilla band should not be considered inferior to the army against which it fights simply because it has inferior firepower. Guerrilla warfare is used by the side that is supported by a majority but which possesses a much smaller number of arms for use in defense against oppression.⁶

The guerrilla fighter counts on the full support of the local people. This is an indispensable condition. And this is clearly seen by considering the case of bandit gangs that operate in a region; they have many characteristics of a guerrilla army, homogeneity, respect for the leader, bravery, knowledge of the terrain, and, often, even a good understanding of the tactics to be employed. The only thing lacking is the support of the people; and these gangs are inevitably captured and exterminated by the public force.⁷

Analyzing the guerrilla band's mode of operation, its form of struggle, and understanding its mass base, we can answer

6. In the margin Che pointed out in red: Improve editing.

7. The paragraph appears marked with a vertical green line, and in the same color Che has written: Delete?

the question: why does the guerrilla fighter fight? We must come to the inevitable conclusion that the guerrilla fighter is a social reformer, who takes up arms as the embodiment of the angry protest of the people against their oppressors; guerrillas fight in order to change the social system that keeps all their unarmed brothers and sisters in ignominy and misery. They launch themselves against the conditions of the ruling institutions at a particular moment and dedicate themselves with all the vigor that circumstances permit to smash the mold of those institutions.

When we analyze more deeply the tactic of guerrilla warfare, we see that guerrilla fighters must have good knowledge of the surrounding countryside; the paths of entry and escape, which will almost always have been constructed by the guerrillas themselves; the possibilities of rapid maneuver; good hiding places; naturally they must also count on the support of the people. All this indicates that the guerrilla fighter will carry out actions in rough, semi-populated areas. Since in such areas the struggle of the people for reforms is aimed primarily and almost exclusively at changing the form of land ownership, the guerrilla fighter is above all an agrarian revolutionary, who interprets the desires of the great peasant mass to be owners of land, owners of their means of production, of their animals, of everything they live for, which will also constitute their cemetery.

Current interpretations identify two different types of guerrilla warfare, one of these being a struggle that complements great regular armies, such as was the case of the Ukrainian fighters in the Soviet Union; but this type of warfare will not be considered in this analysis. We are interested in the other type, the case of an armed group engaged in struggle against a constituted power, colonial or otherwise, which establishes itself as a single base and which develops in rural areas. In all

such cases, whatever the ideological aims inspiring the struggle, the economic goal is determined by the desire for land.

Mao's China begins as an uprising of groups of workers in the South that is defeated and almost annihilated. It succeeds in establishing itself and begins to advance only after the long march from Yenan, when it bases itself in rural areas and makes agrarian reform its fundamental goal. The struggle of Ho Chi Minh is based among the rice-growing peasants, who are oppressed by the French colonial yoke; with this force it is progressing toward the defeat of the colonialists.⁸ In both cases there was the framework of a patriotic war against the Japanese invader, but the economic basis of the fight for land has not disappeared. In the case of Algeria, the grand idea of Arab nationalism has its economic corollary in the fact that a million French settlers utilize nearly all the arable land. In some countries, such as Puerto Rico, where the special conditions of the island have not permitted a guerrilla movement, the nationalist spirit, deeply wounded by daily discrimination, is rooted in the aspiration of the peasants to recover the land that the Yankee invaders seized (even though many of these people are already proletarianized). This same central idea, though in different forms, inspired the small farmers, peasants, and slaves of the eastern estates of Cuba to close ranks and defend the right to possess land during the 30-year war of liberation.*

Considering the possibilities for guerrilla warfare to become transformed into a conventional war as the operating potential

8. From "In all such cases..." at the end of the previous paragraph, until here, Che has marked the original text in red with vertical lines. He has suggested **fx** this, and then, **expand and improve**.

* The Cuban wars for independence from Spain lasted from 1868 to 1898.

of the guerrilla band increases, this special type of warfare should be considered as an embryo, a prelude, of the other. The possibilities for the growth of the guerrilla band and for changes in the mode of fighting until it becomes conventional warfare are as great as the possibilities for defeating the enemy in each of the different battles, combats, or skirmishes that occur. Therefore, the fundamental principle is that no battle, combat, or skirmish should be fought unless it can be won. There is a pejorative saying: "The guerrilla fighter is the Jesuit of warfare." This suggests qualities of treachery, of surprise, of secretiveness, that are obviously essential elements of guerrilla warfare. Naturally, it is a special kind of Jesuitism, promoted by circumstances, which necessitate acting at certain moments in ways different from the romantic and sporting conceptions with which we are taught to believe war is fought.⁹

War is always a struggle in which each contender tries to annihilate the other. Besides using force, they will have recourse to all kinds of tricks and stratagems in order to achieve this goal. Military strategy and tactics are a representation of the objectives of the groups and of the means of achieving those objectives, taking advantage of all the enemy's weak points. In a war of positions, every platoon in a large army will display the same combative characteristics as those of the guerrilla band: treachery, secretiveness, and surprise. When these are not present, it is because vigilance on the other side prevents surprise. But since the guerrilla band is a division in itself, and since there are large areas of territory not controlled by the enemy, it is always possible to carry out guerrilla attacks in

9. From "Naturally, it is a special kind of Jesuitism..." to the end of the paragraph, Che has marked a green line and suggested **fx**.

such a way as to guarantee surprise; and this is what the guerrilla fighter should do.¹⁰

"Hit and run," some call this scornfully, and this is accurate. Hit and run, wait, lie in ambush, again hit and run, repeatedly, giving the enemy no rest. There would appear in all this a negative quality, an attitude of retreat, of avoiding frontal combat. This is, however, a consequence of the general strategy of guerrilla warfare, the ultimate aim of which is the same as in any war: to win, to annihilate the enemy.

Guerrilla warfare is therefore clearly a phase that does not afford in itself the opportunity to attain a complete victory, but rather is one of the initial phases of a war and will develop continuously until, through steady growth, the guerrilla army acquires the characteristics of a regular army. At that moment it will be ready to deal the enemy definitive blows and to achieve victory. The triumph will always be achieved by a regular army, even though its origins were in a guerrilla army.

So, just as the general of a division in a modern war does not have to die in front of his soldiers, the guerrilla fighter, who is the general of himself, need not die in every battle. The guerrilla is ready to give his or her life, but the positive feature of guerrilla warfare is that each guerrilla fighter is ready to die not just to defend an idea but to make that idea a reality. That is the essence of the guerrilla struggle. The miracle is that a small nucleus, the armed vanguard of a great popular movement that supports them, can proceed to realize that idea, to establish a new society, to break the old patterns of the past, to achieve, ultimately, the social justice for which they fight.

10. From "not controlled by the enemy" to the end of this paragraph, and the entire following paragraph, was marked with a blue line with the note: Consider the reason for this in the foreword.

Viewed in this way, what was disparaged acquires true nobility — the nobility of the ends sought, and we are clearly not speaking of a distorted means to an end. This combative attitude, this attitude of never being discouraged, this resolution in confronting the great challenge presented by the final objective also epitomizes the nobility of the guerrilla fighter.

2 GUERRILLA STRATEGY

In the terminology of war, strategy is understood as the analysis of the objectives to be achieved in the light of the total military situation, and the overall ways of accomplishing these objectives.¹¹

To have a correct strategic appreciation from the point of view of the guerrilla band, it is necessary to analyze fundamentally the enemy's likely mode of operation. If the final objective is always the complete destruction of the opposing force, in the case of a civil war the enemy is confronted with the standard task: the total destruction of each component of the guerrilla band. The guerrilla fighter, on the other hand, must analyze the resources that the enemy has for trying to achieve that outcome: in terms of men, mobility, popular support, armaments, and the leadership capacity which can be relied on. We must adjust our own strategy on the basis of these considerations, always bearing in mind the final objective of defeating the enemy army.

There are fundamental aspects to be studied: armaments, for example, and how they are used. The value of a tank, of an

11. Marked in red with the following observation: See Clausewitz. (Carl von Clausewitz (1780-1831) was a Prussian general and military theorist.)

airplane in a fight of this nature must be assessed. The arms of the enemy, his ammunition, his habits must be considered, because the principal source of provision for the guerrilla force is precisely in enemy armaments. If there is a choice, we should choose the same type as that used by the enemy, since the greatest problem of the guerrilla band is the lack of ammunition, which the opponent must provide.

Once objectives have been fixed and analyzed, it is necessary to review the order of the steps leading to the achievement of the final objective. This should be planned in advance, even though it will be modified and adjusted as the struggle develops and unforeseen circumstances arise.

At the outset, the guerrilla fighter's essential task is to keep himself from being wiped out. Step by step, it will become easier for members of the guerrilla band or bands to adapt themselves to their lifestyle and to escape from the forces ranged against them, as this becomes a daily practice. When this is achieved, and it has been able to take up inaccessible positions that are very difficult for the enemy to reach, or it has assembled forces that deter the enemy from attacking, the guerrilla band should proceed to the gradual weakening of the enemy. At first, this can be done close to the points of active warfare against the guerrilla band, and later it can be taken deeper into enemy territory, attacking their communications, and then attacking or harassing their bases of operations and their central base, tormenting them wherever possible, to the full extent of the capabilities of the guerrilla forces.

The blows should be continuous. The enemy soldier in a zone of operations should not be allowed to sleep; his outposts should be attacked and destroyed systematically. At every moment the impression should be created that he is completely

surrounded. In wooded areas and rough ground this effort should be maintained day and night; in open zones that are more easily penetrated by enemy patrols, only at night. For this, the absolute cooperation of the people and a perfect knowledge of the terrain are necessary. These two conditions affect every minute of the guerrilla fighter's life. Therefore, along with centers for the study of current and future zones of operations, intensive work must be undertaken among the local people to explain the motives of the revolution, its goals, and to spread the incontrovertible truth that the enemy's victory over the people is ultimately impossible. *Whoever does not feel this indisputable truth cannot be a guerrilla fighter.*

To begin with, this work among the people should be aimed at ensuring secrecy; that is, each peasant, each member of the community in which the action is taking place, will be asked not to mention what he or she sees and hears; later, help can be sought from those local residents whose loyalty to the revolution offers greater guarantees; later on, these persons can be used in contact missions, to transport goods or arms, or as guides in the zones familiar to them; after that, it is possible to establish organized mass action in workplaces, of which the final result will be the general strike.¹²

The strike is a most important element in a civil war, but in order to achieve it a range of complementary conditions are necessary that do not always exist, and which very rarely emerge spontaneously. These fundamental conditions must be created, basically by explaining the purpose of the revolution and by demonstrating the power of the people and their capabilities.

12. The end of this paragraph from "organized mass action" and the entire following paragraph were marked with a vertical green line with the note: Correct this in accordance with the Vietnamese [experience].

It is also possible to have recourse to certain very homogeneous groups, which must have shown their efficacy previously in less dangerous tasks, in order to make use of sabotage, another of the terrible arms of the guerrilla band. Entire armies can be paralyzed, the industrial life of a zone suspended, leaving the inhabitants of a city without factories, without it, without water, without communications of any kind, without being able to risk travel by road except at certain times. If all this is achieved, the morale of the enemy declines, the morale of combatant units weakens, and the fruit ripens for picking at the precise moment.

All this presupposes an extension of the territory in which the guerrilla action takes place, but an excessive increase of this territory should be avoided. A strong base of operations must always be preserved and continuously strengthened during the course of the war. Within this territory, the indoctrination* of local residents should take place; the irreconcilable enemies of the revolution should be quarantined; all simple defensive measures, such as trenches, mines, and communications, should be perfected.

When the guerrilla band has achieved a respectable level of armed power in terms of arms and the number of combatants, it should proceed to the formation of new columns. This is similar to the beehive that at a particular moment releases a new queen, who goes off to another region with a part of the swarm. The mother hive with the most outstanding guerrilla chief will stay in the less dangerous places, while the new columns will penetrate other enemy territories following the cycle already described.

* Che uses the term "indoctrination" to mean political education.

The time will come when the territory occupied by the columns is too small for them; and in advancing toward regions strongly defended by the enemy, it will be necessary to confront powerful forces. At that moment the columns combine to offer a compact fighting front, and a war of positions commences, a war conducted by regular armies. Nevertheless, the former guerrilla army cannot cut itself off from its base, and should create new guerrilla bands operating behind the enemy lines as the original bands did, proceeding in this way to penetrate enemy territory until it is controlled.

This is how the guerrillas reach the stage of attack, of the encirclement of fortified bases, of the defeat of reinforcements, of mass action, ever more committed, throughout the entire national territory, finally accomplishing the objective of the war: victory.

3 GUERRILLA TACTICS

In military terms, tactics are the practical methods of achieving great strategic objectives.

In one sense, they complement strategy, and in another they are more specific rules within it. As a means to an end, tactics are much more variable, much more flexible than the final objectives, and they should be adjusted continually during the struggle. There are tactical objectives that remain constant throughout a war and others that vary. The first thing to be considered is the adjusting of guerrilla operations to the enemy's actions.¹³

13. The two first paragraphs of this section are marked in red, with the note: See Clausewitz.

The fundamental characteristic of a guerrilla band is mobility. Within a few minutes it can move away from a specific theatre and in a few hours farther still from the region, if that becomes necessary; this mobility allows the guerrillas to constantly change fronts and avoid any kind of encirclement. As circumstances of the war permit, the guerrilla band can dedicate itself exclusively to fleeing from an encirclement, which is the enemy's only way of forcing it into a decisive encounter that might be unfavorable; it can also change the battle into a counter-encirclement (small groups of guerrillas are assumed to be surrounded by the enemy when suddenly the enemy itself is surrounded by stronger contingents; or men positioned in a safe place serve as a lure, leading to the encirclement and annihilation of the entire troop and supply of the attacking force). A feature of this mobile war is the "minuet," so named for its similarity to the dance: the guerrilla bands encircle an enemy position, such as an advancing column; it is surrounded completely from the four points of the compass,¹⁴ with five or six guerrillas at each point, far enough away to avoid being encircled themselves; the battle is started at any one of the points, and the army moves toward it; the guerrillas then retreat, always maintaining visual contact, and initiate an attack from another point. The army will repeat its action and the guerrilla band the same. Thus, successively, an enemy column can be kept immobilized, and forced to expend large quantities of ammunition, weakening the morale of its troops at no great risk to the guerrillas.

This same tactic can be applied at night, but closing in more and showing greater aggression, because in these conditions counter-encirclement is much more difficult. Movement by

might is another important trait of the guerrilla band, enabling it to advance into an attack position and to organize in a new territory where the danger of betrayal might exist. The numerical inferiority of the guerrilla band makes it necessary that attacks are always carried out by surprise; this is the great advantage that allows the guerrillas to inflict losses on the enemy without suffering losses themselves. In a battle between 100 men on one side and 10 on the other, the losses are not equal if there is one casualty on each side. The enemy loss can always be overcome, representing only one percent of their effective forces. A loss for the guerrilla band requires more time to be replaced as it involves a highly specialized soldier and represents 10 percent of the operating forces.

Dead guerrilla soldiers should never be left with their arms and ammunition. The duty of every guerrilla fighter, whenever a *compañero* falls, is to recover immediately these extremely precious elements of struggle. Specifically, the care that must be taken of ammunition and the method of using it are other characteristics of guerrilla warfare. In any combat between a regular force and a guerrilla band it is always possible to distinguish one from the other by their different manner of fire: a regular army will use a great deal of firepower, the guerrillas' shots will be sporadic and accurate.

At one time, one of our heroes, now dead, had to employ his machine gun for nearly five minutes, burst after burst, in order to slow the advance of enemy soldiers. This caused considerable confusion in our forces, because they assumed from the rhythm of fire that that key position must have been taken by the enemy; this was one of the rare occasions where a departure from the rule of saving fire had been necessary because of the importance of the position being defended.

14. From "A feature of this mobile war..." to here, Che has marked in red with the observation: Correct this.

Another elementary characteristic of the guerrilla soldier is flexibility, an ability to adapt to any circumstance, and to convert all accidents of the action to advantage. Contrary to the rigidity of classical methods of war, guerrilla fighters invent their own tactics at every minute of the battle and constantly surprise the enemy.

In the first case, there are only elastic positions, specific places that the enemy cannot pass, and places of diverting him. After easily overcoming difficulties in a gradual advance, the enemy is frequently surprised to find himself suddenly and solidly caught with no possibility of moving forward. This is because, when they have been selected on the basis of a careful study of the terrain, the guerrilla-defended positions are almost invulnerable. It is not the number of attacking soldiers that counts, but the number of defending soldiers. Once that number is in position, it can nearly always successfully hold off a battalion. It is a major task of the chiefs to choose carefully the timing and the place for defending a position without retreat.

The form of attack of a guerrilla army is also different; starting with surprise and ferocity, implacable, it suddenly converts itself into total passivity. The surviving enemy, resting, believes that the attacker has left; he begins to relax, to return to routine life within the **besieged position**, when suddenly a new attack bursts forth in another place, with the same characteristics, while the main body of the guerrilla band lies in wait to intercept reinforcements. **At other times** the guerrillas will suddenly attack an outpost defending the camp, overwhelm and capture it. The fundamental thing is surprise and rapidity of attack.

Acts of sabotage are very important. A clear distinction must be made between sabotage, a revolutionary and highly effective method of warfare, and terrorism, a measure that is generally ineffective and indiscriminate in its results, since it often makes

victims of innocent people and destroys many lives that would be valuable to the revolution. Terrorism should be considered a valuable tactic when it is used to put to death some noted leader of the oppressive forces who is known for his cruelty, his efficiency in repression, or for another reason that makes his elimination useful. But the killing of insignificant individuals is never advisable, since it results in increased reprisals, and inevitable deaths.

There is one very controversial point about terrorism. Many consider that by provoking police oppression, it hinders all more or less legal or semi-clandestine contact with the masses and makes impossible the united action that might be necessary at a critical moment. This is true; but in a civil war the repression by the governmental power in certain towns might already be so great that, in fact, all forms of legal action are suppressed, and any mass action that is not supported by arms is ruled out. Therefore, it is necessary to be circumspect in adopting methods of this nature and to assess the general favorable consequences for the revolution.¹⁵ At any rate, well-managed sabotage is always a very effective weapon. It should not be used to immobilize means of production, which would paralyze a sector of the population (in other words, leave them unemployed), unless this also affects the normal life of the society. Sabotage against a soft-drink factory is ridiculous, but sabotage against a power plant is absolutely correct and advisable. In the first instance, a certain number of workers are put out of work without disrupting the rhythm of industry; in the second case, there will also be displaced workers, but this is entirely justified by the paralysis of regional life. We will return to the technique of sabotage later.

15. Che proposes improve, in red.

Aviation is one of the favorite weapons of a conventional army in modern times, supposedly a decisive one. Nevertheless, it is useless during the early phases of a guerrilla war, when there are only small concentrations of guerrillas in rugged places. The effectiveness of aviation is in its systematic destruction of visible and organized defenses; and for this there must be large concentrations of men who construct these defenses, something nonexistent in warfare of this nature. Planes are also potent against marches by columns on level ground or places without cover; however, this vulnerability can be easily avoided by conducting marches at night.

One of the enemy's weakest points is road and rail transportation. It is virtually impossible to guard every meter of a transport route, a road, or a railroad. At any point a considerable amount of explosives can be planted that will make the road impassable; and by detonating explosives when a vehicle passes by, besides cutting off the road, considerable loss of life and material can be inflicted on the enemy.

The sources of explosives are varied: they can be brought from other zones; or unexploded bombs dropped from enemy planes can be used, although these do not always work; or they can be manufactured in secret laboratories within the guerrilla zone. The techniques of detonation are quite varied; their manufacture also depends on the conditions of the guerrilla band.¹⁶

In our laboratory we made powder that we used as a cap, and we invented various devices for exploding mines at the desired moment. Those that produced the best results were electric, but the first mine we exploded was a bomb dropped from a plane

16. Che proposes improve, in red.

of the [Batista] dictatorship; we adapted it by inserting various caps and adding a gun with the trigger pulled by a cord. At the moment an enemy truck passed, the weapon was fired to set off the explosion.

These techniques can be developed to a high degree. For example, we have learned that in Algeria today, in the struggle against the French colonial power, they are using tele-explosive mines, that is, mines exploded by radio at great distances from the point where they are located.¹⁷

The tactic of setting up ambushes along roads in order to explode mines and annihilate survivors is one of the most profitable for obtaining arms and ammunition. The surprised enemy cannot use their ammunition and has no time to flee; so with a small expenditure of ammunition significant results are achieved. As the enemy receives blows, they also change their tactics, and instead of isolated trucks, moves in veritable motorized columns. However, by choosing the terrain well, the same result can be produced by breaking up the column and concentrating forces on one vehicle. In these cases the essential elements of guerrilla tactics must always be kept in mind. These are: perfect knowledge of the area; surveillance and foresight as to the lines of escape; vigilance over all the secondary roads that might bring in reinforcements to the point of attack; intimacy with people in the zone so as to ensure their help in regard to supplies, transport, and temporary or permanent hiding places if it becomes necessary to leave wounded compañeros behind; numerical superiority at a chosen point of action; total mobility; and the possibility of counting on reserves.

If all these basic tactics are employed, surprise attacks

17. Marked in red with the note: Correct.

along the enemy's lines of communication yield important dividends.

A fundamental part of guerrilla tactics is the treatment of the people in the zone. The treatment of the enemy is similarly important; the norm should be absolute inflexibility during attack, an absolute inflexibility toward all the contemptible elements that resort to informing and assassination, and the greatest clemency possible toward the enemy soldiers who go into battle performing — or believing that they are performing — their military duty. It is a good policy to take no prisoners while there are no significant operational bases and no unassailable positions. Survivors should be set free. The wounded should be cared for with all available resources at the time of the action. Conduct toward the civil population should be governed by great respect for all the customs and traditions of the people of the zone, in order to demonstrate effectively, through deeds, the moral superiority of the guerrilla fighter over the oppressing soldier.

4 WARFARE ON FAVORABLE TERRAIN

As already stated, the guerrilla struggle will not always take place on the most favorable terrain for the employment of its tactics; but when it does, that is, when the guerrilla band is located in zones difficult to reach, either because of dense forests, steep mountains, or impassable deserts or marshes, the general tactics, based on the fundamental postulates of guerrilla warfare, must always be the same.

An important point to consider is the way to engage the enemy. If the zone is so dense, so difficult that an organized army can never reach it, the guerrilla band should advance

to the regions where the army can get to and where there are possibilities for combat.

The guerrilla band should fight as soon as its survival has been assured; it must constantly leave its refuge to fight; it does not have to be as mobile as in those cases where the terrain is unfavorable; it must adjust itself to the conditions of the enemy, but is not required to move as quickly as in those areas where the enemy can concentrate a large number of men in a few minutes. Neither is the nocturnal character of this warfare so important; it will be possible in many cases to carry out daytime operations, especially mobilizations by day, though subjected to enemy observation by land and air. It is also possible to pursue military action for a much longer time, above all in the mountains; it is possible to undertake battles of long duration with very few guerrillas, and it is very probable that the arrival of enemy reinforcements at the field of battle can be prevented.

A close vigilance over the access points is, however, an axiom never to be forgotten by guerrilla fighters. Their aggressiveness (on account of the difficulties that the enemy faces in bringing in reinforcements) can be greater, they can get closer to the enemy, fight much more directly, more frontally and for a longer time, although all of this may be qualified by various factors, for example, such as the amount of ammunition.

Fighting on favorable terrain, particularly in the mountains, presents many advantages but also the inconvenience that it is difficult in a single operation to capture a large quantity of arms and ammunition, owing to the precautions that the enemy takes in these areas. (The guerrilla soldier must never forget the fact that the enemy must serve as the source of arms and ammunition.) The guerrilla band will be able to "dig in" here much more rapidly than on unfavorable ground, that is, to form

along the enemy's lines of communication yield important dividends.

A fundamental part of guerrilla tactics is the treatment of the people in the zone. The treatment of the enemy is similarly important; the norm should be absolute inflexibility during attack, an absolute inflexibility toward all the contemptible elements that resort to informing and assassination, and the greatest clemency possible toward the enemy soldiers who go into battle performing — or believing that they are performing — their military duty. It is a good policy to take no prisoners while there are no significant operational bases and no unassailable positions. Survivors should be set free. The wounded should be cared for with all available resources at the time of the action. Conduct toward the civil population should be governed by great respect for all the customs and traditions of the people of the zone, in order to demonstrate effectively, through deeds, the moral superiority of the guerrilla fighter over the oppressing soldier.

4 WARFARE ON FAVORABLE TERRAIN

As already stated, the guerrilla struggle will not always take place on the most favorable terrain for the employment of its tactics; but when it does, that is, when the guerrilla band is located in zones difficult to reach, either because of dense forests, steep mountains, or impassable deserts or marshes, the general tactics, based on the fundamental postulates of guerrilla warfare, must always be the same.

An important point to consider is the way to engage the enemy. If the zone is so dense, so difficult that an organized army can never reach it, the guerrilla band should advance

to the regions where the army can get to and where there are possibilities for combat.

The guerrilla band should fight as soon as its survival has been assured; it must constantly leave its refuge to fight; it does not have to be as mobile as in those cases where the terrain is unfavorable; it must adjust itself to the conditions of the enemy, but is not required to move as quickly as in those areas where the enemy can concentrate a large number of men in a few minutes. Neither is the nocturnal character of this warfare so important; it will be possible in many cases to carry out daytime operations, especially mobilizations by day, though subjected to enemy observation by land and air. It is also possible to pursue military action for a much longer time, above all in the mountains; it is possible to undertake battles of long duration with very few guerrillas, and it is very probable that the arrival of enemy reinforcements at the field of battle can be prevented.

A close vigilance over the access points is, however, an axiom never to be forgotten by guerrilla fighters. Their aggressiveness (on account of the difficulties that the enemy faces in bringing in reinforcements) can be greater, they can get closer to the enemy, fight much more directly, more frontally and for a longer time, although all of this may be qualified by various factors, for example, such as the amount of ammunition.

Fighting on favorable terrain, particularly in the mountains, presents many advantages but also the inconvenience that it is difficult in a single operation to capture a large quantity of arms and ammunition, owing to the precautions that the enemy takes in these areas. (The guerrilla soldier must never forget the fact that the enemy must serve as the source of arms and ammunition.) The guerrilla band will be able to "dig in" here much more rapidly than on unfavorable ground, that is, to form

a base from which to engage in a war of positions, where small industries may be established as they are needed, as well as hospitals, centers for education and training, storage facilities, propaganda organs, etc., adequately protected from aircraft or from long-range artillery.

In these conditions the guerrilla band can expand its numbers, including noncombatants and perhaps even a system of training in the use of those arms that eventually fall into the hands of the guerrilla army.

The size of a guerrilla band is extremely flexible, depending on the territory, the means available of obtaining supplies, the flight of oppressed people from other zones, the arms available, and the necessities of organization. But, in any case, it is far more practicable to establish a base and expand with the support of new combatant elements.

This type of guerrilla band's radius of action will be as wide as conditions or the operations of other bands in adjacent territory permit.¹⁸ The range will be restricted by the time it takes to reach a secure zone from the zone of operations; assuming that marches must be made at night, it is not possible to operate more than five or six hours away from a point of maximum security. Small guerrilla bands that work constantly at weakening a territory can go farther from the security zone.

For this type of warfare the preferred arms are long-range weapons requiring minimal expenditure of bullets, supported by a group of automatic or semi-automatic arms. Of the rifles and machine guns available in the US markets, one of the best is the M-1 rifle, called the Garand.¹⁹ This should, however, only be used by those with some experience, since it has the

18. Marked in red with the note: Fix.

19. Using the color red, Che suggests improve.

disadvantage of expending too much ammunition. Medium-heavy arms, such as tripod machine guns, can be used on favorable ground, affording a greater margin of security for the weapon and its personnel, but they will always be weapons of defense and not of attack.

An ideal composition for a guerrilla band of 25 fighters would be 10 to 15 single-shot rifles and about 10 automatic arms between Garands and hand machine guns, including light and easily portable automatic arms such as the Browning or the more modern Belgian FAL and M-14 automatic rifles. Nine-millimeter weapons are among the best hand machine guns because they carry more ammunition. The simpler the construction, the better, because this increases the chance of being able to replace parts. All this depends on the armaments the enemy uses, since the ammunition they have is what we will use when their arms fall into our hands. Heavy arms are practically impossible to use. Aircraft cannot see anything in these zones and cease to operate; tanks and cannons cannot do much because of the difficulties of advancing.

A very important consideration is supply. For this very reason, remote zones generally present special problems, since there are few peasants and thus animal and food supplies are scarce. Stable lines of communication must be maintained in order to be able always to rely on a minimum of stockpiled food in the event of any unfortunate contingency.

In this kind of operational zone there are generally no possibilities for sabotage on a large scale; the inaccessibility brings a lack of installations, telephone lines, aqueducts, etc., that could be damaged by direct action.

Animals are important for supply purposes, the mule being the best option in rough country. Adequate pasturage permitting

good nutrition is essential. The mule can manage in extremely hilly country impossible for other animals. In the most difficult situations it may be necessary to resort to transport by men. Each individual can carry 25 kilograms for many hours a day and for many days.

The lines of communication with the outside should include a series of intermediate points staffed by totally reliable people, where goods can be stored and where contacts can be hidden at critical times. Internal lines of communication can also be created; their extension will depend on the stage of development reached by the guerrilla band. In some zones of operations in the recent Cuban [revolutionary] war, many kilometers of telephone lines were established, roads were built, and a messenger service was maintained sufficient to cover all areas in minimal time.

There are also other possible means of outside communication we did not use in the Cuban war but which are perfectly appropriate, such as smoke signals, signals using light reflected by mirrors, and carrier pigeons.²⁰

For the guerrillas it is of vital importance to maintain their arms in good condition, to capture ammunition, and, above all, to have adequate shoes. The first efforts to create industries should therefore be directed toward meeting these needs. Shoe factories can initially be cobbler workshops that can replace half-soles on old shoes, later developing into various organized factories producing a good daily average of shoes. The manufacture of powder is fairly simple, and a lot can be

20. Che marked this paragraph for deletion, and noted in red: Radio, perhaps as an element to expand on in future corrections. Radio broadcasts were well utilized by the Rebel Army in Cuba, and in Chapter III, in the section on propaganda, Che describes the role of radio in the development of the struggle.

accomplished with a small laboratory, bringing in the necessary materials from outside. Mines constitute a grave danger for the enemy; large areas can be mined for simultaneous explosion, destroying up to hundreds of men.²¹

5 WARFARE ON UNFAVORABLE TERRAIN

To conduct warfare in territory that is not particularly hilly, lacks forests, and has many roads, all the fundamentals of guerrilla warfare must be observed, with only the forms altered. The quantity, not the quality, of guerrilla warfare will change. For example, following the same order as before, the mobility of this type of guerrilla band should be extraordinary; strikes should preferably be made at night; they should be extremely rapid, almost explosive, and the guerrillas should then withdraw to a different place from their starting point, as far as possible from the scene of the action, assuming that there is no place secure from the repressive forces that the guerrillas can use as their garrison.

A guerrilla can walk between 30 and 50 kilometers during the night; marching is also possible during the first hours of daylight, unless the operational zones are closely watched or there is a danger that local people will see the passing troops and notify the pursuing army of the guerrilla band's location and route. In these cases it is always preferable to operate at night, keeping as quiet as possible both before and after the action; the first hours of darkness are best. Here too there are exceptions to the general rule, as sometimes dawn might be

21. Che proposes to improve the end of the paragraph, in red.

preferable. It is never wise to let the enemy get used to a certain form of warfare; it is necessary to vary constantly the places, the hours, and the forms of operation.

We have already said that the action cannot be for long, but must be rapid; it must be highly effective, last a few minutes, and be followed by an immediate withdrawal. The arms employed here will not be the same as in the case of actions on favorable ground; a large quantity of automatic weapons is preferable. In night attacks marksmanship is not the determining factor, but rather concentrated fire; the more automatic arms firing at short distance, the more possibilities there are of annihilating the enemy.

Furthermore, the mining of roads and the destruction of bridges are tactics of great importance. Guerrilla attacks will be less aggressive so far as perseverance and duration are concerned, but they can be very violent, and they can utilize different arms, such as mines and the shotgun. Against open vehicles heavily loaded with soldiers — the usual method of transporting troops — and even against closed vehicles that do not have special defenses or against buses, for example, the shotgun is a tremendous weapon. A shotgun loaded with large shot is the most effective. This is not a secret of guerrilla warfare but is used also in major wars; the North Americans used shotgun platoons armed with high-quality weapons and bayonets for assaulting machine-gun nests.

An important problem to explain is that of ammunition; this will almost always be taken from the enemy. It is therefore necessary to strike where there is the absolute guarantee of replacing whatever ammunition is expended, unless there are large reserves in secure places. In other words, a devastating attack against a group of men should not be undertaken at

the risk of expending all ammunition without being able to replace it. In guerrilla tactics it is always necessary to keep in mind the grave problem of procuring the war materiel required to continue the fight. For this reason guerrilla arms should be the same as those of the enemy, except for weapons such as revolvers and shotguns, for which ammunition can be obtained locally or in the cities.

The number of people in a guerrilla band of this type should not exceed 10 to 15. In establishing a single combat unit it is of utmost importance to always consider the limitations on numbers: 10, 12, 15 guerrillas can hide anywhere and at the same time can help each other in putting up a powerful resistance to the enemy. Four or five would perhaps be too small a number, but when the number exceeds 10 there is a greater possibility that the enemy will discover them in their camp or on the march.

Remember that the pace of the guerrilla band on the march is equal to the pace of its slowest person. It is more difficult to achieve a uniform marching speed with 20, 30, or 40 guerrillas than with 10. And on the plains, the guerrilla fighter must essentially be a runner. There the practice of hitting and running is most useful. The guerrilla bands on the plains suffer the enormous disadvantage of being subject to rapid encirclement and of not having secure places where they can set up a firm resistance; they must therefore live in conditions of absolute secrecy for a long time, since it would be dangerous to trust any local person whose fidelity is not perfectly established. Enemy reprisals are so violent, usually so brutal, inflicted not only on the head of the family but frequently on the women and children as well, that pressure on individuals lacking firmness may result at any moment in capitulation and their revealing information as to

where the guerrilla band is located and how it is operating. This would immediately result in encirclement, with the inevitable unfortunate consequences, although not necessarily fatal ones. When conditions, the quantity of arms, and the rebelliousness of the people demand an increase in the number of fighters, the guerrilla band should be divided. If necessary, all can regroup at a particular moment to deal a blow, but in such a way that immediately afterwards they can disperse toward separate zones, again divided into small groups of 10, 12, or 15.

Entire armies can be organized under a single command and respect and obedience assured to this command without the necessity of being in a single group. Therefore, the election of the guerrilla chiefs and the certainty that they coordinate ideologically and personally with the overall chief of the zone are very important.

The bazooka is a heavy weapon that can be used by the guerrilla band because of its easy portability and operation. Today the rifle-fired anti-tank grenade can replace it. Naturally, it will be a weapon taken from the enemy. The bazooka is ideal for firing on armored vehicles, and even on unarmored vehicles that are loaded with troops, and for seizing small military bases of just a few men in a short time; but it is important to point out that a man can only carry three shells, and even this requires considerable exertion.²²

As for using the heavy arms taken from the enemy, naturally nothing should be scorned; but there are weapons such as the tripod machine gun, the heavy 50-millimeter machine gun, etc., which, when captured, should be utilized on the understanding

22. At the bottom of the page Che wrote in red: "This is the experience with US shells for bazookas of ...mm. In other types the load can change." The number of millimeters is blank in the original.

that they might be lost again. In other words, in the unfavorable conditions that we are now considering, a battle to defend a heavy machine gun or other weapon of this type cannot be allowed; they should simply be used until the tactical moment when they must be abandoned. In our Cuban war of liberation, to abandon a weapon constituted a grave offense, and there was never a case where it was necessary. Nevertheless, we mention this in order to explain clearly the only situation in which abandonment would not be such a critical offense. On unfavorable ground, the guerrilla's weapon is the personal weapon of rapid fire.

A peasant population will usually inhabit an accessible zone, and this enormously facilitates supply. Having trustworthy people and making contact with establishments that provide supplies to the population, it is possible to maintain a guerrilla band perfectly without having to devote time or money to long and dangerous lines of communication. Furthermore, it is well to reiterate that the smaller the number of guerrillas, the easier it will be to provide them with food. Essential supplies such as bedding, waterproof material, mosquito nets, shoes, medicines, and food can be found within the zone, since these are items used daily by the local population.

Communications will be much easier in the sense of being able to count on a larger number of guerrillas and more roads; but they will be more difficult in regard to the security necessary for sending messages between distant points, since it will be necessary to rely on a range of contacts that have to be trustworthy. There will be the danger of an eventual capture of one of the messengers, who are constantly crossing enemy lines. If the messages are not so important, they should be verbal; if of great importance, writing in code should be used. Experience

shows that transmission by word of mouth greatly distorts any communication.

For these same reasons industry will have much less importance, as well as being much more difficult to carry out. It will not be possible to have factories making shoes or arms. Practically speaking, industry will have to be limited to small workshops, carefully hidden, where shotgun shells can be recharged and mines, simple grenades, and other bare necessities of the moment manufactured. On the other hand, it is possible to make use of all the friendly local workshops to make whatever is necessary.

This brings us to two consequences that flow logically from what has been said. First, the favorable conditions for establishing a permanent camp in guerrilla warfare determine the degree of productive development of a particular location. All favorable conditions, all the comforts of life usually induce people to settle down; but the opposite is the case for the guerrilla band. The more facilities there are for social life, the more nomadic, the less certain the life of the guerrilla fighter. In reality, this is the result of one and the same principle. The title of this section is "Warfare on Unfavorable Terrain," because everything that is favorable to human life: communications, urban and semi-urban concentrations of large numbers of people, land easily worked by machine — all these place the guerrilla fighter in a disadvantaged position.

The second conclusion is that as guerrilla warfare must necessarily include the extremely important factor of work among the masses, this task is even more important in the unfavorable zones, where a single enemy attack can produce a catastrophe. Indoctrination should be constant, as should be the struggle for unity of the workers, the peasants, and other social

classes that live in the zone, in order to achieve the greatest homogeneous attitude toward the guerrillas. This task with the masses, this continuous attention to the huge problem of relations between the guerrilla band and the local residents, must also govern the attitude taken toward the case of an individual recalcitrant enemy soldier: he should be eliminated without hesitation if he is a danger. In this respect the guerrilla band must be severe. Enemies cannot be permitted to exist within the operational zone that offers no security.

6 URBAN WARFARE

If, during the war, the guerrilla bands move in on the cities and penetrate the surrounding countryside in such a way as to be able to create conditions of some security, it will be necessary to give these urban bands special education, or rather, a special organization.

It is essential to recognize that an urban guerrilla band can never emerge of its own accord.²³ It will be born only after certain conditions necessary for its survival have been created. Therefore, the urban guerrilla will always be under the direct command of chiefs located in another zone. The function of this guerrilla band will not be to carry out independent actions but to coordinate its activities with the overall strategic plans in such a way as to support the action of larger groups situated in another area, contributing specifically to the success of a particular tactical objective, without the operational freedom of other types of guerrilla bands. For example, an urban band

23. Che proposes improve, in red.

will not be able to choose the nature of its operation: whether to destroy telephone lines, to make attacks in another locality, or to surprise a patrol of soldiers on a distant road; it will do exactly what it is told. If its function is to cut down telephone poles or electric wires, to destroy sewers, railroads, or water mains, it will limit itself to carrying out these tasks efficiently.

It should not number more than four or five. The limitation on numbers is important, because the urban guerrilla must be considered as operating on exceptionally unfavorable terrain, where the enemy's vigilance will be much greater and the possibilities of reprisals as well as of betrayal are increased enormously. Another aggravating factor is that the urban guerrilla band cannot go far from the places where it is going to operate; added to speedy action and withdrawal there is also a limit on the distance of withdrawal from the scene of action and the need to remain totally hidden during the daytime. This is a nocturnal guerrilla band in the extreme, with no possibility to change its mode of operation until it can take part as an active combatant in the siege of the city when the insurrection is very advanced.

The essential qualities of the guerrilla fighter in this unfavorable situation are discipline — perhaps to the highest degree — and discretion. No more than two or three friendly houses can be relied on to provide food; it is almost certain that an encirclement under these conditions equals death. Besides, weapons will not be the same kind as those used by other groups. They will be for personal defense, only those that do not hinder a rapid flight or betray a secure hiding place. The group should have not more than one or two sawed-off automatic weapons, with pistols for the other members.

Preferably they will concentrate on prescribed sabotage

actions and never carry out armed attacks, except by surprising one or two members or agents of the enemy troops.

For this they need a broad range of equipment. The guerrilla fighter must have good saws, large quantities of dynamite, picks and shovels, apparatus for lifting rails, and, in general, adequate tools for the work to be carried out. These should be hidden in places that are secure but easily accessible to those who will need them.

If there is more than one guerrilla band, they will depend on a single chief to give orders as to the necessary tasks through contacts of proven trustworthiness that live openly as ordinary citizens. In certain cases guerrilla fighters will be able to maintain their peacetime work, but this is very difficult; practically speaking, the urban guerrilla band is constituted by a group of individuals who are already outside the law, in a situation of war, in unfavorable conditions as already described.

The importance of the urban struggle is extraordinary. A good operation of this nature extended over a wide area can almost completely paralyze the commercial and industrial life of the sector and place the entire population in a situation of unrest, of anguish, almost of impatience for the development of violent events that will relieve the suspense. If, from the moment war is initiated, the future possibility of such a struggle is anticipated and organization of specialists in this field commences, much more rapid action can be guaranteed and lives and precious time will be saved.