

Introduction

Guerrilla warfare has been particularly important ever since the Second World War. This book is concerned less with the history and more with the strategy of this kind of war, analyzing its underlying principles and their connection with the ultimate goal, political change. This is not to say that guerrilla techniques and tactics are a new phenomenon. On the contrary, they go back to the dawn of history. Guerrilla warfare has consistently been the choice of the weak who oppose the strong, for it enables them to avoid direct decisive confrontations and rely on harassment and surprise.

Guerrilla techniques are recorded in ancient Egypt and China. They are mentioned in the Bible and described, sometimes at length, by classical historians, notably Polybius, Appian, Plutarch, Flavius Josephus, Herodotus, and Tacitus. While Rome was still expanding its empire, in the two centuries before Christ, there were long and bitter guerrilla wars in Spain and, later, during the first century A.D., in North Africa. Throughout the Middle Ages and afterward, religious movements made use of guerrilla techniques, as did the peasants who fought in innumerable revolts, the classical example being the peasant war in sixteenth-century Germany. In the Ottoman-dominated Balkans, from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century, socially or nationally oriented bandit groups and movements were based entirely on guerrilla tactics. The most famous guerrilla war, fought by

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the Albanians against the authority of the Turkish sultan, was simply on a much larger scale.

This type of warfare has been characteristic of social and religious movements and has even enabled people to avoid taxation, but it has also been one of the most important forms of resistance to aggression and foreign occupation, notably during the expansion of the Roman, Ottoman, and Napoleonic empires and during the European expansion in the nineteenth century. Guerrilla tactics played a not unimportant role in the American War of Independence, as fought by Marion, also known as the Swamp Fox. Apart from the Vendée uprising during the French Revolution, however, the real “classics” of this period were the wars of national resistance in the Tyrol (1809), in Russia (1812), and in Spain (1808–1813)—giving us the term “guerrilla.” More than any other ideology, modern nationalism managed to extend guerrilla warfare beyond regional or local confines.

Military theoreticians, particularly French and German, have not overlooked the peculiarities of the “little war.” It was analyzed as early as the eighteenth century, but there was no treatment of the subject as a whole until Le Mièrre de Corvey wrote his *Des partisans et des corps irréguliers*. The two great theoreticians of the nineteenth century, Clausewitz and Jomini, gave it some attention. For Clausewitz, influenced as he was by the emergence of nationalism, popular warfare was a war of peasant resistance to a foreign aggressor. Several other theoreticians of the period just preceding the 1830s, notably the Italians, wrote on the subject, sometimes displaying an appreciation of its political potential. But, at the time, guerrilla warfare was quite rightly regarded as only a minor technique that could not carry the day and that was best used to back up a regular army.

In fact, if one leaves aside the Carlist Wars of Succession in Spain and the Italian Risorgimento, guerrilla warfare was a minor and very marginal feature of the post-Napoleonic period, the main examples having been the Polish insurrections and the Greek War of Independence. Indeed, from 1830 until the end of the nineteenth century, as socialism became more influential, urban insurrection came to be considered a better means of gaining power. Rapid urbanization, mass proletarianization, the conservatism of the peasantry, and the increasing centralization of the state apparatus within the capital all seemed to confirm this view-

point, which found explosive expression in 1830, 1848, and 1871. It was only the Italians and the Poles who felt that studies on guerrilla warfare were particularly relevant.

As in the United States, Latin America's Wars of Independence, led by Bolívar and San Martín, were essentially fought by regular armies. The exceptions were in Mexico, in Venezuela (where the *Llaneros* gave considerable support to Bolívar), and in the Plata (especially in Uruguay, where the *montoneros* were active). In Peru (1809–1816) a major insurrection was crushed. The astonishing saga of Toussaint L'Ouverture in Haiti provides another instance of guerrilla activity in Latin America.

A little later, two major guerrilla offensives against Spanish domination were launched in Cuba (particularly in Oriente) from 1863 to 1878 and from 1895 to 1898. The outcome was that the island ceased to be a Crown dependency; in the process, the Spanish General Weyler learned to take the technique of counterinsurgency farther than ever before.

European Expansion and Guerrilla Resistance

The longest, most numerous, and most important guerrilla wars were fought in response to European colonial expansion in Asia and Africa. Examples of such struggles against the British include the bitter, long drawn-out campaigns in Burma (1824–1825, 1852, 1885), the endless wars fought by the Afghans, the Sierra Leone Campaign, the Boer War (1899–1902), and the Somalia Campaigns that dragged on from the turn of the century until just after the First World War. The French fought in Algeria from 1830 to 1847. The conquest of Vietnam took them ten years. Gradually, they perfected political and military counterinsurgency techniques, and they fought on, in Madagascar (1844–1895) and in West Africa, where they encountered stiff opposition (1882–1898). Bitter campaigns were fought by the Dutch in Java and by the Germans against the Herreros of South West Africa. The Portuguese Wars in Angola and Guinea-Bissau continued for more than half a century. The Russians had to overcome the guerrilla forces led by Sheikh Shamyl before they could control the Caucasus (1836–1859). American colonization of the Philippines was bitterly resisted. Finally, full-scale guerrilla struggles erupted repeatedly in nineteenth-century China.

Guerrilla operations nonetheless remained marginal in the eyes of Western strategists. Military writing around the end of the nineteenth century and immediately after was still concerned almost exclusively with regular armies and mastery of the seas, as can be seen from the works of Moltke and von der Goltz (German); Ardant du Picq and Foch (French); and Mahan (American). The orientation was justified, for the ensuing First World War was fought almost entirely with conventional forces. Guerrilla operations played no part in that conflict, with two minor exceptions: Lawrence's campaign in Arabia, which owes its reputation more to his remarkable talent as an author than to its military importance, and the exploits of General von Lettow Vorbeck, who opposed the British Army in Tanganyika from 1915 to 1918 with a few thousand African soldiers and a handful of German officers. The latter struggle is less well known as Vorbeck was no writer and, after all, was on the losing side.

Apart from the Irish National Movement (1916–1920) and the activities of the Macedonian Internal Revolutionary Organization, which has been fighting since the beginning of the century to reintegrate a community split between three states, the main theater of guerrilla activity following the First World War was the Soviet Union. The Soviet authorities found themselves under attack by irregulars almost immediately after the revolution. Some had a left-wing orientation, such as Makhno's irregulars in the Ukraine; others were simply adventurers, like Ungern-Sternberg in the marches of Mongolia. In the early 1930s the Basmachi Muslims of Central Asia also took up arms against the Soviet state, and the technique of counterinsurgency ironically found itself enriched by a few texts from General Tukhachevski. And after the defeat of the Second Reich, German volunteer brigades fought on for years against the Red Army in the Baltic countries. One should never forget that guerrilla warfare is only a technique and is in itself neither left wing nor right wing, as countless examples from the past clearly illustrate.

In the colonies, calm prevailed during the period following the First World War. The established order was contested by only an extremely small elite, and European public opinion remained convinced of the validity of the West's civilizing mission. The major outbreaks of guerrilla warfare occurred in Morocco against

the successive Spanish and French occupiers (1925–1927) and in Libya against the Italians (1922–1932). In British-mandate Palestine, the Palestinian guerrillas' struggle against the influx of Jewish settlers continued unsuccessfully from 1936 to 1939. In Latin America, throughout this period, there was only one guerrilla war worth noting: after six years of struggle (1927–1933), the left populist forces of Sandino won the day in Nicaragua. In China, after suffering terrible defeats in the cities, the communists were withdrawing to the countryside. Having survived the five Kuo-mintang attempts to encircle them, they organized an orderly retreat and by 1935–1936 had already established a solid base in the Yenan.

The Second World War was about to start.

Partisan Campaigns During the Second World War

During the Second World War, partisan campaigns were fought against both the Germans and the Japanese. In Greece, Albania, and the U.S.S.R., this type of warfare achieved substantial, if not always decisive, results. It was also a factor in France, Italy (after 1943), and especially Yugoslavia.

In the U.S.S.R., Stalin appealed to the people to form partisan groups as early as July 1941. The mobilization was conducted from above, and in less than two years their number grew from 30,000 to more than 250,000; these men were state irregulars following in the classical tradition of earlier armies. To counter the partisan menace, both in the Soviet Union and in the Balkans, the Germans organized specialized troops called *Jagdkommandos* (hunting commandos); these combatants operated at night and had no contact with the local population. Generally speaking, because the communists already had a political infrastructure that could be adapted to armed struggle, they were the most easily organized. Indeed, as soon as the U.S.S.R. was invaded, resistance movements were mobilized. But the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, led by an exceptional man and a group of remarkable cadres, was the only organization that presented a platform of demands common to all the ethnic and religious groups in the country. The inactivity of the communists' immediate rival, Mikhailovitch, along with the tremendously repressive

and confining character of A. Pavelitch's pro-Nazi regime, gave them plenty of recruits, whom they were able to organize without external aid (1941–1943). In spite of very different circumstances, the partisans were able to elude all German offensives intended to encircle them. Under similar conditions (tempered slightly by the country's geographic isolation), the Albanians, like the Yugoslavs, were able to seize power at the end of the war.

In Greece, the communists participated actively in the Nazi resistance. Having held onto the weapons left over from the previous war, they resumed hostilities from 1946 until 1947, inflicting severe defeats on a poorly organized and unmotivated regular army. Because they controlled the northern area that bordered Yugoslavia and Albania (encompassing Mt. Vitsi and Mt. Grammos), their logistical position was ideal. However, their situation soon began to deteriorate. In July 1948, the Cominform expelled Tito. Markos and many other Greek leaders were replaced by cadres whose approach was more closely in keeping with Stalin's. Yugoslavia closed its frontier. Internal dissension spread through the communist movement, and eventually a new strategy of frontal confrontation was substituted for guerrilla operations. The moment was particularly ill chosen. The Greek Army, recently reorganized by General Papagos and fully reequipped by the United States, crushed the divided and logistically isolated movement in the major August 1949 offensive against the communist bases.

That same year, however, one of the most important events in postwar history occurred: the Chinese communists came to power. One fourth of the world's population came under the sway of a radically different kind of regime. From 1937, when Mao Tse-tung and Chu Teh commanded only 80,000 men, to 1945, when their forces had grown ten times over, the communists had been busily organizing the vast northern areas, extending their control over more than 20 percent of the Chinese population. Their military potential had increased in all respects. They managed to survive the Japanese extermination campaigns, reinforce their positions, and steadily prepare themselves for the decisive postwar confrontation with the Kuomintang, which lasted from 1946 to 1949 and ended in the complete military victory of the communist forces.

The campaign in China was based on a remarkable innovation. Until the Second World War, the military doctrine of both

right and left treated guerrilla operations as purely secondary. The main concerns were, quite rightly, aviation and mechanical forces. Although they contain nothing new in terms of technique, Mao Tse-tung's writings, which deal with revolutionary war rather than with guerrilla operations per se, constitute a major breakthrough. It is quite meaningless to isolate the strictly military element in his writing, as certain authors have been tempted to do, for what matters is the close link between the political and the military that characterizes Mao's thinking. The point is that *guerrilla warfare is a military tactic aimed at harassing an adversary, whereas revolutionary war is a military means whereby to overthrow a political regime.*

What was Mao saying that was new? Not unlike his predecessors, he considered guerrilla warfare more than a mere backup for the regular army, although Mao did not in fact write about guerrilla war. What he was concerned with was revolutionary war, in which regular army units employ the tactics of irregulars, partisan units fight in parallel to the regular forces (with their actions sometimes considered most important), and classical full frontal assaults are launched only when the situation demands them. Mao's real innovation lay elsewhere, in the field of politics. His political insight was special, for he was a specific and unforeseen avatar of Leninism.

Mao's great political breakthrough was his unorthodox and unexpected application of Lenin's theory of the vanguard party to the peasantry. For the intellectuals, semi-intellectuals, and other more or less enlightened, humiliated, patriotic, and radical elements in the dominated countries, Leninism appeared as a tool, a solution to their immediate problems.

Leninism, the political innovation that made the October revolution possible, opened the way for the creation of new regimes in Europe (Yugoslavia and Albania) and Asia (China and Indochina), wherever the vanguard party could count on the support of a large part of the population. The Vietnamese and Chinese approaches, which are in fact very similar, both stem from Leninism: they rely on generalized propaganda, mass organization (noncombatants and combatants being given equal importance), and a vanguard party that functions as the instrument for political mobilization and military leadership. But all this resulted in a truly effective operational force in Asia only

when the full consequences had been drawn from the discovery that the peasantry had revolutionary potential.¹

Historical Factors in Popular Warfare

Purposefully or not, the movements that have engaged in armed struggle during the last four decades each fit a particular framework. This framework did not automatically determine each movement's chances of success or failure, but it did provide a number of favorable or unfavorable reference points according to which a definite process was either accelerated or slowed down. Three historical forces helped shape revolutionary warfare and guerrilla techniques in the contemporary period.

The first influence we have already mentioned: the emergence, on a national scale, of the peasant question and, more generally, the participation of peasants in armed struggle, either as a combat force or as an underground political structure. A vanguard organization leads the struggle, and its mobilizatory ideology elicits a spirit of self-sacrifice, discipline, and cohesion. Such an organization tends to ensure that it enjoys substantial support among the population by a process of education/politicization and selective use of terror.

The second important influence is the Second World War. The Japanese and German attempt at securing world hegemony broke the international equilibrium and opened the way for the successful Chinese, Vietnamese, Albanian, and Yugoslav campaigns as well as for the abortive ones in Malaysia, the Philippines, and Greece.

The third influence stems from the second and is the gradual breakdown and eventual disappearance of the European colonial empires. The colonial powers were seriously weakened by the partial defeat the Japanese wrought in Asia. The colonial administrations had collapsed under the Japanese thrust. Japanese fascism preached its own version of "Asia for the Asians" as it vanguished the whites; the Western powers fought back in the name of democracy and freedom—but for whom? As the colonial wars continued, European public opinion, once frankly imperialist, gradually began to discover the colonized peoples' right to

¹ Cf. Mao Tse-tung, *An Inquiry on the Hunan Peasantry* (Peking, 1957).

liberty and independence. The colonized peoples began to see that what they had once regarded as a fact of life was actually quite unacceptable. As a result, many armed liberation movements in colonized or semicolonized countries did not have to fight on till they had secured a military victory, which in many cases was quite beyond their reach. By dint of their determination and tenacity—aided by the weariness of Western public opinion, the high cost of war, and the impossibility of any military solution—many of these movements achieved what was primarily a political victory.

This third factor has two major consequences. First, given that European colonialism has almost disappeared from the Third World (except in Namibia), the armed national liberation movements must have reached their zenith during the 1950s and 1960s. With the collapse of Portuguese colonialism in 1974, an era came to an end. Second, it is important to note that *political* victories are only possible in struggles directed against the Western democracies that do not use *all* the means at their disposal; these regimes, sensitive to public opinion at home, will often consent to negotiate, especially since a political defeat carries no serious consequences for them. But dictatorial regimes, whether totalitarian or not, never consider negotiating with a weaker adversary (consider Budapest, 1956) and are certainly not concerned about domestic public opinion. (International opinion is the public opinion of the dictatorships.) To this day, there is practically no example of a struggle waged against this sort of regime that has achieved even a few of its aims without first securing a complete military victory. In Latin America, Asia, and Africa, secessionist or social movements can have only one hope: to win by force of arms.

The Lessons of Revolutionary Warfare

The lessons that can be drawn from the experience of revolutionary war during the past half century can be reduced to two fundamental points.

- The conditions for the insurrection must be as ripe as possible, the most favorable situation being one in which foreign domination or aggression makes it possible to mobilize broad support for a goal that is both social and national. Failing this, the

ruling stratum should be in the middle of an acute political crisis and popular discontent should be both intense and wide ranging.

- The most important element in a guerrilla campaign is the *underground political infrastructure*, rooted in the population itself and coordinated by middle-ranking cadres. Such a structure is a prerequisite for growth and will provide the necessary recruits, information, and local logistics.

There have been several armed movements that at least superficially owed little to Leninism, notably General Grivas' E.O.K.A. in Cyprus and the Mau Mau in Kenya. Although ideologically not "communist," very few modern nationalist movements of the past thirty years have been able to avoid using the Leninist organizational apparatus. They have had to rely on a mobilizatory political organization; propaganda has been an important aspect of their struggle; cohesion on a national scale has been crucial; and unity has stemmed from a definite ideology, be it nationalism with a populist connotation or something radically revolutionary. Leninism, originally a technique developed to bring about internationalist proletarian revolutions, has clearly undergone strange and unforeseen evolutions.

By contrast, the class struggle, that ideology which grew from revolutionary Marxism and was propagated by Leninism, has been rejected by many national liberation movements, wherever such a struggle seemed incompatible with the idea of common opposition to a foreign invader or occupier. Not all elites have been collaborationist—far from it. In the Far East, the Vietnamese consistently managed to set up united fronts dominated by the communists. But elsewhere, notably in the Middle East, the various communist movements, and the other more or less important followers of Marxism-Leninism in a postwar period dominated by the Cold War, were incapable of using the national question to their advantage and generally seemed to be appendages of the Soviet Union.

Nature and Typology of Armed Movements

The useful but rather vague term "guerrilla war" encompasses a varied range of armed activities, including:

- very sophisticated popular wars that may well lead to military victory;
- armed national liberation movements conducted on a national or local level but controlling and organizing at least a significant part of the country;
- regionally isolated embryonic guerrilla movements that pose no direct threat to the established authorities and whose main problems are usually simple survival and preventing a lapse into mere banditism;
- commando actions launched from a neighboring frontier at the behest of a leadership in exile; and
- militarily impotent struggles amounting to little more than headline-grabbing terrorism.

These forms of struggle, clearly differentiated by the level of action each involves, are not, in principle, necessarily characteristic of any particular ideological movement.

A rough typology of the armed conflicts in the Third World over the past decade enables us to distinguish three main categories:

- national liberation movements fighting against a colonial power, an aggressor, or a foreign occupier;
- revolutionary struggles based on social demands in independent countries (civil wars);
- struggles waged by ethnic, religious, or ethnic-religious minorities, either with a more or less openly declared secessionist aim or with lesser ambitions.

Each of the three categories of insurgency has a markedly different probability of success. The first kind of armed conflict is the most likely to arouse mass popular support within the country and to benefit from international backing. Since the Second World War, the following wars of national liberation have fallen within this category: Vietnam (until 1954); Indonesia (1945–1949); Malaysia; the traditionally oriented Mau Mau in Kenya; the Union of Cameroonian Peoples (1957–1960); General Grivas' E.O.K.A. in Cyprus; Algeria; and the former Portuguese colonies of Guinea-Bissau, Angola, and Mozambique. Examples of conflicts in which foreign occupation/aggression and the national question are of critical importance include the Zionist movement in Palestine (1946–1947); the South Vietnamese N.L.F. (once the

Americans had committed their own troops); the Palestinian national movement; the struggle against the British and then the Iranians in Oman (Dhofar); the national liberation movements in southern Africa (Zimbabwe, Namibia, and South Africa); the activities of the Provisional I.R.A. in Ulster; and the Polisario in the ex-Spanish Sahara.

The second category, encompassing those struggles aiming to overthrow the established regime in an independent state, includes all the struggles in Latin America, notably in Cuba, Venezuela, Guatemala, Colombia, Uruguay, Nicaragua, and El Salvador. In Asia, the struggles of the Pathet Lao and the Khmer Rouge fall within this category. In Africa, struggles of this kind broke out in Zaire (1961–1966) and in Chad. Finally, in Europe, there was the case of postwar Greece.

In the third category, covering secessionist struggles or struggles for autonomy conducted by ethnic or ethnic-religious minorities, we can place Biafra (more like a conventional war than a guerrilla campaign), the Kurds of Iraq (1961–1970 and 1974–1975), and southern Sudan (1965–1972), where a black non-Muslim minority fought an Arab Muslim majority. More recently, movements of this kind have developed among the Baluchis in Pakistan and the Kurds in Iran. This sort of struggle will inevitably become increasingly widespread.

Before we analyze these struggles, the general laws that pertain to them, and their particular characteristics, it is worthwhile to try to answer the most complex question that arises: under what conditions will an insurrection break out and what determines its efficacy? There is no single model of armed struggle and no classical situation that invariably precedes it, so there are necessarily several different answers. The simplest insurrection is that directed against a foreign occupier, preferably white and Western (given the contemporary context). Minority movements, especially when they openly proclaim separatist aims—as, for example, the Eritreans do—are by definition in a less favorable position. Furthermore, the wave of anti-Western feeling that grew out of the anticolonial struggles in Africa and Asia has until recently hidden the fact that states in these two continents can have an imperialistic policy toward weaker groups or nations, both within and without its frontiers. Nonetheless, such minority struggles will often manage to mobilize a considerable number of

the population concerned, provided both that the injustices at issue are keenly felt and that a capable leadership emerges (which is not always so simple, given that the minorities are often backward compared to the group oppressing them). It is nearly always far more difficult to launch an insurrection based on class conflict, unless of course the state under attack has already been largely undermined.

It is a rare tyranny that is so unpopular and so poorly defended by those who benefit from it that it collapses without a fight to the finish; Cuba under Batista was an unusual exception. It is also rare for an insurrectionary movement to find a provisional common denominator that unites the diffuse discontent of the various strata of the population, each with its own aspirations and motives. The Shah of Iran did manage to alienate most of the population. His program of rapid growth made wide sectors of the population economically marginal and dislocated their traditional universe; he shocked the masses by proclaiming himself Shah of the Aryans, thereby identifying himself with a pre-Islamic Iranian past that was meaningless to a population firmly committed to an identity based on Shia Islam; finally, his tyranny weighed heavily on various sections of the middle classes.

The actual *catalyst* of insurrection can vary, although certain classical factors, such as excessive taxation, prohibitive tariffs, religious or ethnic oppression, and so on, frequently reappear. But the catalyst itself is often the result of a particular spirit of the age—a specific international situation or a combination of characteristic local features.

In Iran, the catalyst was an increasingly aggressive religious zeal that developed within a few months in the context of the urban insurrections. It provided a focus for the suburban masses, the far-left movements that sought to keep in touch with the people, and the more liberal political aspirations of the middle classes. In Cuba this focus was provided by a group of a dozen men with a program based on the struggle against tyranny and a demand for “bread and freedom.” In Algeria, a few hundred militants who had broken away from the reformist secret organization of the National Movement were crucial. In Kenya, traditionalist tribal elements regrouped around the issue of foreign control of lands.

The general tendency of the period, nonetheless, is one of the

organizational volunteerism of a movement or party that wishes to catalyze the destruction of a situation deemed unacceptable or potentially revolutionary.

Reduced to its fundamentals, the first objective of an avant-garde group is to make already sensitized elements—trade unionists, semiintellectuals, marginalized and rebellious youth, the unemployed—aware of oppression. These people, the middle-level cadre, will then be able to enlighten the more passive sectors of the population. The degree to which the masses are oppressed is less significant than how they perceive their oppression. It is critical that leaders of the mobilized group seek to understand the society. However, for the past thirty years many revolutionary groups have been unable to reach this stage of development.

Without doubt, during a movement's initial development nothing is more important than achieving a correct understanding of the social situation one seeks to alter. Such careful analysis would have led numerous Latin American groups to the conclusion that the likelihood of a victorious end to armed struggle was minimal if not zero. In order for the directing core to develop a successful strategy, the leaders must properly evaluate both the economic dependency and social composition of the area and the availability of sensitized and easily mobilized ranks (these could be composed of either rural or urban populations, ethnic or religious groups, or people of a particular age). Viewed in this light, once its initial errors of urban strategy have been rectified, Amílcar Cabral's analysis of the society of Guinea-Bissau as it relates to national liberation is most interesting. It consists of determining the sociological imbalances within a society,² its revolutionary potential, the political and military weaknesses of the opponent, and the relevant regional and international support available.

The formation of a middle-ranking cadre structure is another essential step. The middle-ranking cadres must be drawn from the people and must speak the people's language if they are to bring about a mass mobilization. The lack of such cadres has proved disastrous for many revolutionary groups, notably in Latin America. Che Guevara's failure in Bolivia is a striking example.

² Cf. Amílcar Cabral, *Unity and Struggle: Speeches and Writings* (New York, 1980) for a brief analysis of the social situation in Portuguese Guinea.

In the early stages, the aim of a vanguard movement is to secure the effective support of a substantial portion of the population. This requires a propaganda effort on two levels: indoctrinating the population and accomplishing successful armed actions that demonstrate the opponent's vulnerability and one's own strength. Terrorism may be used both against those who collaborate politically with the enemy and against the actual enemy. This mobilizational propaganda should lead to organization—another stage many movements never reached, having confused it with agitation. The point is not merely to break the population's passive respect for the established order: a new underground political infrastructure must be constructed and built up patiently by the middle-ranking cadres at a village and neighborhood level. Agitation may produce explosions of support when circumstances are favorable, but organization makes it possible to hold on and even advance when times are hard, as they nearly always are. When control of specific areas has been established, new administrative, political, social, and economic structures must be set up within them, so that a break can be made with the old order and the framework of the new can actually be developed.

The essential elements of this process are absolutely central to a popular war. It is difficult to carry out guerrilla warfare on a national rather than regional scale, but, when the rebellion has wide support, counterinsurrection becomes an arduous task. The problem is that the general level of consciousness is usually low, and the oppressed will fight only when their backs are to the wall. Armed struggle is thus an acceptable course only when there is simply no other way to resolve the crisis within a society; only then is national support possible. Too many Latin American armed movements have initiated armed struggle without considering the situation and the possibility of legal and semilegal action.

In some cases, an existing organization having some links with the population may benefit from a revolutionary situation or an unexpected explosion. This happened in Russia between February and October 1917. Although a theory of the accidental is by definition impossible, it is clear that wars, more than anything else, have made many historical accidents—and much guerrilla activity—possible.

In all mobilizations, the motivations at work are enormously