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A list of Center publications will be found at the end of this volume.

COUNTER-  
INSURGENCY  
WARFARE  
*Theory and Practice*

DAVID GALULA

*Foreword by*  
Robert R. Bowie

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7. The Operations	107
<i>The First Step: Destruction or Expulsion of the Insurgent Forces</i>	107
<i>The Second Step: Deployment of the Static Unit</i>	110
<i>The Third Step: Contact with and Control of the Population</i>	115
<i>The Fourth Step: Destruction of the Insurgent Political Organization</i>	123
<i>The Fifth Step: Local Elections</i>	127
<i>The Sixth Step: Testing the Local Leaders</i>	129
<i>The Seventh Step: Organizing a Party</i>	131
<i>The Eighth Step: Winning Over or Suppressing the Last Guerrillas</i>	133
Concluding Remarks	136

## *Introduction*

The laws of war—this is a problem that anyone directing a war must study and solve.

The laws of revolutionary war—this is a problem that anyone directing a revolutionary war must study and solve.

The laws of China's revolutionary war—this is a problem that anyone directing a revolutionary war in China must study and solve.

—MAO TSE-TUNG, *Strategic Problems of China's Revolutionary War*  
(December, 1936)

No chess player has ever found, nor is any likely to find, a sure way of winning from the first move. The game contains too many variables even for one of today's nerveless electronic computers to plot out a guaranteed checkmate.

War is not a chess game but a vast social phenomenon with an infinitely greater and ever-expanding number of variables, some of which elude analysis. Who can deny the importance of luck in war, for instance, and who can assess luck in advance? When Mussolini precipitated a war in the Balkans, forcing Hitler to waste the best part of the spring of 1941 in a secondary theater and to delay the prepared German attack on Soviet Russia, he may well have saved Moscow. It can be argued that this event involved no element of luck, but rather a flagrant error on the part of the Axis: Mussolini should have consulted his partner. Yet since Stalin had played no part in Mussolini's decision, what conclusion can be reached except that Stalin was extremely lucky?

The profusion of variables in war has never discouraged the search for foolproof systems. Because war can be a matter of life and death to states and nations, few other fields of human activity have been so consistently, thoroughly, and actively analyzed. Ever since men have thought and fought (sometimes in the reverse order), attempts have been made to study war—philosophically, because the human mind loves, and needs to lean on, a frame of reference; practically, with the object of drawing useful lessons for the next war.

Such studies have led, in extreme cases, to the denial that any lesson at all can be inferred from past wars, if it is asserted that the conduct of war is only a matter of inspiration and circumstances; or conversely, they have led to the construction of doctrines and their retention as rigid articles of faith, regardless of facts and situation. French military history offers a remarkable example of oscillation between these two poles. The French had no theory, no plan in the 1870–71 Franco-Prussian War. In 1940, they duplicated a recipe proved during World War I and fought a 1918-type of war against the German panzer divisions. The result in both cases was disastrous.

Nevertheless, from studies and accumulated experience, observations have emerged of certain recurrent facts that have been formulated into “laws” of war. They do not, of course, have the same strict value as laws in physical science. However, they cannot be seriously challenged, if only because they confirm what plain common sense tells us. And they are very few in number. Thus, it is the first law that the strongest camp usually wins; hence Napoleon’s axiom, “Victory goes to the large battalion.” If the contending camps are equally strong, the more resolute wins; this is the second law. If resolution is equally strong, then victory belongs to the camp that seizes and keeps the initiative—the third law. Surprise, according to the fourth law,

may play a decisive role. These laws, substantiated by countless cases, constitute the ABC’s of warfare. They have, in turn, begotten guiding principles such as concentration of efforts, economy of forces, freedom of action, safety. Application of these principles may change from epoch to epoch as technology, armament, and other factors change, but they retain in general their value throughout the evolution of warfare.

In most wars, the same laws and principles hold equally true for both contending sides. What varies is the way each opponent uses them, according to his ability, his particular situation, his relative strength. Conventional war belongs to this general case.

Revolutionary war, on the other hand, represents an exceptional case not only because, as we suspect, it has its special rules, different from those of the conventional war, but also because most of the rules applicable to one side do not work for the other. In a fight between a fly and a lion, the fly cannot deliver a knockout blow and the lion cannot fly. It is the same war for both camps in terms of space and time, yet there are two distinct warfares—the revolutionary’s and, shall we say, the counterrevolutionary’s.

This is where Mao Tse-tung is misleading. What he calls “the laws of revolutionary war” are in fact those of the revolutionary side, his side. The one who directs a war against a revolutionary movement will not find in Mao and in other revolutionary theorists the answers to his problems. He will surely find useful information on how the revolutionary acts, he may perhaps infer the answers he is looking for, but nowhere will he find them explicitly stated. Some counterrevolutionaries have fallen into the trap of aping the revolutionaries on both minor and major scales, as we shall show. These attempts have never met success.

What, then, are the rules of counterrevolutionary warfare? Here we can observe another curious fact. Although analyses of revolutionary wars from the revolutionary's point of view are numerous today, there is a vacuum of studies from the other side, particularly when it comes to suggesting concrete courses of action for the counterrevolutionary. Very little is offered beyond formulas—which are sound enough as far as they go—such as, “Intelligence is the key to the problem,” or “The support of the population must be won.” How to turn the key, how to win the support, this is where frustrations usually begin, as anyone can testify who, in a humble or in an exalted position, has been involved in a revolutionary war on the wrong—i.e., the arduous—side. The junior officer in the field who, after weeks and months of endless tracking, has at last destroyed the dozen guerrillas opposing him, only to see them replaced by a fresh dozen; the civil servant who pleaded in vain for a five-cent reform and is now ordered to implement at once a hundred-dollar program when he no longer controls the situation in his district; the general who has “cleared” Sector A but screams because “they” want to take away two battalions for Sector B; the official in charge of the press who cannot satisfactorily explain why, after so many decisive victories, the rebels are still vigorous and expanding; the congressman who cannot understand why the government should get more money when it has so little to show for the huge appropriations previously granted; the chief of state, harassed from all sides, who wonders how long he will last—these are typical illustrations of the plight of the counterrevolutionary.

There is clearly a need for a compass, and this work has as its only purpose to construct such an instrument, however imperfect and rudimentary it may be. What we propose to do is to define the laws of counterrevolutionary

warfare, to deduce from them its principles, and to outline the corresponding strategy and tactics.

The enterprise is risky. First of all, whereas conventional wars of any size and shape can be counted in the hundreds, no more than a score of revolutionary wars have occurred, most of them since 1945. Is it enough to detect laws? Generalization and extrapolation from such a limited basis must rely to some extent on intuition, which may or may not be correct. Then there is the pitfall of dogmatism inherent in any effort at abstraction, for we are not studying a specific counterrevolutionary war, but the problem in general; what may seem relevant in a majority of cases may not be so in others where particular factors have affected the events in a decisive way.

We shall not claim, therefore, that we are providing the whole and complete answer to the counterrevolutionary's problems. We hope merely to clear away some of the confusions that we have so often and so long witnessed in the “wrong” camp.

What is primarily dealt with here is counterrevolutionary warfare in the areas called “colonial” and “semi-colonial” by the Communists, and “underdeveloped” by us. That revolutionary wars can occur outside these areas is possible, but their success would be far from certain, for a stable society is obviously less vulnerable. In recent times, only one revolutionary war has taken place in a “capitalist” area—in Greece in 1945–50—and the revolutionaries were defeated. We may perhaps see the beginning of another in the Quebec Province of Canada today. In any case, we believe that the problem is not acute in the developed parts of the world.

A matter of semantics has to be cleared up before proceeding further. It is unwise to concede to Mao Tse-tung that the revolutionary's opponent is a “counterrevolutionary,” for this word has come to be synonymous with “reac-

tionary," which has not always been, nor will it always be, the case. Therefore, one side will be called the "insurgent" and his action the "insurgency"; on the opposite side, we will find the "counterinsurgent" and the "counterinsurgency." Since insurgency and counterinsurgency are two different aspects of the same conflict, an expression is needed to cover the whole; "revolutionary war" will serve the purpose.

*COUNTER-  
INSURGENCY  
WARFARE*

## 1. *Revolutionary War: Nature and Characteristics*

### *What Is a Revolutionary War?*

A revolutionary war is primarily an internal conflict, although external influences seldom fail to bear upon it. Although in many cases, the insurgents have been easily identifiable national groups—Indonesians, Vietnamese, Tunisians, Algerians, Congolese, Angolans today—this does not alter the strategically important fact that they were challenging a *local* ruling power controlling the existing administration, police, and armed forces. In this respect, colonial revolutionary wars have not differed from the purely indigenous ones, such as those in Cuba and South Vietnam.

The conflict results from the action of the insurgent aiming to seize power—or to split off from the existing country, as the Kurds are attempting to do now—and from the reaction of the counterinsurgent aiming to keep his power. At this point, significant differences begin to emerge between the two camps. Whereas in conventional war, either side can initiate the conflict, only one—the insurgent—can initiate a revolutionary war, for counterinsurgency is only an effect of insurgency. Furthermore, counterinsurgency cannot be defined except by reference to its cause.

Paraphrasing Clausewitz, we might say that “Insurgency is the pursuit of the policy of a party, inside a country, by every means.” It is not like an ordinary war—a “continuation of the policy by other means”—because an

insurgency can start long before the insurgent resorts to the use of force.

### *Revolution, Plot, Insurgency*

Revolution, plot (or *coup d'état*), and insurgency are the three ways to take power by force. It will be useful to our analysis to try to distinguish among them.

A revolution usually is an explosive upheaval—sudden, brief, spontaneous, unplanned (France, 1789; China, 1911; Russia, 1917; Hungary, 1956). It is an *accident*, which can be explained afterward but not predicted other than to note the existence of a revolutionary situation. How and exactly when the explosion will occur cannot be forecast. A revolutionary situation exists today in Iran. Who can tell what will happen, whether there will be an explosion, and if so, how and when it will erupt?

In a revolution, masses move and then leaders appear. Sun Yat-sen was in England when the Manchu dynasty was overthrown, Lenin in Switzerland when the Romans fell.

A plot is the clandestine action of an insurgent group directed at the overthrow of the top leadership in its country. Because of its clandestine nature, a plot cannot and does not involve the masses. Although preparations for the plot may be long, the action itself is brief and sudden. A plot is always a *gamble* (the plot against Hitler in 1944; the plots in Iraq against King Faisal and Nuri al-Said in 1958, and against Kassem in 1963).

On the other hand, an insurgency is a *protracted struggle* conducted methodically, step by step, in order to attain specific intermediate objectives leading finally to the overthrow of the existing order (China, 1927-49; Greece, 1945-50; Indochina, 1945-54; Malaya, 1948-60; Algeria, 1954-62). To be sure, it can no more be predicted than a revolu-

tion; in fact, its beginnings are so vague that to determine exactly when an insurgency starts is a difficult legal, political, and historical problem. In China, for instance, should it be dated from 1927, when the Kuomintang-Communist alliance broke and force came into play, or from 1921, when the Chinese Communist Party was founded to establish a Communist regime in the country? But though it cannot be predicted, an insurgency is usually slow to develop and is not an accident, for in an insurgency leaders appear and then the masses are made to move. Although all recent insurgencies—with the exception of that in Greece—were clearly tied to a revolutionary situation, the cases of Malaya (1948-60), Tunisia (1952-55), Morocco (1952-56), Cyprus (1955-59), Cuba (1957-59), and others seem to show that the revolutionary situation did not have to be acute in order for the insurgency to be initiated.

### *Insurgency and Civil War*

An insurgency is a civil war. Yet there is a difference in the form the war takes in each case.

A civil war suddenly splits a nation into two or more groups which, after a brief period of initial confusion, find themselves in control of part of both the territory and the existing armed forces, which they proceed immediately to develop. The war between these groups soon resembles an ordinary international war except that the opponents are fellow citizens, such as in the American War Between the States and the Spanish Civil War.

### *Asymmetry Between the Insurgent and the Counterinsurgent*

There is an asymmetry between the opposite camps of a revolutionary war. This phenomenon results from the very

nature of the war, from the disproportion of strength between the opponents at the outset, and from the difference in essence between their assets and their liabilities.

Since the insurgent alone can initiate the conflict (which is not to say that he is necessarily the first to use force), strategic initiative is his by definition. He is free to choose his hour, to wait safely for a favorable situation, unless external factors force him to accelerate his moves. However, in the world of today, polarized as it is between East and West, no revolutionary war can remain a purely internal affair. It is probable that the Malayan and the Indonesian Communist Parties were ordered to start the violent phase of their insurgency at the 1948 Calcutta Communist-sponsored Conference of Youth and Students of Southeast Asia. Thus, the decision was not entirely left to the Malayan and Indonesian Parties.

Until the insurgent has clearly revealed his intentions by engaging in subversion or open violence, he represents nothing but an imprecise, potential menace to the counterinsurgent and does not offer a concrete target that would justify a large effort. Yet an insurgency can reach a high degree of development by legal and peaceful means, at least in countries where political opposition is tolerated. This greatly limits pre-emptive moves on the part of the counterinsurgent. Usually, the most he can do is to try to eliminate or alleviate the conditions propitious for an insurgency.

An appraisal of the contending forces at the start of a revolutionary war shows an overwhelming superiority in tangible assets in favor of the counterinsurgent. Endowed with the normal foreign and domestic perquisites of an established government, he has virtually everything—diplomatic recognition; legitimate power in the executive, legislative, and judicial branches; control of the administration and police; financial resources; industrial and agricultural

resources at home or ready access to them abroad; transport and communications facilities; use and control of the information and propaganda media; command of the armed forces and the possibility of increasing their size. He is *in* while the insurgent, being *out*, has none or few of these assets.

The situation is reversed in the field of intangibles. The insurgent has a formidable asset—the ideological power of a cause on which to base his action. The counterinsurgent has a heavy liability—he is responsible for maintaining order throughout the country. The insurgent's strategy will naturally aim at converting his intangible assets into concrete ones, the counterinsurgent's strategy at preventing his intangible liability from dissipating his concrete assets.

The insurgent thus has to grow in the course of the war from small to large, from weakness to strength, or else he fails. The counterinsurgent will decline from large to small, from strength to weakness, in direct relation to the insurgent's success.

The peculiarities that mark the revolutionary war as so different from the conventional one derive from this initial asymmetry.

#### *Objective: The Population*

Afflicted with his congenital weakness, the insurgent would be foolish if he mustered whatever forces were available to him and attacked his opponent in a conventional fashion, taking as his objective the destruction of the enemy's forces and the conquest of the territory. Logic forces him instead to carry the fight to a different ground where he has a better chance to balance the physical odds against him.

The population represents this new ground. If the insurgent manages to dissociate the population from the



counterinsurgent, to control it physically, to get its active support, he will win the war because, in the final analysis, the exercise of political power depends on the tacit or explicit agreement of the population or, at worst, on its submissiveness.

Thus the battle for the population is a major characteristic of the revolutionary war.

### *Revolutionary War Is a Political War*

All wars are theoretically fought for a political purpose, although in some cases the final political outcome differs greatly from the one intended initially.

In the conventional war, military action, seconded by diplomacy, propaganda, and economic pressure, is generally the principal way to achieve the goal. Politics as an instrument of war tends to take a back seat and emerges again—as an instrument—when the fighting ends. We are not implying that politics vanishes entirely as the main directing force but rather that, in the course of the conventional war, once political goals have been set (although the government may change them), once directives have been given to the armed forces (although the government may modify them), military action becomes foremost. “*La parole passe aux armes*”; the gun becomes the “*ultima ratio regum*.” With the advent of the nuclear age and its consequent risks of mutual destruction, politics, no doubt, will interfere more closely—as it did in the recent case of Korea—with the conduct of the war (limited objectives) and with the actual conduct of the operations (privileged sanctuaries, exclusion of nuclear weapons). Nevertheless, military action remains the principal instrument of the conventional war.

As a result, it is relatively easy to allocate tasks and responsibilities among the government, which directs oper-

ations, the population, which provides the tools, and the soldier, who utilizes them.

The picture is different in the revolutionary war. The objective being the population itself, the operations designed to win it over (for the insurgent) or to keep it at least submissive (for the counterinsurgent) are essentially of a political nature. In this case, consequently, political action remains foremost throughout the war. It is not enough for the government to set political goals, to determine how much military force is applicable, to enter into alliances or to break them; *politics becomes an active instrument of operation*. And so intricate is the interplay between the political and the military actions that they cannot be tidily separated; on the contrary, every military move has to be weighed with regard to its political effects, and vice versa.

The insurgent, whose political establishment is a party and whose armed forces are the party's forces, enjoys an obvious advantage over his opponent, whose political establishment is the country's government, which may or may not be supported by a party or by a coalition of parties with their centrifugal tendencies, and whose army is the nation's army, reflecting the consensus or the lack of consensus in the nation.

### *Gradual Transition from Peace to War*

In the conventional war, the aggressor who has prepared for it within the confines of his national territory, channeling his resources into the preparation, has much to gain by attacking suddenly with all his forces. The transition from peace to war is as abrupt as the state of the art allows; the first shock may be decisive.

This is hardly possible in the revolutionary war because the aggressor—the insurgent—lacks sufficient strength at the

outset. Indeed, years may sometimes pass before he has built up significant political, let alone military, power. So there is usually little or no first shock, little or no surprise, no possibility of an early decisive battle.

In fact, the insurgent has no interest in producing a shock until he feels fully able to withstand the enemy's expected reaction. By delaying the moment when the insurgency appears as a serious challenge to the counterinsurgent, the insurgent delays the reaction. The delay may be further prolonged by exploiting the fact that the population realizes the danger even later than the counterinsurgent leadership.

#### *Revolutionary War Is a Protracted War*

The protracted nature of a revolutionary war does not result from a design by either side; it is imposed on the insurgent by his initial weakness. It takes time for a small group of insurgent leaders to organize a revolutionary movement, to raise and to develop armed forces, to reach a balance with the opponent, and to overpower him. A revolutionary war is short only if the counterinsurgency collapses at an early stage, as in Cuba, where the Batista regime disintegrated suddenly, less under the blows from the insurgents than through its own weakness; or if, somehow, a political settlement is reached, as in Tunisia, Morocco, Cyprus. To date, there has never been an early collapse of an insurgency.

The revolutionary war in China lasted twenty-two years, if 1927 is taken as the starting year. The war lasted five years in Greece, nine in Indochina, nine in the Philippines, five in Indonesia, twelve in Malaya, three in Tunisia, four in Morocco, eight in Algeria. The war started in 1948 in Burma and still goes on, though in a feeble way.

#### *Insurgency Is Cheap, Counterinsurgency Costly*

Promoting disorder is a legitimate objective for the insurgent. It helps to disrupt the economy, hence to produce discontent; it serves to undermine the strength and the authority of the counterinsurgent. Moreover, disorder—the normal state of nature—is cheap to create and very costly to prevent. The insurgent blows up a bridge, so every bridge has to be guarded; he throws a grenade in a movie theater, so every person entering a public place has to be searched. When the insurgent burns a farm, all the farmers clamor for protection; if they do not receive it, they may be tempted to deal privately with the insurgent, as happened in Indochina and Algeria, to give just two examples. Merely by making anonymous phone calls warning of bombs planted in luggage, the insurgent can disrupt civilian airline schedules and scare away tourists.

Because the counterinsurgent cannot escape the responsibility for maintaining order, the ratio of expenses between him and the insurgent is high. It may be ten or twenty to one, or higher. The figure varies greatly, of course, from case to case, and in each situation during the course of the revolutionary war. It seems to apply particularly when the insurgent reaches the initial stages of violence and resorts to terrorism and guerrilla warfare. The British calculated the cost of every rebel in Malaya at more than \$200,000. In Algeria, the FLN budget at its peak amounted to \$30 or \$40 million a year, less than the French forces had to spend in two weeks.

There is, it seems, an upper limit to this ratio. When the insurgent increases his terrorism or guerrilla activity by a factor of two, three, or five, he does not force the counterinsurgent to multiply his expenditures by the same factor. Sooner or later, a saturation point is reached, a point where the law of diminishing returns operates for both sides.

Cost ratio

X

Once the insurgent has succeeded in acquiring stable geographical bases, as, for instance, the Chinese Communists did in northwest China, or the Vietminh in Tonkin, he becomes *ipso facto* a strong promoter of order within his own area, in order to show the difference between the effectiveness of his rule and the inadequacy of his opponent's.

Because of the disparity in cost and effort, the insurgent can thus accept a protracted war; the counterinsurgent should not.

#### *Fluidity of the Insurgent, Rigidity of the Counterinsurgent*

The insurgent is fluid because he has neither responsibility nor concrete assets; the counterinsurgent is rigid because he has both, and no amount of wailing can alter this fact for either side. Each must accept the situation as it is and make the best of it.

If the counterinsurgent wanted to rid himself of his rigidity, he would have to renounce to some extent his claim to the effective rule of the country, or dispose of his concrete assets. One way of doing this, of course, would be to hand over everything to the insurgent, and then start an insurgency against him, but no counterinsurgent on record has dared apply this extreme solution.

On the other hand, the insurgent is obliged to remain fluid at least until he has reached a balance of forces with the counterinsurgent. However desirable for the insurgent to possess territory, large regular forces, and powerful weapons, to possess them and to rely on them prematurely could spell his doom. The failure of the Greek Communist insurgents may be attributed in part to the risk they took when they organized their forces into battalions, regiments, and divisions, and accepted battle. The Vietminh made the

same mistake in 1951 in Tonkin, and suffered serious setbacks.

In the revolutionary war, therefore, and until the balance of forces has been reached, only the insurgent can consistently wage profitable hit-and-run operations because the counterinsurgent alone offers profitable and fixed targets; only the insurgent, as a rule, is free to accept or refuse battle, the counterinsurgent being bound by his responsibility. On the other hand, only the counterinsurgent can use substantial means because he alone possesses them.

Fluidity for one side and rigidity for the other are further determined by the nature of the operations. They are relatively simple for the insurgent—promoting disorder in every way until he assumes power; they are complicated for the counterinsurgent, who has to take into account conflicting demands (protection of the population and the economy, and offensive operations against the insurgent) and who has to coordinate all the components of his forces—the administrator, the policeman, the soldier, the social worker, etc. The insurgent can afford a loose, primitive organization; he can delegate a wide margin of initiative, but his opponent cannot.

#### *The Power of Ideology*

The insurgent cannot seriously embark on an insurgency unless he has a well-grounded cause with which to attract supporters among the population. A cause, as we have seen, is his sole asset at the beginning, and it must be a powerful one if the insurgent is to overcome his weakness.

Can two explosive but antagonistic causes exist simultaneously in a single country—one for the insurgent, the other for his opponent? Such a situation has happened occasionally, for example, in the United States, when the antislavery movement clashed with the doctrine of states'

rights. The most likely result in this case is a civil war, not an insurgency.

The probability is that only one cause exists. If the insurgent has pre-empted it, then the force of ideology works for him and not for the counterinsurgent. However, this is true largely in the early parts of the conflict. Later on, as the war develops, war itself becomes the paramount issue, and the original cause consequently loses some of its importance.

It has been asserted that a counterinsurgent confronted by a dynamic insurgent ideology is bound to meet defeat, that no amount of tactics and technique can compensate for his ideological handicap. This is not necessarily so, because the population's attitude in the middle stage of the war is dictated not so much by the relative popularity and merits of the opponents as by the more primitive concern for safety. Which side gives the best protection, which one threatens the most, which one is likely to win, these are the criteria governing the population's stand. So much the better, of course, if popularity and effectiveness are combined.

#### *Propaganda—A One-Sided Weapon*

The asymmetrical situation has important effects on propaganda. The insurgent, having no responsibility, is free to use every trick; if necessary, he can lie, cheat, exaggerate. He is not obliged to prove; he is judged by what he promises, not by what he does. Consequently, propaganda is a powerful weapon for him. With no positive policy but with good propaganda, the insurgent may still win.

The counterinsurgent is tied to his responsibilities and to his past, and for him, facts speak louder than words. He is judged on what he does, not on what he says. If he lies, cheats, exaggerates, and does not prove, he may achieve

some temporary successes, but at the price of being discredited for good. And he cannot cheat much unless his political structures are monolithic, for the legitimate opposition in his own camp would soon disclose his every psychological maneuver. For him, propaganda can be no more than a secondary weapon, valuable only if intended to inform and not to fool. A counterinsurgent can seldom cover bad or nonexistent policy with propaganda.

#### *Revolutionary War Remains Unconventional Until the End*

Once the insurgent has acquired strength and possesses significant regular forces, it would seem that the war should become a conventional one, a sort of civil war in which each camp holds a portion of the national territory from which he directs blows at the other. But if the insurgent has understood his strategic problems well, revolutionary war never reverts to a conventional form.

For one reason, the creation of a regular army by the insurgent does not mean an end to subversion and guerilla activity. On the contrary, they increase in scope and intensity in order to facilitate the operations of the regular army and to amplify their effects.

For another reason, the insurgent has involved the population in the conflict since its beginning; the active participation of the population was indeed a *sine qua non* for his success. Having acquired the decisive advantage of a population organized and mobilized on his side, why should he cease to make use of an asset that gives his regular forces the fluidity and the freedom of action that the counterinsurgent cannot achieve? As long as the population remains under his control, the insurgent retains his liberty to refuse battle except on his own terms.

In 1947, the Chinese Nationalists launched an offensive

a challenge  
to govt  
to make  
to be made

against Yen-an, the Communist capital, in northern Shensi. They took it without difficulty; the Communist Government and regular forces evacuated the area without a fight. Soon after, however, the population, the local militias, and a small core of guerrilla and regional troops began harassing the Nationalists while regular Communist units attacked their long communication lines, which extended north from Sian. The Nationalists were finally obliged to withdraw, having gained nothing and lost much in the affair.

In 1953, the French forces in Indochina found a study made by the Vietminh command to determine whether in Vietminh territory there was any area, any fixed installation worth defending. The answer was no. Indeed, that same year, in Vietminh territory northwest of Hanoi, the French seized a huge depot of trucks and ammunitions left totally unguarded.

We have indicated above the general characteristics of revolutionary war. They are an ineluctable product of the nature of this war. An insurgent or a counterinsurgent who would conduct his war in opposition to any of these characteristics, going against the grain, so to speak, would certainly not increase his chances for success.

## 2. *The Prerequisites for a Successful Insurgency*

The cause of most recent insurgencies can easily be attributed to revolutionary situations that might have exploded into spontaneous revolutions but bred instead a group of leaders who then proceeded to organize and conduct the insurgencies. In view of this fact, it would be wrong and unjust to conclude that insurgencies are merely the product of personal ambitions on the part of their leaders who developed the whole movement artificially.

For the sake of demonstration, let us suppose that in Country X a small group of discontented men—possessing the attributes of leadership, inspired by the success of so many insurgencies in the past twenty years, well aware of the strategic and tactical problems involved in such an enterprise—have met and decided to overthrow the existing order by the path of insurgency.

In light of the counterinsurgents' material superiority at the outset, their chances of victory will obviously depend on whether certain preliminary conditions are met. What conditions? Are these conditions a must? In other words, what are the prerequisites for a successful insurgency?

Knowing what they are would help in assessing, from a counterinsurgent's point of view, how vulnerable a country would be to an insurgency.