



Kwame Nkrumah's Thought on Guerrilla Warfare and Revolution

Bruno Ribeiro Oliveira

Universidade de Granada

Granada, Espanha

E-mail: 1988broliveira@gmail.com

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4873-3858>

Abstract: The Handbook of Revolutionary Warfare (1966) was written by Pan-Africanist, revolutionary, theorizer of the global south, and first leader of independent Ghana Kwame Nkrumah (1909-1972). His work is used as a source to understand Nkrumah's thoughts about radical politics and guerrilla warfare in the context of the Cold War and African decolonization. Nkrumah's manual is an important document to discuss and understand the history of radical thinking in Africa in its South-South cooperation that connects Asia, Africa and the Americas. The writing and use of guerrilla manuals was common during struggles for independence or revolutions in the global south throughout large part of the 20th century, especially during the 1960s and 1970s. The military aspect of Nkrumah's thought has largely been ignored by scholars. By making comparisons to other guerrilla manuals and thinkers, it is possible to find the influences and the limitations of Nkrumah's thought about irregular war. His Handbook is part of a moment in history in which radical ideas were thought about with the concepts of colonialism, neocolonialism, imperialism, capitalism, socialism and Third World, depicting that guerrilla war was a necessary strategy to overcome these situations by changing from capitalism to socialism. The study

of the Handbook shows us how it relates the need for violent action through guerrilla warfare with the poor conditions of existence of workers and women, the level of development of a country, the role of a country and a people in production and trade in the international arena, and the subaltern situation of Third World countries. Guerrilla fighting is thought as an appropriate and initial way to achieve changes in modes of production, government, social relations and international relations between center and periphery.

Keywords: Kwame Nkrumah (1909-1972), Guerrilla Warfare, African Revolution, Guerrilla Manual, African Military History,

O Pensamento de Kwame Nkrumah sobre Guerrilha e Revolução

Resumo: O Handbook of Revolutionary Warfare (1966) foi escrito pelo pan-africanista, revolucionário, teórico do sul global e primeiro líder de Gana independente, Kwame Nkrumah (1909-1972). Este manual é utilizado como fonte para compreender o pensamento de Nkrumah sobre políticas radicais e guerra de guerrilhas no contexto da Guerra Fria e da descolonização africana. O manual de Nkrumah é um documento importante para discutir e compreender a história do pensamento radical em África na sua cooperação Sul-Sul que liga Ásia, África e as Américas. A escrita e o uso de manuais de guerrilha foram comuns durante as lutas pela independência ou em revoluções no sul global durante grande parte do século XX, especialmente durante as décadas de 1960 e 1970. O aspecto militar do pensamento de Nkrumah tem sido amplamente ignorado pelos estudiosos. Ao fazer comparações com outros manuais e pensadores da guerrilha é possível encontrar as influências e as limitações do pensamento de Nkrumah sobre guerra irregular. Seu manual faz parte de um momento da história em que ideias radicais foram pensadas com os conceitos de colonialismo, neocolonialismo, imperialismo, capitalismo, socialismo e Terceiro Mundo, mostrando que a guerrilha era uma estratégia necessária para superar essas situações e passar do capitalismo ao socialismo. O estudo do Handbook nos mostra como ele relaciona a necessidade de uma ação violenta por meio da guerrilha com as má condições de existência de trabalhadores e mulheres, o nível de desenvolvimento de um país, o papel de um país e um povo na produção e no comércio internacional e a situação subalterna dos países do Terceiro Mundo. A luta de guerrilha é pensada como uma forma adequada e inicial para se atingir mudanças nos modos de produção, de governo, de relações sociais e nas relações internacionais entre centro e periferia.

Palavras-chave: Kwame Nkrumah (1909-1972), Guerra de Guerrilhas, Revolução Africana, Manuais de Guerrilha, História Militar Africana



El Pensamiento de Kwame Nkrumah sobre Guerrilla y Revolución

Resumen: El Handbook of Revolutionary Warfare (1966) fue escrito por el panafricanista, revolucionario, teórico del sur global y primer líder de la Ghana independiente, Kwame Nkrumah (1909-1972). Este trabajo se utiliza este manual como fuente para comprender el pensamiento de Nkrumah sobre la política radical y la guerra de guerrillas en el contexto de la Guerra Fría y la descolonización africana. El manual de Nkrumah es un documento importante para discutir y comprender la historia del pensamiento radical en África en su cooperación Sur-Sur que conecta Asia, África y las Américas. La redacción y el uso de manuales de guerrilla fueron comunes durante las luchas por la independencia o las revoluciones en el sur global durante parte del siglo XX, especialmente durante las décadas de 1960 y 1970. Los estudiosos han ignorado en gran medida el aspecto militar del pensamiento de Nkrumah. Al hacer comparaciones con otros manuales y pensadores guerrilleros, es posible encontrar las influencias y las limitaciones del pensamiento de Nkrumah sobre la guerra irregular. Su manual es parte de un momento de la historia en que se pensaron ideas radicales con los conceptos de colonialismo, neocolonialismo, imperialismo, capitalismo, socialismo y Tercer Mundo, mostrando que la guerrilla era una estrategia necesaria para superar estas situaciones y pasar del capitalismo al socialismo. El estudio del Handbook nos muestra cómo se relaciona la necesidad de la acción violenta a través de la guerra de guerrillas con las malas condiciones de existencia de los trabajadores y las mujeres, el nivel de desarrollo de un país, el papel de un país y de un pueblo en la producción y el comercio internacional, y la situación subalterna de los países del Tercer Mundo. La lucha guerrillera es pensada como una forma adecuada e inicial de lograr cambios en los modos de producción, el gobierno, las relaciones sociales y las relaciones internacionales entre el centro y la periferia.

Palabras clave: Kwame Nkrumah (1909-1972), Guerra de Guerrillas, Revolución Africana, Manual de Guerrillas, Historia Militar de África.

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INTRODUCTION

The pan-Africanist politician, socialist, revolutionary and first president of independent Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah (1909-1972) is widely known for his political ideas, but less so for his military thinking on guerrilla warfare. While books such as *Africa Must Unite* (1963) and *Neocolonialism, The Last Stage of Imperialism* (1965) are among his most popular works, Nkrumah's *Handbook of Revolutionary Warfare* (1968) is still lingering in shadows.

The *Handbook of Revolutionary Warfare* was written and published in a period of social convulsion in the Third World. Nkrumah's thought on guerrilla is linked to ideas of revolution that emerged within violent revolutionary processes in the 20th century. One of the arguments of this article is that the book represents a more radical approach of Nkrumah's thought towards social change but, as a military manual, the book lacks the original arguments it has for the political components present in the work. It is more political than military, although its main argument is the creation and operation of a guerrilla army.

The *Handbook* couldn't be written without Nkrumah's contacts with other theorists of guerrilla warfare and revolution. It is through a comparison with other intellectuals and proponents of guerrilla warfare, such as Mao Tse-Tung, Che Guevara, Amílcar Cabral and Vo Nguyen Giap, that the influences, novelties and limitations of Nkrumah as a guerrilla theorizer appear. Finding the connections that shaped Nkrumah's proposal for this kind of war in relation to the historical context he was facing will help to enhance the intellectual history of Nkrumah, the military history of guerrilla warfare, and the connections between revolutionary movements and thinkers across the global south.

Guerrilla warfare was present in many scenarios of decolonization in Asia and in Africa. Conflicts such as the Portuguese Colonial War (or War of Liberation) in Mozambique (1964-1974), Guinea-Bissau (1963-1974) and Angola (1961-1974); the Rhodesian Bush War (1964-1979); the Kenyan Mau Mau Insurgency (1952-1960) and the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962), are some of the examples of guerrilla warfare in contemporary African history. Nkrumah, a proponent of revolution in Africa and around the globe, as well as a notorious anti-colonialist and anti-capitalist, was well aware of such happenings.

In Asia, the great examples of guerrilla warfare were the Vietnam War (1955-1975) and the Chinese Civil War (1927-1949). As in many scenarios of asymmetric warfare in Africa, these two wars in Asia saw Marxism mingled with political and military action. In these two wars, guerrilla warfare proved to be a useful way of fighting and achieving victory. Here is another argument that will unfold in this article: Nkrumah's *Handbook*, to be better understood, cannot be separated from the broader world of left-wing guerrilla movements across the globe in its moment of creation. The author was in contact with ideas of violent political action, had revo-



lutionary plans for achieving socialism in Africa, and guerrilla warfare experiences, strategies and tactics were flowing between minds across the world.

In Latin America, guerrilla warfare has played an influential role in politics and war. From the success of the Cuban Revolution (1953-1959) onwards many conflicts involved the use of guerrilla warfare from the Caribbean to Central America and further into the southern cone of the continent. Many groups, such as Uruguay's Tupamaros, used Guevara's example of guerrilla (ACTAS TUPAMARAS, 1976, p.26) to strike imperialism while reflecting in the importance of the Chinese Civil War for their urban guerrilla (ACTAS TUPAMARAS, 1976, p.13). The Tupamaro example in South America shows how large was the influence of successful guerrilla wars around the globe and how people and groups adapted it to their own interests and terrains. This is a path Nkrumah will trail when writing his manual. The Chinese influence was felt in Africa when they helped the guerrillas in Guinea-Bissau (SOUSA, 2020, p.7) and got to Nkrumah through Mao Tse-Tung's writings and talks with Amílcar Cabral.

The global phenomena of guerrilla warfare was wide. In Brazil, the Marxist thinker and guerrilla fighter Carlos Marighella had connections in Cuba for military training (MAGALHÃES, 2013, p.352). The nationalist leader Leonel Brizola was close to Fidel Castro's ideas in establishing guerrillas in Brazilian hinterlands (MAGALHÃES, 2013, p.338). The *Partido Comunista do Brasil* (Brazilian Communist Party) had connections in China (MAGALHÃES, 2013, p.337) and the Democratic Republic of Korea offered training camps for Brazilians guerrilla fighters (MAGALHÃES, 2013, p.509).

A peripheral state such as Brazil was well connected to other guerrilla strategies and tactics in America and Asia. Nkrumah, in his position as leader of Ghana, but even after being ousted from power, was in touch with theorists and guerrilla fighters in Latin America, Africa and Asia. Nkrumah was aware of the Latin America history of struggles as he even cites Cuban and Haitian revolutions as examples in his *Handbook* (NKRUMAH, 1969, p.38).

The Conakry period (1966-1972), or the period of exile of Nkrumah after he was overthrown, is an important part of his intellectual history. Although he no longer held an official government position, Nkrumah wrote important books and pamphlets in this period. He was an important link in a chain of peripheral intellectuals who were studying and discussing ideas on how revolution could be possible through guerrilla warfare. In his exile he received many freedom fighters and anti-colonial organizations with which he shared and exchanged thoughts and experiences with (although he does not name them in his book *Dark Days in Ghana* for security reasons at the time) (MILNE, 1987 pp.38-39). We shall understand how the *Handbook* was developed, what were its influences and what are the proposals and limitations of it for revolution and guerrilla warfare.



ON REVOLUTIONARY WARFARE

The *Handbook* of Nkrumah cannot be separated from his previous writings, the history of contemporary Africa, and the Cold War. In 1961, Nkrumah, as president of Ghana, signed a treaty of friendship with the People's Republic of China and in 1962 he condemned the British support to India in its border dispute with China. For Nkrumah the approximation to a communist state was a way to strike British interference not just in China, but in its role as a world player (ISMAEL, 1971, pp.507-508). Nkrumah manifested his desire to not be aligned to any political group of the Cold War when he rose to power in 1958 (ANGLIN, 1958, p.152), but he was clearly against Western interests led by the United States. His policies and ideas were closer to the non-aligned states and the anti-capitalist policies of socialist countries.

Nkrumah had a worldwide influence as a proponent of socialism and pan-Africanism. He was a problem to the capitalist bloc led by the United States and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). His international activities made him a dangerous figure for Western interests. The United States blocked Nkrumah's Ghana from receiving assistance from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (SOMERVILLE, 2017, p.67), two institutions Nkrumah would name as enemies in his manual.

The political party of Nkrumah, *Convention's People Party*, had in its program an internationalist interest in promoting the relationship with socialist countries to fight and abolish "all forms of national and racial oppression and economic inequality among nations, races, peoples and to support all action for World Peace" (NKRUMAH, 1973 p.59). Nkrumah was promoting the decolonization of Africa and the rest of the Third World, not just political decolonization, but economic too.

Africa's integration to the capitalist system did not equal the same rate of development in the colonizer's country and its colonies (MARTIN, 1973 p.77; SOMERVILLE, 2017 p.14). His government followed the purpose of taking back control of the economy (MARTIN, 1973 p.78). During the colonial period, it was controlled by the metropole, and after it the influence remained and Nkrumah was aware of that.

While away on a trip to socialist Vietnam, Nkrumah was ousted in a coup d'état on February 24, 1966. The coup was led by military and police personnel that formed the *National Liberation Council* (BINEY, 2009 p.81). Nkrumah's rule, which had started in 1957 ended. Behind the Ghanaian insurgents, France, England and the United States had been providing aid since February 1964 (BINEY, 2009, 84). Nkrumah's *Handbook* is connected to what happened and it is through his Marxist-Leninist theoretical tools that he explained this episode. It was described as the action of neocolonial and imperialist interests (BINEY, 2009, p.82). This is an important point on why he abandoned peaceful ways to change society.



Nkrumah's strategy of development by industrializing Ghana was quickly abandoned after the coup (HETTNE, 1980, p.177). Diplomats from socialist countries were expelled, financial assistance from Western countries started flowing in, and the International Monetary Fund interference in internal affairs started. The prior relevance of Nkrumah's Ghana in international affairs diminished as a result of the coup (HETTNE, 1980, p.187).

As Nkrumah was not able to return to Ghana, he made the city of Conakry, in the Republic of Guinea, his new home. Guinea was the right place since Ahmed Sekou Touré, its president, was also a pan-Africanist. Not long before, in 1958, Ghana and Guinea formed a union. In 1961 there was still the Ghana-Guinea-Mali Union that served as an example of Pan-African union. Nkrumah was a guest of honor of Touré and it was in Conakry that the *Handbook* was written.

The originals of the work stayed in Ghana after the coup and many records about African liberation movements fell in the hands of external oppositors of his regime (MILNE, 1987 p.39). According to Nkrumah (1969, p.l), the manual was a new tool to help foment revolution in Africa together with the mass movements of the oppressed people in the United States, the Caribbean, South America, and the rest of the world. In connection to his previous works (*Africa Must Unite*, 1963, *Neo-colonialism, the Last Stage of Imperialism*, 1965, and *Towards Colonial Freedom*, 1947), the *Handbook* praises Pan-African union and struggle in connection with the African diaspora.

In his life of exile, Nkrumah idealized armed struggle as the proper way to end neocolonialism. He believed in international struggle and unity among the people who once suffered under colonialism and now suffer under neocolonialism. The African revolution he proposed was a step to the socialist revolution in the world (BINEY, 2009 pp.90-91). This idea was not new.

In 1958, with the objective of creating ties to help anti-colonial struggles, Nkrumah held the *Conference of Independent States* which was attended by the United Arab Republic (Egypt and Syria), Sudan, Tunisia, Libya, Ethiopia and Liberia (SOMERVILLE, 2017, p.53). His government held the *All African People's Conference* in 1960 where anti-colonial movements gathered to discuss, demand and denounce the actions of European colonialism in Africa.

In Belgrade, 1961, the leader of Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito, the president of Egypt, Gamal Abdel Nasser, the Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, Indonesia's first president, Sukarno, and Kwame Nkrumah created the *Non-Aligned Movement*. The idea was to counter the power of the American and the Soviet bloc and fight colonialism, neocolonialism and imperialism.

Nkrumah thought of colonialism as a "policy by which the 'mother country', the colonial power, binds herself to the political ties with the primary objective of promoting her own economic advantages" (NKRUMAH, 1973 p.18). Imperialism manifests in an empire in which different people were under a central and authoritarian rule through such action of creating



political ties (NKRUMAH, 1973, p.18). His writing was the intellectual side of his work, and his foreign policies tried to export his ideas to other countries with common interests.

After the meeting of the *Organization of Solidarity with the People of Asia and Africa* (OSPAA) in Accra in 1965, the following year a new continent, America (or the Latin part of it), was added to the list of international solidarity against imperialism, colonialism and neocolonialism. Nkrumah was aware of the Tricontinental and the Havana Conference of 1966 (NKRUMAH, 1969, p.38). The mission of the Tricontinental, or *Organization of Solidarity with the People of Asia, Africa and Latin America* (OSPAAAL), was to unite the three continents against Western dominance. The event had the presence of famous revolutionaries such as Nkrumah, Che Guevara and Amílcar Cabral. Cabral used the opportunity to bring forth the links between class, colonialism and liberation (LOPES; BARROS, 2019, p.3). Che Guevara believed in the united struggle of the Third World against the center in order to achieve freedom (GUEVARA, 1967).

The Tricontinental intended to be an alternative to the bipolar world order and the Cuban government thought it could help expand its influence and its revolutionary model (LARANJEIRO, 2019, p.3). Cuban forces were present in Angola and in Guinea-Bissau, where Che Guevara met Amílcar Cabral in 1965. Both influenced Nkrumah's thought on guerrilla warfare (GLEIJESES, 1997, p.47). Ghana was an important site for Cuba since its first military mission in Africa took place during Kwame Nkrumah's government in 1962 (LAUMANN, 2005, p.67). Nkrumah was well aware of the weight of Guevara in international affairs and lamented his death in a letter written in 1967 (BINEY, 2009, p.91). In his *Handbook*, he cites Guevara's idea on the importance of warfare (NKRUMAH, 1969, p.20).

Guevara spent three months in Africa in 1965. On January 14th he landed in Ghana and met Nkrumah. At this moment, Guevara was the minister of industry in Cuba and Ghana was an important place to be since Cuba wanted to cement its relationship with Third World nations, especially one that was on the path of socialism. Guevara's belief was that the world was the stage for the fight against imperialism. And Africa, according to him, was a new arena in this struggle (LAUMANN, 2005, p.61-62).

In exporting his Cuban model and his anti-imperialist ideas, Guevara was advocating the formation of guerrilla armies with Cuban characteristics and support. While in Ghana, William Gardner Smith, a Marxist journalist and part of Nkrumah's government, reported that "he and Che discussed the possibility of forming a guerrilla army comprised of black Cubans and African Americans to join liberation movements in Africa" (LAUMANN, 2005, p.71). The visit of Guevara was meant to export the revolution, enhance Cuba's relationships, create anti-imperialist alliances and support decolonization efforts (LAUMANN, 2005, p.63-64). It was in these Afro-American contacts and cooperation that later developments happened. For example, the



Tricontinental meeting in Havana in 1966 and the later Cuban missions to Angola. For Nkrumah, he became acquainted with the idea of guerrilla.

In the years that Nkrumah led Ghana, guerrilla warfare was burning up many places around the world. Most of the guerrilla movements had some sort of Marxist, Leninist, Stalinist, Maoist or Hoxhaist influence. To lesser or greater extent many battlefields were connected to the Cold War. From the rice fields of Vietnam to the dirty war in the cities of South America or in the forests of Angola and Mozambique, war was a valid way for many movements and intellectuals to achieve the desired political, economical and social changes they were aiming for. After being ousted from power, Nkrumah becomes more radical and follows the path of irregular warfare.

By 1968, Nkrumah no longer believed in peaceful ways to end imperialism. Armed struggle and violent revolution are, at this moment, part of his vocabulary. The defense of armed struggle is evident throughout his manual. He was sure that only armed struggle could achieve liberation: "Revolutionary warfare is the logical, inevitable answer to the political, economic and social situation in Africa today. We do not have the luxury of an alternative" (NKRUMAH, 1969, pp.41-42). The *Handbook* states that whenever a country directs itself into any form of socialism, imperialism will try to interrupt the process through neocolonial violence. According to him, this happens because they have "to suppress and kill openly in order to survive" (NKRUMAH, 1969, p.54).

While explaining why peaceful ways to socialism are not possible he cites the Mau Mau struggle in Kenya between 1952 and 1960. For him, this was a movement with a just cause since peaceful means had been of no help (NKRUMAH, 1969, p.52). Peaceful transitions to socialism were not possible and the Third World had many examples of failed transitions to socialism which were curbed by the center (NKRUMAH, 1969, p.55). Nkrumah saw himself as an example because he understood the role of Western influence in taking him down from a position in which he could speak and act. The only outcome possible for him after that was revolutionary and guerrilla warfare.

The scholar Ama Biney (2009) wrote that Nkrumah might have been influenced by many thinkers of revolution and warfare. According to her, they are the Chinese revolutionary Mao Tse-Tung, the French West Indian intellectual Frantz Fanon, the American journalist and scholar Robert Taber, the Chinese general Sun Tzu, the American writer and communist William J. Pomeroy, the Vietnamese general Nguyen Giap, and the Austrian communist Franz Marek (BINEY, 2009, p.92).

Like Nkrumah, who expressed his absolute trust in Marxism (BINEY, 2009 p.91), the Vietnamese general Vo Nguyen Giap believed that a revolutionary party must be organized within the line of thought of Marxism-Leninism, even in its military organization (GIAP, 1976, p.9). In



general, it is Marxism-Leninism that makes it possible to think of the military organization of the masses (GIAP, 1976 p.13). Giap is in accordance with Ho Chi Minh, who also held Marx and Lenin as the right theorists for the liberation of the oppressed in the world (MINH, 1971, p.53). For Mao Zedong it is no different when it comes to Marx and Lenin, the “principle of revolution is universally correct, for China and for all other countries” (TSE-TUNG, 1954a, p.1). Marxist inspired movements, such as the communists from Vietnam and China, or the partisans from the Balkans in World War II, breathing inspiration from the 1917 Russian Revolution helped to shape the world through guerrilla warfare.

Mao Zedong's experiences have been published in his 1937 book entitled *On Guerrilla Warfare*. The book is one of the oldest in a tradition of left-wing thinkers and fighters who shared their thoughts on armed struggle and politics. Guevara (with *Guerra de Guerrillas* in 1960), the Guinean revolutionary Amílcar Cabral (with *Unity and Struggle* in a posthumous publication in 1979) and Carlos Marighella (*Minimanual do Guerrilheiro Urbano* in 1969), are other examples of theorists and fighters who have enriched the field of guerrilla warfare with their experiences.

Guerrilla fighters and theorists wrote to understand what they were facing in order to better conduct the war they were fighting. Mao's experience in the fight against the Japanese later served to teach guerrillas. He understood China as a semi-colonial and semi-feudal country in which the terrain demanded guerrilla war (ZEDONG, 2005, p.72). Guevara, following a similar approach in reading the South American situation, believed that guerrilla warfare was possible in the countryside (GUEVARA, 2004, p.9). His manual, *Guerra de Guerrillas*, was written for the purpose of offering structures in which other movements could learn and adapt (GUEVARA, 2004, p.10).

What is remarkable in all those thinkers and fighters is that when they write about pulling the trigger, this act is never separated from a whole political, geopolitical and ideological universe. In the area of guerrilla warfare in the 20th century, especially in connection to anti-colonial, anti-imperialist and revolutionary ideals close to Marxism, warfare is never thought of without a connection to politics. This is a path Nkrumah follows in his contribution. Within the names that Ana Biney (2009) mentioned before, they speak inside this frame where politics are in close relationship to fighting.

For Frantz Fanon, capitalism was responsible for creating a mass of wretched third world citizens (FANON, 2004, p.57). Violence was not only recommended, but necessary. According to Fanon, the process of decolonization cannot be complete without violence against the colonizer. Indeed, he states that it is through violence that the colonized will bring freedom and humanity for itself (FANON, 2004, pp.219-220). Like Fanon, Nkrumah relies on violence and in the same way as the Caribbean thinker, it should be organized through guerrilla action to achieve revolution.



In his formula, violence is needed to decolonize the land and the soul of both the colonized and the colonizer. The use of guerrilla was deemed as the tactic that enabled the masses to defeat modern armies like those of France and Portugal. Fanon imagined that through guerrilla warfare it was possible to create and operate a "national liberation army" (FANON, 2004, p.85). In his writings, Fanon talks about its relationship with anti colonialism and warfare.

Through all its political connections and readings, Nkrumah was well aware of revolutionary intellectuals and movements around the globe. He was aware of the American-Trinidadian and Black Panther leader Stokely Carmichael (who later changed his name to Kwame Ture in reference to Kwame Nkrumah and Ahmed Sekou Touré), the American human rights activist Malcolm X and Amílcar Cabral (BINEY, 2009, p.86-87; MILNE, 1987, p.40). These three revolutionaries, in two different continents, had to deal with a structure of power dominated by white people. The anti-Western sentiment was shared since blacks in the Americas and in Africa were exposed to the harsh conditions generated by capitalism and racism. One encounter was especially influential. Cabral proved to be highly important for the development of the *Handbook*. It was him that influenced Nkrumah on ideas about armed struggle. According to Ama Biney (2009, p.91)

Cabral, who had been given a house in Conakry by President Sekou Toure, was one of Nkrumah's few visitors. The two would engage in political discussions and, on one occasion in June 1967, Cabral presented a film on 'Portuguese Guinea' to Nkrumah and thirty of his entourage. It seems the theory of armed struggle significantly shaped Nkrumah's outlook on global conflict, in which he considered Africa had a crucial role to play. These ideas were expressed in the *Handbook of Revolutionary Warfare*, published in 1968.

Ama Biney (2009, p.92) reinforces the idea that both Nkrumah and Cabral shared characteristics for being anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist. The difference lies in the nature of their warfare influences. Cabral was a guerrilla theorizer and fighter, Nkrumah was only a theorizer. This impacted his military thinking for a revolution based on guerrilla. We will see that the *Handbook* lacks the experience of the field, and the author is focused on strategy at a higher level of operations. When it comes to the field of operations where the action takes place, his teachings are basic and generic.

As guerrilla war was laid as the path for Nkrumah's proposed African revolution, no peaceful ways were looked upon in his book (BINEY, 2007, p.291). To finish with capitalism and its close relatives, imperialism, colonialism and neocolonialism, the world needed to be shaken by a violent insurgency to raise the red banner of socialism on a global scale (BINEY, 2007, p.306). In Nkrumah's own words, "the imperialist powers will never give up their political and economic dominance over their colonies until they are compelled to do so (NKRUMAH, 1973, p.38)."



THE HANDBOOK OF REVOLUTIONARY WARFARE

The book is divided in two parts, *Know the Enemy* is the first and focuses on showing the nature of imperialism and neocolonialism. It supports the idea of uniting Africa to end foreign intrusion. The second part of the book, *Strategy, Tactics and Techniques*, centers around strategies and tactics for guerillas. It touches on subjects such as policies, propaganda, mobilization, equipment, logistics, espionage, communication and explosives. The first part sets the scenario, the goals and the reasons for fighting, the second wants to teach the basics of guerrilla war. In organizing the book in such a way, Nkrumah is following the example of other guerrilla manuals where the reasons of the fight must be explained.

Even though separated, the two parts are in deep connection with each other. For Nkrumah, the idea of creating a revolutionary guerrilla army cannot be separated from the goals of destroying imperialism and uniting Africa under socialism. Imperialism is an old topic in Nkrumah's thought, already in 1938 he was writing about it (BINEY, 2007, p.26). In his *Handbook*, imperialism is presented in connection with neocolonialism. The term neocolonialism was used by Nkrumah already in 1958 at the Conference of Independent States.

Neocolonialism served to explain the new forms of colonialism that could threaten Africa. His concept of neocolonialism implies that this is a form of control that acts at the economic, political and cultural level (BINEY, 2007, pp.241-241). Nkrumah explains that these concepts are weapons of the developed world (Western Europe and the United States) and their international institutions (International Monetary Fund, International Development Association, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the European Common Market) (NKRUMAH, 1969, p.7).

Once we know their names, we must understand how the enemy works. Nkrumah wrote that international finance capital started exploiting the colonized world by new means after World War II. Before, colonies were subdued by a single metropole in Europe. After the decolonization, a collection of imperialists in the center started exploiting the periphery through neocolonialism (NKRUMAH, 1969, p.5). This led to the phenomenon of *sham independences*.

Sham independence is the term used by Nkrumah to describe former colonies that are still under the control of "conservative forces of the former colony and where economic power remains under the control of international finance" (NKRUMAH, 1969, p.8). Nkrumah cites as examples of *sham independences* the case of former French colonies and of Nigeria, which he believes achieved independence under the guidance of neocolonialism (NKRUMAH, 1969, p.32). The idea of *sham independence* is different from what Nkrumah calls a *genuine independence*. This term describes a country that is no longer under any form of control from capitalist powers because independence was achieved by revolution (NKRUMAH, 1969, p.33).



Nkrumah knows that when the colonized struggle for liberation and achieve independence, this is but a part of a longer process of liberation. Decolonization, in this sense, is a long process that is not just about removing the flag of the metropole, but requires the total destruction of structures laid out by the Western world. After colonialism any country can be affected by imperialism, and the construction of an independent state will depend on the level of imperialism acting over it. The level of foreign influence will show if a country is truly independent (NKRUMAH, 1968, p.29). As long as an independent African state lingers under neocolonialism, freedom will never be achieved. Nkrumah wants to explain this for the reader because he wants us to know how the world works and what is the place of Africa in it.

Decolonization ended one form of control but it was followed by what he affirms to be the last stage of imperialism, neocolonialism (NKRUMAH, 1967, p.35)¹. For him, it was clear that colonial rule had come to an end, but not the control over politics, culture and economics (NKRUMAH, 1967, p.281). The term serves to explain how a country, even after a process of decolonization, can still exist as a dependent state with deep ties to the centers of capitalism (NKRUMAH, 1969, p.8).

Going further than just pointing out that Africa lies under neocolonial control, Nkrumah sets out four points on how the West portrays the world. According to the central capitalist powers (1) there is only one way and that is the path of liberal democracies; (2) there is only one economic system and it is capitalism; (3) anything different from that is communism and autocracy; (4) every single people, culture, worldview and country must follow the Western way of existing because everything else is wrong, in other words, people must abide by the world order developed by the West (NKRUMAH, 1969, pp.8-9). This argument implies that what Nkrumah proposes is the total decolonization of Africa. He is not just trying to cut the bonds that tie economy and politics with the center, but trying to remove influences of Western thinking over African minds.

Africa, in Nkrumah's thinking, exists in relation to a center that is responsible for the peripheral situation of the continent. While Western Europe and the United States are responsible for the present situation of Africa, he is also addressing the past and centering colonialism as the reason for the present moment of neocolonialism. This form of analysis, which was carried

1 Nkrumah was strongly influenced by the work of the Russian revolutionary and intellectual Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924). While Lenin wrote the book published in 1917, *Imperialism, the Highest State of Capitalism*, Nkrumah followed the Leninist tradition in his book *Neocolonialism, The Last Stage of Imperialism*, originally published in 1965. According to Ali Mazrui (1966 p.9), Nkrumah's most important publications flourished under Russian influences "Kwame Nkrumah's first important publication twenty years ago was inspired by Lenin's theory of imperialism. The publication came to be entitled *Toward Colonial Freedom*. Nkrumah's last publication in office is his new book, *Neocolonialism The Last Stage of Imperialism*.> That too owes its doctrinal inspiration to Lenin's theory of imperialism".

by other intellectuals, such as Walter Rodney (with his work *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* of 1974) and Immanuel Wallerstein (with his work *The Modern World-System* of 1981), focus on the effects of the different stages capitalism went through since the first wave of European expansion over the Americas (COOPER, 2002, p.57).

Nkrumah cannot think of Africa without the dichotomy of the center (oppressors) and the periphery (oppressed). In breaking with Western interests, Nkrumah recenters Africa. He recognizes that Africa is at the periphery of the capitalist system, but he wants to achieve an autonomous path for the continent, to bring value to what is African and deny many aspects of the West. It does not mean he wants to return to a pre-colonial past, but he wants to address the issues left by decades of colonialism and allow Africa and Africans to build their own path without external influences.

The position of Kwame Nkrumah is anti-imperialist and he regards not just politics and economics to discuss ways of liberation. He believes in the importance of culture and African worldviews. But Nkrumah has a particular view about African autochthonous ways of thinking. He believes that two concepts are the essence of the whole of African thought. He has in mind a continent united under one flag and this flag must represent pan-Africanism and African Socialism.

Léopold Sédar Senghor from Senegal, Tom Mboya from Kenya, Julius Nyerere from Tanzania and Sékou Touré from Conakry, defended (with differences) the same ideals of Nkrumah that were developed around 1955 and 1970. For these thinkers (that are not part of African Marxism as Frantz Fanon and Samir Amin, for example), Western individuality must disappear, harmony must reign, Africa must be united, and classes should no longer exist. It should be a return to the (imagined) days before colonialism where no exploitation was found. All this would be protected within a modern nation-state of continental size (ALVARADO, 2018, pp.280-281; DEVÉS-VALDÉS, 2008, p.126). This shows how Nkrumah, as well as other thinkers, does not despise all the ideas from the West, such as nationalism, nation-states and contemporary bureaucracies to run it.

If every civilization has a particularity, African Socialism is what represents all people of Africa. In other words, an African civilization. For this reason, African Socialism cannot be separated from Pan-Africanism. At the core of the building of socialism in the African way, lies the unity of Africans (ALVARADO, 2018, p.283). African Socialism promotes unity in culture, politics and economics across the whole continent and promotes Pan-Africanism (ALVARADO, 2018, p.289).

As Pan-Africanism and African Socialism are together for Nkrumah, his proposed guerrilla army must be continental in size and must work to implement socialism. It is through guerrilla warfare that he plans to start dealing with specific conditions left by the European intrusion and the fragmentation or balkanization of Africa. It shall unite the continent politically, cultu-



rally and economically; promote an Africanization of Africa by following the ideal of African Socialism (which is understood as inherently African and as had been curbed by Europe); and destroy much of the West's cultural, political and economical influences imposed over African societies (ALVARADO, 2018, p.299).

He follows the motion made at the Fifth Pan-African Congress held in Manchester (1945) where himself, the future president of Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta, the Nigerian future prime minister, Obafemi Awolowo and the Malawian future president, Hastings Banda, were present. This was the first Pan-African congress where the majority of the participants were Africans (MURYATAN, 2021, p.41). Although no mention was made of neocolonialism in the 1940s, since the concept had not developed yet, Nkrumah is sure that the congress helped shape the ideals of unity among all Africans. By 1968, Nkrumah hoped to achieve democracy and prosperity by an "All-African struggle against colonialism and all the new manifestations of imperialism (NKRUMAH, 1969, p.27)."

As the enemies, their methods of operation and their objectives are presented in his *Handbook*, Nkrumah proceeds to show the strategy for war. By raising the means of production, raising the level of organization of people, spreading the idea of African revolution against neocolonialism, is how a guerrilla army can be built (NKRUMAH, 1969, p.56).

Nkrumah plans in accordance with his Pan-Africanist view. The proposed All-African People's Revolutionary Party (AAPRP) and its armed wing, the All-African People's Revolutionary Army (AAPRA), must direct all of the efforts for African liberation. Both are intrinsically connected to one another with the intention to fulfill the political and military mobilization. The leadership of both organizations would be divided among socialist leaders (NKRUMAH, 1969, p.58). The path to victory will be guaranteed by one party rule guided by African socialism (NKRUMAH, 1969, p.11). Although Nkrumah recognizes the plurality of leftist organizations in the continent, he believes that a central party must have the final word in directing political and military efforts.

Another proposed creation is the All-African Committee for Political Coordination (AACPC) to deal with a great number of organizations working together. The AACPC brings together all those struggling for the same goals. The Third World thinking of Nkrumah is seen here when he presents the AACPC. He wants this organization to coordinate efforts with Asia and Latin America to promote relationships between socialist states (NKRUMAH, 1969, pp.57-58). As imperialism and neocolonialism are global phenomena, the stage for the fight must be global (NKRUMAH, 1969, p.21).

All these organizations should be created around three objectives: the end of imperialism, the elimination of neocolonialism, and the creation of a new nation-state engulfing the whole of Africa (NKRUMAH, 1969, p.27). Socialism will be the guiding principle and Nkrumah

gives four basic ideas: (1) common ownership of the means of production; (2) state-planned economy; (3) political power at the hand of the people; (4) the application of scientific methods on every field of thinking and production (NKRUMAH, 1969, p.28).

To wage this revolutionary war, Nkrumah divides Africa in three types of areas: (1) Liberated areas, which are parts of the continent that are no longer under any form of foreign control; (2) areas under enemy control, which are regions still under imperialism or neocolonial control (meaning areas ruled by African elites aligned with imperialism) (NKRUMAH, 1969, pp.45-46); (3) contested areas (or areas of transition), which are zones in which revolutionary activity is taking place (NKRUMAH, 1969, p.48). In Nkrumah's grand strategy, each area is understood in its specific situation, functions and goals. For example, any liberated area does not stop at this point but helps contested areas to end enemy occupation (NKRUMAH, 1969, p.45).

In areas of struggle, Nkrumah sees the possibility of organizing clandestine operations to disrupt enemy governments. He is not clear when it comes to what kind of operations are those, but he understands that each place must create its own possibilities within the circumstances of the area (NKRUMAH, 1969, pp.49-50). Nkrumah may sound naive, but guerrilla theorists are aware that each field requires a different approach. Che wrote that recommendations must be adapted (GUEVARA, 2004, p.55) and that there are no rigid schemes when it comes to guerrilla warfare (GUEVARA, 2004, p.36). Mao emphasized that any guerrilla must be flexible in order to be successful (TSE-TUNG, 1954b, pp.17-18).

Nkrumah identifies five problems that may disrupt revolutionary activity: (1) imperialists can try to take advantage of any division in the political party; (2) imperialists may try to deal through diplomacy, thus halting the revolutionary outcome; (3) the party's own command may isolate itself; (4) the party can commit the mistake of not taking any initiative to solve situations it faces; (5) leaders may try to be opportunistic while liberating an area (NKRUMAH, 1969, pp.50-51). Nkrumah idealizes a struggle until the bitter defeat of enemies. In his mind, any form of peaceful negotiation, such as diplomacy, will only harm revolutionary goals. He does not believe that the West will negotiate the end of structures responsible for the neocolonial situation of Africa and the central position of the West.

In the year the *Handbook* was published, Africa was still undergoing decolonization. An example of this moment that influenced Nkrumah was the fight in Guinea-Bissau, where Amílcar Cabral and the *Partido Africano pela Independência de Guiné e Cabo Verde* (PAIGC) were fighting Portugal. In Guinea-Bissau, the guerrillas were disputing areas held by the colonizers, they were promoting political views on liberated territory while being helped by neighboring countries like Guinea-Conakry. The struggle in Guinea, in reality, holds the strategies proposed for Africa in Nkrumah's *Handbook*.



While Cabral was working politically and militarily, Nkrumah only had political experience. Cabral was influenced by the Chinese experience when he traveled to China. His first formulation for guerrilla was inspired by the Chinese and was used in his home country (TOMÁS, 2007, p.158). After some time on the field, Cabral and his associates made their own adaptations for their struggle, their territory and their aims. One of the concepts created by Cabral was *liberated zones*. When PAIGC's guerrillas were able to expel the Portuguese from an area, it would become a *liberated zone*. This zone was then used to create military, political and social structures to help maintain the area free of colonial intrusion. It would further help the development of the struggle in other regions (TOMÁS, 2007, p.176).

In 1964, PAIGC and Cabral were worried that the party should not become too militarized but should be, instead, an armed political party. So, in areas held by the guerrillas, the command was shared between political and military commanders (TOMÁS, 2007 p.193). The similarities to Nkrumah's idea of creating the AAPRP and the AAPRA, where political and military activity are shared, are close to Cabral's formulation.

Both Cabral and Nkrumah must have been acquainted with Mao Zedong's idea of areas of operation. Although Mao was struggling in a different context - the Japanese invasion of China between the 1930s and 1940s - he developed one idea that found its place in the guerrillas of Cabral and Nkrumah. Mao made a distinction between *guerrilla base areas* and *guerrilla areas*. While the first are areas held by the guerrilla army that are safer from attacks of the enemy, the second, *guerrilla areas*, are places in which the control is still being disputed with the enemy.

For a *guerrilla area* to become a *guerrilla base area*, Mao says it depends on the elimination of enemy personnel, the destruction of puppet governments and the formation of anti-enemy organizations (TSE-TUNG, 1954b, pp.35-36). It made sense for guerrilla thinkers like Nkrumah and Cabral to start anticipating and evaluating the control of the terrain in order to organize the guerrilla.

Unlike others, Nkrumah does not delve into small details of operations. When describing where to settle the posts of command of the AAPRA, he makes vague assumptions such as placing them in liberated areas far from enemy aggression and with a higher level of economic development (NKRUMAH, 1969, pp.58-59). So wide are some of the arguments, that he writes the following:

Tactics will, therefore, vary according to the particular phases of the struggle, and the activity and actions of the enemy. Attack is the first principle, though there are times when defence is both necessary and useful. These two methods—attack and defence—are therefore closely linked, and basic in guerrilla tactics (NKRUMAH, 1969, p.108).



Nkrumah is not new in his formulation. A guerrilla must be fast, must surprise the enemy and disappear, must understand that its lack of equipment can be adjusted by fast mobility and choosing when and where to engage the enemy (NKRUMAH, 1969, pp.108-109). And, as written above, it must attack and defend. Without novelties for the field, he comments that an army such as that must operate in difficult terrains to avoid being caught (NKRUMAH, 1969, pp.110-111). For example, Robert Taber's study of guerrillas of 1965 points out with more accuracy that this kind of warfare must rely on certain kinds of large terrains (rural areas, mountains, forests) to conduct the war in order for the enemy to disperse its troops and extend its supply and communication lines (TABER, 2002, p.111).

Nkrumah comments that guns can be acquired in markets, by stealing depots, by disarming the enemy or simply produced in factories. It is important to hide and preserve every gun (NKRUMAH, 1969, pp.114-115). He shares his thoughts on matters of espionage, writing that spies are needed to obtain information, and that enemy spies must be judged and executed (NKRUMAH, 1969, pp.115-116). Nkrumah provides general ideas on how to plan guerrilla warfare, with few details that are not new nor surprising for anyone acquainted with military operations.

The Handbook is equally poor for the battlefield. It provides little information on how to fight when compared to the rich information on the reasons to fight. To find cover, to use the darkness as an advantage, to arrange signals for communication, to constantly harass the enemy, to run and not engage stronger units (NKRUMAH, 1969, pp.116-117). These are basic tactics and strategies. Robert Taber offers a similar explanation in his book when it comes to the capture of arms, and describes ways of conducting the fight, something Nkrumah's *Handbook* doesn't provide (TABER, 2002, pp.30-31).

Ideas of offensiveness and sabotage are loosely explained. Blowing up bridges, railroads and industries, causing strikes and sabotaging the enemy in its own territory are some examples (NKRUMAH, 1969, pp.116-117). When it comes to defense, he only mentions that precautions must be taken when setting up a guerrilla base. They should be in sites that can stay hidden and be easily defended (NKRUMAH, 1969, p.109).

The Handbook offers little information for the fighters. He reminds the importance of gathering arms and equipment from the enemy, of conducting operations of reckoning before any attack and to fortify the defenses against attacks (NKRUMAH, 1969, pp.118-119). Besides the war, he writes on the importance of the relationship between the fighters and the masses.

The guerrilla fighter must be friendly in every aspect to the population, teach the reasons of the struggle and help the life of the people. Nkrumah sees the guerrilla fighter as someone who must "set an example of respect, hard work and devotion to the revolutionary cause" (NKRUMAH, 1969, p.120). The inhabitants of areas where the guerrilla acts can provide

supplies and information for the fighters (NKRUMAH, 1969, pp.111-112). Guerrilla fighters and theorists, such as Mao and Che, have the notion that guerrilla is not the end, but the means to transform society. They both believed that guerrilla war cannot succeed without a relationship with the masses.

Nkrumah is in connection to Mao Tse-Tung's thought on guerrilla warfare when the winner of the Chinese Civil War explains that "A revolutionary war is never confined within the bounds of military action" (ZEDONG, 2005, p.11). For Mao, a revolutionary war's final objective is not to defeat an enemy, but to destroy an existing social order to create a new society. For that reason, guerrilla warfare is understood as a method for revolutionary purposes.

Che, who was inspired by Mao's and Ho Chi Minh's guerrillas, wrote that a successful guerrilla can only achieve its goals in contact with the peasants (GUEVARA, 2004, p.11). What Che called popular work, or the act to explain, motivate and educate the people for the revolution, is a major point for the guerrillas to work on (GUEVARA, 2004, p.14). For Che, the guerrilla represents the masses and the guerrilla fighter is a social reformer that answers the call of the people (GUEVARA, 2004, p.10). Che, who focuses on the countryside like Mao and Ho, knows that peasants can contribute to the war and revolution (GUEVARA, 2004, p.53). Nkrumah, following the same pattern, believes in the importance of the guerrilla's connection to the masses.

When Mao writes that revolutionary warfare can be done using guerrilla warfare, he is aware that his fight is aiming for political goals (ZEDONG, 2005, p.47). For him, "Without a political goal, guerrilla warfare must fail [...]" (ZEDONG, 2005, p.48). It is close to Nkrumah's formulation where guerrilla warfare is not the end nor is apolitical. Guerrilla is the means to an end, the transformation of society. Mao concludes that "Military action is a method used to attain a political goal. While military affairs and political affairs are not identical, it is impossible to isolate one from the other" (ZEDONG, 2005, p.97).

In this connection between military and political action, Mao's idea is that every fighter must understand the political goals that they are fighting for, and any inhabitant that is under a controlled zone, must be taught the political program of the revolution (ZEDONG, 2005, p.95). Nkrumah follows the same pattern in his *Handbook*, by connecting guerrilla warfare with the masses he aims to the end which are African socialism and Pan-africanism with the support of the workers.

Who is to serve in Nkrumah's guerrilla? The masses (peasants and workers) that give strength to the guerrilla armies (NKRUMAH, 1969, p.68). Nkrumah hopes that the lower classes will join the struggle because they have more to gain with the destruction of neocolonialism. In order to be part of the army, the guerrilla fighter must be checked in three principles: his social origin, his quality as a worker and as a man, and his ideological orientation. After that he goes

through political and military training. It is here that Nkrumah's proposal meets the limit of his consciousness. Women are not taken into account for the military role, only supporting roles. Of all the groups to recruit, cooperatives of women are among the last, behind workers unions, trade unions and student unions (NKRUMAH, 1969, p.69).

It is not central, but there is space for women's role in Nkrumah's revolutionary guerrilla. He evaluates women through the answering of these questions "What is the nature of her links and/or dependence on the imperialist oppressor? How can these links be used to the advantage of our revolution?" (NKRUMAH, 1969, p.90). The revolutionary adherence of women is to be measured in his manual. The set of questions goes on: "In which specific cases can it be said that women in Africa are exposed to a two-fold exploitation as workers (i.e. class exploitation in the Marxist sense of the term), and as women?" (NKRUMAH, 1969, p.91). The rhetoric, although important, is not sufficient for him to work on the questions of African women.

This proposition indicates that he understands women suffering under double standards, in labor conditions and in their role in patriarchal societies. At the same time, he questions the ability of women to be as positively revolutionary as men. While men do not deserve the questionnaire to test their revolutionary adherence, women must pass through it to prove they are worthy.

Nkrumah says that women are wives, sisters and mothers of freedom fighters. It indicates that they are some sort of biologically generated being that exists to care for others, but they have a place in revolution (NKRUMAH, 1969, p.91). They are not regarded on the same level as men. He understands that they are "eligible for the same responsibilities and authority" but training must be "adapted to their capacities and physical strength" (NKRUMAH, 1969, p.92).

Men are supposed to fight, and anything outside this service is a waste. But women should focus on particular activities. Education of children; medical care of fighters; driving vehicles (NKRUMAH, 1969, pp.93-94); distribution of food; sewing of clothing and uniforms; and "Propaganda to subvert the enemy" (NKRUMAH, 1969, pp.94-95). It is at this moment that Nkrumah shows the limitations of his revolution. Women are still thought of as homemakers. He proposes a further inquiry into the situation of the African woman, but he is not able to answer it. Nkrumah only thinks of women in areas that are supporting men.

This is not uncommon in guerrilla manuals that think of warfare as a masculine activity. In Guevara's manual, the role of women was pondered but, just as Nkrumah, he thinks that women are biologically predestined to perform specific tasks. The Argentinian thinks that females can have a destructive effect since young men tend to desire women in the guerrilla. Men's desire for women can be used for espionage by enemies and the solution is to forbid relationships between female and male fighters (GUEVARA, 2004, p.71).



Guevara thinks that women can be dangerous for the guerrillas, but he believes that there is a colonial way of thinking that discriminates against women. Women can fight alongside men, but he believes that there are specific tasks that women are better suited for. The tasks mentioned are “transport of messages and money, cooking, teaching, and organizing schools” (GUEVARA, 2004, pp.56-57). Both Guevara and Nkrumah try to find a place for women in guerrilla, but are not capable of seeing further than their consciousness allows.

A good guerrilla fighter must be male for Guevara and Nkrumah. That is why Nkrumah focuses so much on areas where men are prevalent. He wants to draw recruits from peasants, industry workers, mining and commerce; students; elements of the petite bourgeoisie sided with the lower classes are accepted; even the anti-imperialist or nationalist bourgeoisie. But the most important component of the revolution is the peasant. They are the majority that carries a revolutionary potential (NKRUMAH, 1969, pp.75-76). By pointing the peasant as the backbone of the irregular army, his proposal is similar to Maoist and Cuban guerrillas that have put their efforts on rural areas.

Guerrilla warfare for Nkrumah is a revolutionary war. Not because guerrillas are intrinsically revolutionary. Guerrilla warfare can be used to enhance any political goal. He thinks that guerrilla warfare is a better way for underdeveloped states to fight better equipped enemies. The *Handbook* was not influential for military actions as Nkrumah’s ideas were in the political arena. It was a moment of reflection after being overthrown from his office in which he advocated an armed struggle to solve problems identified by him in Africa.

Nkrumah’s *Handbook* is a source for political, military and historical discussion rich with ideas and information that belongs to the moment of decolonization. Many ideas from the Third World are crossing Nkrumah’s mind at this moment. His conceptualization of the world as it is, and what it should be, let us look at a moment of radicalization in his political formulations.

He offers an explanation of the structures of the world through the concepts of imperialism, colonialism, neocolonialism and the division of the globe between center and periphery. These concepts explain why one must fight while it mingles guerrilla warfare and political goals.

In comparing Nkrumah’s guerrilla proposal with other thinkers of guerrilla, it is possible to draw parallels within the intellectuals of warfare and politics. This proposal for world change is part of the struggles of the Third World in the decades following World War II and Nkrumah was an important part of the radical thinking of the global south.

CONCLUSION

The *Handbook for Revolutionary Warfare* holds pedagogical, historical and political information. It aims at mobilizing and politicizing in order to engage in some form of revolutionary activity. This logic tells us that a revolutionary becomes a guerrilla fighter in Nkrumah's proposal. A guerrilla fighter is a soldier and a political agent for the unity of Africa under African socialism. They (and mostly are men) struggle to destroy a form of living in order to construct another. A guerrilla army is led by men who will bring the revolution, while women play a minor role.

The question of women's liberation is not deeply thought through, but the role of women is not found in many guerrilla manuals. These questions would only emerge with a broader presence later. The main mission of Nkrumah is to challenge the structures of international capitalism, especially on its economic and political terms, while understanding that culture plays a role in it. This is where this *Handbook* shares similarities with other revolutionary works.

The manual is a political manifesto and a manual for irregular warfare. The second characteristic is simple, but Nkrumah organizes basic strategies for wide operations of irregular warfare and serves as an introduction to the subject. The organization of guerrillas in such a huge territory is hardly thought about. Most theorists think of it in specific regions, while Nkrumah thinks of its locality in a broader context of politics and war.

Kwame Nkrumah follows the tradition of other guerrilla fighters and theorizers who have drawn inspiration from revolutionary contexts. From the Russian revolution to the revolutionary struggles of the post-World War II, leftists, within their many branches, have held an intellectual production that explained the use of force to achieve their objectives. Nkrumah is part of this tradition, he explains the world through a Marxist approach to promote revolution through guerrilla warfare. Part of his thought during his Conakry exile is the defense of organized violence to achieve freedom from neocolonialism, seeing its defeat as giving way to African unity under African socialism.

The *Handbook of Revolutionary Warfare* is Nkrumah's only contribution to the field of guerrilla warfare and revolution. The manual may not be militarily strong as it is politically, but it is seminal to understand African radical thinking.



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