



Red Army's Do it Yourself, Nazi Bashing Guerrilla Warfare Manual: The Partizan's Handbook, Updated and Revised Edition 1943

Lester Grau, Michael Gress

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This 1943 third edition of the *The Partisan's Companion* is the last-and-best Red Army manual used to train partisans to fight the Nazi invader. Its usefulness outlived World War II. It was later used to train “third-world” guerrillas in their wars of national liberation in the 1950s–70s and even the Fedayeen guerrillas who fought U.S. and coalition forces in Iraq. Once upon a time, the Boy Scout Manual concentrated almost exclusively on camping, field craft and first aid. *The Partisan's Companion* adds guns, demolitions, hand-to-hand combat, assorted mayhem and multiple forms of Nazi-bashing. It is like the old Boy Scout Manual on steroids.

When Germany invaded the Soviet Union, the Red Army was hard pressed to cope with the “invincible” Wehrmacht. The initial partisan resistance efforts also had problems. No locals were welcome, and the only guerrillas recognized by Moscow were surrounded Red Army units and units of loyal party members who were sent into unfamiliar territory to battle the Nazis. The initial training manual was a reprint from the Russian Civil War, and most of these units were wiped out. Finally the Soviets began recruiting partisans from the local community—but with Red Army officers and secret police agents. The partisan effort improved.

By 1943, it was obvious that Germany was losing the war. The partisan ranks grew as did the training requirements for the partisan commanders. The 1943 edition of the *Partisan's Companion* helped quickly train new guerrillas to a common standard. Besides field craft, it covers partisan tactics, German counter-guerrilla tactics, demolitions, German and Soviet weapons, scouting, camouflage, anti-tank warfare and anti-aircraft defense for squad and platoon-level instruction. It contains the Soviet lessons of two bitter years of war and provides a good look at the tactics and training of a mature partisan force. The partisans moved and lived clandestinely, harassed the enemy, and supported the Red Army through reconnaissance and attacks on the German supply lines. They were also the agents of Soviet power and vengeance in the occupied regions. Soviet historians credit the partisans with tying down ten percent of the German army and with killing almost a million enemy soldiers. They clearly frustrated German logistics and forced the Germans to periodically sideline divisions to hunt the partisans. The partisans, and this third edition, were clearly part of the eventual Soviet victory over Germany.

Les Grau is a retired US Army officer who fought guerrillas in South Vietnam—and left on a stretcher. Consequently, his appreciation for guerrilla tactics came early in his career. The Army later taught him Russian, and his tours of duty included frequent trips to the Soviet Union and elsewhere. He has is the author of three books on the Soviet-Afghan War, including *The Other Side of the Mountain: Mujahideen Tactics in the Soviet-Afghan War* (with Ali Jalali). Mike (Misha) Gress grew up in the wilds of Siberia where everyone's dad, including his own, was a veteran of the fight against the Nazis. He joined the Soviet Army and served in the infantry (motorized rifle) forces, and afterward produced *The Soviet-Afghan War: How a Superpower Fought and Lost* with Les Grau.

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