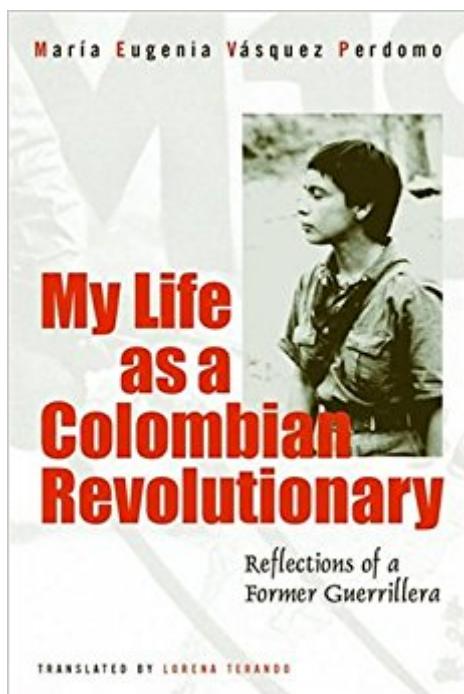


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# My Life As A Colombian Revolutionary: Reflections Of A Former Guerrillera



## **Synopsis**

In *My Life as a Revolutionary*, Maria Eugenia Vasquez Perdomo presents a gripping account of her experiences as a member of M-19, one of the most successful guerrilla movements in Colombia's tumultuous modern history. Vasquez's remarkable story opens with her happy childhood in a middle-class provincial household in which she was encouraged to be adventurous and inquisitive. As an eighteen-year-old university student in Bogota, Maria Eugenia embraced radical politics and committed herself to militant action to rid her country of an abusive government. operations in the 1970s and 1980s and became one of its leaders. She was able to avoid detection for nearly twenty years in the movement because she was both clever and considered too attractive to be a guerrillera. Her vivid narrative brings to life the men and women who were her comrades and conveys their anxiety and exhilaration as they carried out their actions. When she tells of her love affairs with some of M-19's top leaders, she cannot separate romance from camaraderie or escape a sense of impending tragedy. guerrilla movement in a Latin American country, this would be a book well worth reading. But she also gives us an unsparing analysis of what it meant to be a woman in the movement and how much her commitment to radical politics cost her.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

"...gripping... Vasquez Perdomo's work makes a significant contribution to a void in women's testimonial literature in Latin America, describing her personal experiences with the movement's activities so that the reader is moved and informed....the book adds to a collective understanding of

Colombia's bloody history and women's position in it."-The Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education "With sweeping narration, the rebel leader recounts her near-death experiences and exhilarating love affairs as she participated in covert operations against the government, providing a fascinating look at what it was like to be a young feminist within a guerrilla movement."-Latina "My Life as a Colombian Revolutionary is a rare and compelling book. Vasquez Perdomo recounts how a young, middle-class woman became a leader of the M-19, one of the most creative and successful of the Colombian guerrilla movements. She was personally involved in some of the M-19's most audacious actions, including the stealing of Bolivar's sword and the kidnapping of a score of ambassadors to Colombia. I cannot say enough about how successful Vasquez Perdomo is in illuminating the frightfully complex personal and political issues she struggles with."-Charles Bergquist, University of Washington, Seattle "My Life as a Colombian Revolutionary is a fascinating autobiography. Vasquez Perdomo provides an extraordinary insider's account of Latin American youth culture, radical student politics of the 1960s and early 1970s, and the formation of the M-19 guerrilla movement. This is a lively, self-reflective, engaging and humane account of what it meant to be a woman revolutionary in those years. It is a unique, moving document."-Catherine LeGrand, Department of History, McGill University

A gripping memoir of a woman who left middle-class life to become a member of a Colombian militant group

"My Life as a Colombian Revolutionary; Reflections of a Former Guerrillera," by Maria Eugenia Vasquez Perdomo is primarily a guerrilla narrative of Colombia's violent past. To this end, the author provides an intimate understanding of "how" young urban and rural Colombians flock to revolutionary movements. However, this book has two major shortcomings. First, the author fails to adequately explain "why" Colombians turn their back on establishment institutions to promote change. And secondly, Vasquez makes a very feeble attempt to demonstrate contrition for living the life of a terrorist for 18 years. On that note, it is no surprise that the Spanish-language version of this book was awarded the Colombian National Prize for Testimonial Literature in 1998. Colombian readers have a good understanding of the absence of political, economic, social and land reforms inside their country. American readers of this text should be warned to pay close attention to the strong 22-page historical "Introduction" by Arthur Schmidt. Otherwise, they will never completely figure out "why" Colombians join guerrilla organizations. The author fails to give a comprehensive understanding of significant historical events. For instance, Jorge Eliecer Gaitan, the Bogotazo, La

Violencia, The National Front, the controversial 1970 elections and Camilo Torres take a back seat to her day to day anti-imperialism, anti-oligarchy, anti-sectarianism guerrilla activities. Had the author dedicated more time to weave Colombia's complex history to her narrative this would be a benchmark book. Still and all, this is an extremely valuable text. Vasquez is harassed, hunted and tortured by state institutions. She also renounces motherhood twice for her senior leadership position in the M-19 guerrilla organization. Consequently, her explanation of the turmoil on the Colombian urban campus and the era of war for the sake of peace is useful. Moreover, information on legendary M-19 leaders, Jaime Bateman, Gustavo Arias (a.k.a. Boris), Carlos Pizarro, Ivan Marino Ospina, Antonio Navarro, and Alvaro Fayad is priceless. It just would have made more sense for the author to have developed a better "connect" between the revolutionary consciousness and Colombia's long history of state-inspired violence. Bert Ruiz

My wife is originally from Ecuador and her best friend is from Colombia. So, through staying with her friend's wonderful family in Pasto, I have had the opportunity to explore and experience this vibrant country full of some of the most kind and generous people I have ever met. Tragically, Colombia's history, from far into the past until today, has been marred by devastating political violence and warfare. When Maria Vasquez was a young, idealistic student she joined a group of revolutionaries, known as the M-19s, hoping to transform Colombian society. Vasquez is an excellent writer who paints a vivid and compelling portrait of her youthful adventures and political activites. That is why I give this book a high rating. Unfortunately, Vasquez's actions included such atrocities as robbery, kidnapping and hostage taking at a foreign embassy. Obviously, her actions caused suffering to many innocent people. She and other M-19 guerillas also receiving military training in Castro's Cuba and Gadaffi's Libya. In contemporary terms she would likely be called a terrorist. Vasquez does take some responsibility for her actions in the final chapter. But most of the book is a highly romanticized account of her "glory days" as a guerilla, in which little remorse is expressed. In that respect I was disappointed. Still this book has an amazing story to tell and I do recommend reading it. But, sadly, instead of changing Colombia for the better Vasquez and her fellow M-19s only continued Colombia's brutal legacy of political violence and killing. This beautiful country and its people deserve better!

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