

Guerrilla Struggle

and the
Working Class



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GUERRILLA STRUGGLE AND THE WORKING CLASS

The first crucial problem of the revolution and of all class struggle is to correctly and fully assert the leading role of the working class. Because of its economic, political, and historical position, the working class has become the representative of the progress of human society in our epoch, the only class capable of elevating the toiling people to masterhood of their destiny.

Guerrilla struggle is "irregular warfare". It is necessary therefore to understand fully the application of "guerrilla war" tactics to civil strife, civil political action. In this pamphlet the aim is to apply the strategy of guerrilla war to the economic arena. This does not necessarily fall into direct political action but is in fact an aid to the working class in the daily bread-and-butter struggle it is compelled to wage because of class relationship. It is a daily tool but is also political and will develop as changing contradictions force direct political struggle on the working class.

One should not hold the oversimplified view that economic slogans are reformist while only political ones are revolutionary. There may be political slogans with a reformist character and economic ones carrying a revolutionary content. The question is, when, in what connection, and with what aim is a given slogan put forward? A genuinely revolutionary party, one that is unswervingly devoted to the final goal of the revolution, is able, in one way or another, to put the seal of the revolution on all slogans and on all forms of organization and struggle, including those with the faintest political tinge, which are considered necessary for the purpose of mustering the masses when the situation is not yet favourable to all-out revolutionary actions.

Guerrilla action is an essential to the winning of a struggle, to prevent demoralisation and setback and is, in effect, the only course, the only strategy open to us. There is no other way at this time because of all the forces arraigned against us. It becomes imperative to grasp this now and act now. For us, the workers, it is not a tactical question, it is an ideological one; not simply a question of how to win tomorrow's battle but of how to win the war.

All the present struggles being waged by workers in engineering, hospitals, the civil service, among dockers, miners, teachers, students, in all sections of work, are waged against reduction in standards of life and are assuming enormous political significance because of the introduction of corporate measures by the State to impose a reduction in standards of living.

State measures used by the employing class, the Industrial Relations Act, Counter Inflation Act with its various Phases 1, 2, 3, the resurrection of Pay & Prices Boards, the introduction of direct fining of workers pursuing wage demands (all of which are a direct legacy from the Labour Government, now adopted by the Tory Government) show that the struggle is to be long, protracted, guerrilla. 'In Place of Strife', the 'Sixty Day Pay Pause', the proposed fining of workers who sought to set aside the Prices & Incomes Policy in regard to wage claims, and earlier the Prices & Incomes Policy itself, allegedly to beat inflation, were all creations of the Labour Government. Labour politicians, 'leaders' and generals of the T. U. C., formerly almost to a man supporters of earlier Labour Party legislation, neither have the sincerity nor the capacity to meet this assault on the working class. Indeed, they are reduced to a strategy now, among other things, of calling for a General

Strike which, it is wishfully hoped, will compel a Government to retreat or, better still, cause the defeat and collapse of the present government, leading to a General Election; which would only replace one Capitalist Government by another Capitalist Government.

Communists never harbour any illusions and never passively wait for what may come out of contradictions within the enemy's ranks. Moreover, we are aware that in face of action by the people, the hostile forces are wont to strive to patch up their quarrels in the hope of 'closing their ranks' against the revolution. But there is a more fundamental truth: 'Capitalist property disintegrated them, transformed them from allies into savage beasts.' Only the workers themselves can develop the strategy and tactics to defeat the opposing class, the enemy.

LEADERSHIP FROM THE WORKERS TO THE WORKERS

Everyone should realise we are in for a long, bitter and intensive struggle to achieve victory; first in the immediate problems but how much more in the real struggle, the revolutionary struggle for the seizure of power, the overthrow of the class enemy, the Capitalist class, replacing it by the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

This will not happen without the leadership of the Marxist-Leninist Party.

It does not mean, however, that if we assist in the present struggle, we shall be "adopted" by the working class, that they will come to "love" us and when they advance to revolutionary action, remember our role and call on us to lead them. We, the Marxist-Leninists are not the intellectual mentors of the working class. Our knowledge is derived in part from them we are part of them as they of us.

Only in action at the place of work are leaders created. Therefore, we the Marxist-Leninists must seek to lead at our place of work but not in arrogance and at the same time must assist those who fight, those who lead: for we are not exclusive, on the contrary we must assist those who lead to become Marxists and recruits to our Party. It is self evident that there are no other leaders: nor can guerrilla struggle advance and extend without those leaders. From guerrilla struggle to protracted struggle, from protracted struggle to guerrilla war, from guerrilla war to Peoples' War, armed struggle.

Guerrilla struggle is mass struggle. It demands and creates a special kind of leadership and leaders at the point of struggle, hence its nature as mass struggle and its constant rejection by social democrats, right and left alike, who see the struggle in bourgeois terms with a standing army and a General Staff as at Whitehall.

Guerrilla struggle enables those directly involved to control and conduct the struggle. Ultra-left calls for positional struggle, e.g. a General Strike now, are a counsel of despair. They are voices from outside, of those who do not belong, constantly calling, telling others what to do. At best, it is wishful thinking, dogmatism, demanding an overall level much higher than exists. General Strikes are a great weapon, not to be used lightly. In its most dastardly intent, the constant call for a General Strike is a device to usurp the power of the working class. The advocates will say: "We knew they were no good, now we have exposed them, follow us, even worse generals."

We oppose such calls at this time because we must take account of the uneven development of sections of workers. We, the workers, must win, so we must fight to win and moreover retreat at times, to win. The first duty is the preservation of

one's troops. To the ultra-left, politics is the exposure of leaders and the hope of self substitution. It is not the politics of the mass. The enemy, capitalism, is still strong and we are still weak ideologically. There are no other forms of struggle, no alternatives open to us which can lead to advance to victory. We shall constantly extend and improve our methods in the course of struggle, we shall teach each other, learn from practice, our source the working class, their experience our guide.

'Correct political and military lines do not emerge and develop spontaneously and tranquilly but only in the course of struggle.'

'The line is the key link; once it is grasped everything falls into place.'

'Mobile struggle is primary but we do not reject positional struggle where it is possible and necessary.'

This is not a transient war, it will increase, for the attack against us must increase; we must guard against any theory of one swift onslaught by us to victory. Hence the need arises to develop guerrilla struggle, to have this conception of fighting accepted in every place of work, from which will come the recruits for the Marxist-Leninist party and revolution.

We must not be adventurous, leading to defeat with a large number of casualties and widespread demoralisation, nor must we be cowardly opportunists and fail to struggle. There is a willingness to fight by the working class. It is very important at this time of struggle by the working class to assess the struggle and to analyse the way forward.

KNOW YOURSELF, KNOW YOUR ENEMY.

"To win a war, we cannot overstep the limitations imposed by material conditions." In this struggle what are they?

Above all, the Communist Party of Britain Marxist-Leninist. Neither its membership nor its ideological level keep pace with the development of the struggle and at times even the ideological understanding of the working class waging that struggle. Nevertheless, it is the only Party born out of that class, sharing that development. It is not artificially imposed upon that revolutionary force of the working class but is made up of the vanguard of that class.

The political level of the workers makes for self imposed limitation in struggle; they lack the class conscious understanding of the opposing class, the capitalist class. The class enemy is quite clear: its aim is the maintenance of the status quo, the preservation of power, the subjugation of the working class to possess the power. Opposed to this the position is by no means clear. The working class is not embarked on a seizure of power. At this time the struggle they wage is defensive to retain the "power" they possess to live with Capitalism. This is not possible. We understand this now as they will come to understand. For Capitalism to retain its power, it must wage war against the opposing class, the workers. The greater their difficulties, the more vicious their blows. This is their position today. They are the counter revolutionaries of progress. Such a role would condemn the working class to serfdom. Impossible!

The Labour Movement is staffed today by Social Democrats so that its aims are those of Social Democracy, not revolution; this at this time in spite of the zeal and courage of the workers. The Social Democrats are the prop of capitalism because they have permeated our class with the idea of "gradualism" and "reformism", evolution not revolution, and have developed to a high degree the refusal to struggle and, more sinister still, the pretence of struggle, two recurrent elements separate from the

organic development of the class. We can therefore expect to see in the future, as at present, many facets of the class conflict which may appear to be an arming of the class for struggle but which are, in fact, in direct opposition to it.

Because of the pressure of the organised working class, the T. U. C. on March 5th 1973 was compelled to call for a "one day General Strike" straightaway. Small as the demand was, the T. U. C. put it as far away as possible, May 1st. Nevertheless, this was still a gain because from time immemorial in Britain, the T. U. C., the Labour Movement "leaders", the whole Labour Party leadership have steadfastly opposed the call for a stoppage on May 1st.

The enemy of the working class in Britain today is of a very mixed composition. It includes the ultra-left, no less social democratic, who sow division and dismay in the revolutionary army. Some say "all trade unions are bourgeois and their officials betrayers". They seek an artificial division into "red" and "white" workers. Today it is transparently clear that the whole working class is the embryo army, the only army for revolution, with a tremendous capacity to confound, to beat the enemy when and where he is weak, withdraw when he is strong and to harry him when he pursues, supreme tactics of active defence. Their source of knowledge is in the previous struggles of their class and, most important, the experience in the struggle of all sections of workers today.

The ultra-left do not accept this. In their witless arrogance they assume the roles of teachers, guardians, generals, an officer corps who will order the "stupid workers" to die when necessary. The ultra-left think they are the sole source of knowledge, the theoreticians; instead they are like Chauncleer

who stood on tiptoe, closed his eyes and stretched his neck to sing so loud and the fox caught him.

Active defence is offensive defence and this is the key. It is this the ultra-lefts reject. Attack and defence are the basic forms of fight, of learning to preserve our forces and destroy the enemy. The ultra-lefts hate this as much as the bourgeoisie hate it because guerrilla struggle is the natural force which leads to revolution. It is the weapon of the masses. The enemy, left or right, cannot adopt such tactics, cannot afford to adopt them, or the ideological basis required for such a struggle which would inevitably be turned against them. Neither the bourgeoisie nor the ultra-lefts can conduct a guerrilla war, only fight against one. On its highest level, political armed struggle in Vietnam could not be defeated by the most powerful military machine of the bourgeoisie, Imperialist U.S.A. The army of the bourgeoisie is a mercenary army, not an ideological army. The ultra-left possess no army whatsoever; they have the same concept as the bourgeoisie, imposing an ideological concept, theirs, of leadership, and wish to run the working class into a mercenary army to obey order. Both the bourgeoisie and the ultra-left hate and fear the working class leaders developing from the revolutionary struggle of the working class.

It is important to assess correctly the balance of forces for though the working class is ideologically weak and the capitalist class is ideologically strong the capitalists are afraid and do not seek a direct confrontation. Their present strategy is to isolate the vanguard, to cut down the leaders and their greatest victory would be the destruction of the Marxist-Leninist Party but they are prisoners of their own contradictions, they must attack more fiercely. The class relationship must sharpen and they will undoubtedly seek to use the same force, the same weapons, the same repressive laws, the attendant

cruelty and torture that they use in Ireland today through the same mercenary troops. Yes, they are afraid and they have cause to be. Revolution is the main trend in the whole world today. We can relate the experiences of others in the past in higher levels of struggle, revolutionary struggle, in peoples' war.

This is the reverse of terrorism. Revolutionary war is waged by the class, not an individual, not a group. The ruling class employs terrorism.

APPLICATION OF GUERRILLA LINE.

'When the enemy launches a large scale encirclement and suppression campaign our general principle is to lure him in deep, withdraw into the base area and fight him there, because this is our surest method of smashing his offensive.'

Everybody knows that the Industrial Relations Act as an awesome threat of suppression is a dismal failure, a joke. Legislative power to imprison workers, putting the dockers into Pentonville prison, the power to sequester Union funds, and the attempt to take over the Union in the Goad and Langston cases were reduced to devices of retreat. The dockers were released because of the strength of the working class protest. The majesty of the law, originally created to defend the employers and sap the Unions of all fighting strength, was reduced to a joke in the miserable cases of Goad and Langston. In this fray the total result was a loss to the employing class.

Encouraged by Goad and Langston, two more individuals, one of the A. U. E. W. and one G. M. W. U. sought to follow these examples and challenged a basic 100% Trade Union membership.

This was at Thorn, Sunderland. They tendered resignations from their respective Unions, no doubt believing that they would receive the protection of the Industrial Relations Act and might even secure a reward, even payment while not working. The members of all Unions decided not to allow the two individuals into the establishment, nor allow them to be suspended on full pay. The members imposed sanctions and the management laid off the two individuals on minimum rate. The workers would not allow the management to pay the wages and said they would completely withdraw their labour. Following negotiations the two individuals who had tendered their resignations from their Unions made application for reinstatement.

"The Trade Unions concerned having considered the whole situation agreed that the following formula should be accepted by all interested parties as a basis for resolving the dispute.

- a. That the two individuals publicly withdraw all their previous comments and reason for resigning from their Unions.
- b. That we recommend to the respective branches that they give favourable consideration to the two individuals' application for membership back into their respective Union.
- c. Until the whole matter is considered by the branches at their next meetings the two individuals will be on unpaid leave of absence. The matter shall be dealt with by the two branches within seven days from the 10th January 1973.
- d. If all the parties concerned accept these conditions normal working shall resume from the date and time of acceptance."

This is a perfect example of luring the enemy in deep to beat him on the terrain where we are strong for, above all, the law stated that a worker had the right to belong or not to Union and this was designed to shatter the concept of "closed shop" or 100% Trade Union membership. So much for the law!

Because of the growing power of the Trade Unions it became necessary for governments to have recourse to new laws against the workers, believing that through a frontal confrontation against a new law the inherent respectability of the British working class would make them conform. The A. U. E. W. ignored the law and demanded that the State call them to account, to seize its property by sequestration. Goad, an erstwhile member, who had three times been a member and also a member of the T. & G. W. U., on each occasion of his departure being heavily in arrears, sought the affirmation that he was a member of the A. U. E. W. The Union, because of its policy decisions not to appear before the Court, not to recognise the law, which sought to outlaw Trade Unions, ignored the whole proceedings and there followed two fines of £5,000 and £50,000; in total £67,000. With the new law, the government had the right to seize the property of the Union, imprison the E. C. of the Union for disobeying a law, and take over the Union and its administration. Cowards, as always, the Government used a stockbroker, part of the Establishment, to surrender to the Court the value of the fines without permission of the Unions, avoiding a physical and frontal confrontation. Regarding Langston, a further case of luring the enemy, he did not want to be a member. Who cares? Presumably the Chrysler workers did for they said: "You needn't be a member but we don't work with you." The employer faced with this dilemma, decided better have the willing mass than the unwilling individual. He went

through the I. R. C. claiming an unfair industrial practice. Donaldson in his sagacity found that his court could not deal with such a conundrum. So much for the law!

Whilst not original, for there were notable examples among railworkers and miners in the 20s and 30s and earlier, factory occupations are a fresh example of the ingenuity of workers in pursuit of their militancy. As isolated examples they cannot succeed. However, they are of themselves examples of guerrilla struggle. They were possible because of their isolation. The bourgeoisie did not conduct a frontal attack against them through the police or troops, preferring to leave them in semi-legality rather than challenge for fear of the accruing of solidarity of other workers. So, whilst heroic examples they are only lessons; they could not succeed of their own, but they are a tribute to the growing militancy. The most rooted, the most earthy, began in the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders because it was a struggle for the preservation of shipbuilding in Scotland. The closure of the Upper Clyde was the death knell to shipbuilding in that region of mass unemployment. This was clearly understood by all workers in that struggle. Because all the working class did not come to their aid, the leadership of the struggle was seized and betrayed. Trade Union, self-styled leaders, hawked around the world the sale of the Upper Clyde to a Swedish shipbuilder, to Onassis, and finally to a Yank, Marathon. Occupation and sit-in at this time, which require the maximum support and solidarity, can never be more than a holding action.

Three examples of recent struggle give special lessons to all: the miners' strike, hospital ancillary workers and Fine Tubes.

The miners' strike of 1972 is a perfect illustration of guerrilla technique in what would seem to have been set up for positional struggle or war. It involved a single industry — mining, a single employer — the N. C. B., and one union — the N. U. M.

It was expected to be an all out strike with frontal conflict against the employer and the Government.

Yet it was precisely the taking over from the union 'leadership' by the miners themselves (especially the younger ones) which ensured victory.

The rapidly developed flying picket and mass picket at the point of use of the product evoked widespread solidarity of other unionists at loading depots and power stations involving transport workers, maintenance engineers and electricians, which forced retreat and defeat of the Coal Board and the Government and the pretence of a 'special case'.

It was the ingenuity and energy of younger miners, bringing the issue to all other trade unionists at the place of work through such methods as picketing, which not only brought forth from their fellow workmates direct solidarity, but the support and sympathy of the public generally, and produced an understanding among all others of the justness of the struggle.

Such understanding displayed by the rank and file miners contrasts with the opportunist adventurism and posturing of their spokesman the President subsequently, who first called for either a General Strike against the Government or acceptance of Government stricture, and then advised retreat on the May Day (1973) strike.

This proves generals are found and created on the battlefield, not in political parlours.

The hospital workers' strike is equally an example of guerrilla technique, properly conducted, but against impossible odds. Nothing short of recanting by the Government of its Counter Inflation Act would suffice for victory. These heroic workers were caught by the calendar of events, making retreat the only final correct tactic.

Gallant as was their struggle they were not able to secure the solidarity of fellow trade unionists, much lip service being given but little if any material and fraternal assistance.

They were left to struggle alone.

Nevertheless the response generally of other hospital staff, nurses and doctors, was one of allies in the struggle not blacklegs.

For the Government, a pyrrhic victory, since the workers' sacrifice meant the Government's true defeat. Lessons to be learned are that the Government has no real care for a Health Service or for those who work within it. The Hospital service has always been greatly overburdened and on point of breakdown.

The hospital ancillary workers were for the first time in real struggle, open class conflict, but they were still too gentle, not ruthless enough, ever conscious of the social, humane nature of their work.

A public which did not actively support the health workers (in its own interest) is saying, no less than the Government, that the health worker does not deserve a living wage but the wages of malnutrition, that a Health Service cannot exist since it fails to provide sustenance for those who work within it, but instead makes them and their families candidates for hospital treatment.

It was a gallant struggle, not wrong but unsupported. The workers have learned at least that they who labour owe no loyalty, and but for their principles can seek employment elsewhere for a living wage, for never elsewhere could they receive less than as ancillary hospital workers.

Fine Tubes was a struggle which demonstrates complete inflexibility and demonstrates too the danger of throwing masses into struggle either too late or too soon. A failure also to avoid a battle of attrition in which we lose more than we gain.

In June 1970, after interminable negotiations with this Yankee-owned firm, 165 trade unionists withdrew their labour, leaving behind some 30-40 scabs. So far so good.

By the end of June, the company wrote to all workers dismissing them unless they returned on July 1st. Here was time to take stock and analyse the new situation, not because one is afraid of an employer or of dismissal, but because of a changed position in battle.

For almost immediately the employer began considerable recruitment of new workers (scabs) at much better conditions. The strikers loyal almost to a man did not return. Now only some 35-37 remain actually in the struggle, but it is not correct to say they are still on strike. On the contrary their withdrawal from the work does not affect the employer economically. In truth they are locked out.

When it was clear that new workers were ready to break the picket line, then new methods were demanded. There should have been a return in order to fight within as a fifth column if necessary, Retreat is no heresy for we never cease to struggle and can most effectively do so at the place of work.

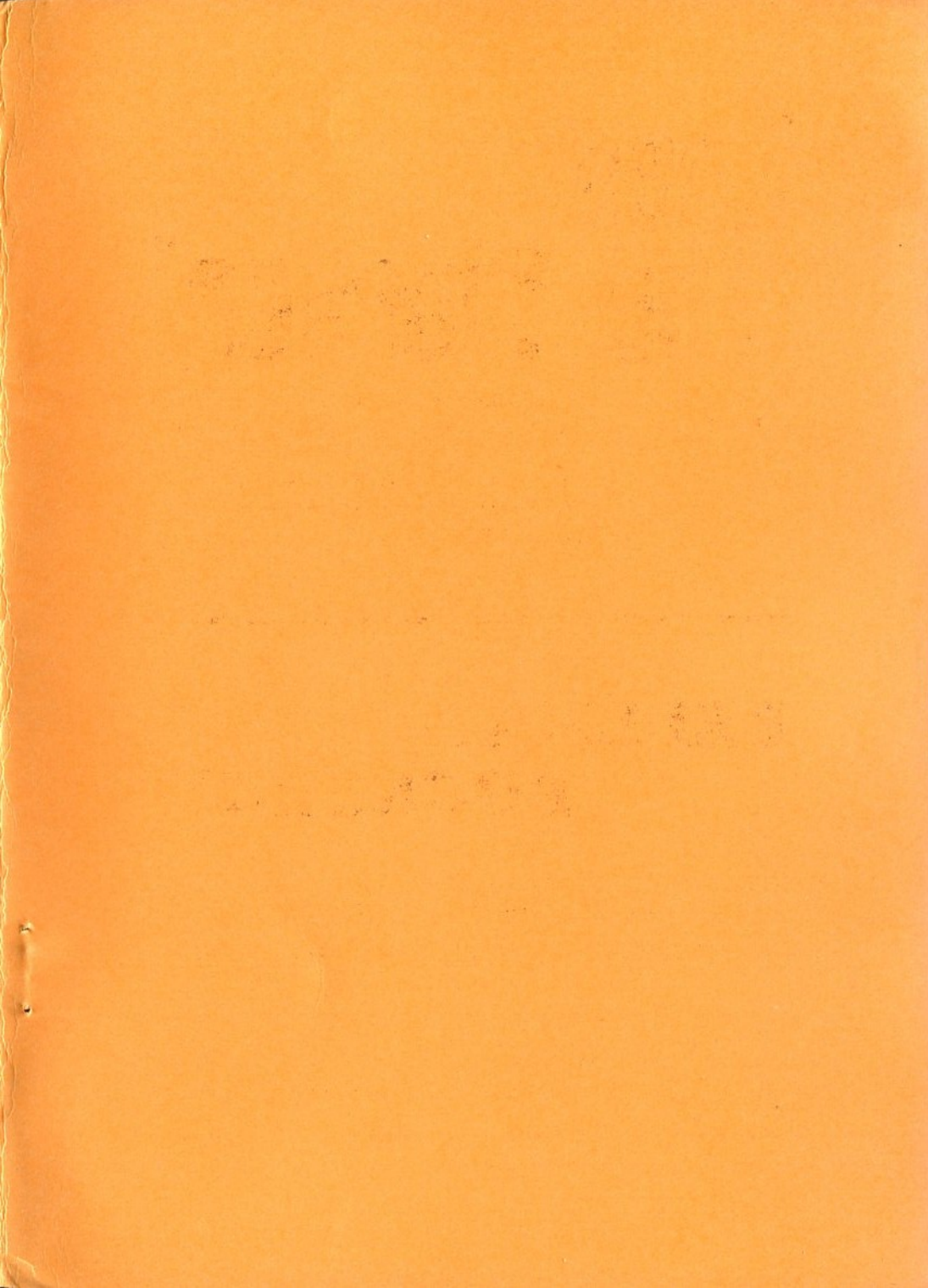
There was recognition of the employer's strength in the call for blacking, which in the same breath recognises that production is proceeding. Blacking at best is ancillary, a demand for solidarity from other workers — properly so — but nevertheless acknowledging that the employer is succeeding in maintaining production and is neutralising the effect of the strike.

Most of the strikers have sought employment elsewhere. Let us hope they will carry new lessons with them to teach others, for the struggle they will have to continue, and experience is the best teacher.

CONCLUSION

Antaeus, son of mother Earth, whenever thrown to the ground in battle came up 10 times stronger from the contact with the Earth that nourished him and gave him life. Hercules managed to defeat him in combat by raising him off the ground and slowly, as he got weaker, crushing the life out of him.

Such would be the fate of a Marxist-Leninist party which lost contact with the working class. Guerrilla struggle in the economic arena was invented by the British working class; through this the first Trade Union movement was established. A guerrilla line with Marxist-Leninist leadership in China and Vietnam was the foundation for Socialism in those countries. The Marxist-Leninist guerrilla line for struggle in Britain today, as laid out in this pamphlet, is of and for the working class. So long as our Party hews closely to the Class which gives it life, it will grow and the Class will grow in ideology with it.



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