

# SOCIALIST

## ORGANISER

Trotsky  
on  
China

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### UNILATERALISM OUT, ANTI-UNION LAWS IN

# Kinnock listens to David Owen



**L**abour movement activists ache to kick Thatcher out of office.

Only a hopeless fool or a socialist sectarian as arid and rigidly out of touch with reality as an anchorite monk could live in Britain now and not want Labour to win the next election.

That is the dominant mood in the labour movement now. It is the mood which allows Neil Kinnock and his friends to do what they are now doing in the 'Policy Reviews' being carried out by Labour's National Executive.

What they are doing is little short of swallowing Thatcherism whole. Neil Kinnock and his friends have accepted the 'Thatcher Revolution' — which in fact is a counter-revolution against everything the labour movement has achieved this century.

Labour's goal now, the goal of Neil Kinnock and Labour's leaders, could be summed up as Thatcherism with a human face. It is not socialism, nor serious reform of capitalism, nor even a comprehensive restoration of the fabric of the welfare state torn into tatters by Thatcher and her crew over the last decade.

It is just Thatcherism humanised — if a policy which proposes to keep Britain's nuclear weapons can honestly be said to have anything positively human about it.

Neil Kinnock now sounds so much like David Owen that Owen, the man who ratted on Labour and helped the Tories win the last two elections, has been pouring fulsome praises over Kinnock's head.

SDP MP John Cartwright, one of the Labour renegades who helped Owen make Britain safe for Thatcher, now says he could rejoin

the Labour Party with a clear conscience. The measure of the Labour Party now is that Neil Kinnock could probably welcome Cartwright back in, and David Owen too, with a clear conscience.

Kinnock and his friends have trimmed and reshaped their consciences so that they can more easily live, and, they hope, rule, in a Britain shaped by Margaret Thatcher and the vile brand of Toryism she embodies. They are telling Thatcher that her spirit will still go marching on even after the Tories are replaced by a Labour government.

Thatcher has won her victories for her class for many reasons. One of them was that the combativity of the working class was damped down by slump and unemployment.

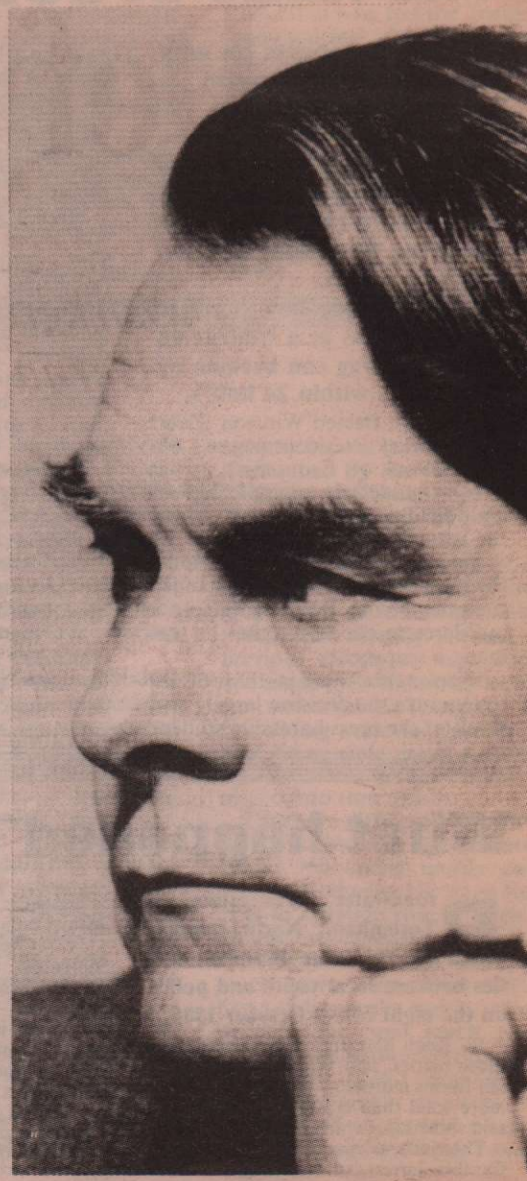
Now that combativity is rising again, spurred on by rising inflation and a fall in the numbers unemployed. The dockers, railworkers, engineers and others who are now once more beginning to flex their industrial muscle represent a different response to Mrs Thatcher's New Order.

As yet it is a limited response. But it is a far better and more healthy response.

If Kinnock's message to the Tories is that Thatcherism will survive Thatcher, the message of the new mood in industry is 'Don't count your victories until you have won the war'.

### More on the Policy Reviews

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## ORGANISE TO DEFEND LABOUR POLICIES



# How to fight the anti-union laws

**EDITORIAL**

Last Friday, a judge ruled the London Underground workers' strike out of order.

Members of the rail union NUR had voted 7-1 for a strike. But the judge said the ballot paper was badly worded.

Port bosses are taking the dockers' union to court to have their strike ruled unlawful too. Their argument is that whatever the ballot papers say the strike is actually political, against the Government's abolition of the Dock Labour Scheme.

Almost every strike is unlawful these days. Workers can and do defy the law — health workers' and postal workers' strikes were unlawful, but never came to court — but defy it we usually must to do anything effective.

There are several laws, which between them outlaw 'secondary' picketing and 'secondary' strike action (ie action with workers not directly in dispute with a particular company); outlaw mass pickets; outlaw 'political' strikes; make the closed shop extremely difficult to enforce; make spontaneous or quickly-decided action impossible by insisting upon the slow process of balloting; interfere in various ways with the autonomy of trade unions. They have exposed unions to the threat of having all their resources and assets seized.

For the most part, the trade unions allowed these laws to be put into effect without serious opposition. The Industrial Relations Act of the early 1970s was made unworkable by trade union action. These current laws seem far more formidable.

When the 1982 Act was introduced, there was small-scale trade union agitation, but absolutely no action. Individual unions had their assets seized without significant or effective solidarity action from other unions or the TUC.

The defeat of the NGA print



Photo: John Smith, Profile.

## Marching to defend jobs

Over 3000 people turned up on the May Day march through Kirkby (Merseyside), giving a huge boost to the Birds Eye workers fighting

the closure of their factory. Unemployment in Kirkby already stands at 23.5 per cent. Three out of four people are on state benefits.

union by Eddie Shah at Warrington in late 1983 was the major turning point. If the TUC had even begun to mobilise, it could have defeated Shah early. He was a small employer. But the TUC left the printworkers in the lurch.

That defeat could have been reversed if the TUC leaders had rallied to the miners in 1984-5. The Tories were still cautious, rejecting David Owen's calls for more use of

anti-union law against the miners. But the TUC did nothing; the miners were beaten; and that consolidated the laws further.

To a large extent the laws are now accepted as a fact of life by the trade unions. Rules on balloting are widely observed; union leaders bend over backwards to avoid legal (and so financial) penalties.

Today the search for ways around the law is, in principle, sen-

sible and necessary. It is understandable if trade unionists, at rank and file or leadership level, look at the mighty battalions that have been defeated by the law, and think twice about risking the same fate.

But looking for legal loopholes and escape routes has extremely limited possibilities for success. The laws are now far-reaching and difficult to bypass.

Unofficial action is more difficult

to hit with the law. There have been lots of 'unlawful' short unofficial strikes without legal action. But serious, long unofficial disputes are a different matter.

The trade union leaders will be pushed (by the courts) to put a stop to the strike. Remember the P&O dispute: just the National Union of Seamen declaring the strike unofficial was not enough. The union leaders have to convince the judge they were actively trying to stop the strike. And an unofficial strike means strikers will not get strike pay where otherwise they might.

Getting round the law by unofficial actions is all right for short protest actions, but no answer in long disputes.

So very often there is a stark choice: the unions either accept their action will be ruled unlawful, pull out the stops to win, and mobilise solidarity; or they surrender without a fight.

If the unions fight, we can win. A single small union on its own can't beat the courts; but the whole TUC, or several big unions, certainly can. Consider the alarm created by the prospect of two or three big groups of workers striking simultaneously over pay this summer. The unions still have great power, if they will mobilise it.

Victory can never be guaranteed. But at worst defeat after a fight is better than abject surrender.

Now there are better conditions for fighting than there have been in a long time. There is a revival in strike activity — the biggest since the defeat of the miners.

The best time to defy the law is when the trade union movement looks strong. Moreover, the union laws are increasingly unpopular: even people who supported their introduction now feel the Tories have 'gone too far'. And in the wake of their Vale of Glamorgan fiasco, the Tories must be worried about popularity.

So the time to defy the law is now. If the Tories can be forced to back down once, the laws will be increasingly useless to them. Such an achievement will not be easy. But the trade union movement has no choice.

## A wage demand to unify

By Martin Thomas

The bosses' paper, the Financial Times commented on Monday 8 May on "the disruptive impact the recent rise in inflation has had on some two-year pay agreements which included a form of inflation-proofing".

Workers at Premier Brands in Birkenhead had got an increase of 9.45 per cent under a deal which had promised them a pay rise of two per cent more than the January inflation rate. At De Smet Rosedowne workers got 8.9 per cent because their agreement committed the bosses to raise wages by the

March inflation rate plus one per cent.

The rise in inflation which makes inflation-proofing of wages so 'disruptive' for the bosses also makes it more important for the unions. The fact that price rises could continue high for some time, or even accelerate, underlines both these messages. Since the stock market crash of October 1987, the risk has been clear of a drastic new slump, which could swiftly wipe out all the limited gains that some sections of workers have made in the last few years.

'Escalator clauses', or a 'sliding scale' — committing bosses to pay rises, preferably monthly, in line with the cost of living — are an old trade union demand. It's time to give them more prominence and more urgent consideration.

A sliding scale cannot replace the

fight for real increases. London Underground workers are fighting for catch-up rises to make good the whittling-away of their real wage levels over recent years; the sliding scale is not a substitute for that fight, either. But it can very well be fought for, and even won, alongside those demands.

Many countries — from Italy to the United States, from Australia to Belgium — had forms of sliding scale for many years, covering major industries or even all workers.

The sliding scale is most relevant today in countries like Poland, where rapid inflation is pushing the working class into desperate poverty. It was a major issue in the recent talks between the government and Solidarnosc.

In the end the Solidarnosc leaders agreed to 'pay' the government's limited liberalisation by limiting sliding scale pay rises to only 80 per cent of the price rise. Militants in Solidarnosc have protested strongly.

Even where it is not such an urgent and central issue, however, the sliding scale can be important because it is a unifying factor in wage struggles. It is a demand that can be raised by and for all workers.

The essential idea is that workers should assert some conscious control over our standard of living, rather than being the helpless victims of market forces which allow

us some gains in booms and then throw us down again in slumps. Control is also important over the calculation of the cost of living index. Official government figures can grossly underestimate the real inflation rate for most workers. Sliding scale agreements should be linked to inflation indexes worked out by the labour movement.

The sliding scale can and should be raised not just as an element for trade union claims, but as a demand for legislation by a future Labour government.

Instead of blathering about how a Labour government "won't be a soft touch for the unions", Labour's leaders should be committing themselves to safeguard working class living standards by a sliding scale which underpins all wage agreements and also safeguards state benefits against inflation.

Sometimes the sliding scale demand is not very useful. Obviously it has little bite when inflation is low.

In 1972-3 a sort of half-sliding scale — threshold agreements — was pushed by the Tory Government. The Tories imposed wage controls, and tried to ease them in by saying that workers would get increases above the decreed maximum at the rate of one per cent for each one per cent the inflation rate rose above a 'threshold'.

The idea of threshold

agreements was launched not by the Tories but by the TUC, in early 1972; but the Tories then used the formula to try to tie the unions in to wage controls.

The Tories were trying to damp down, obstruct, diffuse and divert a great wave of industrial militancy which had already broken their previous efforts at wage controls and made their Industrial Relations Act unworkable. To agitate for a full sliding scale in place of their half sliding scale, instead of opposing the whole affair, would have played into their hands.

Times are different today. In fact their threshold agreements of 1972-3 rebounded nastily on the bosses, producing big wage rises in 1974 as inflation rose to levels that no-one had expected.

Since then bosses have been much more wary about anything like a sliding scale; and its value for workers has been much clearer. Over the years since the runaway inflation of 1974-5 and 1979-80, bosses in many countries have fought hard to get rid of sliding scale agreements dating from the '50s or the '60s.

Working class confidence is reviving today; but we do not have anything like the great industrial offensives of the early '70s. Demands which can begin to knit together unity and map out a solid defensive position are at a premium. The sliding scale is one of those.

'The emancipation of the working class is also the emancipation of all human beings without distinction of sex or race'

Karl Marx

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# Why 'Communism' in China has meant a police state

"They're not Communists, but feudal old guys", a Chinese worker was recently reported as saying about China's ruling bureaucrats.

Yet men like Deng Xiaoping were revolutionaries in their own way. They spent nearly 30 years in battle against the imperialist powers which dominated China and against China's landlords and top capitalists. They led a huge revolution, based on the struggles of millions of peasants, in 1949.

Their present position is not just the result of old age and the privileges of power. The totalitarian regime, the stifling of free political life, against which China's students and workers are now protesting, was initiated straight away after the revolution in 1949.

Why? The decisive transformation of the outlook, social affiliation,

and political character of the Chinese Communist Party leadership took place between the 1920s and the 1940s.

In 1927-8 the Chinese workers' movement was crushed. False policies by the Chinese Communist Party, imposed on it by Stalin, contributed to this defeat. A revolutionary opportunity was missed.

The Communist leaders fled the cities and established themselves in the countryside. There was no real central state power in China at that time. By mobilising the peasants for rent reductions or land reforms, the Communist Party was able to win local power in sizeable areas and build up a formidable military machine.

That was the start of the process which led to the revolution of 1949. It also transformed the revolutionaries. Divorced from the working class, placed at the head of big military

and administrative machines, and educated in the ideas of Stalinism, which were increasingly the ideas of an exploitative bureaucratic ruling class, these "Communists" moved very far from the ideas of workers' liberty.

In the article from which we publish extracts here — "Peasant War in China and the Proletariat" written in 1932 — Leon Trotsky commented on this transformation at an early stage.

Trotsky did not anticipate that the Maoists would take full power in China, crush the old capitalist class, and establish their own totalitarian state. Another 17 years of great changes in world politics were to pass before that could happen. Yet as early and 1932 Trotsky was able to highlight some of the factors and processes that would later prove decisive.

The peasant movement has created its own armies, has seized great territories, and has installed its own institutions. In the event of further successes — and all of us, of course, passionately desire such successes — the movement will become linked up with the urban and industrial centres and, through that very fact, it will come face to face with the working class. What will be the nature of this encounter? Is it certain that its character will be peaceful and friendly?

At first glance the question might appear to be superfluous. The peasant movement is headed by Communists or sympathisers. Isn't it self-evident that in the event of their coming together the workers and the peasants must unanimously unite under the Communist banner?

Among the Communist leaders of Red detachments there indubitably are many declasseed intellectuals and semi-intellectuals who have not gone through the school of proletarian struggle. For two or three years they live the lives of partisan commanders and commissars; they wage battles, seize territories etc. They absorb the spirit of their environment. Meanwhile the majority of the rank-and-file Communists in the Red detachments unquestionably consist of peasants, who assume the name Communist in all honesty and sincerity but who in actuality remain revolutionary paupers or revolutionary petty proprietors. In politics he who judges by denominations and labels and not by social facts is lost. All the more so when the politics concerned is carried out arms in hand.

The true Communist party is the organisation of the proletarian vanguard. But we must not forget that the working class of China has been kept in an oppressed and amorphous condition during the last four years, and only recently has it evinced signs of revival. It is one thing when a Communist party, firmly resting on the flower of the urban proletariat, strives through

the workers to lead a peasant war. It is an altogether different thing when a few thousand or even tens of thousands of revolutionaries, who are truly Communists or only take the name, assume the leadership of a peasant war without having serious support from the proletariat. This is precisely the situation in China. This acts to augment to an extreme the danger of conflicts between the workers and the armed peasants. In any event, one may rest assured there will be no dearth of bourgeois provocateurs.

In Russia, in the period of civil war, the proletariat was already in power in the greater part of the country, the leadership of the struggle was in the hands of a strong and tempered party, the entire commanding apparatus of the centralised Red Army was in the hands of the workers. Notwithstanding all this, the peasant detachments, incomparably weaker than the Red Army, often came into conflict with it after it victoriously moved into peasant guerrilla sectors.

In China the situation is radically different and moreover completely to the disadvantage of the workers. In the most important regions of China the power is in the hands of bourgeois militarists; in other regions, in the hands of leaders of armed peasants. Nowhere is there any proletarian power as yet. The trade unions are weak. The influence of the party among the workers is insignificant. The peasant detachments, flushed with victories they have achieved, stand under the wing of the Comintern. They call themselves "the Red Army" ie, they identify themselves with the armed forces of the Soviets. What results consequently is that the revolutionary peasantry of China, in the person of its ruling stratum, seems to have appropriated to itself beforehand the political and moral capital which should by the nature of things belong to the Chinese workers. Isn't it possible that things may turn out so that all this capital will be directed at a certain moment against the workers?

Naturally the peasant poor, and in China they constitute the overwhelming majority, to the extent they think politically, and these comprise a small minority, sincerely and passionately desire alliance and friendship with the workers. But the peasantry, even when armed, is in-

capable of conducting an independent policy.

Occupying in daily life an intermediate, indeterminate, and vacillating position, the peasantry at decisive moments can follow either the proletariat or the bourgeoisie. The peasantry does not find the road to the proletariat easily but only after a series of mistakes and defeats. The bridge between the peasantry and the bourgeoisie is provided by the urban petty bourgeoisie, chiefly by the intellectuals, who commonly come forward under the banner of socialism and even communism.

The commanding stratum of the Chinese 'Red Army' has no doubt succeeded in inculcating itself with the habit of issuing commands. The absence of a strong revolutionary party, and of mass organisations of the proletariat renders control over the commanding stratum virtually impossible. The commanders and commissars appear in the guise of absolute masters of the situation and upon occupying cities will be rather apt to look down from above upon the workers. The demands of the workers might often appear to them either inopportune or ill-advised.

Nor should one forget such 'trifles' as the fact that within cities the staff and offices of the victorious armies are established not in the proletarian huts but in the finest city buildings, in the houses and apartments of the bourgeoisie; and all this facilitates the inclination of the upper stratum of the peasant armies to feel itself part of the 'cultured' and 'educated' classes, in no way part of the proletariat.

Thus in China the causes and grounds for conflicts between the army, which is peasant in composition and petty bourgeois in leadership, and the workers not only are not eliminated but, on the contrary, all the circumstances are such as to greatly increase the possibility and even the inevitability of such conflicts; and in addition the chances of the proletariat are far less favourable to begin with than was the case in Russia.

The Russian Narodniks used to accuse the Russian Marxists of 'ignoring' the peasantry, of not carrying on work in the villages, etc. To this the Marxists replied: "We will arouse and organise the advanced workers and through the workers we shall arouse the



peasants." Such in general is the only conceivable road for the proletarian party.

The Chinese Stalinists have acted otherwise. During the revolution of 1925-27 they subordinated directly and immediately the interests of the workers and the peasants to the interests of the national bourgeoisie. In the years of the counter-revolution they passed over from the proletariat to the peasantry, ie, they undertook that role which was fulfilled in our country by the SRs when they were still a revolutionary party. Had the Chinese Communist Party concentrated its efforts for the last few years in the cities, in industry, on the railroads; had it sus-

tained the trade unions, the educational clubs and circles; had it, without breaking off from the workers, taught them to understand what was occurring in the villages — the share of the proletariat in the general correlation of forces would have been incomparably more favourable today.

The party actually tore itself away from the class. Thereby in the last analysis it can cause injury in the peasantry as well. For should the proletariat continue to remain on the sidelines, without organisation, without leadership, then the peasant war even if fully victorious will inevitably arrive in a blind alley.

## A film about growing up

Belinda Weaver reviews 'The Year My Voice Broke'

Small towns are pretty much the same anywhere; people who are 'different' get a hard time. "The Year My Voice Broke" is set in the southern tablelands of New South Wales in 1962, but it could be any small town in Australia, or in England or in America. Only the details are different.

Freya is sixteen. Bold, assured, a free spirit, she hates the confining morality of smalltown life which encourages and applauds promiscuity in men, while condemning it in women. When she falls for Trevor, a football-playing school mate, she can't see any reason why she shouldn't go to bed with him. What's stopping them, after all, except other people's disapproval. Freya is used to that. People have always thought her wild.

But the townspeople view unmarried sex rather differently from childish pranks. In their eyes, Freya has crossed the thin line between being a 'nice girl' and a slut. She's fair game now for any man, they think, whether young, old, married or not. If a girl 'does it' with a man outside the protection of marriage, then in the eyes of the townspeople, she no longer deserves respect.

Only Freya's friend Danny thinks differently. Danny cherishes a hopeless passion for Freya, his former childhood playmate who has grown up faster and left him behind in the uncertainties of adolescence.

Danny, a slight, sixteen year old boy whose father runs a pub, is the film's narrator as well as the main character, so we get his thoughts and comments on what's going on both before and after it happens.



William Dafoe as an agent investigating the murder of civil rights in another recent release, 'Mississippi Burning'.

Danny is different from the rough and tumble boys in his school class. Unlike them, he's a thinker and a dreamer, and he's sensitive too.

He wants to protect Freya because he loves her, but realises he's helpless. Freya has to make her own mistakes.

Growing up films are usually pretty tedious, dealing as most of them do with some dreary boy's masturbation fantasies. But this one isn't. It's touching and funny and real.

There are many laughs in the film, but it's moving too, since it deals with everyday things — growing up, growing away from people, making painful decisions, leaving home — in a totally unselfish way. It's certainly better than anything Hollywood has ever done about growing up.

## Anti-social behaviour

### LES HEARN'S SCIENCE COLUMN

The increase in carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere is well-known, as is its possible effect of warming the Earth. Less well-known is that CO<sub>2</sub> is just one of several gases capable of having a greenhouse effect (GHE).

- Others include:
- nitrous oxide, formed when fuels are burnt in, for example, car engines;
  - chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), better known for destroying the ozone layer;
  - ozone itself, when formed in city smogs;
  - halons, used in some fire extinguishers;
  - methane, main constituent of natural gas but released from a wide variety of other sources too.

Together, these gases have as much effect as CO<sub>2</sub>. Clearly, tackling the GHE means cutting down on all greenhouse gases.

The main problem in this is methane. Through present at a very low level in the air, it is far more effective at keeping in the sun's warmth — 25 times worse than CO<sub>2</sub>. Growing at 1% per year, methane may overtake CO<sub>2</sub> as a greenhouse gas in just 50 years.

So where does methane come from? It seems a major source is the

insides of cows! To be more precise, the source is the activity of methane-producing bacteria in cows' guts.

Two billion years ago, such bacteria were the dominant form of life on Earth. Then, the atmosphere contained little oxygen. But as the modern type of photosynthesis got under way and oxygen levels rose, the methane producers, to whom oxygen is a deadly poison, were forced into oxygen-free refuges.

Such refuges were stagnant swamps and bogs, the muddy bottoms of ponds and lakes, and... the guts of herbivores such as termites and cattle. There, they digest cellulose, releasing food for themselves and their hosts, and releasing methane.

Cows release about 200 grams of methane (1/5 cubic metre) per day in their farts. Since there are some 1300 million cows on Earth, about 100 million tonnes (Mt) of methane are 'released' by them per year.

Other sources of methane include:

- leaks from coal mines, oil fields, rocks and gas pipelines;
- emissions from the 6.5 million square kilometres of bogs, marshes and rice paddies (up to 150 Mt from the latter alone);
- emissions from the rear ends of termites (5 Mt);
- the burning of forests, and grasslands.
- rotting rubbish tips (70 Mt per year).

The total is about 500 Mt per year. Much is removed by oxidation but perhaps 50 Mt are added to the atmosphere net per year.

## The Shores of Amerika

By Mick Ackersley

In the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich there is a darkened, centuries-old globe showing the world as it was known to the learned in the late 15th century, before Columbus sailed to the Americas.

On it there is only sea, and no other

land, between Europe and the coast of Asia or 'the Indies'. Columbus knew that the world was round, but he vastly miscalculated its size and its distances, and therefore did not see the possibility of an unknown land mass between Europe and Asia.

Columbus landed on the islands of Hispaniola (Haiti and Santa Domingo) and Cuba, never on the mainland. He died believing he had found a way westward to the Indies, and not

knowing that he had found a new, unanticipated, world. It was Amerigo Vespucci who sailed up the coast, in about 1500, and mapped it as a new, unexplored, continent. Thus: America.

The globe at Greenwich shows with rough accuracy the world as it was known to Europeans before Columbus and Vespucci sailed — a world without America. Yet America was nevertheless there, looming across the future of humankind.

He trusted, Josef, misnamed it 'Amerika'.

3

They organised the strong people they had found there:

And Josef told them they lived in Amerika  
And that they were free, unlike the people of care  
And sorrow back there. And then Josef made  
Amerika

A place of slavery such as Europe never was.  
Those who resisted slavery, Vladimir's crew too,  
Were defamed as warriors in slavery's cause  
And killed in millions like beasts in Josef's private  
zoo.

As the waves of death engulfed the people, the land  
blushed  
Dim red with spilled blood, and the dead were piled  
high  
And deep as the bitter saragasso sea. Hushed  
With awe and terror, the people bowed to the big lie;

And to rule by the Brigand King, their would-be  
God, 'Our Sun'  
Who curbs all that moves and thinks, plying the  
butcher's knife;  
Who rules as an ignorant Killer-Pope, turning the gun  
On Spartacus, and on Kepler too, cauterising life.

4

So the Promethean heroes who outfaced  
Blind nature won an old, and not a new world;  
And Josef disgraced our Amerika; displaced  
The maps and stole the name on that red unfurled

Banner for that bleak land where he enslaved and  
maimed.  
And we stand dreaming on the shore; becalmed,  
coward band —  
Our own Amerika unknown, unfound, unclaimed —  
Chained by bleak Necessity's iron countermand.

And some who'd sought escape because our world is  
foul  
Turned back again, and grew to hate that savage  
place,  
That false Amerika, and loved again our old ghoul,  
And they curse those who quest still, as a mad  
malicious race.

And there are those who say no such place can ever  
be;  
No other Amerika is hidden in a far sea;  
There is no Amerika beyond Amerika;  
That it can not now be. But we shall see, we shall  
see,  
That our Amerika still looms before humanity,  
It will rise like the Indies out of the rough sea.  
It will rise like the Indies out of the rough sea!

And we will sail from old Necessity to the Land  
Of Freedom; we will conquer our own Amerika!  
We will build a world with neither slave nor ruling  
brigand;  
We will seek and shape and make our own Amerika!  
Amerika, O Amerika, my unfound land.

Asked who his heroes were, Marx said "Spartacus and Kepler". Spartacus represented the elemental revolt of the slaves; Kepler was the struggle for knowledge, for science. Kepler lived in the 16th century and spent his life working over the observations made by Tycho Brahe in an attempt to prove Copernicus's contention (from the late 15th century) that the Sun, not the Earth, was the centre of the solar system. A half-medieval man, who earned a living as an astrologer, Kepler went wrong again and again because he believed that the Earth had to go round the Sun, if it did, in a perfect circle, because God created the movement and everything to do with God is perfect. Thus he sought a perfect circle, where in fact the movement of the Earth round the Sun is elliptical. He persevered, and eventually worked it out. A hero more truly befitting our own condition than Karl Marx's!

"America, O America, my new found land".  
John Donne.

To sail out of Old Necessity into the warm lands  
Of Freedom, and settle in our Amerika;  
To find a world with neither slaves nor ruling  
brigands,  
To seek and shape and make our own Amerika!

1

Brave Vladimir Columbus has sailed out west  
Into the stormy unknown much-charted seas  
To find our Amerika. He goes to test and quest  
For land out there. The others bide and shirk. He  
sees

His chance and takes it: his strong craft could sail to  
Hell  
And back again; his crew have been through the  
hardest schools;  
The map-makers have done their work — now  
practice will tell  
The true mariners apart from the wishful fools

Who stand on the shore and dream of the unfound  
land,  
Afraid to launch their craft out on the raging main,  
Though they too know the next new world is now at  
hand  
And must be found and won: chains to lose, a world  
to gain!

And Vladimir knows this tide will go, if they stand  
In frozen fear, and strand them there on the shores  
of Europe:  
So, with straining sails and bodies stretched and  
broken, his band  
Of heroes fought the waves and winds until the ropes

Had lumps of flesh clinging to them, and the waves  
blushed  
Dim red with spilled blood, and the dead floated  
thickly  
On that bitter saragasso sea; until, hushed  
In awe and terror they came to Amerika, logically

There where it should be. But in fact it was a world  
Unknown, uncharted, almost undreamed of, they'd  
found:  
A raw unripe land. But bold Vladimir unfurled  
His red no-quarter banner there on that bleak  
cold ground.

2

They'd found an unexpected place, an Atlantis in  
Reverse, set down in the wide sea between the old  
World and Amerika, and thought it was the unseen  
Land: though lost, they thought they'd set the future  
to unfold

In that barren place! — Less free of Old Necessity  
Than our old world; where want which withers  
human life  
Was sharper, keener, stronger, more savage; where no  
City  
Of God could be built amidst the inescapable strife:

The wars of all against all; the battle for place;  
The war of those on top to stay where they are, there:  
The savage war of the haves, that war without grace,  
To keep down the have-nots — class war stark and  
bare.

"Amerika, O Amerika, my new found land!"  
Vladimir never knew it was not Amerika,  
He died unsure what land it was they'd found, and a  
brigand



# SOCIALIST

## ORGANISER

Build the action to beat Moodie

# Strike to defend jobs!

DSS workers walk out as officials attempt to sabotage jobs campaign

By a London DSS Moodie striker

Against a backdrop of increasing Tory attacks on the civil service, members of the clerical grades union CPSA are meeting to discuss policy at our annual conference in Blackpool.

Delegates at the DHSS section conference pushed through an emergency motion criticising the right-wing Section Executive for their undemocratic and biased running of the recent ballot on the Government's 'Operational Strategy' (computerisation of Social Security offices with 20,000 job losses).

In the ballot, workers were forced to choose between accepting 'Operational Strategy' or going for an all-out strike with no preparation. They narrowly accepted the deal.

But the debate and vote at conference clearly showed that union members had voted against an immediate unprepared all-out strike, rather than for 20,000 job cuts.

The following day, DHSS delegates passed an emergency motion calling for a ballot on paid strike action in the first London 'cluster' of Social Security offices to be affected by 'Moodie' (relocation of benefit work to other areas of the country) and for an all-London reps' meeting to be called at the close of conference.

On Monday 8th, delegates and observers to the full union conference heard reports of more and more London 'Moodie' offices voting to join the unofficial one-day strike on Tuesday (see report). Conference floor protests forced the National Disputes Committee to meet to decide whether to support a ballot for paid all-out strike action in the first 'cluster'.

They deferred their decision pending a meeting of the Section Executive, and right wingers on the Section Executive quickly started questioning the validity of the emergency motion.

On Tuesday 9th the Section Executive recommended a strike ballot — but not along the lines of the motion passed at Section Conference. Instead, they wanted to ballot all

offices in Greater London on an unpaid all-out strike. There are many 'non-Moodie' offices in Greater London, and this is an obvious attempt to sabotage action.

We attempted to force the National Executive to allow a striker from the Ealing cluster to address the full conference. Union president Marion Chambers refused to allow it and threatened to close the conference down.

As I write, we don't know what the National Disputes Committee will say about the Section Executive's call for a strike ballot.

A striker will address the NDC, he will be arguing for them to implement the terms of the emergency

## China: build a solidarity campaign!

By Cheung Siu Ming

After the vast and largely peaceful demonstrations in Beijing on 4 May, the struggle in China has entered a

new phase.

The regime has made one further concession by allowing largely accurate reports of the events in the Chinese news media. One section of the march consisted of Chinese journalists shouting 'No more lies!'

Premier Zhao has made reassuring noises to overseas financiers about the "reasonableness" of some of the students' demands. There is still some speculation that Zhao, who is on the reformist wing of the bureaucracy, might be scapegoated like Hu Yaobang two years ago. However, the hard-liners must have been thrown into some disarray when they learned last week that the threat of outright repression failed miserably to dent the demonstrators' audacity.

And the regime's low-profile tactics may have had some success. The demonstrators do not have another clear focal point for protest, and the promise of some concessions has divided the student movement.

The large majority of students, it seems, have returned to classes, to await the regime's response to their demands, and militant minorities like the Beijing students have been left somewhat exposed.

Nevertheless it would be mistaken to think that the whole wave of protest will now gradually wind down. Students returning to classes are developing their newly-formed organisations, and debating the lessons of recent events.

They have stepped back because they realise that they do not have the strength, political clarity, or organised links with the workers to win a head-on confrontation with the regime. Although severely embarrassed and lacking any credibility among the masses, the Chinese Communist Party still has enormous reserves and a massive repressive apparatus.

It will bide its time and aim to carry out a mopping-up operation later against the new layer of student leaders, just as it has done before.

The key task in the coming period for the students is to maintain and build their independent organisations, and to encourage groups of workers to do likewise.

Socialists outside China can give many forms of support. Twinning student unions overseas with their Chinese comrades is the most obvious one.

The Campaign for Socialist Democracy in China is contacting Chinese student societies and student unions in the London colleges, with the aim of building for a public meeting and developing solidarity work.

Labour Party and trade union branches are urged to pass motions of support, invite speakers, and send donations to the campaign, which could do with some funds.

The campaign can be contacted c/o CIAC, 68 Shaftesbury Avenue, London W1 (01-836 8291).



Ellis fiddles while jobs burn

## The battle is on

Unofficial walkouts greeted the arrival of 'Regional Support Teams' when they appeared at Ealing DSS office in London this Tuesday 9th May.

The walkouts included all the offices in the Ealing 'cluster' including Southall which has been described as a weaker office. In fact after reps held a meeting to get over the arguments the vote was

40-0 for strike action with just 2 abstentions.

Support for the action spread further afield. 10 out of 11 offices came out in London North and other non-Moodie offices joined the action as well. Walkouts took place as far away as Manchester.

One striker summed up the mood well "We've done this to give the DHSS Section Executive a kick up the backside and get them moving".

## College joins tabloid witch hunt

Chris Rose was arrested on Monday 8 May for a protest stunt when Princess Anne visited his college.

The bodyguards who grabbed him soon found that what he had with him was nothing more alarming than a water pistol — but he was arrested and has been suspended from college.

Chris tells the story.

I was arrested about 100 yards away from Princess Anne, brandishing a water pistol, after I had shouted the words, 'Education for the masses,

not the ruling classes!'

I was arrested for possession of a firearm and attempted breach of the peace, kept in a cell for three and a half hours, strip-searched, and questioned. I was released later along with another protester, Joseph Hughes, who had been arrested almost simultaneously on another part of the campus without my knowledge.

The story was all over the tabloid press on Tuesday 9th. The vice-principal summoned me to his office and suspended me from the college, which means I can't sit my finals, I have to move out of my room, and I mustn't set foot on

campus.

A total over-reaction! And I've been released without charge to appear at the police station on 19 June.

The college should not be allowed to witch-hunt in such an outrageous way. Is it a coincidence that Joseph Hughes, who was arrested in similar circumstances but has never been involved in political activity on campus and is not a socialist, has not been suspended?

Messages of support to: Chris Rose, c/o Royal Holloway and Bedford New College Student Union, Egham Hill, Egham, Surrey TW20 0EX.

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