

SOLIDARITY

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The Communist Party

Is there a fork in the British Road ?

The I.Q. Industry

Knocking the stuffing out of intelligence tests

Ireland

Nationalism and working class history

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Cover picture; Victorious singing ends the Communist Party's Special Congress in May of this year, at which hardline Communists were defeated decisively by the Eurocommunist faction. Photograph by Sheila Gray/Format.

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Publishing history. The present Solidarity Journal is the latest in a line of magazines produced by the Solidarity Group and stretching back to the early sixties. Solidarity for Workers Power, first in this sequence, was founded in 1960 and ran to 89 issues. This was succeeded by the nationally produced Solidarity for Social Revolution which ran to 16 issues and was in turn succeeded by the current journal. Our publishing history is complicated further by the existence in the sixties and early seventies of six or seven regional Solidarity magazines, among them those produced by the Scottish, South Wales, and North Western Solidarity groups; and by the publication of the shortlived, nationally produced, Solidarity for Self Management.

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AS WE SEE IT

PARTY POLITICS

Catti Calthrop



Beyond Eurocommunism

The British Communist Party has been taken over by self-styled 'Eurocommunists'. Many libertarians view the occasion of leninists falling-out as a time for revolutionaries everywhere to rejoice; others cautiously welcome any inching away from stalinism. Have the changes in the CP gone far enough? Paul Anderson doesn't think so, and here he tells why.

IF ANYONE had suggested in 1975 that in ten years' time a monthly magazine published by the Communist Party would be making the intellectual running on the British left, nobody 'in the know' would have been able to resist a snigger.

At that time, the CP had the air of a corpse which had been

decomposing for thirty years. It was losing its membership rapidly; its ideology seemed neanderthal; and its practice consisted largely of bureaucratic manoeuvrings within a few trade unions. Nothing about the CP was remotely appealing. And yet in 1985...bright young (well, fortyish) boys and girls, wearing expensive glasses and chic knitwear and calling

themselves 'Eurocommunists' (a term which went out of fashion on the Continent several years ago), have revamped the party magazine Marxism Today; and even the Financial Times recognises it as pivotal to current left debates.

What's more, these Eurocommunists have - with a little help from CP apparatchiks anxious to dump some 'awkward comrades' - removed the Stalinist old guard (the 'Tankies') from positions of influence within the party (though the Tankies still control what used to be the Party's daily newspaper, the Morning Star).

Rivalry between diehards and Eurocommunists

It is too soon to tell whether the Eurocommunist takeover of the CP and the success of Marxism Today will reverse the decline in CP membership. There are nevertheless signs that the 'new look' CP will prove attractive to a wide range of people - those who find the Labour Party too bureaucratic and traditionalist, the varieties of Trotskyism too authoritarian, workerist or simplistic and the peace or women's movements lacking in broad political perspectives. At first sight, the CP of the Eurocommunists seems flexible, intelligent and modern, determinedly civil libertarian, committed to democratic pluralism and feminism. It seems to have abandoned the worst of workerism and pro-Sovietism.

Libertarian socialists can only welcome the re-thinking within the CP. But there are good reasons to believe that this process has some way to go before any self-respecting libertarian socialist could consider completely trusting the Party.

First, the Eurocommunists have at no time questioned the organisational principles of the

'democratic centralist' Leninist party. Indeed, they beat the Tankies and expelled their leaders from the CP in an essentially democratic centralist power struggle. The Tankies were convicted of breaches of party discipline - they had committed the 'crime' of not following the leadership's 'line'.

Not one Eurocommunist has bothered to ask whether this is the right way to go about politics. Not one has raised doubts about the right of leaderships to define 'lines', let alone wondered aloud whether radical politics really is a matter of the formulation of 'lines' which, if correct, the masses will follow. In such circumstances, it is rather difficult to believe in the Eurocommunists' stated commitment to the creation and maintenance of a culture of genuinely plural discourse on the left.

Second - and, it has to be said, consistent with this - the Eurocommunists have failed to engage in anything like an adequate critique of the regimes of 'actually existing socialism'.

They have certainly raised doubts about the human rights record of Soviet-type societies; they have provided (lukewarm) support for opposition movements in such societies (on condition that these do not 'overstep the mark'); and they have criticised certain 'errors' in Soviet foreign policy (such as the invasions of Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan).

But they have refused to analyse critically and systematically the harsh social reality of 'actually existing socialism': instead, they clutch at straws, hoping against hope that one or another change of leadership, one or another official hint of 'reform from above', will somehow lead to the triumph of the 'good aspects' over the 'bad aspects'. Even though

this is preferable to the Party's position at the time of the Hungarian Uprising of 1956 - when the CP cheered as the tanks rolled in - it remains lily-livered and simplistic. Perhaps more important, it does nothing to dispel suspicion as to the sort of 'socialism' the CP would bring about if it ever had the chance.

Political limitations of Eurocommunism

Third, the Eurocommunists' abandonment of the old 'workerism' is a rejection merely of the way the old-style CP, by giving almost exclusive priority to jockeying for position in the trade union bureaucracies, ignored many important issues outside the sphere of production. The Eurocommunists, in other words, see the battle for office as just one activity for good Communists. They have offered neither a critique of the ideology and practice of bureaucratic corporatist union politics, nor an alternative model of workplace politics (though this is hardly surprising given their reliance for their majority in the CP on such figures as Mick McGahey).

This simply will not do. If we are to develop an adequate workplace politics (which we must, even if we reject workerism) we have to understand the ways in which the interests of trade union bureaucrats (even those on the 'left') and the interests of those they claim to represent often conflict. We need to emphasise the importance of direct democratic control of workplace struggle by those immediately involved. And we have to go beyond the demands for 'more jobs and more money' which characterise traditional trade union militancy - forcing onto the political agenda projects for massive reduction in working time, the disassociation of income from productivity, the self-management of production, and the transformation of productive

techniques. This will not be an easy task: but that is no reason to shirk it.

Fourth, the Eurocommunists' medium-term strategy of creating a 'broad democratic alliance' to defeat 'Thatcherism' is rather less exciting than its proponents would have us believe. Insofar as the Eurocommunists are arguing that the new right's attempts to make its ideology the common sense of the age should be fought against on all fronts they make a sensible point. And their emphasis on a plurality of oppositional social movements and the need for coalition building among these are also to be welcomed (with the proviso, of course, that the Eurocommunists' continued commitment to leninism makes their enthusiasm for pluralism rather unbelievable).

Unfortunately, their idea of the possible basis for such a coalition is extraordinarily wide of the mark. Because they identify the problem as 'Thatcherism' they cannot but end up (in spite of their Gramscian rhetoric) seeing the apotheosis of their political project as everyone-to-the-left-of-Ghengis Khan 'uniting to kick out the Tories'. Now the Tories are very nasty and it would be nice to kick them out. We should not, however, misidentify the problem; just as we stress that 'you can't blow up a social relationship', we have to stress that you can't vote one away either. 'The problem', in other words, is not 'the Tories', but something deeper; which we can formulate as our lack of control over the decisions that fundamentally affect us. Rather than attempting to unite the social movements around a simple anti-Toryism, we should be emphasising the potential for a far more radical unity based on a common refusal of powerlessness in everyday life and the project of generalised self-management.

PARTY POLITICS

Taking the British road



In a further attempt to crack down on indiscipline over 'The Morning Star', British Communists staged an emergency congress in mid-May. To get in and out, delegates were forced to run the gauntlet of members already expelled over the issue (see picture). Nino Staffa, a member of the Italian Communist Party, expresses here his sadness at the way his British comrades have behaved. We print this article not because we agree with it — we don't — but because it throws light from an unusual angle on this dispute.

MANY PEOPLE on the left find the current bitter struggle inside the Communist Party not only amusing but also further proof of the righteousness of their views. I believe, however, that what is going on inside the CP should

worry everybody who thinks of themselves as being on the left, since it is symptomatic of the way politics is conducted in this country in all parties and political groupings.

In the CP a vicious fight has

been waged between two factions with fundamentally opposing views and models of socialism. Both models have their attractions because they are based on the experiences of, loyalties to, Communist Parties in other countries, and the policies adopted are defended by each faction with even more fervour than the originators of those policies would care to use. Hence we have the phenomenon of 'Eurocommunists' who know their Gramsci by heart, holiday in Italy every year, and take in the Unita Festivals, but who haven't noticed that the Italian CP (PCI) stopped using the term 'Eurocommunist' about five years ago.

On the other hand, we have the pro-Moscow faction (the 'Tankies'), who defend the Soviet Union's past policies with even more enthusiasm than the Soviets do themselves. So while relations between the CPSU and the PCI have been improving over the last few years, despite the strong attacks on Moscow by the Italians over issues such as Poland and Afghanistan, the pro-Moscow faction of the CPGB is still showing a remarkable Paisleyite fervour in upholding the view that all evil comes from Rome.

The Euros are mostly influenced by the politics of 1968 and student politics of the sixties and seventies. They have worked hard to get their progressive views on feminism, gays, blacks and youth accepted by the Party, with much opposition from the Tankies, who rolled out the old chestnut of these issues 'being a deviation from the class struggle'. The Euros have analysed 'Thatcherism' as being a new right wing phenomenon in British politics, which calls for the building of broad alliances to combat this government's reactionary policies.

Predictably, the Tankies have replied that there is no such thing as Thatcherism; class

struggle is the only answer to this "new phase of Toryism". What we face, they have claimed, "then [i.e. 1926] as now" is "a crisis of capitalism". As for the policy of building broad alliances, the Tankies have been charging the Euros for several years with wanting to drag the CPGB into the SDP.

At the recent Special Congress of the CP, the Eurocommunists swept the board. Leading Tankies were expelled from the Party; and all Tankies were removed from the executive committee. They now control only what used to be the party newspaper, the Morning Star.

The reason it came to this between Euros and Tankies is that

WHO'S WHO ?

Eurocommunists



Self-styled 'British Roaders' the Eurocommunist faction controls the weekly newspaper Focus (UK circulation 3,500) edited by ex-Morning Star man Paul Olive, and monthly magazine Marxism Today (UK circulation 10,500) edited with breathtaking opportunism by Martin Jaques. Operating out of the party headquarters at 16 John Street ECL, the Euros are led by General Secretary Gordon McLennan (inset) and, since May, the entire Executive Committee.

WHO'S WHO?

Hardliners



The hardline Communists control the party's daily newspaper, the Morning Star (UK circulation 16,000), and operate from the paper's offices at 75 Farringdon Road EC1. Key protagonists are Mary Rossner, Secretary of the Peoples Press Printing Society (the trust which manages the Star), and the paper's editor Tony Chater, and deputy-editor Dave Whitfield (inset). The May congress saw Chater and Whitfield's expulsion from the party confirmed by 166 votes to 76, and 166 to 77.

inside the CP there has been a breakdown of the fundamental mechanism of a Communist Party, 'democratic centralism'. Neither side felt able to debate their differences in their local branch meetings or elsewhere, and the decisions of Congress or the leadership were by and large not accepted as binding by the whole party, because the losers (often the Tankies) did not feel that they had been given a fair hearing. The reason for this is simple: there is no tradition of political debate in this country - there are only victors and vanquished. If the vanquished are not totally obliterated they will continue to indulge in factional activity.

As far as I am concerned, the

current situation, total hostility between the Morning Star and the CP, is absurd, and whoever allowed things to get into this state should be sent packing. The party leaders failed to lead, and even now are being led themselves by the victorious Eurocommunists. I can't help feeling, however, that if the other lot had won Gordon McLennan would have carried on as General Secretary quite happily.

Having met people on both sides of the political divide in the CPGB I am saddened by the whole affair. Many worthy comrades have been forcefully drawn into one faction or another and hence prevented from working together where previously they had fought side by side on a whole host of initiatives. In NALGO, for instance, Euros and Tankies worked together very well to produce a coherent 'Broad Left' policy supported by the non-Trot left in that union. After the expulsion from the CP of John Beavis (currently Metropolitan District Secretary of NALGO and a leading Tankie), a whole area of work is potentially threatened and open to the ravages of both the Trots and the old NALGO right wing.

To take another example, in Tottenham a very good campaign was organised by the local CP branch (which included several leading Tankies) to 'Save the Prince of Wales Hospital'. They managed to mobilise local churches, kicked the local Labour Party into life over the issue, worked with community groups, and so on, in the best manner of building broad alliances. Yet most of the same Tankies' factional in-fighting consisted of bitter criticisms of the Euros for their policy of 'building broad alliances'.

Why didn't people learn from all this? Perhaps it is because the two sides now hate each other on a personal level; when hate is deeply ingrained, any excuse for factionalism will do, and any policy will do.

DODGY LOGIC

Science as social control

In the first installment of a two-part article on the use of intelligence testing as a means of social control, Petr Cerny shows how American racists used IQ tests to stem immigration.

LIKE THE MARXISTS, the mythologisers of science claim to have an objective method for determining the truth or otherwise of a phenomenon, be it physical, biological or social. However, unlike marxism, science has shown that in certain respects it can 'deliver the goods'. This is reflected in the profound difference between the popular conceptions of marxism and science. Clearly, any ideological attack that can claim to have mustered the force of science behind it poses a very potent threat to those under attack. Lenin and others tried to do this by constructing the edifice of scientific socialism. The Right, in recent times, has not tried to be scientific at one step removed; they have used so-called scientific research directly to bolster their ideological position. Nowhere is this clearer than biology.

I will not say anything more in this article about the traditional left's attempts at mystification. Instead, I will show how the right perverts human endeavours and achievements for its own ideological ends.

First let me make my own position clear. I think that science is one of the most human of endeavours. A puny, weak collection of individuals dares to say that we can understand the universe; we can and will know what happened in the first millionth of a second of the origin of the universe; we will know why one blob of jelly turns into a frog, why another,



superficially similar, turns into a human, and why a third turns into a cancer. But, and it is a big but, science is performed by human beings. So it too is subject to the preconceptions and prejudices that its practitioners carry with them.

Some scientists are far to the right. They actively use their science to further the aims of the right. Others are politically asleep, and so can be manipulated by their peers. In this article I want to concentrate on one specific area, intelligence, as a



1. Voleur piémontais.



2. Misdea.

Four 'born criminals' from the pages of Cesare Lombroso's L'Uomo Delinquente (The Criminal Man) of 1876. Lombroso, an Italian criminologist who lived between 1835 and 1909, brought about a shift in criminology from a legalistic preoccupation with crime to a 'scientific' study of criminals. It is not difficult to see in his now discredited ideas the seeds of several subsequent fads and (continued across page)

case study to show how the right can and does use science as a social weapon.

Intelligence tests and social control

The idea of attempting to measure intelligence was developed by the French psychologist Alfred Binet at the turn of the century. He thought that by being able to measure mental abilities he would be able to help handicapped children. Binet had no theoretical underpinning for his tests; they were essentially a scientific hodge-podge. His famous dictum was "It matters very little what the tests are, so long as they are numerous". (L'Année's Psychologique, 1911,) The parameter defined by Binet was mental age. A child was given tasks of increasing difficulty until it reached its limit. The level of that limit defined its

mental age. Binet, though, was always careful not to claim that he was measuring a human absolute. "Intelligence", he said, "was too complex to capture with a single number". He also warned, "we speak of a child of eight having the intelligence of a child of seven or nine years; these expressions if accepted arbitrarily may give rise to illusions".

The transformation of Binet's efforts, which had the noble intentions of helping backward children, into a social assessment system that could be used to condemn or condone - the 'intelligence quotient system' - took place in the United States. This transformation of intelligence testing into a social weapon rests on two fundamental fallacies that run through all right-wing biological determinism: a 'vulgar hereditarianism' and 'reification'.



3. P. C., brigand de la Basilicate, détenu à Pesaro.



4. Incendiaire et cynède de Pesaro, surnommé *la femme*.

(from facing page) ideologies, from phrenology through eugenics to hereditarianism. Lombroso believed that certain individuals are born criminals, or atavistic criminals — biological throwbacks to a primitive stage of human evolution. He also suggested that criminals can be recognised by certain physical characteristics. Ironically his work encouraged a more humane and constructive treatment of convicts.

Scientists are, of course, human. Many, because of educational advantages, come from the ruling social groups and share their prejudices and their anxieties. They carry into their science the convictions of their social groups. These convictions then become confused with their science. Prejudice is reinforced by the power of science. Rationality itself become another area that the ruling class expropriates for itself, denying it to any other group.

The hereditarian fallacy

The hereditarian theory of IQ is an American product. It originated in the United States at a time when jingoism was rampant, when there was a rising tide of cheap, and sometimes politically radical, immigrant labour fleeing from the destruction of post-First World War Europe, meeting indigenous American racism.

The hereditarian fallacy is not the simple claim that intelligence is to some degree inherited; I am sure that it is. It is very hard to find any aspect of human physiology, anatomy or performance which has no genetic component at all. The fallacy is based on two unjustified and false implications drawn from this observation.

The first error in the hereditarian position is the equation of 'inheritable' with 'inevitable'. To the layman this might be a pardonable mistake, but in a scientist it is an unforgiveable conceptual error. To a biologist (though not apparently to a psychologist) the term 'inheritable' refers to the passage of traits or tendencies along family lines as a result of genetic transmission. It says nothing about the range of environmental modifications to which these traits are subject. Genes do not make specific bits and

pieces of a body; they code for an array of forms possible over a range of environmental conditions.

For example, there is an inherited condition called phenylketonuria (PKU). Children born with this condition are poisoned by their mother's milk or any high-protein food, and, if left untreated, their brains deteriorate after birth until they are irreversibly brain-damaged. In the past, such children had to be institutionalised. Now, though, if a PKU child is born, it is fed a special diet and the 'inherited' brain deterioration never occurs. An environmental modification prevents the mental consequences of this genetic condition. Similarly, a partially inherited low intelligence may be subject to extensive improvement through appropriate education and training; or it may not. The mere fact of inheritability does not allow any conclusion to be drawn as to the effect of environmental influences.

The second falsification adopted by the hereditarians is a gross methodological error. In this error lies the major political impact of hereditarian ideas. It consists of a logically invalid extension of the inferred inheritability of intelligence levels, and is a confusion between within- and between-group testing. Studies on the inheritability of intelligence obtained by means of the traditional means of comparing scores of relatives, or contrasting scores of adopted children with both their biological and adopted parents, are of the within-group type. That is, they permit an estimation of inheritability within a single coherent population, e.g. white middle-class Americans. The false step lies in assuming that if heredity explains a certain percentage of variation among individuals within a group, it must also explain a similar percentage of the differences in average IQ between different groups e.g.

white middle-class Americans and black working-class Americans. But variation between individuals within a group and differences in mean values between groups are entirely separate phenomena.

An example of this is human height, which has a higher genetic component than the highest values quoted for IQ. If we take two separate groups of males, the first with an average height of five feet ten inches, who live in a prosperous European town, and the second with an average height of five feet six inches who live in a starving third-world village, we will find that heritability is about 95 per cent in each case. All this means is that tall fathers will tend to have tall sons. It says nothing as to whether or not better nutrition in the next generation would raise the average heights of the villagers relative to that of the Europeans.

Likewise, even if intelligence does have a high genetic component within a group, no conclusions are possible as to 'relative genetic intelligence' between groups, such as whites and blacks. Any difference between the means may still be only a reflection of the environmental disadvantages suffered by blacks.

Political consequences of hereditarianism

Almost all the early American psychologists were convinced hereditarians. They had an enormous impact on American political life in the early years of this century: but their biggest 'success' was the 1924 Restriction of Immigration Act.

The story begins with the administration of IQ tests to all draftees into the American army during the First World War - the largest ever piece of data gathering in the field of

intelligence testing.

The psychologists drew two conclusions from the data they had gathered: first that northern blacks were brighter than southern, and second, that recent immigrants to the USA were dumber than older waves of immigrants. This was taken to mean that the 'genetic stock' of the American people was being corrupted by inferior south- and east-European genes that were flooding into the United States after the first world war. The explanation of the data is a text-book example of the way in which 'science' can be harnessed to support the prejudices of the ruling group.

Prepared under the auspices of the National Research Council

NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE TESTS

By M. E. HAGGERTY, L. M. TERMAN, E. L. THORNDIKE
G. M. WHIPPLE, and R. M. YERKES

THESE tests are the direct result of the application of the army testing methods to school needs. They were devised in order to supply group tests for the examination of school children that would embody the greater benefits derived from the Binet and similar tests.

The effectiveness of the army intelligence tests in problems of classification and diagnosis is a measure of the success that may be expected to attend the use of the National Intelligence Tests, which have been greatly improved in the light of army experiences.

The tests have been selected from a large group of tests after a try-out and a careful analysis by a statistical staff. The two scales prepared consist of five tests each (with practice exercises), and either may be administered in thirty minutes. They are simple in application, reliable, and immediately useful for classifying children in Grades 3 to 8 with respect to intellectual ability. Scoring is unusually simple.

Either scale may be used separately to advantage. The reliability of results is increased, however, by reexamination with the other scale after an interval of at least a day.

Scale A consists of an arithmetical reasoning, a sentence completion, a logical selection, a synonym-antonym, and a symbol-digit test. Scale B includes a completion, an information, a vocabulary, an analogies, and a comparison test.

Scale A: Form 1. 12 pages. Price per package of 25 Examination Booklets, 2 Scoring Keys, and 1 Class Record \$1.45 net.

Scale A: Form 2. Same description. Same price.

Scale B: Form 1. 12 pages. Price per package of 25 Examination Booklets, Scoring Key, and Class Record \$1.45 net.

Scale B: Form 2. Same description. Same price.

Manual of Directions. Paper. 32 pages. Price 25 cents net.

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*Experimental work financed by the General Education Board
by appropriation of \$25,000*

WORLD BOOK COMPANY

YONKERS-ON-HUDSON, NEW YORK
2126 PRAIRIE AVENUE, CHICAGO

An advertisement for Louis Terman's intelligence test. The concept of 'intelligence quotient' was adapted by Terman from the ideas of German psychologist William Stern.

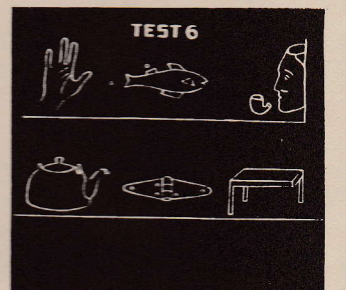
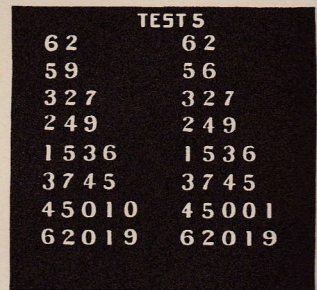
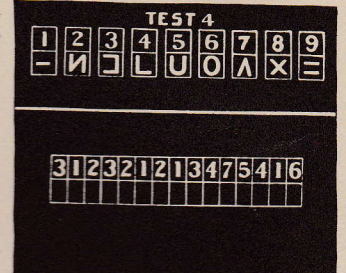
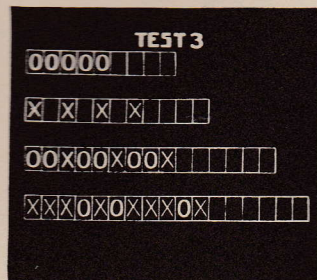
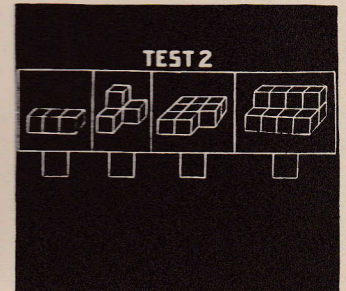
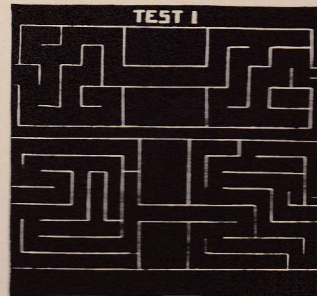
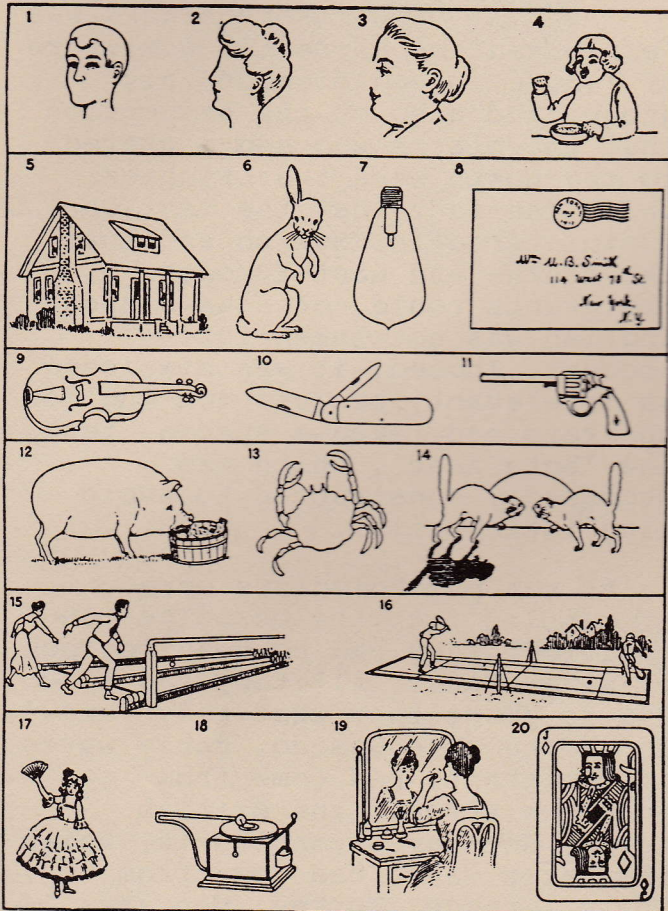
Needless to say, in the United States of the 1920s, the ruling groups were of Anglo-Saxon or Nordic descent, as were the psychologists commissioned by the US government to undertake the research.

The data on northern blacks was 'explained' by a greater admixture of 'white' blood amongst this group, and also by the assumption that the blacks who had migrated to the north were the brighter ones. The fact that the test was administered in English and that the south- and east-European immigrants could not always speak English was not taken into account. Indeed, it was dismissed as irrelevant, because non-English speakers had taken a special test, the 'beta test', which was supposedly constructed to avoid linguistic skills.

As the psychologists were proceeding from the hereditarian position, they had no need to look at side issues. All they had to do was to prove that what they 'knew' to be the case was so. Early waves of immigrants had come from northern Europe, the British Isles, Germany, Scandinavia, while the later waves had come from Italy, Greece, Turkey, Hungary, Poland, Russia, and other Slavic countries. In the analysis of the data, Jews were astonishingly listed as "Alpine Slavs". The net political consequences of this piece of 'research' was the Restriction of Immigration Act. In the buildup to the passing of the Act such passages as the following, by Henry Osborn, President of the American Museum of Natural History, were written.

"I believe those tests were worth what the [first world] war cost, even in human life, if they serve to show clearly to our people the lack of intelligence in our country, and the degrees of intelligence in different races who are coming to us, in a way which no one can say is the result of prejudice...We have learned

Examples from the notorious Alpha and Beta Tests developed by RMYerkes, and in use in the USA during the twenties. Because it was reluctantly becoming accepted that verbal only tests discriminated against all those with different educational and cultural backgrounds, the innovation of Yerkes' test was that it had both a verbal (Alpha) and non-verbal (Beta) part. One moment's consideration of the completion test on the left is sufficient to show just how free from requiring a literate, educated English background the Beta tests in fact were.



once and for all that the negro is not like us. So in regard to many races and sub-races in Europe we learned that some which we had believed possessed an order of intelligence perhaps superior to ours (a reference to the Jews) were far inferior."

The effect of the Act was to set a discriminatory quota on immigration into the United States. The point of reference for the calculation of the quota was the 1890 census (the most recent one being that of 1920). The reasons for choosing the 1890 census are clear: the main waves of south- and east-European immigration had started after that date, and these groups were

therefore numerically much smaller in the 1890 population. As the quota was fixed at 2 per cent of the numbers in that census the effect would be to reduce dramatically immigration from those parts of Europe, but to allow large numbers from north and western Europe. Scientific racism had won a major victory. As Calvin Coolidge remarked when he signed the bill, "America must be kept American".

● The second part of this article, which shows how British scientists took over the initiative in this field, and in particular examines the problem of 'reification' in accounts of intelligence, will be published in a future issue.

IRELAND
**Nationalist
 nonsense**

Peter Berresford Ellis
A History of the Irish Working
 Class
 Pluto Press, £3.50p

THIS IS A NEW edition - with an enlarged final chapter dealing with the 'Northern Revolution' - of a book originally published in 1972. It is very bad. It does not point the way to the development of a real socialist movement or to truly autonomous working class action. The book itself is a symptom of all that is wrong in the state of Ireland. It is not even about the working class of Ireland - of whom an accessible real history is badly needed - but about Irish nationalism. On every issue, the Church, the trade unions, the bourgeois parties, and the character of the Irish state, the only serious criterion the author applies is their attitude on the national question. While it is both wrong and impossible to ignore the intimate relationship between nationalism, socialism, and the working class movement in Ireland, the subordination of all to the movement of national liberation expressed in the book is a historical example of the fundamental problem for workers and socialists in Ireland.

While the book covers the fairly familiar ground of the bloody history of British colonialism, it ignores the fact that for the last hundred years many of the most brutal oppressors of the working class in Ireland were impeccably Irish and often nationalists to boot. There is no analysis of the rise of Irish capitalism.

A recurring feature of the book

is the way it consistently glosses over difficult questions. To take only one example: the two main heroes of the Irish labour movement - the emphasis on individuals rather than movements is one of the features of the nationalist milieu - are Jim Larkin and James Connolly. The history of the former, from charismatic industrial leader before 1914, paid agent of the German government during the first world war in America (no better or worse than being paid by the British), pensioner of the Comintern during the 1920s, to trade union leader of the most reactionary stamp, surely needs some critical examination. In Connolly's case, his brutal judicial murder by the British has been allowed to obscure his inability, like Larkin, to break



Walter Crane's depiction of socialism and sectarianism, drawn in 1886.

with Catholicism, his reactionary views on women and the family, and the fact that when the chips were down he subordinated the autonomous organisation of the working class to bourgeois nationalism, a danger against which in an earlier epoch he had consistently warned, and which gives a perhaps unintended truth to the comment of Paul Foot on the book's cover that "it takes off where Connolly left off".

The same error, or perhaps one should say crime, of sacrificing the class to the interest of the nation, continues today. At the last Irish general election both the Provos and the INLA called on their supporters to vote for Charles Haughey (who makes Thatcher look like a liberal) because they perceived him as better on the national question. Over the past sixty-odd years all the Irish ruling class has had to do when in difficulties is to wave the green flag and the 'socialist' movement has fallen over itself to rally round.

On this side of the Irish sea, what has been wrong with the socialist and radical movements is not, as nationalist myth would have it, a reluctance to support struggles in Ireland - indeed, such support has been a central plank of their programme for over two hundred years (I am not, here, speaking of the Labour Party) - but a slavish, uncritical and fundamentally patronising acceptance of every rotten feature of the nationalist legend.

In his last, new chapter dealing with events in the North since 1967, Berresford Ellis continues the same theme. There is no attempt to analyse how the early and genuinely non-sectarian Civil Rights Movement sold out to Republicanism or the true political character of the IRA schism, and while the brutalities of the 'security forces' and the loyalist paramilitaries are exhaustively dwelt upon there is

silence about the sectarian outrages carried out by republicans.

There is an old Ulster story which tells that when William of Orange was being rowed back over the Boyne after the battle he was asked by the ferryman who had won. He replied "it doesn't concern you; you will still be a boatman". At least King Billy had an awareness of class realities which this book so conspicuously lacks. Far from illuminating and informing us about the development of the working class and socialist movement in Ireland, it is in fact propaganda, one might even say caricature, rather than history, and a barrier to the development of a real understanding of both those movements and the social bases of one of the most reactionary regimes in Europe. It makes no contribution whatsoever to the emergence of a genuine internationalist revolutionary movement.

KEN WELLER

POLAND

Simplified struggles

Henri Simon
Poland 1980-82; Class Struggle and the Crisis of Capital
 translated by Lorraine Perlman
 Black and Red, Detroit, 1985
 £3.50p

SIMON ARGUES that the Polish union movement Solidarnosc was not an instrument of workers' self-management, but a force to recuperate self-activity and to transmit directives from the state to the working class. He finds evidence that factory-based strike committees instituted some form of workers' management, often against the advice of Solidarnosc and KOR (the group of intellectuals which advised them). His argument is

presented clearly and well-illustrated; yet his book is not convincing. His argument is focused upon a reductionist, almost fundamentalist, concept of economic class relations. He has nothing to say about Polish youth culture or women's movements, and seems confused when analysing Polish nationalism or assessing the real diversity of currents within Solidarnosc and KOR. His analysis of the Polish church and popular Catholicism is simply incoherent; on page 1 we are told that the church was "an independent mass organisation", on page 57 it is described as both an institution of the Polish state and an integral part of Western capitalism, and on page 98 Simon writes that the church is an instrument of mediation between the state and the people. While this work provides some insights into tensions within Solidarnosc and gives some new information about conditions within Poland, it does not provide a clear analysis of the rise and subsequent defeat of Solidarnosc.

JOHN COBBETT

U. S. S. R.

New ruling class

Bruno Rizzi
The Bureaucratisation of the World
 Tavistock, London, 1985, £9.95p

AT LONG LAST translated into English, the text that inspired a thousand accounts of the Soviet Union as 'bureaucratic collectivist' (a society, in other words, which was neither capitalism nor socialism but a exploitative third type of modern society). Rizzi's attack on Trotsky's analysis of the USSR is dated (it was written in 1939) but is definitely worth a read if you or your library can afford it.

PAUL ANDERSON

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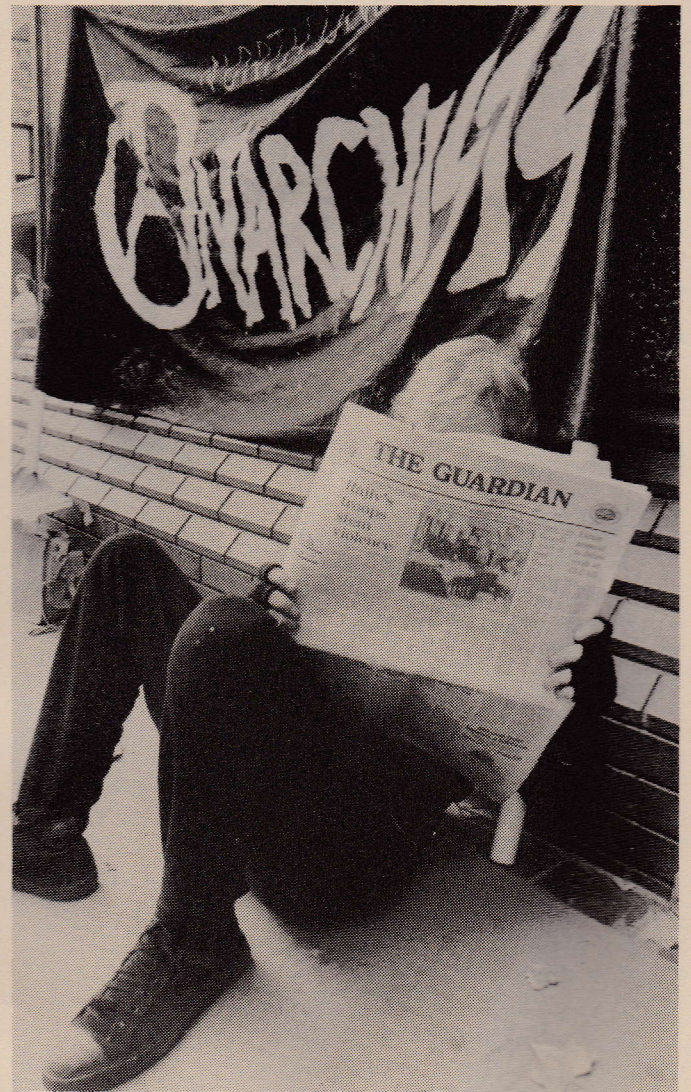
Solid commentary on miners' strike

From Cajo Brendel:

Thanks for the latest issue. I think Solidarity is interesting, though I find less interesting than it was many years ago. At that time, in the sixties, one could find solid information about class struggles in Britain in almost all the issues. It isn't like that any more. For instance, look at your lack of information on the miners' strike. Of course, I do not think that your group was not keenly concerned about it. But I found the absence of any comment regrettable (like many other readers, I believe) and it surprised me. May I say that I agree more or less totally with all Ken Weller says (in 'Autonomy wagged by its tail'), but I'm absolutely not convinced by the, in my view, very poor excuses written by S K French ('No comment for comment's sake').

Of course he's right when stating that there's no advantage in "tailending the numerous leninist groups in commenting in general terms on matters we knew only through the mass media". But what KW has done is a comment, given from your very special position (very different from any sort of leninism or vanguardism), a comment which is underlining the very important difference between any action of workers themselves and any official action as provided by the position of a trade union in general and Arthur Scargill in particular. As I said above, I agree with it, but you could have done it much earlier than you did! What does it really

mean when French tells the readers "We had no inside information?" Doesn't he declare, only a few lines further on, that several of you have spoken to miners and their families? Didn't you get some 'inside information' from that? I think so, even if the miners in question were sharing all the possible illusions in respect to the trade union movement. For such 'inside information' doesn't come from what the workers seem to believe, but from what they are doing. In



Off-duty activist caught without a copy of Solidarity by photographer John Wildgoose.

my view, it's you and me and people like us who are perfectly aware of the importance of 'autonomous forces' or the 'infrastructures' of the local strikes. It's one of my experiences that workers often only have limited ideas about the real meaning of their own actions. I'm sure it must have been the same during the miners' strike.

One of our group, 'Act and Thought', was visiting a Welsh miners' village in late August 1984. He got 'inside information' there, in the first place, not by using his ears, but by using his eyes. He saw what the miners and the women were doing; he heard them saying that all their activities were in full support on the NUM; he realised that in fact their autonomous action, their direct domination of their own struggle - in many ways caused and stimulated by the fact that legal offensives against the union was handicapping the leadership - should be judged otherwise than as union policy, and that there was a gap between the activities of the rank and file and those of the union bureaucracy; even though the rank and file was not or may have been only partly conscious of it. In this way - briefly explained here - we were able to comment on the strike last autumn. I think you could have done the same.

I was pleased with the article on Nicaragua and the comment on it. Act and Thought, like Solidarity, is not prepared to withdraw criticism because the subject to criticise is one of the idols of the so-called left. You know that well, since my Theses on the Chinese Revolution, and you will surely not be surprised that I agree with many things in the article and in the comment by Ian Pirie. Many things; not everything. Where Pirie says that there is a potential for socialism in Nicaragua, I have my doubts. As you may understand, I see the Sandinistas as the radical

vanguard of the inevitable bourgeois (and state-capitalist) revolution in the typical and historical Nicaraguan form. I have materials (fruit of the research of a comrade in a factory in Managua) which show clearly the class divisions between workers and the new (Sandinista) class which came to power by the Sandinista revolution, which was of course a great leap forward compared to the brutal dictatorship of Somoza.

Maybe you can agree with me that the imperialist attitude of the USA and Reagan in respect to Nicaragua is - among other good reasons - deplorable because it helps to cover the real contradictions in Nicaragua after the revolution. It doesn't stimulate a working class attitude among the workforce, but is encouraging nationalist feelings.

I hope we can discuss this and other problems another time. Unfortunately we don't do it enough.

Friendly yours

● Editorial note: Several readers were very critical towards 'No Comment for Comment's Sake' in the last issue. Following this Cde. French has been subjected to a vigorous self-criticism session and will do better in the future when his injuries have healed. We are hoping to report on life for the miners after the strike in a future issue.

CORRECTION

On page 13 of the last issue we inadvertently missed a line of a quotation from Michel Foucault. This passage should have read "where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never is a position of exteriority in relation to power". We apologise.

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