

REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST TENDENCY PUBLIC FORUMS

'The crisis of imperialism - workers versus the state'

Friday 16 Feb The imperialist state and reformism - Frank Richards.
Friday 2 March Imperialist oppression and the working class - Mary Masters.
Friday 16 March Labour left, Labour right and the state - Kate Marshall.
Friday 30 March Crisis: Workers against the state - Keith Tompson.

All four forums are at 7.30pm at the Roebuck pub, Tottenham Court Road.
Nearest tubes: Warren Street and Goodge Street. Admission 20p.

Workers against the state

Today, after four years of wage restraint, workers have begun to take action on a massive scale to defend their living standards. The Labour Government's five per cent policy lies in ruins; section after section of the trade union movement demands wage rises to keep up with the cost of living. Strikes by lorry drivers, railwaymen and public sector workers have shown workers' willingness to rebut the Government's assault on wages.

Today every struggle of the working class is confronted with the power of the bourgeois state. Since the present strikes began in November, the entire armoury of the bourgeois state has been primed to crush working class unrest. Plans for comprehensive military intervention against the lorry drivers were drawn up in mid-December. The Government has attacked trade union rights with an ideological, legal and police offensive against 'secondary picketing'. The army has been called in to replace striking ambulancemen in London and lorry drivers in the Six Counties of Ireland.

The success of the defensive struggles of the working class depends on the ability of workers to defy the state. Today the Marxist understanding of the state is vitally important for the working class.

The fight against state socialism

For decades workers' struggles have been debilitated by the liquidation

of Marxism in the labour movement. The fight for independent working class politics must begin with a critique of the reformist strategy which has led workers to identify with the bourgeois state. Today state socialism - the strategy of using the capitalist state to introduce socialist policies - is advanced most consistently by the Labour left and the Communist Party. They aim to channel workers' increasing distrust of the Labour Party leadership into a reformist backwater by contrasting the betrayals of the Labour right with their own 'progressive' economic policies. They propose to beat the capitalist crisis - within the capitalist system.

The Communist Party claims that more wages for public sector workers and higher pensions all round 'would increase the demand for the goods which our factories could produce' (Morning Star, 22 January 1979, p1). In the fantasy world of the state socialists the bourgeois state can solve the crisis by redistributing wealth in favour of the working class. While the Labour Government cuts workers living standards and attacks the organisations of the labour movement the state socialists exalt the 'progressive' potential of the capitalist state. Yet whether it is initiated by a Tory or a Labour Government, the intervention of the bourgeois state in the class struggle is necessarily directed against the working class. By obscuring this fact, the state socialists hinder the emergence of an independent working class response to the savage measures launched by the state today.

Racism, nationalism and the working class

British trade unionists will come out in opposition to the extreme form of racism represented by the National Front. But so far workers have remained passive in the face of the daily attacks on black workers implemented through immigration controls and police harassment. As long as workers support the state socialists in their calls to revitalise British industry through import controls and other chauvinist policies, the argument that immigration controls are necessary to protect 'British jobs' will gain ground. Class unity between black and white workers can only be forged through the fight against reformism in the workers' movement.

Again, the official trade union movement has consistently failed to oppose the national oppression of the Irish people by the British imperialist state. The state socialists justify imperialist rule in the Six Counties of Ireland by crowing about the 'peace-keeping' and 'democratic' role of the British state. They ignore the brutal war of oppression carried on by the Labour Government in Ireland. Building effective support for the Irish struggle against British imperialism is inseparable from the fight to break the working class from its present reformist leadership.

To defend the working class against the state, revolutionaries must fight to break workers from the pro-imperialist politics of the Labour Party and the 'left' critics of the present Government. The working class can only go forward by taking on and ultimately destroying the bourgeois state. The revolutionary critique of reformism provides the starting point for this struggle. It forms the subject of our new journal and of our series of public forums.

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