

SEP (Australia) first national congress

Resolution 3: Oppose the US war drive against China

9 May 2012

The following is the third of seven resolutions passed unanimously at the first national congress of the Socialist Equality Party (Australia) held from April 6 to 9, 2012 in Sydney (see: “Australian SEP holds first national congress”). See resolutions 1, 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7.

1. This Congress of the Socialist Equality Party denounces the preparations for imperialist war against China being spearheaded by the United States in order to reassert its dominance over the Asia-Pacific region and maintain its world hegemony by military means.

2. The global financial crisis that erupted in 2007–2008 brought to the surface the historic decline in the economic position of the United States, with far-reaching political consequences. More than eighty years ago, Leon Trotsky explained that “in the period of crisis the hegemony of the United States will operate more completely, more openly, and more ruthlessly than in the period of the boom” as it sought to overcome its “difficulties and maladies” at the expense of its rivals. Trotsky’s assessment has been entirely borne out.

3. Beginning in mid-2009, the Obama administration, in response to criticisms that the Bush regime had ignored the growing influence of China, initiated an offensive aimed at undercutting China’s diplomatic relations in Asia, which had been carefully crafted over the previous decade. The new American “pivot” to Asia has so far included: backing South Korea in its confrontation with China’s ally North Korea; support for Japan in its tense standoff with China over the disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands; large arms sales to Taiwan; a US diplomatic intervention into territorial disputes in the South China Sea; closer military relations with Vietnam, Indonesia and especially the Philippines; US efforts to prise Cambodia and, more successfully, Burma from China’s orbit; new US arrangements to use northern and western Australian military bases; strengthening the US strategic partnership with India; and moves towards the formation of a strategic bloc of the four regional “democracies”—the US, Japan, India and Australia—against China.

4. Taken together the Obama administration’s provocative diplomatic-military moves are aimed at China’s encirclement, using US strategic alliances, partnerships and bases. The Pentagon’s strategic document released in January explicitly declares that the US military will “rebalance towards the Asia Pacific region” and puts the onus on China “to avoid causing friction in the region.” A central focus of US military planning is to ensure control over key naval “choke points” through South East Asia that would enable a US economic blockade of China in the event of conflict. The reckless US push against China has the character of a pre-emptive strike against a potential rival that threatens to set off a nuclear conflagration with devastating consequences for the peoples of the US and China, and for the very future of humanity itself.

5. The official policy of the Chinese regime remains the “peace and development” program initiated under Deng Xiaoping. But sections of the

military and the Beijing bureaucracy are now calling for this to be abandoned on the grounds that whatever assurances and guarantees China provides the US about its peaceful intentions, its continuing economic rise will inevitably bring a military response from Washington, for which China must now prepare. Their hand has been strengthened by the damage done to Chinese interests during NATO’s intervention in Libya and by the threatened military actions against Syria and Iran.

6. While its economic, financial and military capacities have undergone a rapid expansion over the past three decades, China is not an imperialist power. The growth of the Chinese economy derives from its integration into the globalised processes of production as the world’s largest cheap labour platform. It remains completely dependent for investment and technology on the major transnational corporations, which take the lion’s share of profits. Chinese capitalism is constantly impeded by the imperialist economic and strategic order established and dominated by the United States since the end of World War II. Its huge purchases of US bonds are not an expression of financial strength, but reflect the Chinese economy’s need for a low yuan and its dependence on US markets. As a result, it is highly exposed to unilateral action by American financial authorities. Likewise, China’s expanding military capacity is not a sign of strength, but of immense vulnerability. US imperialism, with its vast global network of bases and alliances, and its overwhelming military superiority, has the capacity to threaten Chinese interests in any corner of the world. China is ruled by a highly unstable capitalist regime, whose ruling elite is drawn from sections of the Stalinist bureaucracy, and their sons and daughters. Those, including within the pseudo-left, who designate China as an imperialist power, do so in order to justify an attack by US imperialism or to proclaim their “neutrality”, thereby providing tacit support to imperialism, as the state capitalists did during the Korean War.

7. The opposition of this Congress to the preparations of US imperialism for war against China in no way implies support for the Chinese regime or any section of it. The present regime is the outcome of the betrayals of the gains of the 1949 revolution by the Stalinist-Maoist bureaucracy, which carried out the restoration of capitalism, beginning in the final years of Mao’s rule, and continued and deepened under Deng Xiaoping and his successors. Both the perspective of the “peaceful rise” and closer integration of China into the framework of world capitalism, and the call for increased military preparations to combat the imperialist threat, can lead only to disaster.

8. Chinese workers must reject the Beijing regime’s promotion of Chinese nationalism—which only serves to divide them from their counterparts in the rest of Asia and around the globe—and its rapid turn to militarism. The expansion of China’s military, including nuclear weapons, will provide no insurance against war, but only further ammunition for US imperialism to justify its war preparations. Moreover,

the regime's arms buildup is aimed at protecting, not the lives and well-being of the hundreds of millions of ordinary Chinese people, but the economic and geo-strategic interests of the country's new bourgeoisie, headed by a few hundred billionaires. The regime will not hesitate to use the same military against any domestic opposition to its rule, in alliance with the very imperialist powers that are dependent on the exploitation of Chinese workers as cheap labour. The fact that the Chinese government has prioritised spending on internal security over its military budget for three consecutive years, since the outbreak of the global financial crisis, underscores the fact that it views its "own" working class as a greater threat than America's military machine. The only means of countering the threat of US imperialist aggression and nuclear war is the overthrow of capitalism and imperialism through the socialist revolution. The working class can place no faith in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regime and must rely on its own methods of revolutionary class struggle to oppose war. The only genuine allies for Chinese workers are their class brothers and sisters in the US, Australia, throughout the region and the world, who face similar disasters at the hands of their own governments.

9. The Chinese working class must advance its own independent program and political struggle against all factions of the ruling apparatus in order to meet the growing dangers it confronts. To do so, it must draw upon the strategic lessons of the experiences of the international workers' movement, of which the Chinese Revolution and the subsequent evolution of the Chinese state form a crucial component, and base itself on an international socialist strategy.

10. The 1949 Chinese Revolution confirmed, once again, the Marxist understanding of the nature of the imperialist epoch, which had opened up with the eruption of World War I in 1914 and the Russian Revolution of October 1917, as the death agony of capitalism—the epoch of wars and revolutions. It took place in the aftermath of World War II, as part of an eruption of revolutionary struggles by the working class and colonial masses around the world. In country after country, however, the Stalinist Communist parties betrayed these post-war struggles. Under the Yalta, Potsdam and Tehran agreements signed with Churchill, Roosevelt and Truman, Stalin helped stabilise capitalist rule in Western Europe, in return for hegemony over the so-called buffer states of Eastern Europe. In China, notwithstanding the treachery of the Soviet bureaucracy, the Stalinist CCP was propelled towards the seizure of power by the exceptional circumstances that followed the defeat of Japanese imperialism: a severe economic and social crisis, the profound political weakness of the bourgeois Kuomintang (KMT) regime; and a powerful popular upsurge, in spite of the terrible blows struck against the working class and peasantry as a result of Stalin's betrayal of the 1925–27 Second Chinese Revolution. In line with Stalin's policies, the CCP initially subordinated the working class and masses to its attempts to form a coalition government with the KMT. It was only in October 1947, as the Cold War was launched and the KMT—with US backing—prepared to militarily crush the CCP, that Mao Zedong finally called for its overthrow. Politically, the CCP drew strength from its association with the Soviet Union, and the widespread but false belief among workers and peasants that the Moscow regime embodied the heritage of the Russian Revolution. Militarily, the CCP's peasant armies were fortified by the training and Japanese arms supplied by the Soviet army in Manchuria. The CCP inflicted a series of devastating defeats on the KMT's forces and, in October 1949, proclaimed the People's Republic of China.

11. The 1949 Chinese Revolution, and the measures taken in its aftermath, dealt a shattering blow to world imperialism. It overthrew the bourgeois-landlord ruling class and carried out the agrarian revolution; it unified the country, divided for decades by imperialism and reactionary warlords; it ended direct imperialist domination and nationalised key sections of industry, establishing crucial foundations for the transition to

socialism, and verifying the Trotskyist Theory of Permanent Revolution. As Trotsky had demonstrated, in countries of belated capitalist development, including the colonies and semi-colonies oppressed by imperialism, the tasks of the democratic revolution—principally the overthrow of landlordism and the abolition of imperialist rule—could not be accomplished by the national bourgeoisie, but only by the working class, leading the mass of the peasantry behind it. Having taken power in its own hands, however, the working class would be compelled to make deep inroads into the private ownership of the means of production, and begin the struggle for socialism. While the Chinese Revolution effected a vast social and economic transformation, unlike the 1917 Russian Revolution it was not carried out by a politically mobilised working class establishing independent organs of workers' power. Rather, it was deformed from the outset by the Stalinist-Maoist-led Chinese Communist Party, which sought to suppress the independent struggles of the working class. The Stalinist bureaucracy was compelled to carry out the expropriation of the bourgeoisie because of enormous expectations within the working class, along with the threat of imperialist intervention.

12. The state that emerged from the revolution was of a hybrid character. Private ownership of the means of production was abolished, but the working class was suppressed by the bureaucratic regime and did not exercise political power. Based on the Trotskyist movement's analysis of the Soviet Union as a degenerated workers' state, and of the transformations carried out by the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe, where the means of production were nationalised in the immediate years after World War II, the Fourth International characterised China as a "deformed workers' state."

13. This sociological definition embodied a political perspective and prognosis. On the one hand, it pointed to the progressive character of the social and economic transformation that had been carried out, and the need for the Chinese and international working class to defend these gains against imperialism and the Chinese bourgeoisie. On the other hand, it made clear that the regime established after 1949 was not historically viable. It directed the working class to fight for a political revolution to overthrow the bureaucracy and establish democratic organs of workers' power, in order to defend and advance the gains of the revolution. If power remained in the hands of the Stalinist-Maoist regime, which based itself on the reactionary nationalist perspective of "socialism in one country"—first advanced in opposition to the Theory of Permanent Revolution by the Stalinist leadership in the Soviet Union, as it usurped political power from the working class in the 1920s—then capitalist restoration would inevitably follow.

14. The Fourth International's analysis was developed in opposition to two tendencies that attacked the movement's programmatic foundations. The Pabloites argued that the establishment of deformed workers' states, in Eastern Europe and then in China, was not an aberration but represented the wave of the future. The transition to socialism, they declared, would no longer be initiated by the working class taking political power under the leadership of Bolshevik-type parties, as in Russia, but would take place through the establishment of "deformed workers' states" by the Stalinist bureaucracy, in a process stretching over centuries. The state capitalist tendency attacked Pabloism from the right. According to them, not only was the Soviet Union state capitalist, so also were the Eastern European states and China. Discounting the historical significance of nationalised property and its organic connection to the historical interests of the working class, the state capitalists maintained there was nothing to defend against imperialism. Both the Pabloites and the state capitalists wrote off the revolutionary role of the working class, falsely attributed a historical validity to the Stalinist regimes, and in every country sought to subordinate the struggles of the working class to the existing Stalinist, reformist and trade union bureaucracies.

15. None of the immense economic problems confronting China in the

aftermath of the revolution could be resolved on the basis of the Stalinist regime's nationalist economic agenda and suppression of the working class. This confirmed another vital component of the Theory of Permanent Revolution: that in the era of the domination of world economy over all national economies, the socialist transformation, while beginning on the national soil, could only be completed on the international arena.

16. The inability of the regime to resolve these mounting problems within the confines of China was the driving force of the zig-zags in policy in the 1950s and 60s, and consequent power struggles within the bureaucratic apparatus. A decade of economic and political crises, which included the failure of the Great Leap Forward of 1957–58, the Sino-Soviet split and withdrawal of Soviet aid, the convulsive class struggles sparked by Mao's Great Proletarian Cultural revolution and the 1969 border clashes between China and the Soviet Union, culminated in Beijing's rapprochement with US imperialism in 1972. This coincided with the collapse of the post-war capitalist boom, and a deepening global economic crisis, which exacerbated the regime's economic problems. These could not be resolved on the basis of national autarchy. An expansion of trade with the West was followed by initial steps towards capitalist restoration, and in 1978, Deng Xiaoping opened up China to foreign capital. China's closer economic integration into the processes of globalised production only compounded internal social and class tensions. In 1989, these erupted in mass struggles in Beijing and other cities, which were violently suppressed by the regime in the Tiananmen Square massacre and subsequent police witch-hunt.

17. A statement by the International Committee of the Fourth International on June 8, 1989 explained that the massacre was the culmination of a decade in which the Chinese Stalinists had worked systematically to restore capitalism. "The main purpose of the terror being unleashed by the Beijing regime is to intimidate the Chinese masses and crush all opposition to its deliberate liquidation of the social conquests of the Chinese Revolution," it stated. The bloodbath in Beijing paved the way for a dramatic acceleration of the free market program and a flood of foreign investment as global corporations recognised that the Stalinist police-state regime could be relied upon to discipline the working class and guarantee private property and profit.

18. The integration of China into the capitalist world market has led to rapid economic growth. But it has provided no new stable base for either Chinese or global capitalism. The Chinese economy is completely dependent on markets in the advanced capitalist countries, now in the grip of the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. Moreover, economic expansion has created explosive social contradictions, signified by the growth of the working class to 400 million, amid ever-widening social inequality. Strikes and protests are increasing, indicated in the doubling of "mass incidents" from 90,000 in 2006 to 180,000 in 2010. The Chinese working class is heading for a revolutionary confrontation with the regime of "princelings" and "red capitalists" that dominates economic and political life.

19. The crucial task is the building of a new revolutionary leadership in the Chinese working class. This can only be achieved in a relentless struggle against the petty-bourgeois pseudo-left, who, while claiming to oppose the present capitalist regime, reject the revolutionary role of the working class and are organically hostile to its political independence. Prominent among them are the neo-Maoists, who insist that capitalist restoration only began with the coming to power of Deng Xiaoping. In reality, it was the nationalist and petty-bourgeois doctrines of Maoism—above all its adherence to the Stalinist theory of "socialism in one country"—that led to the economic impasse and created the conditions for the outright capitalist restorationists, headed by Deng, to take political power. It was Mao, not Deng, who mobilised the army against the working class when it threatened the regime during the period of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. And it was Mao who initiated the turn to

US imperialism, the indispensable precondition for the program of the "free market", capitalist restoration and the reintegration of China into the capitalist world market that was to follow.

20. The coming revolutionary upheavals in China will emerge as an integral component of the new period of revolutionary struggle that has emerged internationally. The Chinese working class must turn to the program and perspective of the ICFI, which embodies the essential lessons of the key strategic experiences of the international working class in the twentieth century, and the protracted struggle of the Trotskyist movement against Stalinism, reformism and Pabloite opportunism. This Congress affirms the central role that the Socialist Equality Party must play in the founding and building of new sections of the ICFI in China and throughout the Asia-Pacific region.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact