

May Day 2016: Oppose the drive to war in the Asia-Pacific

James Cogan
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The following speech was delivered by Socialist Equality Party (Australia) national secretary James Cogan to the International May Day Online Rally held on May 1, 2016.

Comrades and friends: As we meet this May Day, the US imperialist “pivot” to Asia, its diplomatic and military confrontation of China, has inflamed geopolitical tensions to levels not seen since World War II. Every country in the region is engaged in preparations for war.

Korean workers already live every day under the shadow of a catastrophic conflict. In the South, the ruling class has lined up with US plans for “pre-emptive” attacks on nuclear-armed North Korea and the “decapitation,” that is, assassination, of its political and military leadership, in order to undermine the strategic position of China and Russia.

In the South China Sea, the US Navy has violated the 12-mile territorial zone around Chinese-claimed islands and reefs twice in the past eight months, goading Beijing to respond militarily.

The White House has justified these operations with lies about defending “freedom of navigation” and the “rules-based global order.” US imperialism recognises no rules or laws except those that benefit the Wall Street banks and corporations. Its actions have nothing to do with “freedom” and everything to do with world domination and compelling the Beijing regime to submit to US economic and strategic demands.

The American ruling elite views China as the most significant threat to its global dominance and is preparing to bring Beijing to heel, by war if necessary.

In just the past days, US Senators have made strident calls for the Obama administration to order military provocations in the South China Sea every week.

Tensions are set to escalate even further in the

coming months. The United Nations Permanent Court of Arbitration will soon bring down a ruling on a US-backed Philippines’ challenge to China’s territorial claims. Strategic think tanks and media commentators openly acknowledge that this could trigger reactions in Beijing that have explosive consequences.

The ruling classes in the Philippines, Vietnam, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and Taiwan have all lined up behind US imperialism and will be drawn into any conflict.

In pursuing confrontation with China, the United States relies, above all, on its major imperialist allies in Asia, Japan and Australia.

The nationalist government of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has stoked conflict with China over disputed territory and enacted “collective self-defence” legislation that enables it to by-pass the constitutional prohibition on waging war. In 2015, the Japanese military scrambled jet fighters 571 times against Chinese aircraft, and 288 times against Russian aircraft, which were allegedly approaching Japanese-claimed territory. The recklessness on all sides could lead to an incident that triggers all-out war.

As for the Australian ruling class, it has opened up northern and western Australia as a base of operations for US aircraft and warships, and has fully integrated its own armed forces with the US military. It is proceeding from mercenary calculations that its alliance with the US still provides the best means of protecting its imperialist interests in the South Pacific, Antarctica and internationally.

Likewise, New Zealand, a minor imperialist power, has cast aside its isolationist stance of the 1980s and aligned itself with Washington and Canberra.

The ICFI and its sections fight for the mobilisation of the working class against the imperialist drive to war

against China. But we give no support to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regime. Its response to US-led militarism is reactionary and only increases the dangers of conflict. The CCP does not represent the interests of the Chinese working class and oppressed, but the corrupt business oligarchy that developed as Mao Zedong and his political heirs restored capitalism in China from the 1970s.

The Beijing regime presides over staggering social inequality and exploitation. It seeks to protect the Chinese capitalist elite with militarist actions of its own and by promoting anti-Japanese and anti-American nationalism and chauvinism.

Last month, the Chinese military confirmed that it has deployed a new Inter Continental Ballistic Missile—the DF-41. The rocket can carry 6 to 10 nuclear warheads and has a range of 12,000 kilometres, meaning it can reach virtually anywhere on the continental United States.

The only purpose of such a weapon is to inflict a holocaust on millions of American civilians in the event of war, just as the sole purpose of the US nuclear arsenal is to destroy China, Russia, or any other rival, and slaughter tens of millions of people.

We give no credence to the bromides of pacifists and pseudo-left defenders of capitalism who claim that the existence of such weapons will “pull” American imperialism and the Chinese and Russian bourgeoisies “back from the brink.”

The ruling class of every country must be disarmed. The only social force that is capable of carrying that out is the international working class, based on the perspective of world socialist revolution.

Bourgeois politicians and journalists in every country justify militarism with rhetoric about “national interests” and “national sovereignty.” Hundreds of millions of workers and young people, however, want only peace and a future for the next generation.

The interests of the capitalist class are diametrically opposed to those of the working class. Capitalism and the nation-state system must be ended, and the world economy reorganised on socialist foundations, to prevent the catastrophe of a Third World War.

The Socialist Equality Party in Australia, along with the Socialist Equality Group in New Zealand, looks forward to working with workers, youth and political groups across the Asia-Pacific—in China and Japan, in

Korea, throughout South East Asia, and in the Pacific Island states—who agree with the historic fight to build an international anti-war movement on the socialist and internationalist principles that have been elaborated by the ICFI.



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