

SEP (Australia) first national congress

Resolution 2: Against imperialist war

9 May 2012

The following is the second 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, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7.

1. This Congress condemns the escalating intervention into Syria by US imperialism and its allies and their advanced preparations for war against Iran. In advance of these new military adventures, the Obama administration is systematically demonising the Syrian and Iranian regimes as enemies of democracy and supporters of terrorism. Its cynical claims that Tehran's nuclear programs constitute a dire threat to regional and world peace are dutifully magnified by a compliant media. While calling for "democracy" in Syria and Iran, the US relies for support on autocratic Gulf states, such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar, notorious for their abuse of democratic rights. Washington targets Tehran and Damascus as part of its bogus "war on terror", but relies on Islamists and Al Qaeda-linked militias to do its bidding in Libya and Syria. American allegations that the Iranian regime is seeking to build nuclear weapons are highly questionable. Unlike Israel, India and Pakistan, which all have nuclear weapons, Iran has signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and its nuclear facilities are subject to regular UN inspections. Washington's chief concern with potential Iranian nuclear weapons is that they would complicate American plans for a military attack. In reality, the nuclear issue is the pretext for a relentless US-led campaign of intense diplomatic pressure, crippling economic sanctions and ultimately war, aimed at subordinating Iran to American interests.

2. This Congress warns that a new war in the Middle East threatens to engulf the region and become the trigger for a broader global conflagration. The real motivation for Washington's predatory plans is to establish pro-US regimes in Damascus and Tehran, as it has already done in Kabul, Baghdad and Tripoli, to reinforce its dominant position in the energy-rich regions of the Middle East and Central Asia. The Obama administration's machinations are directly threatening the economic and strategic interests of its competitors. That is why Russia and China have vetoed US-sponsored resolutions in the UN Security Council on Syria, and opposed further sanctions against Iran. Rivalries in the Middle East intersect

with escalating geo-political tensions produced by the deepening global economic crisis, especially between the US and China, posing the danger of a wider war.

3. NATO's war on Libya in 2011, which ousted the Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi and installed the pro-Western National Transitional Council (NTC), has become the model for imperialist operations in Syria. In the wake of the revolutionary upheavals in Tunisia and Egypt, the US and NATO intervened in Libya to establish a beachhead in North Africa against the revolutionary movements of the working class and to exploit the opportunity to remove Gaddafi. Using the fig leaf of a UN resolution to "protect civilians", NATO war planes supported the NTC's militias in waging a criminal war that resulted in at least 80,000 Libyan casualties. NATO openly flouted international law by deploying Special Forces inside the country and illegally arming Libyan rebels. The outcome is a deeply anti-democratic regime in Tripoli, responsible for mass detentions, torture and extra-judicial killings, which rules on behalf of Western governments and energy giants.

4. The most destabilising factor in world politics is the explosive eruption of American militarism. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, US imperialism has sought to offset its historic economic decline by exploiting its overwhelming military superiority to undermine the interests of its European and Asian rivals. The first Gulf War against Iraq in 1990–91 was followed by the US-led military intervention into Somalia in 1993–95, the Balkans War of 1998–99, the 2001 occupation of Afghanistan and the 2003 invasion of Iraq. The recklessness and criminality of US actions find their historic parallel in the predatory wars of the German Nazis, Italian fascists and Japanese militarists in the lead-up to World War II. The Bush administration's doctrine of pre-emptive war justifies wars of aggression—the crime that was central to the conviction of Nazi war criminals at Nuremberg. Obama has extended the Bush doctrine, including authorising the unrestricted use of US drones and Special Forces to assassinate anyone deemed a security threat, including American citizens, anywhere in the world.

5. Two decades of escalating and unending militarism and war have generated broad opposition within the working class, particularly among young people. But at every stage the "left"

liberals, the Greens and above all the pseudo-left organisations have functioned on behalf of the bourgeoisie as barriers to the development of a genuine anti-war movement directed against the root cause of war—the capitalist system. Hostile to Marxism, these layers are deeply opposed to the independent interests of the working class. Their social base is a stratum of the affluent middle class, enormously enriched during the past two decades through the processes of financialisation and rapidly rising stocks. Among them is a growing recognition that their material interests are organically tied to those of their “own” imperialist power. As a result, the ex-lefts have become, ever more nakedly, propagandists for imperialist war.

6. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the great powers engaged in colonial plunder and war under the guise of the West’s “civilising mission.” Now these humanitarian nostrums have been revived in the name of the UN’s “responsibility to protect.” During the Balkans War, a segment of the ex-lefts swung directly behind the predatory intervention of US and European imperialism, echoing the phony humanitarian claims of Clinton and Blair that the aim was to prevent the massacre of Kosovars. They became advocates for the criminal invasion of Iraq to oust the “dictator Hussein”, even as others from the same political milieu used their “left” credentials to divert the unprecedented international protests of February–March 2003 into futile appeals to the UN, or to France and Germany, to stop the war.

7. The installation of Obama marked a further shift by the pseudo-lefts openly into the camp of imperialism. Those who had been critical of the Bush administration embraced Obama as a new voice of reason, even as he seamlessly continued the imperialist intrigues and wars of his predecessor. The entire pseudo-left fraternity lined up in one way or another behind the NATO war on Libya. American history professor, Juan Cole, shamelessly used his reputation as a critic of the Iraq invasion to justify the rapacious actions of US imperialism in Libya. As bombs were falling on Tripoli, leading Pabloite Gilbert Achcar complained that NATO was not dropping enough bombs on Libya. The French Pabloite New Anti-capitalist Party stood behind President Nicolas Sarkozy, justifying his government’s illegal supply of arms to the anti-Gaddafi rebels. Those outfits that did not openly endorse the NATO air war supported the NATO-backed “revolutionaries” inside Libya—the reactionary collection of ex-Gaddafi loyalists, CIA agents, Islamists and bourgeois liberals that gathered under the NTC banner. Now the ex-lefts are doing the same in Syria, supporting the ground forces of a new imperialist intervention—the right-wing anti-Assad opposition associated with the pro-Western Syrian National Council and Free Syrian Army. Following the overthrow of Gaddafi, Achcar held talks with Syrian opposition forces, calling on them to support foreign military intervention into Syria.

8. The escalating tempo of localised imperialist interventions and wars will inexorably lead to conflicts between the major

powers and a catastrophic global conflagration. Once again, the international working class confronts two fundamental alternatives: socialism or barbarism. This Congress reaffirms that a genuine anti-war movement of the working class can only be built on the basis of the Marxist understanding that the source of imperialist war lies in the capitalist profit system itself. It does not arise from the irrationality or incompetence of political leaders, but from the contradictions between a globally integrated world economy and the continued existence of national states, and between socialised production on a world scale and the subordination of all economic activity to the accumulation of private profit by a tiny capitalist minority. The only social force that can prevent a new world war is a unified revolutionary and socialist movement of the international working class—the only social class that has no interest in maintaining either the private ownership of the means of production or the nation-state system. The common danger confronting workers in every country can only be removed through the overthrow of the failed profit system and the establishment of a world planned socialist economy.

9. The critical task before the Socialist Equality Party is to win Australian workers to this perspective. As capitalism plunges humanity towards a new global war, the bourgeoisie and its agencies promote nationalism and chauvinism to poison the minds of working people. In its fight for the international unity of the working class, the SEP has a particular political responsibility to combat the anti-Chinese and anti-Muslim prejudices being deliberately cultivated to justify the Australian government’s support for wars in the Middle East and the US military build-up against China. Likewise, the SEP will systematically expose the pretentious abstractions of pacifism, disarmament, neutrality, democracy and humanitarianism used by imperialism to cloak its intentions and disarm the working class. The political education of workers and youth will take place through a rigorous exposure of every tendency that claims war can be prevented without the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and the taking of power by the working class.

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