

The fight for the political independence of the working class in China

By James Cogan
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This speech was delivered by James Cogan, national secretary of the Socialist Equality Party (Australia), to the May 3 International May Day Online Rally, organized by the International Committee of the Fourth International.

The US “pivot” to Asia, or more accurately the preparation by US, Australian and Japanese imperialism for war against China, threatens the future of humanity.

The military forces of each of these countries are being equipped, deployed and trained to implement the “AirSea Battle concept,” which envisages a “blinding campaign” of air bombardments and missile, cyber and “counter-space” attacks against mainland China, as well as a naval blockade to cripple its economy and starve its population.

The assault would seek to destroy military installations and command centres, satellites, communications systems and power grids, and, in the process, devastate Chinese cities and slaughter an untold number of civilians.

The recklessness involved is reflected in various war studies being published in US strategic and military circles. A recent one, published on April 1 by the US National Defense University, asserts: “Although conventional strikes on mainland China would be escalatory by design, they would not inevitably lead to nuclear escalation.”

In other words, the American ruling elite, backed at this point by its Japanese and Australian allies, is prepared to risk nuclear war to achieve its ends. Washington will not stop in the drive to subjugate China and its vast labour resources to the untrammled domination of US banks, investment houses and corporations.

In the face of the war danger, the Chinese working

class cannot leave its fate in the hands of the Chinese Communist Party regime. The CCP is the political representative of the Chinese bourgeoisie. It is organically hostile to any struggle against imperialism based on the working class, because that would directly threaten its own material interests and rule.

The CCP took power in 1949 under the leadership of Mao Zedong and established a state modeled on the bureaucratic Stalinist regime in the Soviet Union. It claimed it would abolish the vestiges of colonialism and lift the Chinese masses out of backwardness.

Instead, the nationalist policies of Maoism, based on the Stalinist theory of “socialism in one country”, led, within just 23 years, to Mao’s overtures to US imperialism and the subsequent restoration of capitalism. Under Deng Xiaoping and his successors, the CCP collaborated with Washington to integrate China into the world order dominated by the United States.

Today, China is world capitalism’s primary cheap labour manufacturing platform and the source of vast profits for transnational corporations, as well as for the new Chinese bourgeoisie, which largely emerged out of the Communist Party hierarchy.

The CCP-linked Chinese capitalists have amassed immense fortunes. Out of a population of 1.35 billion, there are some 450 billionaires, more than 60,000 individuals boasting over \$200 million in personal wealth, and 2.5 million US dollar millionaires.

In contrast, some 400 million people, especially rural peasants, live in poverty, and hundreds of millions of industrial and so-called “migrant” workers endure low wages and harsh conditions. As the global slump and deflation worsens, economic growth has plummeted, threatening mass unemployment.

The CCP still refers to this state of affairs as

“socialism with Chinese characteristics.”

In response to Washington’s threats, Beijing is pouring hundreds of billions of dollars into strengthening the Chinese military, in the vain hope that aircraft carriers, nuclear-armed submarines and airfields on artificial islands in the South China Sea will intimidate the US war-mongers. Meanwhile, it is forging ever closer ties with Russia and appealing to the European rivals of the US for closer relations.

Bitter tensions are developing between the major imperialist powers over which will dominate China’s markets, reflected in the decisions of Britain, Germany, France and Italy to defy Washington and join the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank. The US and Japan have responded over the past week by expanding their military alliance and intensifying their aggressive stance against China.

As the danger of military conflict mounts and domestic class antagonisms grow, the CCP promotes nationalism, anti-American sentiment and anti-Japanese chauvinism, in order to divide Chinese workers from their only allies in the struggle to prevent war and to win their social and political rights—the workers of the United States, of Japan, of Asia and of the world.

The Chinese working class must assimilate the great strategic lessons of the twentieth century, including the momentous revolutionary struggles carried out by the Chinese masses themselves, from 1911 to 1949, and the bitter experiences of the Chinese working class in the struggle against the CCP regime in 1989, which culminated in the Tiananmen Square massacre.

The task in China is to establish the political independence of the working class from every wing of the Chinese bourgeoisie. This includes the petty-bourgeois democrats, who assert that the CCP can be pressured to establish some form of liberal democracy and that an accommodation with imperialism would guarantee peace.

In June 1989, the subordination of the working class to the student leadership and their protest perspective enabled the CCP to drown the mass movement in blood in Beijing and throughout the country.

The working class must also resolutely oppose the reactionary advocates of national self-determination and separatism in Tibet, Xinjiang and other regions of China, who serve as the political agents for so-called

“humanitarian imperialism”, aimed at plunging the country into chaos and civil war and providing the pretext for intervention.

The way forward for the working class in China lies in joining with its counterparts around the world to build an international anti-war movement, based on the perspective of world socialist revolution. War can only be prevented through the overthrow of capitalism by the international working class.

A critical part of this perspective is to bring the history, principles and program of the Trotskyist movement to the advanced Chinese workers and youth, and the establishment of the Chinese section of the International Committee of the Fourth International.

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