

Resolutions of the Socialist Equality Party (Australia) Fourth National Congress

For an International Anti-War Movement!

20 April 2018

The following text is the second of four resolutions passed at the Fourth National Congress of the Socialist Equality Party (Australia) held in Sydney from March 30 to April 2, 2018 (see: Resolutions 1, 3, 4). Greetings to the congress were delivered by delegates from Socialist Equality Parties in the US, Europe and Sri Lanka and the Socialist Equality Group in New Zealand. The incoming national committee re-elected James Cogan SEP national secretary, Cheryl Crisp assistant national secretary and Peter Symonds World Socialist Web Site national editor.

1. Central to the work of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) is the struggle against the imminent danger of a world war. The International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) is the sole political organisation capable of providing the revolutionary leadership necessary to mobilise the working class against the slide into a global catastrophe. The only means for preventing war is socialist revolution: the replacement of capitalism and its system of rival nation states with a unified world socialist federation.

2. In its resolutions of 2014 and 2016, the ICFI warned that the deepening crisis of global capitalism and its underlying contradictions were creating the growing threat of world war, and called for the building of an international anti-war movement of the working class.

3. US imperialism has become the chief destabilising factor in world politics. Having failed to arrest its historic decline through more than two decades of criminal wars in the Middle East and Central Asia, it began preparing for war against its chief rivals, China and Russia. This has now reached a new stage. What was implicit in 2011 in the Obama administration's "pivot to Asia" against Beijing, and in 2014 in its intervention in the Ukraine against Moscow, has now been made explicit in the Trump Administration's National Defence Strategy (NDS) of January 2018. The NDS declares that "inter-state strategic competition," not the "war on terror," is "now the primary concern," and that the US must "prioritise preparedness for war" against the "revisionist powers," China and Russia, its main "strategic competitors." Confronted with Washington's recklessness and aggression, not only the capitalist regimes in China and Russia, but the major European and Japanese imperialist powers as well, have concluded that they must arm themselves to defend their vital interests, even if this means conflict with the US. The threat of major trade war measures by the Trump administration against China and other countries is a clear sign of the growing antagonisms.

4. The world has reached a dangerous tipping point. Without the intervention of the working class, it is not a question of *if* war will break out, but *when*. The US military already confronts its Russian counterpart on the opposite side in the proxy civil war in Syria. In

Asia, Trump has vowed, by military means if necessary, to prevent North Korea from building a nuclear missile capable of striking the US—a capacity that US officials say is just months away. The danger posed by these and many other flashpoints around the world is compounded by the intense social and political crisis within the United States itself. Bitter infighting in the political establishment, over whether to target Russia or China first, is intertwined with fears in ruling circles over the re-emergence of the powerful American working class into struggle. The danger exists that the Trump administration, besieged on all sides, will resort to war as a means of diverting enormous internal tensions outwards, against a foreign enemy.

5. War shocks, which will undoubtedly escalate in the coming period, will provoke a powerful anti-war response among millions of workers and youth, who have already drawn conclusions from the criminal character of past US wars. Moreover, the drive to war will only intensify the class struggle, as the ruling classes seek to make the working class pay for their colossal military spending. Thus, the emerging mass struggles of the working class on social issues are indissolubly connected to the struggle against war. The Socialist Equality Party will aggressively intervene in this movement on the basis of its socialist and internationalist perspective.

6. In its 2016 resolution "Socialism and the fight against war," the ICFI set out the essential principles upon which an anti-war movement must be developed. It must be based on the working class; it must be anti-capitalist and socialist; it must be independent from and hostile to all political parties and organisations that defend the capitalist system; and, above all, it must be international, uniting and mobilising the vast power of the working class in a unified global struggle to end capitalism and its nation-state divisions and establish world socialism.

7. The SEP will expose the accelerating preparations in Australia for war, and the lies and propaganda used to justify it. While the present Coalition government and the previous Labor government have fully integrated Australia into the US war drive against China, Canberra is not simply a puppet of Washington. Australian imperialism has its own economic and strategic interests in the Asia-Pacific and is hostile to China's growing influence in what it regards as its own backyard—the South Pacific. The dominant sections of the Australian ruling elite regard the country's longstanding military alliance with the US, and its close economic ties with Wall Street, as essential to protecting Australian interests in Asia and internationally, even if this means war with China, its largest trading partner.

8. Just as the "war on terror" was accompanied by the vilification of

Muslims, powerful sections of the media and political establishment have launched a racist campaign, fed by the military-intelligence agencies, against Chinese “interference,” aimed at portraying China as a menacing enemy power. The Turnbull government, with the assistance of Labor and the Greens, is now in the process of ramming through draconian new legislation that dramatically increases the scope and penalties for existing crimes, such as treachery, mutiny and espionage, and criminalises “foreign political interference.” These police-state measures will be used to suppress anti-war protests, illegalise parties and organisations, and incarcerate “enemy nationals” *en masse*, as occurred in Australia during World Wars I and II.

9. The SEP opposes all forms of nationalism, racism and xenophobia, which only serve to divide the working class, and to justify war and attacks on democratic rights. The chief enemy of the Australian working class is the ruling class at home, which exploits the drive to war to try to suppress the class struggle and demand ever-greater sacrifice in the name of defending the nation.

10. As an integral part of the world socialist revolution, the ICFI and the SEP fight for the building of a socialist and internationalist movement of the working class in China and Russia. No support can be given to any policies of the Beijing or Moscow governments. They preside over the ruthless exploitation and repression of the working class, representing only the interests of the corrupt financial and corporate oligarchy, which was spawned during the restoration of capitalist relations by the Stalinist apparatuses in both countries. Their nationalist and militarist response to imperialist threats and intrigues serves only to heighten the danger of world war.

11. The building of a powerful anti-war movement is indissolubly connected to the SEP’s struggle for the political independence of the working class from all factions of the bourgeoisie. Whatever their differences, every establishment party—including the Greens, various pacifist formations and bourgeois critics of the US alliance—defends Australian imperialism. The concerns expressed within the political establishment, over Australia’s support for the intensifying US war drive against China, are of a purely tactical character. Advocates of a more “independent” foreign policy, such as former Labor Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, suggest it might be possible for Australia to mediate an accommodation between the US and China, and thus avoid the consequences of war. As Rudd reassured the US in 2009, however, such diplomacy will be accompanied by “also preparing to deploy force.” Others, like Senator Jim Molan, a former army general who doubts the US can maintain its global dominance, are calling for a massive boost in military spending to establish a “fortress Australia,” so that it can assert its own interests without necessarily relying on Washington. Others go even further and support the acquisition of nuclear weapons.

12. Those who advocate an “independent foreign policy” ignore the fact that Australia, as a middle-ranking power, has always pursued its interests by serving as the adjunct to the major imperialist regional power: first Britain, then, after the fall of Singapore in 1942, the United States. They also ignore the fact that the Australian military, intelligence agencies and state apparatus are completely integrated with their American counterparts. Under President Obama, and now Trump, Australia is being converted into a massive rear base for war against China. Existing infrastructure, such as the key communications, intelligence and targeting base at Pine Gap, have been supplemented by the opening up of northern Australian bases to US Marines, warships and warplanes.

13. Within the framework of its US alliance, Australian imperialism

is also strengthening its own relations throughout the region. These include agreements with Japan and India, the other members of the “Quadrilateral” grouping being formed with the US; closer military integration and operations with New Zealand and France in the Pacific; and ever closer ties with Singapore and other ASEAN states.

14. The central importance of Australia to US imperialism and its Indo-Pacific strategy has been underscored by the recent nomination of Admiral Harry Harris, an anti-China hawk and head of US Pacific Command, as American ambassador to Canberra. Any attempt by Canberra to pull back from its alignment with the US would provoke an aggressive response from both the pro-US faction within the Australian establishment and from Washington, which has not hesitated in the past to marshal support to oust prime ministers, including Gough Whitlam in 1975 and Kevin Rudd in 2010.

15. The SEP will continue to expose the pernicious pro-war and pro-imperialist agenda of pseudo-left organisations, such as Socialist Alternative and Socialist Alliance. They speak for a layer of the privileged upper middle class, which, as the crisis of capitalism deepens, has lurched to the right, echoing the line dictated by the US State Department. In Syria, they back the US-led military intervention, portraying Washington’s right-wing proxies as “revolutionaries.” They have already signalled their support for the US war drive against Beijing, labelling China as expansionist and “imperialist.” Above all, they are deeply hostile to the struggle for the political independence of the working class, and seek to subordinate workers and youth to the parties of the ruling class—particularly, the Labor Party and the Greens—as well as to the trade unions.

16. The SEP’s perspective, as part of the fight for world socialism, is to bring to power a workers’ government that will implement far-reaching socialist measures. A workers’ government will repudiate the US alliance, along with all basing and access agreements; repeal all anti-democratic laws, including the anti-terror and “foreign interference” legislation; and dismantle the entire military-police-intelligence apparatus. It will end the oppression of the peoples of Papua New Guinea, East Timor and the South Pacific island states by Australian imperialism and actively assist the working class in Asia and the world to put an end to the profit system.

17. The SEP will encourage and initiate the broadest political opposition by workers and youth against the US military alliance, the basing of military forces in Australia, and all US and Australian military interventions and wars. The SEP has a particular responsibility toward the political education and mobilisation of the workers of Asia. In the next period, the party will intensify its efforts to extend the influence of the ICFI throughout Asia and the Pacific, and lay the political foundations for the building of new sections of the World Party of Socialist Revolution in the region.

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