

Comrades,

Welcome to the 14th Congress of the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist).

We meet on the lands of the Kurna people and pay respects to their elders, past and present, to their resilience and successful survival in the face of colonialist unsettlement and dispossession. We extend to all First Nations peoples in Australia our recognition that force and violence, and the threat of force and violence, were the chief means by which the un settlers illegally disrupted the stable and enduring lifestyles that span some 60,000 years on this continent. We pledge our support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land rights and rights to self-determination and sovereignty.

Delegates and observers from five states are with us today and will take part in the discussion of our current situation and tasks. On behalf of the Central Committee I have outlined and reported on a number of matters below.

They are not exhaustive and our agenda for today will have opportunities for comrades to raise other matters as they see fit.

This report deals with the Australian people's need to deal with US imperialism as our main enemy and to have a clearer understanding of China's emergence and role within the region and in its relation with this country. It revisits the issue of our two-stage theory of revolutionary struggle in order to deal with criticisms that are sometimes directed at us, and it looks at a matter that is of concern to many, and that is terrorism and the erosion of civil liberties. The report also looks at what we might loosely call the "people's movement" and our work within it, at unions and the ALP, and finally at some of our key tasks.

US imperialism is the main enemy

For Australian Communists, US imperialism is the main enemy. It constitutes the core of big capital in Australia. When we talk about the ruling class in Australia we are primarily talking about giant US industrial and financial corporations and their Australian managers and senior executives. As the most strongly organised and most powerful elements of the capitalist class, they have willing partners and servants in the political, military, legal, diplomatic, cultural, scientific and educational institutions of our country. Fellowships to and scholarships at key US institutions are made available to secure the loyalty and embed the ideology of opinion makers and community leaders. US cultural products saturate our radio, cinema, television and online streaming. The values of arrogant individualism, of aggressive put-downs, of cut-throat competitiveness sit side-by-side with professions of liberty, freedom and democracy and together assist US imperialism to maintain ideological hegemony.

Cheerleading on behalf of US imperialism permeates both major political parties. Key personnel in both the Coalition and Labor parties report to their masters in the

US embassy. The Murdoch media based and biased in the US makes and breaks federal and state governments. Of course, it occasionally backs a loser, as it did with Tony Abbott, leading to a campaign by the Business Council of Australia (comprising the 100 largest corporations in Australia, mostly multinationals) which successfully saw the more “popular” Malcolm Turnbull elevated to the Prime Ministership.

Pine Gap plays a role in the US war of terror, new US bases are opened and existing ones expanded. The Australian armed forces are deployed in lapdog obedience to the requirements of the US empire. The so-called US-Australia Alliance deprives our nation of the capacity for independent decision-making in foreign policy and sets us against the tide of history and the interests of the people of the world.

To meet the needs of its own imperialist finance capital, US imperialism has attempted to create the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) Agreement. But this has aroused opposition from people in each of the participating countries, including the US, with the result that progress towards its adoption has been considerably slowed. Within Australia, we have helped shape and direct this movement of opposition with its underlying anti-imperialism and its objective of defending Australian independence and national sovereignty. The Trade In Services Agreement (TISA) is also being pushed by US imperialism to privilege the profits of the richest corporations and countries in the world over those who have the greatest needs. It seeks to place the so-called reforms of the neo-liberal agenda beyond the capacity of signatory governments to change.

Internationally, US imperialism seeks full spectrum domination, meaning either the elimination of rivals or their coercion into agreeing to play by rules set by the US for the “international community”. However, the US is an historically declining superpower. That decline is subject to the law of uneven development and will not take the form of a rapid one-way slide to oblivion. Its decline will make US imperialism a more dangerous and more menacing enemy of the world’s people and will push it to reckless confrontation with emerging rivals. This poses a great threat to our regional peace and stability, as it has done to the Middle East and the Ukraine.

In the so-called “tilt to Asia”, US imperialism looks to be taking initiatives to make itself stronger as it builds to a confrontation with China. At the same time, it reveals something of its strategic weakness in the requirements that it is placing on Japan, the Philippines, Australia and other regional “allies” to finance more of the infrastructure on which its tilt depends and to provide more of the personnel and equipment to bring about the tilt. It wants Japan to emerge from its pacifist post-War constitution and provide more of the military strength for its containment of and confrontation with China. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s compliance with this directive of US imperialism is arousing great concern and opposition within Japan and within the region, indicating that the tilt is not immune from the playing out of contradictions that will make it somewhat unstable as a cornerstone of US strategy.

The growing inability of the US to fully fund its own aggressive measures to shape and control the future is starting to be seen in the Middle East where it now tries to avoid having its own “boots on the ground”. Its reliance on the armed forces of the weak regimes it props up in Afghanistan and Iraq is not something it would have entered into by choice, just as its inability to bring about regime change in Syria by its own armed intervention is hugely embarrassing and frustrating for it. Gaddafi might be gone, but Libya is hardly safe for the US, and it has had to drag Saudi troops from their lair to try and crush the anti-US Houthi rebels in Yemen. Embarrassingly for it, it has failed to stop the entry of Russian warplanes into the conflict on the side of Assad’s government. US imperialism no longer holds all the cards in international conflicts. Finally, and to the extreme consternation of reactionary circles in the US, an accommodation of sorts has been reached with Iran (and, closer to home, with Cuba).

The danger of war will exist so long as imperialism exists. Despite all the talk of globalisation and the erosion of the nation state or its absorption into some form of ultra-imperialism that transcends national bases for capital accumulation and expansion, the reality is very much that imperialism has national expression and that US imperialism is the highest form of the national expression of a home base for the major sources of industrial and finance capital. It both leads and has rivalry with other imperialisms. It has no friends, but only allies, and it treats those allies with great suspicion, conducting espionage against their leaders and seeking to outmanoeuvre them diplomatically, politically and militarily. Inter-imperialist rivalry and contradiction will never quietly dissipate but will, on the contrary, intensify and create instability and conflict.

We must continue to put opposition to US imperialism at the centre of our struggle for anti-imperialist independence. Other imperialist powers, whether older or newer, will also seek to curtail Australian independence for their own advantage and must have their influence over our country removed in the course of revolutionary struggle against US imperialism.

On China

Our 13th Congress in 2012 declared that “previous certainties about socialism in China are now obsolete. Our view is that forces working for the further entrenchment of capitalism in China have the upper hand in the Communist Party of China.” The question is whether that characterisation of China remains adequate. To that end we have encouraged study of an overseas document *Is China imperialist?* We have also recommended to a number of comrades other publications and commentaries from the Communist Party of Great Britain (Marxist-Leninist), the Communist Party of the Philippines, the International League of People’s Struggles and China’s own *White Paper on Defence Strategy*.

In upholding the interests of the Australian working class, we first raised our concerns about China's heading down the capitalist road with the Chinese in the early 1990s following China's first investment in Australia, its 1986 acquisition of shares in the Portland Alcoa smelters. We told the Chinese that any Chinese capital used to appropriate surplus value from the labour power of Australian workers would be viewed by us as indistinguishable from other capital, and that if workers came into conflict with employers backed by Chinese capital then we would be duty bound to support those workers. The Chinese were somewhat bemused by our approach: they viewed their investment in Portland as good for Chinese workers and wondered why we would not want to support the interests of Chinese workers.

Twenty years later and China is not only Australia's largest trading partner; it is also a major source of foreign direct investment (FDI) in this country. As a socialist society China pursued trade relations on the basis of equality, mutual benefit and the exchange of needed goods. The Chinese Embassy in Australia has argued that the flow of capital between our two countries is the same as the flow of commodities, and is mutually beneficial: Chinese capital is invested in Australia and Australian capital is invested in China. However, there is a difference between capital and commodities. Capital is utilised for the purpose of exploiting labour power and appropriating surplus value. Commodities are the product of labour power and their sale is the means through which surplus value is realised. Commodities can be traded between countries without adding to or intensifying the exploitation of labour power in their country of origin; capital must seek the intensification and exploitation of labour power wherever it is invested.

The China-Australia Free Trade Agreement (ChAFTA) was signed by negotiators from the respective sides in November 2014, although the text was only released in June 2015, and at the time of writing, has still to be ratified by the Australian parliament. Like the TPP created by US imperialism, it is not so much a trade agreement as an investment guarantee. It contains provisions which are unacceptable to the Australian working class, such as the right of Chinese companies investing more than \$150 million to import temporary workers from China without testing whether Australian workers are available, and for those temporary workers to be paid at Australian minimum wage standards which can be below those negotiated in enterprise agreements. It also includes Investor State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) clauses which cancel national sovereignty by providing corporations with the right to sue governments over legislation which harms the investor's interests. China is the more powerful partner in the ChAFTA and the provisions it contains amount to interference in our internal affairs, undermining of our sovereign right to enact legislation to protect the people and the environment, and an attack on the rights and conditions of Australian workers.

Australia has been the single biggest destination for Chinese outward FDI. Excluding Hong Kong, Chinese FDI in 2013 amounted to \$4.7 billion or 12.15% of the total. Compared to the US (\$17.54 billion) and the UK (\$7.79 billion) this is still

small, however, the rate of investment, coming off a smaller and comparatively recent base, far outstrips that of other sources of FDI. The quantum of Chinese FDI represents only 3.31% of the total, compared to 23.73% for the US, 13.76% for the UK and 10.04% for Japan (the latter having recorded annual declines in investment here for several years).

The figures I am using here are already two years out of date and will understate current Chinese FDI. Most of the Chinese FDI has been in the resources sector with smaller amounts flowing to agriculture, financial services, infrastructure and housing.

It is one thing for a socialist nation to trade extensively with the capitalist world. It is an entirely different thing for a socialist country to export capital. We have already characterised China as a country which has departed from the socialist road, a country being taken further and further down the capitalist road by a Communist Party which, particularly since Jiang Zemin's "Three Represents" policy, no longer claims to represent the working class exclusively, and is in fact the Party of the millionaires and billionaires who, as "productive forces", are entitled to its membership.

We have previously said that there are some centres of ideological contestation in China. China still pays full respect to Mao Zedong as the founder of the PRC but maintains the Deng Xiaoping line of Mao "having committed serious errors in his later life". In the weeks leading up to this Congress, Tsinghua University offered an online course, free of charge, internationally, on *An Introduction to Mao Zedong Thought*. It is based on a course that is compulsory for university students in China. Parts of it are excellent, but its revisionist orientation emerges in some of the multiple choice questions used for assessment, such as "Which one is not included in the main content of Mao Zedong Thought? a) theory on new democratic revolution; b) theory on socialist revolution and construction; c) theory on the building of the revolutionary army and military; d) theory on continued revolution under proletarian dictatorship". You don't need to be a Rogues Scholar to pick d) as the item to be omitted, because d) goes to the heart of whether or not China would develop along the collective, socialist road or degenerate along the private, capitalist road.

The capitalist orientation of China's modern reforms coupled with its push to export capital to world markets invariably means that it is not just on the capitalist road but on the highway to imperialism. A country cannot export capital to the extent that China has without transforming itself into an imperialist power, into a partner with and opponent of already existing imperialisms.

The Chinese now speak of their need to project power abroad, to defend their overseas interests. The 2015 White Paper on China's Military Strategy begins well: "China will unswervingly follow the path of peaceful development, pursue an independent foreign policy of peace and a national defense policy that is defensive in nature, oppose hegemonism and power politics in all forms, and will never seek

hegemony or expansion”. However, there are many references to “resolutely safeguarding development interests” and these are defined in terms of “the security of overseas interests concerning energy and resources, strategic sea lines of communication (SLOCs), as well as institutions, personnel and assets abroad.”

In 1974 Deng Xiaoping addressed the United Nations. Ironically, this architect of China’s embrace of capitalist “reforms” delivered an excellent Marxist-Leninist analysis, the whole of which is worthy of a re-reading here:

<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/deng-xiaoping/1974/04/10.htm> . There is one passage in particular which is relevant to our current discussion of China. It follows:

China is not a superpower, nor will she ever seek to be one. What is a superpower? A superpower is an imperialist country which everywhere subjects other countries to its aggression, interference, control, subversion or plunder and strives for world hegemony. If capitalism is restored in a big socialist country, it will inevitably become a superpower. The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, which has been carried out in China in recent years, and the campaign of criticizing Lin Biao and Confucius now under way throughout China, are both aimed at preventing capitalist restoration and ensuring that socialist China will never change her colour and will always stand by the oppressed peoples and oppressed nations. If one day China should change her colour and turn into a superpower, if she too should play the tyrant in the world, and everywhere subject others to her bullying, aggression and exploitation, the people of the world should identify her as social-imperialism, expose it, oppose it and work together with the Chinese people to overthrow it.

China is not, at this stage, a fully-fledged superpower, but there are elements of interference, control and even plunder in the role it is starting to play internationally. To the extent that it departs from its pledge to “never seek hegemony and expansion”, to the extent that its trade and investment practices undermine the interests of the Australian working class, we will certainly uphold our proletarian revolutionary and internationalist duties in exposing it, opposing it and working together with the Chinese people to overthrow it.

In taking a stand against any emerging imperialist practices by China we should not get caught up in current xenophobic and racist anti-Chinese sentiment. There are right-wing fascist elements that seek to utilise fears about Chinese influence on real estate prices, Chinese purchase of Australian farmland and Chinese investment in environmentally and socially controversial projects to advance their class collaborationist and nationalist reactionary agendas.

We must take a principled stand against racism when we involve ourselves in campaigns involving the Chinese. We should oppose attempts to blacken the reputation of Mao Zedong and other leaders of the Chinese revolution and continue to popularise the Chinese Communist Party’s history of revolutionary struggle to end

feudalism, imperialism and bureaucratic capitalism, and to lift these burdens from the backs of the Chinese people. We should uphold the example of China's socialist construction during the period which saw the emergence of the theory of continuing the revolution under the conditions of the dictatorship of the proletariat. We should repudiate cynicism and defeatism associated with China's current embrace of capitalism. In terms of the dangers and provocations presented by a declining US imperialism attempting to oppose and contain China as a rival, we should support the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of China determined at the time of Comrade Mao Zedong's revolutionary leadership.

The principal contradiction for us remains that between the Australian people and US imperialism which is the main source of FDI, the overlord controlling our economic, political, military, diplomatic, and cultural activities. We must keep to the course we have chartered in our two-stage revolutionary program: fighting to free Australia from the clutches of US imperialism and then deepening the fight for socialism.

The lessons from Greece

The situation in Greece has put the malevolence of imperialist finance capital on display for all to see. Greece is a part of Europe, a part of the privileged world that generally remains exempt from the barbarity and violence imposed on Third World countries by imperialism. NATO has not bombed Athens, but the Troika (the IMF, the European Commission and the European Central Bank) has demanded that Greece cut a pound of flesh and more from its own body to repay the imperialist loan sharks of Europe and the IMF. The original Shylock deserved some sympathy or understanding as a Jew persecuted and mistreated by Christians, but the Shylocks of the Troika have no such excuses. They are businesspeople with no motive other than to accumulate capital through usury.

Because Greece falls into the category of developed capitalist democracies the strategies and tactics of the working class and its revolutionary leadership are bound to have lessons for Australian revolutionaries. Although we have not lived the daily experience of the Greek people we do have the theoretical weapon of Marxism with which to try and make sense of the internal developments of countries other than our own. That said, we stand to be corrected by Greek comrades if our use of Marxist theory has shortcomings or errors.

Greece is a nation that occupies just over half the land area of the Australian state of Victoria and has just under half the population of Australia. It has three main Communist organisations, all of which have contest parliamentary elections. The Greek Communist Party (KKE) has not participated in SYRIZA. The Communist Party of Greece (M-L) and the Marxist-Leninist Communist Party of Greece form their own coalition, People's Resistance, and supported SYRIZA in its early stages without formally joining it. The Communist Organisation of Greece (KOE) joined SYRIZA and has four members of parliament.

For the purposes of this report, I am not dealing with other left social-democratic, Trotskyite or anarchist groupings. The three Communist organisations have different strategies and tactics. Comrades and parties which we respect and which are in general agreement on fundamental theoretical and ideological matters have differed over what they believe to be the correct path forward for Communists in Greece. Comrade Harpal Brar and the Communist Party of Great Britain (M-L) support the KKE's position; Comrade Jose Maria Sison and the Communist Party of the Philippines support the position of the KOE.

Our position has always been one of rejecting the revisionist view that there can be a peaceful transition through parliamentary processes to a fundamental change in the relations of production and of the class structures that accompany those relations. It is entirely illusory to believe that Greece could extricate itself from the web of imperialist domination through elections and negotiations. When the revolutionary forces are not yet strong enough to command support from the people, participations in elections serve only to broadcast the electoral weakness of the revolutionaries and their isolation from the broad ranks of the people.

However, situations can arise when a broad mass movement comes into with the potential for it to entrench and deepen an anti-imperialist stand adopted by a parliamentary majority. Political parties leading such a mass movement may also have the potential to develop the focus of people's struggles away from parliamentary manoeuvres to a self-conscious need to develop extra-parliamentary mass struggle. This may require some representation in the parliament by those parties precisely to assist in exposing its subservience to imperialism and to capitalism.

For a brief time in 1927, the Guomintang (Kuomintang) had two governments in China. One was led by Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek) at Nanjing and had just massacred the Communists of Shanghai to bring to an end a period of GMD-CCP cooperation against the Northern Warlords. Another group of the GMD established its capital at Wuhan under Wang Jingwei and continued to pursue cooperation with the CCP.

In reply to a position being put by Trotsky and Zinoviev, Stalin posed the question of whether or not the Communists should participate in the Wuhan government. He said:

“Since China is passing through an agrarian revolution, since the victory of the agrarian revolution will mean the victory of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, the victory of a revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry, and since Nanking is the centre of national counter-revolution and Wuhan the centre of the revolutionary movement in China, the Wuhan Kuomintang must be supported and the Communists must participate in this Kuomintang and in its revolutionary government, provided that the leading role of the proletariat and its party is ensured both inside and outside the Kuomintang.

“Is the present Wuhan government the organ of a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry? No, it is not such an organ as yet, and will not soon become one. But it has every chance of developing into such an organ, given the further development of the revolution and the success of this revolution.”

The first lesson to be drawn from this is that a Communist party must always be in a position to exercise both unity and independence within any coalition or front that it enters, and that the exercise of independence is for the purpose of developing and strengthening the leading role of the working class. The second is to base its participation on the potential for the further development of the revolutionary situation, for its development to a newer and qualitatively higher level.

The Greece of today is not the China of yesterday. However, it seems reasonable that Communists in Greece participated in the creation of SYRIZA in 2004 and attempted to strengthen its anti-imperialist policies within parliamentary confines, on the one hand, and the leadership of the working class in protecting those policies through mass organisations and extra-parliamentary actions on the other.

SYRIZA gradually emerged as the main opposition to the traditional social democratic PASOK government through the 2004, 2007 and 2012 elections. It was supported by Greeks opposed to imperialist austerity measures. It seems reasonable that Marxist-Leninist Communists worked alongside SYRIZA to support what could be supported and to criticise and oppose its tendencies towards vacillation and diversion of struggle into the parliamentary arena. The years 2010-11 were years of intense popular and workers’ struggles against an unprecedented capitalist-imperialist attack, but what followed, in a classic case of the law of uneven development, was a protracted phase of setback of the popular movement. Electoral illusions persisted and were strengthened and gave SYRIZA the opportunity to form government.

Ten days prior to SYRIZA’s First Congress in July 2013, the Communist Organisation of Greece (KOE) decided, as a “necessary step for the strengthening of SYRIZA and of its unified expression, to suspend its autonomous public presence”. The KOE was the second-biggest group in SYRIZA at the time and was making its gesture to show support for the transformation of SYRIZA from a movement to a party. This was not, from our limited knowledge of the situation, in keeping with the principle of Communist participation in a broad party formation.

When SYRIZA emerged as the largest party in the January 2015 election, it still fell short of a clear majority of seats and thus entered a coalition with the right wing Independent Greeks (ANEL). Despite the anti-imperialist rhetoric directed at the Troika’s austerity demands, SYRIZA-ANEL kept Greece inside the framework of NATO, EU and the Eurozone. The potential for it to develop to a newer and higher stage of resistance to imperialism was diminished, culminating in a referendum where the choices were between the austerity demanded by imperialism and the austerity proposed by SYRIZA-ANEL’s Memorandum. It seems reasonable that the

Communists denounced the referendum as a farce and organised boycotts by their supporters.

Despite the Communists' calls to boycott the referendum, many Greeks felt compelled to vote "No" in order to once again reject anything coming from the Troika. The result was an explosion of euphoria at the strength of the No vote (just over 60%) and anger and disillusion after Tsipras agreed to negotiate with the Troika a Memorandum that was worse than what had been rejected in the referendum. This led to the resignation of Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis and the withdrawal of 25 members to form a new party called Popular Unity. The five KOE MPs in SYRIZA abstained from voting on the Third Memorandum in July¹ and announced on September 10 that they would not be running in the September 20 snap election and would encourage their members and supporters to abstain from voting.

Whether they were responding to the calls from Marxist-Leninists to abstain, or were simply weary of and cynical about the September election, a record 45% of eligible voters did not cast a ballot in the "compulsory" – but unenforced – general election. The SYRIZA-ANEL coalition was returned with a slightly reduced number of seats, KKE maintained its previous 5.5% vote and the ML coalition remained steady on about .16% of the vote, substantially less than the 3% threshold required to obtain a seat.

So do these developments show that a policy of non-participation in SYRIZA, of non-cooperation with SYRIZA at the time of its formation and growth into the main opposition party was wrong? In my opinion, it does not. A balance needed to be found between unity and struggle within the anti-imperialist movement. Its participants included on the right those whose preference was for legislative measures and reliance on the authority of the Greek parliamentary structure, and those on the left whose preference was for mass work and the development of struggles by the working class in workplaces and community settings.

With the benefit of hindsight, the advocates of a sectarian "all struggle and no unity" position will proclaim themselves "correct" because of the Tsipris betrayal. But did the very short life of the Wuhan government and the emergence, ten years later, of Wang Jingwei as a puppet of Japanese imperialism make CCP participation in the Wuhan government wrong? No, because conditions existed to create a potential for the Wuhan government to play a positive role, just as conditions existed in Greece in the late 2000s to create a potential for SYRIZA to play a positive role.

¹ Within hours of the Greek government accepting the humiliating and disgraceful Third Memorandum, the KOE released a 13-point statement which included the following self-criticism: "...the Communist Organization of Greece feels the need to apologize to the Greek People for failing to estimate how low could the Greek government and the leadership of SYRIZA fall. The lack of such estimation did not allow us to dissolve completely and timely the last remaining illusions about a possible dignified stand of the government against the Troika, even at the eleventh hour. This self-criticism cannot and must not be sidestepped, despite the fact that we wrote and said many times during the last months that the total surrender was inevitable because of the obsessive line of the leadership for an "agreement at any expense"."

Whether our analysis of the Greek situation was right or wrong, the importance of this discussion for us lies in the need to be able to assess, at the right moment and in the right circumstances, our ongoing rejection of parliamentary participation. There are no circumstances at the present time in which pursuit of influence in parliamentary struggles will be to the advantage of the Communist Party.

Since our inception we have rejected any diversion of peoples' struggles into parliamentary channels. This must continue to be our stance for the foreseeable future. But it might not always be the correct position to adopt. Persevering with this position under different and more politically mature circumstances could lead us to a sectarian deviation. We will need to be able to correctly apply Marxist theoretical reasoning to currently unforeseen circumstances as they arise and mature. It is timely to remind ourselves through the prism of the Greek political crisis that principled adherence to the fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism must not become dogmatism and that the exercise of flexibility in the application of Marxism-Leninism must not become opportunism.

The war of terror

In the final analysis, the war of terror is the means by which imperialist finance capital maintains its domination over the people and nations of the world. The reactionary classes deploy terror to maintain their rule. The standing armed forces of the imperialists routinely adopt tactics which lead to overwhelming "collateral damage" amongst innocent civilians. They also have a long history of deploying death squads and other irregular and mercenary forces to take out what a new Pentagon manual identifies as "unprivileged belligerents". In relation to peace activists and progressive forces in their own imperialist and developed capitalist heartlands, they use fear of terror by real or imaginary opponents to control the people with draconian "anti-terror" legislation.

For more than a decade, the imperialists have inverted logic and tried to claim leadership of the "war on terror". The whole history of colonial expansion and imperialist division of the world has been one of the employment of terror against people fighting for freedom from enslavement, for national liberation and for independence and socialism. Whether it is the plunder and pillage of standing armies or the disappearances and assassinations of clandestine death squads, terror has been the way countless people throughout the world have experienced capitalism and imperialism.

The terror imperialism now claims to be fighting had its origins in the Soviet social-imperialist invasion of Afghanistan. British and US training of religious zealots to fight the Soviets quickly extended to training and equipping similar groups for the purpose of achieving regime change in targeted countries including Iraq, Libya and Syria. That zealotry has seen the trainees outgrow the role assigned to them by imperialism; it has seen them with their own religio-fascist agenda turn around to bite the hand that fed them.

Groups like ISIS have emerged as a type of international lumpen-proletariat. In advanced capitalist countries the lumpen-proletariat consists of people who cannot or will not live as members of the working class, people broken in spirit by poverty, lack of education and opportunity, health failure, and drugs. Their escape route from all of this is criminal activity and criminal violence through which they seek to empower and enrich themselves. They aspire to live like the idle rich they see at the top of society. ISIS recruits come from all strata of society and include educated and articulate youths. They hate imperialism for its wanton random violence against the communities from which they come and for its failure to embrace the Prophet, but they are not conscious anti-imperialists. They aspire to have an empire of their own, the Caliphate and murder and terrorise any who stand in their way. Their open fighting is directed at armed opponents, including genuine anti-imperialists, but their terrorism is directed at non-combatants, at innocent civilians, including in the imperialist and developed capitalist countries. Theirs is the personally brutal mirror image of the impersonal brutality of imperialist drone attacks and the rain of Zionist phosphorous bombs over Gaza. Whether you behead the person next to you or simply feed coordinates to a drone from the safe distance of Pine Gap, you are equally a terrorist as far as your victims are concerned.

ISIS-inspired terrorist attacks in Australia, France, Britain and elsewhere give the ruling classes of those countries the excuse to intensify surveillance of all progressive politically active people. We have already seen a vast expansion of police and security powers in this regard. We are also seeing the roll-out of a campaign encouraging teachers to identify potentially “radicalised” youths. A number of case studies are presented including a young girl who leaves her supportive family to become an environmental activist. Of course, there is the obligatory case study of a Muslim youth, but the lumping together of people exercising legitimate democratic rights with those coming under the influence of ISIS shows how terrorism enables the ruling class to spread its repressive net ever more widely. The goal of “deradicalising” ISIS followers can never succeed so long as it denies the existence of imperialist violence and terror.

Marxists eschew terrorism. The terrorism of imperialism is the much greater and the more dangerous and perfidious of the two terrorisms we have discussed. It will be directed at the revolutionary anti-imperialist movement when it develops to a particular level of influence in Australia. It will come from the authorised state agencies of violence and it will come from fascist thugs to whom the state will turn a blind eye and encourage. We will only be able to defend the advances we make in the development of the movement for independence from imperialism by countering the violence of the state with the organised resistance of the revolutionary movement. Our activity will arise as a defensive measure and gradually assume an offensive capacity, but it will always be organised against identified agencies of the capitalist state and will never take the form of indiscriminate and random violence in which

members of our own class become victims. We will never practice terrorism or endorse terrorist activity.

The two-stage Australian strategy for independence and socialism

The realisation that a two-stage theory of revolution accorded with the characteristics of Australia as a developed capitalist country dominated by US imperialism emerged and was accepted by us in the early 1970s. Comrade E.F. Hill led theoretical development of this strategy and our younger comrades enthusiastically implemented it both within the Party and in a number of mass organisations influenced by us.

In developing and implementing this policy, two erroneous lines emerged. The first was a rightist tendency to deny the socialist content of the theory, to over-emphasise patriotism and the maintenance of a national bourgeois economy during the first stage of the revolution. In effect, this line accepted some form of intermediate stage between the anti-imperialist revolution and the socialist revolution. Its adherents discouraged mention of socialism for fear of alienating allies in the struggle against US imperialism. This line was publicly criticised in February 1978 in “For independence and socialism”. This document clearly stated that the struggle for independence must not weaken the sentiment for socialism.

From the left came a movement led by some previously influential younger members of the Party. This group started to organise a faction within the Party in 1977. By then their erroneous position on the two-stage revolution (over-emphasising the socialist objective and dismissing the patriotic non-socialist elements within the united front) was caught up in their support of the “Gang of Four” in China. They tried to establish a group in opposition to the Australian Independence Movement led by Party activists. Their influence quickly waned.

The legacy of our development of the two-stage theory of revolution is that a number of people and organisations on the Left still mistakenly ascribe to us a position that is similar to the rightist line mentioned above. For three decades or more we have been maligned as “patriots” and “nationalists”. They essentially continue to criticise us for believing in some form of intermediate stage between capitalism and socialism. Mainly Trotskyite in their own ideological commitment, they reject the two-stage theory of revolution, shouting loudly against imperialism in the context of international arenas of struggle, but denying that it is the main enemy of the Australian people and main target of an initial stage of revolutionary struggle in this country. In opposing the first, anti-imperialist stage of the Australian revolution they portray Australia as an imperialist country in its own right, a situation which, if it was correct, would place an exclusively working class revolution on the agenda. It is true that some Australian capitalists engage in imperialist activity in their own right, but they do not constitute the majority of the Australian bourgeoisie and their activities

are not so representative of that bourgeoisie or so independent of US imperialism as to be able to characterise the Australian state as an independent imperialist entity.

There is no intermediate stage between capitalism and socialism embedded in our two-stage theory of the Australian revolution. During the first stage, assets belonging to the imperialists and their local compradors will be expropriated by new organs of state power and pressed into service for the benefit of the majority of Australia's working class and its allies. The first stage, the anti-imperialist stage, is defined by the socialist character of that expropriation which can only occur under working class leadership exercised through working class organs of state power.

Giant foreign multinational corporations have killed off many Australian capitalist firms. Some Australian capitalists see potential for growth in working for and with imperialist corporations and financiers; however, imperialism is predatory and cares nothing for the capitalists of other countries who will always be threatened by it. Sooner or later all will face ruin from imperialist competition. It may be that some of them will see the sense of allowing the anti-imperialist movement to develop. Some may contribute financially or in other ways to that movement. Is it impossible that as the anti-imperialist movement develops and grows, that a section of the Australian capitalists will permit their workers to engage in paid time and without penalty in anti-imperialist demonstrations and rallies? Is it impossible that they might not cooperate with the revolutionary movement in ensuring supplies of food and other necessities to suburban areas under the control of an anti-imperialist front? Is it impossible that some might provide needed services to an anti-imperialist state power in exchange for a guarantee of continued existence within a private sector enclave of a socialist economy? The division of the Australian revolution by stages means that some sectors of the economy owned by national bourgeois elements who are either supportive of, or neutral towards, the anti-imperialist stage will still operate as capitalist businesses into the period of the second stage, necessitating the deepening of the socialist revolution and its embrace of all economic functions throughout the second stage. This will be a period during which the proletarian organs of state power license the operations of cooperative Australian capitalists whilst directing them towards activities which strengthen the socialist orientation of the economy, eventually resulting in their absorption into that economy as socialist concerns with appropriate compensation to their former owners. Thus there is an overlap with the first stage melding into the second stage, both having predominantly socialist content, and certainly no intermediate national bourgeois economic stage between capitalism and socialism.

The people's movement and work within the Left

There are various interpretations of the Left. It is part of our Marxist-Leninist training and culture to identify a genuinely revolutionary Left which is based on confidence in the working class, practises the mass line, promotes communist ethics based on service to the people and adheres to fundamental beliefs about the nature of the

state, the danger of imperialist war and the great unlikelihood of a peaceful, parliamentary transition to socialism. It is important that we uphold the ideology of genuine Marxism-Leninism against revisionism, which seeks to take the revolutionary content from Marxism, and deviations of both an ultra-Left and Rightist nature. It is also important that we are able to work effectively within the people's movement which will invariably bring us into contact with those with whom we have ideological, political and organisational differences.

This is not to avoid openly acknowledging the differences we have with other organisations and groups for the sake of being accepted within the movement. It means that we should judge other organisations in the mass movement on the basis of their actions, on whether what they are doing is helping to unite the movement and assisting it to raise the level of understanding of its participants and to raise the level of struggle. Without prejudging people and labelling them, we should work with others where we can while any who attempt to control, split and weaken the movement should be identified and isolated.

We look to work with other individuals and organisations who are genuine in their support for the movement, who do not want to advance their own factional interests at the expense of the unity of the movement, who will not continually try to put a dampener on struggle or subordinate the movement to a mainstream social democratic party and to bourgeois parliamentarism. So long as they can be seen by their actions to be interested in uniting, interested in strengthening the movement and interested in raising the level of struggle then we should unite with them, work with them, talk with them and not ourselves divert the mass movement into self-defeating sectarianism and factionalism.

Our hopes for the future of the people's movement are firmly based around Australian youth. Young people should make more political mischief. They should definitely trouble the rich. They should enact the great truth of Marxism that it is right to rebel against reactionaries, that defiance of arbitrary and oppressive authority is a good thing. They should repudiate the values of capitalism and imperialism and rediscover the communist virtues of fighting self and serving the people.

And yet, young people are not easily drawn to disciplined and demanding commitments such as characterise Communist organisation. We will struggle for some time to win more than a few supporters among the youth. In the absence of a genuinely revolutionary situation, the revolutionary movement has few practical opportunities to attract young people to its side. They are more inclined to be caught up in movementism and spontaneity. Thus, from time to time, phenomena such as the Occupy movement capture their imagination and arouse excitement and passion. Or they drift towards seemingly revolutionary groups which, in the absence of patient nurturing in the science of Marxism-Leninism, place on their shoulders unrealistic demands to "sell the paper" and "get to the meeting"; as a result they all too quickly burn out and fall away from the movement. Our responsibility is to facilitate the

involvement of young people with our Party to the extent that it is now possible to do so, whilst preparing ourselves for future growth in this area as the contradictions of capitalism and imperialism intensify in the direction of an actual revolutionary situation.

Unions, the working class and the ALP

Our standing amongst the more advanced sections of the workers is reasonably good. We have some good comrades very active in their union or involved in campaigns supported by the union movement. Partly this derives from our long-standing Marxist-Leninist attitude towards trade unionism as a bourgeois ideology and towards the Labor Party as a party of capitalism.

At the same time, we have been at the forefront of the work towards an independent working class agenda and we have had some success in winning support for a position of pressuring and placing demands on the Labor Party rather than supporting it and relying on it. Certainly the ACTU has gone further than it has in the past in stating in its *Campaign Operational Plan 2014-2015* that in respect of the next federal election, “We will not be campaigning for the election of an ALP Government, we will be campaigning for an independent agenda or vision for our country.” There will be vacillation and backsliding in relation to this but it gives us a platform for advancing our minimum demands and a useful reference point for further mass work aimed at preventing people’s struggles from being diverted into the quicksand of parliamentarism.

Trade unions are the basic organisations for the defence of the interests of the working class, but they are also bound in a thousand and one ways to capitalism through the institutions they work in, the rules by which they are bound, the properties they own and the investments they have. Some are affiliated to the ALP, others are not. Some have leaderships more committed to the class struggle than others; indeed, some are now so corporatized that any concept of struggle is completely alien to them. And then there are the many workers now sitting outside trade union organisation, either as long-term unemployed, or as so precariously employed that contact with the relevant union is near impossible to make, or employed under shonky sub-contracting arrangements that encourage them to see themselves as their own boss and therefore in no need of trade union protection.

No matter how small a proportion of workers there are now covered by and members of unions, the mere fact of union representation in the workplace is anathema to the big corporations seeking to squeeze the last drop from the workers. Unions are under all-round attack from peak employer bodies and from the two main parliamentary parties. The reality is that unions have lost massive ground over the last three decades and are now bound and circumscribed by rules and regulations that would not be out of place in the most repressive regimes around the world. The

right to strike has essentially been lost, the threat of individual work contracts is re-emerging and it is now illegal to identify a scab as a scab!

We must be in the front ranks of the defence of rights at work, and in defence of the right to have and belong to a union. We must not let the unions, for all the shortcomings we see in them, be further carved up by the multinationals and their agents. That means preparing workers for real struggle and not just courtroom struggle, for endurance of real suffering and sacrifice and not just running down the union cheque-book. It means identifying and nurturing leaders of the John Cummins variety who will accept that "...it is an occupational hazard for union officials to be arrested and perhaps go to gaol". It means promoting leaders who will embody the spirit of the O'Sheas and Gallaghers, who will embody the spirit John expressed when he said "Jailing could have left me suitably chastened to grovel...but I am convinced I've done nothing wrong. How can it be a crime for a union official to serve his members?" If a rank-and-file worker like Ark Tribe can embody that spirit then so too should a larger number of paid union officials. And they will. Come the times, come the comrades.

Our key tasks

In the following section we identify some of the key tasks around which members will need to unite and carry forward.

Party building: We have continually striven to position ourselves as the vanguard organisation of the Australian proletariat. That is a huge task made harder by the fact that our membership has seen no substantial growth for quite a few years. If we don't have members in each of the major industries capable of influencing the content of the demands put forward by workers in those industries, capable of influencing the course of struggles that arise within those industries, capable of lifting the ideological and political awareness of workers in those industries, then we cannot be the vanguard we aspire to be.

The Party must never hide its face. It can have a public face through a small group of identified leaders, and through its publications and website but it also needs a face through individual members revealing their connection to the Party when the time is right and with the right people. All comrades must exercise initiative in being the face of the Party at the level of the workplace and the community when and where conditions permit. We need to develop confidence in approaching people to join the Party.

Merely having a website and placing our wisdom on the platform of an assortment of internet search engines is not a development in the direction of practical leadership of the class struggle. We must have a membership that grows within the working class. This means that our existing members must be active recruiters of new members. We must absolutely not be held back by a general practice of non-disclosure of membership. The reasons for the adoption of our organisational

principle of general non-disclosure of membership are to protect our members from surveillance by the state and harassment and threat by its agents, and to ensure that there are no barriers to the effectiveness of the mass work conducted by members, barriers that can arise if one prematurely and inappropriately declares oneself to be a Communist.

We must also work to build the Party as a genuinely national organisation and have representation not only in the capital cities but in regional centres as well. The strength and cohesion of the centre is a return on investments made in the responsibilities given to the parts. This requires the centre to have confidence in the sections and the parts; it means encouraging initiatives to be taken in the writing and dissemination of agitational materials relevant to particular states, territories and regions.

Building the Party also requires adherence by all to the principle of democratic centralism. Democracy and centralism are a unity of opposites. Centralism can only provide unity of purpose to the Party if it is based on genuine democracy within the Party.

Under democratic centralism, the minority is subordinate to the majority. This does not mean that the majority is always right, that a majority opinion determines the correctness of a policy or line. But it does provide for the orderly conduct of discussions and acts to prevent the degeneration of the Party into a debating society that does nothing but endless navel-gazing. It is incumbent on the majority to respect the right of the minority to criticise the line or policy with which they disagree and for both to allow practice to reveal what is right and what is wrong with a policy or line.

Under democratic centralism, the lower level of organisation is subordinate to the higher level. This does not mean that a higher level of organisation can act arbitrarily or without accountability to the membership. Lower levels of Party organisation have the right to supervise the work of those with higher levels of responsibility up to and including the recall of elected delegates to higher levels of organisation if they act contrary to the wishes of those who elected them.

Under democratic centralism, the individual is subordinate to the organisation. This does not mean that comrades lose the capacity to act and think independently, that they should passively wait for someone to tell them what to do, that they should fear taking the initiative and deciding for themselves how to work in a particular place of employment or community group. Quite the contrary. But neither does it give individual comrades the right to divorce their actions from the organisation, to fail to report on initiatives they have taken and the results that come from these, to fail to observe Party discipline while acting only on their own behalf, doing what they like and pulling away from the organisation and its centralised guidance. Such comrades need to take note of what Comrade Mao Zedong wrote in *Combat Liberalism*.

Promoting an independent working class agenda: This has been a cornerstone of our mass work for the past ten years and has certainly resonated with the more class conscious and militant sections of the working class. It reflects a weariness with the cycle of hope-betrayal-despair that attaches to the Labor Party and a determination to define the interests of workers against the parliamentary opportunism of social-democracy. We said in 2012 that such an independent agenda need not be a “formal document to which various organisations must commit, but there should be a central core of demands that are put forward in various ways”. In November 2013 we said it was time for progressive-minded people to “give that agenda something of a more concrete shape, so that when we talk of our agenda there is a common understanding of basic principles and shared objectives”.

It should be noted that following Turnbull’s accession to the Prime Ministership, the ACTU wrote him a congratulatory letter and asked to meet with him to discuss a number of issues. This was significant in two ways: firstly it served as a public declaration of the ACTU’s having its own voice and of its capacity to act independently of the ALP; and secondly it put out as a public agenda those issues which we have by-and-large been championing through our mass work in our respective unions and community organisations. Now we all know that the ACTU has a long history of betrayal of the workers’ movement and names like Monk, Hawke, Crean, Kelty and Ferguson point to the essentially bourgeois ideology of trade unionism, but at the present time we can see the reflection of what we would call an independent working class agenda² in those matters raised for discussion with Turnbull (even where some are couched in reformist, social-democratic terms). Those items were:

- Protecting and creating local jobs for all Australians through investing in local industries, such as ship building and manufacturing;
- Protecting our rights at work and moving to stop attacks on penalty rates, the minimum wage and other rights such as paid parental leave;
- Halting the passage of free trade agreements that clearly trade away the interests of Australian workers and our sovereign rights;
- Supporting universal access to health care by maintaining the integrity of Medicare;
- Investing in our children’s future by protecting access to and the quality of education, in particular reversing your government’s position on \$100,000 university fees and promising to fully fund Gonski reforms;
- Halting further cuts to public services and public sector jobs, and ensuring there are enough public sector workers to deliver the services our communities need and rely on;
- Ensuring all Australians have a decent retirement;

² The ACTU leadership subsequently maintained its opposition to the ChAFTA despite the ALP agreeing to support it, thus again, showing a certain independence of the Labor Party.

- Ensuring we have a tax system that is fair; and
- Ending the wasteful and politically motivated Trade Union Royal Commission.

One of our tasks should be to ensure that in our unions and community organisations we give these items a more specifically anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist ideological perspective, that we take them as a basis for discussions and mass work and as a springboard for raising the level of political understanding in the working class and the community.

Another task is to identify opportunities for the involvement of the workers themselves in the raising of these demands; that is, opportunities for practical political activity by workers and community activists. Only in the context of practical struggles can the leading role of the working class be unleashed; leadership by the diversion of struggle into the quicksand of parliamentarism.

A third task is to expand the agenda, to link these essentially economist, living standards-based demands to wider issues of doing away with financial and jail-time penalties for exercising the right to strike, of smashing the coercive Fair Work Building and Construction (FWBC), of opposition to imperialist war, of calls for the removal of all US bases on Australian soil, of support for Aboriginal peoples' rights to self-determination and land rights, of calls for nationalisation of key industries, of opposing fascist state measures and state repression...the list goes on.

Opposing subservience to US imperialism: This needs to be identified separately as a key task because it is the bridge between the immediate demands of an independent working class agenda and the realisation of the first stage of the Australian revolutionary movement. Our focus must be on placing the question of opposing US imperialism before the people at every opportunity. If US imperialism dominates every aspect of our lives, then opposition to US imperialism must be our focus everywhere. Over time we should ensure that our influence extends beyond our own party and the couple of mass organisations in which we work, and which do have an anti-imperialist focus, into other mass organisations where there is potential to develop a much more sharply anti-imperialist perspective. There are a range of republican, cultural, ethnic, women's and farmers' organisations in which we have little current involvement.

An important task for a Communist party is to enhance its responsibilities in the field of proletarian internationalism. If US imperialism is a world-wide phenomenon, then opposition to US imperialism must be developed through appropriate links to organisations and movements and persons outside our own country who are also struggling against US imperialism. To a certain extent, our ability to develop such ties has been constrained by the absence of paid public leaders who can attend international conferences and speak on our behalf or maintain personal ties with leading international figures. We will make slow progress in developing those ties as we are unlikely to have public full-time operatives anytime soon; nevertheless, all

members must rise to the occasion and have a firm internationalist outlook and know-how and on what issues to engage workmates and friends in discussions about the world-wide crimes of US imperialism and how the struggles of peoples of various countries and regions interact with and support our own. At the same time, we do not want to encourage revolution-by-tourism whereby comrades try to involve themselves in everybody's struggles but their own. This afflicts some people and some organisations on the Left where the low level of struggle in one's own country makes more intense struggles elsewhere seem rather romantic and attractive. Ho Chi Minh's advice remains absolutely true: if you want to help people such as the Vietnamese at the height of their struggle against US imperialism, then make revolution in your own country. We must remain grounded in our own circumstances and lift the level of struggle here as an expression of real internationalism.

Applying Marxism-Leninism through conscientious study and investigation: All people have their own approaches to learning and their own preferred ways of finding out about things. Many are coloured by their own past exposures to different types of learning at school, at university, as an apprentice and so on. Some develop an aversion to reading or have been conditioned to think that "study" is beyond them. Workers in particular are sometimes resistant to reading (and writing): schools that have failed to develop them as readers leave them feeling inadequate and ashamed; one of the legacies of schooling is that reading never seemed relevant - it was tedious and a waste of time.

For a revolutionary, reading is a discipline like having a job, and getting up early every morning to get to the job. It's just something that time has to be found for. Workers are skilled at hands-on tasks, but workers' leaders need to develop theoretical understanding of the way capitalism works and of the way socialism can be achieved. All Party members need to put time aside to read the classic works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Mao Zedong and our own Ted Hill to see how these people approached the problems of their day and applied a theoretical perspective to them. In that respect, study for a Communist goes beyond familiarity with a text and aims at developing the ability to use the methods of successful past revolutionaries to deal with the current situation. It aims to give each of us the skill to develop a correct line in relation to unforeseen, unpredictable and unprecedented developments. Studying for us is not for the sake of intimidating others with a bunch of useless quotes but of developing a quiet confidence about our work, of knowing the teachings so as to use the method.

In order to apply what we learn from Marxist-Leninist theory we need to know the circumstances and situation in which we will seek to use it. All current phenomena grow out of the past, but take on their own peculiar characteristics and many-sided attributes in the present. We can't make assumptions about social phenomena without properly investigating them, without finding out what caused them, without knowing how workers and others are responding to them and what they want done about them.

We should strive to be first-rate experts, not so much in the teachings of Marxist authors as in the areas of daily life to which we aim to apply the methods of Marxism that we refine through our study. That means struggling against left-bloc lifestyles by having wide social connections and being receptive to information and arguments from a wide range of sources, hardly any of which will be presented from a proletarian Marxist perspective.

Effective Party activists must have interpersonal communication skills of a high order. Perhaps the most important skill as a communicator is the ability to listen to others. Listening is not a passive activity, but an essential foundation for engaging with others in meaningful ways. Listening is an essential component of investigating people's concerns, problems, ideas and visions. A good listener has enough personal assurance, based on knowledge of Marxist theory and investigation of circumstances, not to need to hear his or her own voice nor seek the limelight, but rather, to give others the chance to develop and grow politically and ideologically.

Conclusion

Comrades, in the coming three years, we can expect to see more of financial instability and crisis; more of the concentration of wealth in fewer and fewer hands while the majority experience precarious work, under-employment and unemployment, and the bankruptcy and ruin of small businesses; more privatisation and the theft of services from the people; more evidence of stress in people's lives (drugs, petty crime, domestic violence, suicide and self-harm, psychological disorder and mental sicknesses); more damage to the environment and its eco-systems; more violent conflicts instigated or manipulated by imperialism and reactionary forces; and more attempt to restrict our freedoms and erode our rights and liberties.

We are communists because we do not have confidence that these problems can be resolved by parliamentary reforms; because we don't believe in dealing with each problem in isolation; because we see the inter-connectedness of all social, political, economic and ideological problems with the economic base of capitalism characterised by private ownership of the means of production and the private appropriation of the fruits of social labour power. We are communists because we look outside the square of the capitalist mode of production and see not just a preferable alternative, but an alternative that is an objective necessity given the operation of the economic laws of motion embedded in class society.

Our ideology is a correct reflection of social being, but its correctness alone is insufficient for the tasks that lay ahead. We need to increase our numbers, to build the party, to find ways of relating our politics, organisation and ideology to the experiences of our more advanced workers, and through them to the people of our suburbs and regional centres.

Let us hope that we can discuss some successes in relation to this at our next Congress!