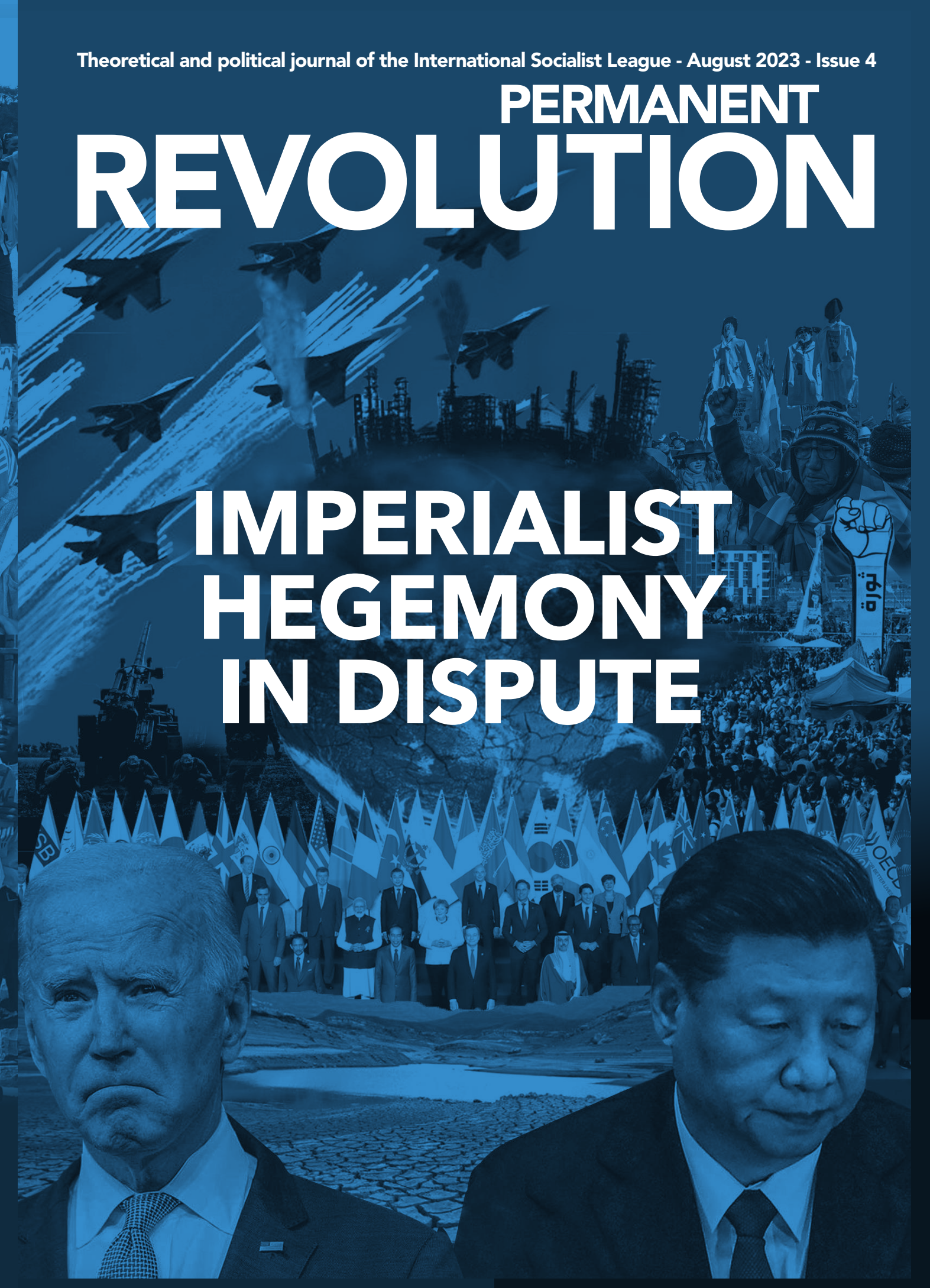


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PERMANENT REVOLUTION

IMPERIALIST HEGEMONY IN DISPUTE



PERMANENT REVOLUTION

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Imperialist hegemony IN DISPUTE



These are times of a truly unprecedented gravity in history. The structural economic crisis of this decadent imperialist capitalist system, and the increasing misery and inequality, generate struggles and recurring social rebellions as well as political polarization that includes the rise of far right expressions. On top of this boiling cauldron, come new pandemics, climatic catastrophes and regional wars that cause massive forced migrations, even the threat of a third world war appears on the horizon.

The qualitative difference with previous periods is that global warming, climate change and environmental pollution and destruction today reach levels that have never been seen, perhaps already exceeding some limits of no return. This is no “lie of the Marxist left” as the denialists say, but a tangible and scientific fact. At the same time, the size of the arsenals that the great powers continue to accumulate in an arms race

that, of course, includes nuclear weapons, suffice to put civilization and the very planet Earth that shelters us at risk of disappearing.

Currently, two central opponents are carrying out a growing duel for global hegemony. We are not moving towards a “multipolar” world with a certain equilibrium, but to greater confrontations. And the shift from one imperialism to another has never been peaceful, but characterized by war. One contender is the United States: although it still remains the dominant imperialism, it has been in decline since the fall of the former USSR and the weakening of the entire Stalinist apparatus left it alone, without its associate, to absorb the world’s conflicts. Its obvious opponent is China, which, faster rather than slower, continues to advance in international clout and commercial, economic, political and military intervention.



This major dispute and the hypothesis of a new world war are topics of analysis and debate for the whole of the bourgeois class and obviously also for Marxist and revolutionary tendencies. The characterization of China is directly linked to this: is it still state capitalism, is it an economy *in transition*, or are we already facing a new imperialist power? In any case, unlike other sectors of the center-left and left, our International Socialist League does not attribute to China any progressive role, being just as exploitative and predatory capitalist as the United States.

In the event of a direct confrontation between the two superpowers, the entire area of the Pacific Ocean would become the first theater of war, though certainly not the only one. In such a case, it would be an urgent necessity to coordinate a great international campaign against the war. But this dispute for hegemony already has concrete regional expressions today, such as the tensions in Taiwan and Hong Kong, the threats of imperialist military intervention in Niger and Haiti or the attempt by NATO to advance into Eastern Europe, Russia's reactionary invasion of Ukraine and the consequent war unleashed there, which continues. In addition to rejecting all imperialist interference, we must raise the defense of the right of all subjugated people to their self-determination, independence and national sovereignty.

As for this war, apart from the campists that support Russia in considering it a progressive camp in relation to NATO, both the *pacifism* raised by sectors of the center-left and the

two-way *defeatism* posed by some Trotskyist currents end up in mistakes that benefit Putin. These divisions prevented the development of a broad mobilization against the invasion. In contrast, our position combines support for the legitimate struggle of the Ukrainian people to defend their territory against the Russian invasion, with the political denunciation of Zelensky's capitalist government and the demand for NATO's withdrawal and dissolution.

All of these burning political and theoretical issues constitute the main object of the present edition of *Permanent Revolution* that we offer to our readers: what is the real situation in the United States, what is China and what role does it play in the world, the tensions in the Asia-Pacific area, the state of the Russia-Ukraine war, with what program and policy should revolutionary organizations intervene. In addition to these articles, we contribute others on the political debates in the radical left in Argentina and Brazil, as well as on the first Pan-African Congress of the ISL that is taking place in Kenya.

We offer these texts as a contribution to a better understanding of the challenges that the complex global situation poses and to the politics for intervening correctly in them, promoting the international regroupment of revolutionaries and the socialist revolution in each country and throughout the world, which is the only strategic way to defeat this inhuman system of exploitation, oppression and death before it ends up plunging us into the most atrocious barbarism. 🌐



THE DECLINE of US imperialist hegemony

BY LUIS MEINERS

The decline and crisis of US imperialist hegemony is one of the defining features of the present. While the US remains the leading imperialist power, it is no longer capable of single-handedly dictating the terms of operation of the world order and faces a rising strategic rival. This relative decline has deep roots and is marked by pivotal events of the last few decades.

The US emerged from World War II as the main capitalist power on the planet. Together with the Soviet Union they constituted the two poles

of the postwar world order. The Bretton Woods agreement of 1944 sealed the hegemony of the dollar as world currency and gave rise to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, constituting the institutional framework of US hegemony.

By the 1970s, however, the situation was beginning to get complicated. The recovery of the capitalist powers that had suffered most destruction in World War II - Germany and Japan - meant increasing competition for US industry. Michael Roberts¹ points out that from the second half of the 1960s the rate of profit in the US had begun to decline. Added to this,

in 1974 marked the military defeat of US imperialism in Vietnam.

However, with the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the US emerged as the undisputed leader of a unipolar world. US imperialism tried to organize the world according to the needs of the new hegemony. This meant incorporating states into the international framework of institutions built for this purpose and expanding their influence through new institutions and trade agreements. An example of this was the expansion of NATO towards the Eastern European states. Both US capitalist parties were committed to this imperialist strategy. US imperialism also acted as a global gendarme, trying to stabilize



the world order under its hegemony.

With George W. Bush, US imperialism tried to consolidate its hegemony by strengthening its control over the Middle East. Under this strategy he launched wars on Afghanistan and Iraq which intended to achieve rapid regime changes in those countries taking advantage of the opportunity to justify increased militarism in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. This offensive was also projected as a platform to achieve greater control over the region and its strategic resources.

But events would show that a new unipolar world order was not an easy bet. For decades Stalinism had acted to contain, divert and deactivate

revolutionary processes and class struggle around the world. The collapse of the postwar bipolar order meant that US imperialism was left alone at the forefront of efforts to control and resolve the conflicts and contradictions that arose.

In Iraq and Afghanistan its military offensive was bogged down in endless wars with no clear signs of victory. This also sparked a rise in anti-war sentiment with huge demonstrations around the world and within the US itself. In this context, it became increasingly isolated as its plans to consolidate imperialist hegemony produced opposite results to those expected. .

THE 2008 CRISIS

The economic crisis that broke out from the bursting of the real estate bubble had its roots in the strategies applied to overcome the crisis of the 70s. The neoliberal offensive deployed since the late 70s marked by the sharp rise in interest rates by the Federal Reserve - the *Volcker shock*-, achieved a recovery of the rate of profit on the basis of a strong recession during the first half of the 80s and a constant offensive against the working class. However, by the first decade of the 21st century that recovery showed signs of exhaustion and falling rates of profit inflated a speculative bubble that finally burst.

The 2008 crisis opened a decade of economic stagnation and social and political polarization - both in the US and globally - that impacted on US hegemony. The Arab Spring of 2011 and its course of revolutions, counter-revolutions and civil wars found the US already exhausted by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. In its intervention in the region, the US had to measure itself against regional powers and the presence of Russia, without being able to impose its own designs on the ground. At the same time, its main NATO allies in Western Europe were facing their own crises and even the rise of protest movements such as in Spain.

Within the US, Occupy Wall Street signaled the start of a new cycle of mobilization after some of the most important struggles of the previous decade, such as the anti-war movement and the historic immigrant strikes, had been channeled electorally under pressure from the Democratic Party. There was a process of political radicalization of the youth that would have repercussions beyond the movement. In 2014, the first iteration

of the Black Lives Matter movement took place after the murders of Michael Brown and Eric Garner at the hands of the police, showing the enormous potential of the Black struggle against racism and the police that erupted even stronger in the historic rebellion of 2020. The start of the presidency of Donald Trump produced a major response from the feminist movement. The Women's March against Trump's inauguration gathered hundreds of thousands in Washington and millions across the country. Throughout the entire period there was also a relative resurgence of the struggles of the labor movement.

The right had its own process of "radicalization". The first evidence of this was the Tea Party, which emerged in response to the election of Obama and his economic rescue package. It had an expression of mobilization in the streets in 2009 and in the 2010 elections it appeared as a right-wing challenge to the establishment of the Republican Party. This process was again expressed in Trump's campaign as an outsider in the 2016 Republican primary. After Trump's victory, the emboldened extreme right called for the "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville in 2017.

In this scenario of social polarization, the traditional political structures of the US regime were shaken by anti-establishment sentiment. The "moderate" positions within both the Republican and Democratic parties lost ground to the emerging phenomenon from the right and left. Shaken by internal tensions the US also began to face a strategic rival at the international level.

INTER-IMPERIALIST RIVALRY IN THE TIME OF TRUMP

Countering China became a priority during the Obama administration. The approach taken to do this was to try to isolate it by guaranteeing US control over the Pacific. The Trans Pacific Treaty (TTP) was a key initiative in this regard, establishing a trade agreement between the countries of the entire region which explicitly left China out to hinder the expansion of its influence through trade and diplomacy.

Trump further escalated tensions with China, shifting from a strategy based on isolation and containment towards a more directly confrontational stance. This could be seen in the trade war launched by Trump in 2018. This escalation was not without logic, it expressed the need for US

imperialism to face a rival on the rise in the period of its own decline.

However, it is perhaps in this respect that Trump left the needs of the US ruling class most unfulfilled. Throughout his presidency there were several moments of open collision with the establishment in matters of foreign policy: the controversies over the withdrawal of troops from Syria, over the relationship with NATO, the resignation of James Mattis as Secretary of Defense, among others. Trump's unilateralism and undermining of the traditional system of alliances - exemplified by his withdrawal from multilateral agreements on trade and the environment - were questioned by both Democrats and Republicans. He was also criticized for his focus on Russia and China.



Despite his isolationist rhetoric Trump continued to pursue the global interests of US capital, albeit in a way that partly departed from the established consensus. Trump's more aggressive and one-sided approach alienated traditional allies. In doing so, it effectively weakened the international position of the United States thus creating the anxieties of the ruling class and the national security apparatus that Biden tapped into in the 2020 electoral contest.

BIDEN: IS AMERICA BACK?

Biden vowed to restore US leadership in the world in line with the concerns expressed by the national security apparatus and the US ruling class against the unilateral "America First" approach. He expressed the need for the country to recover its position with its traditional allies in order to form a solid block for competition with its growing rivals. This reflects both an understanding that the US must face a world of greater instability and in-



ter-imperialist competition, and an awareness that its relative weakness means it cannot go at it alone.

The Russian invasion provided an opportunity for the Biden administration to advance this strategic task. One of the consequences of Putin's invasion has been a relative strengthening of NATO. This alliance had been damaged by the loss of prestige of US imperialism after the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan. The tensions between the different member states of the alliance were made public on more than one occasion. The Trump presidency had deepened this situation.

The policy of the US towards Ukraine has been marked by this, and by the orientation of weakening Russia as much as possible. Simultaneously, it has sought to avoid direct involvement and to restrict any kind of assistance that could lead to an escalation involving direct confrontation.

Throughout this process it has clashed at times with its allies within NATO, but in general terms the alliance is better off today than it was before the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Inter-imperialist tensions with China have continued to rise. A particularly high point occurred in 2022 with the visit of Nancy Pelosi to Taiwan. Although the US remains formally committed to the policy of *strategic ambiguity* (acknowledging China's sovereignty but maintaining ambiguity regarding Taiwan's independence), it has become more explicit in its defense of the island. The Biden administration has also accelerated commercial and economic efforts aimed at reorienting circuits of production and supply - particularly of strategic technology - moving them out of the Chinese orbit. At the same time, it has sought to strengthen its strategic links in the Pacific with Australia and Japan.

The US remains the hegemonic imperialist power, but there is no doubt that this hegemony is in crisis and questioned. It is clear that we are going through a period characterized by rising tensions. In addition to the war in Ukraine and the rivalry with China, tension is growing on the Korean peninsula. In this framework, it is essential that revolutionary socialists oppose US imperialism from an independent position that is against all imperialist aggression without falling into any kind of campism. 🌱



1. <https://thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2021/08/17/the-relative-decline-of-us-imperialism/>



Inter-imperialist RIVALRIES in the Asia-Pacific and the build-up for war

BY TOM BRAMBLE, SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE, AUSTRALIA

The Asia-Pacific region is a vital hub for the world economy. Sixty per cent of maritime trade passes through it, one-third through the South China Sea alone. Growing inter-imperialist rivalry in the region is taking the Asia-Pacific closer to war, with potentially catastrophic consequences.

Since 1945, when the US crushed Japan's bid for power, the US has dominated this vast expanse. The US Pacific Fleet is the most formidable mobilisation of military power, and US finance and multinationals have long played an important role in the region. But bolstered by the spectacular growth of its economy in the past three decades and the enhanced state power that has gone with it, China is now contesting US domination. The Chinese ruling

class cannot tolerate a situation in which it is prevented from exercising what it regards as its proper role in the region. China's ambitions in Asia are a threat to the US. Washington cannot afford to see its Pacific Fleet pushed out of the area because this would signal to allies and adversaries alike that it is no longer "the world's indispensable nation", as Hillary Clinton once described the US. Both sides are developing a multi-pronged strategy to defeat the other.

THE US OFFENSIVE AGAINST CHINA

The Biden administration has inherited and intensified the Trump administration's targeting of China across all domains. US military spending spirals upwards. The US has hundreds of military facilities in Asia and the Western Pacific. Japan hosts the most of any country, with 50,000 US military personnel. Okinawa, an island on Japan's southern periphery, hosts the largest wing of the US Air Force. South Korea has 30,000 US troops and navy personnel on 15 US bases. These include Camp Humphreys in Seoul, the world's largest US overseas military base, and Jeju, like Okinawa, just a few hundred kilometres from the Chinese coast. The US-controlled territories of Guam in the Pacific and Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean are home to a fleet of B52 bombers and thousands of US military personnel. The US also has an agreement with Singapore to use naval and air bases there. These sit in a vital strategic chokepoint on the straits of Malacca at the entry to the South China Sea.

The US has increased military exercises with its longstanding allies in the region, such as Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Australia and Singapore, and it is now drawing Vietnam and the Philippines, two countries that in recent decades threw out US bases, closer. Joint naval drills, euphemistically called "freedom of navigation" exercises, regularly involve dozens of ships and submarines in hostile patrols close to the coast of China and through the Taiwan Strait.

These bases and military exercises today have one main purpose: to intimidate China.

The US's allies are following its lead in boosting military outlays. Japan is increasing its arms budget by 20 per cent to US\$55 bil-

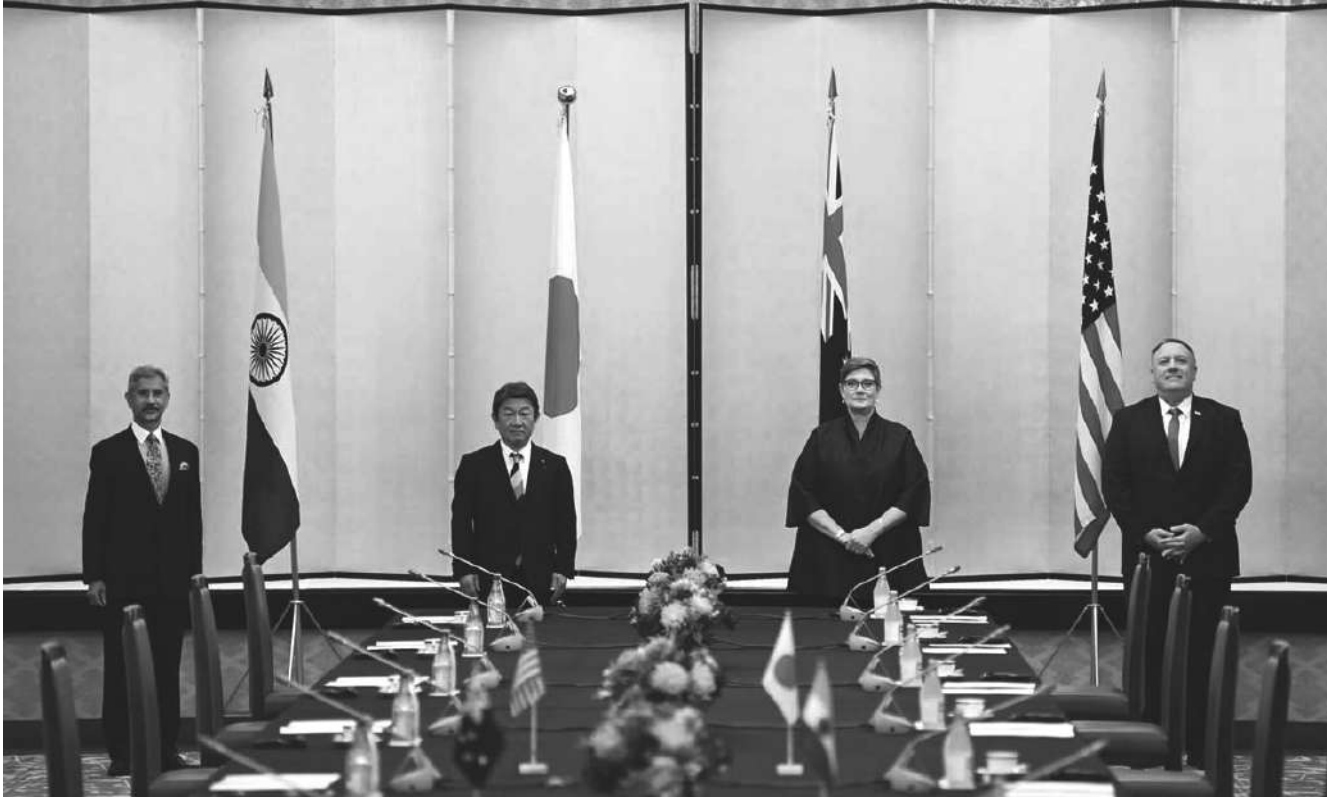
lion. South Korea has announced 7 per cent annual increases over the next five years.

Australia, too, is playing an increasingly important role in US war preparations. Australia has announced major new military expenditures, most notably more than US\$300 billion on a fleet of nuclear-powered submarines. US-run spy facilities in Central Australia and Western Australia are essential to US war planning. Australia offers the US basing facilities for the Marine Corps, the US Navy and the Air Force that are out of reach to all but a few Chinese bombers and missiles.

Australian imperialism is reverting to an earlier period of aggressive intervention in Asia. Following the defeat of the US, backed by Australia, in Vietnam in the 1970s, Australia tempered its overseas military ambitions, introducing the "Defence of Australia" doctrine, which cut the military budget and concentrated Australian forces closer to home. This didn't prevent Australia from joining US forces in the 1991 Gulf War or the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq in the early 2000s, and nor did it stop Australian bullying of South Pacific islands, but these were relatively small-scale deployments. Australia has now returned to what it calls the "Forward Defence" doctrine. This means much more aggressive military ambitions and the positioning of the navy far from Australian shores and closer to China; the nuclear submarines will loiter off the Chinese coast, ready to fire cruise missiles. "Forward Defence" has nothing to do with defending the Australian mainland but is all about supporting the US in its domination of the Asia-Pacific.

Australia has also been at the forefront of efforts to pull India closer to the US-led strategy to contain China. India has historically sought to balance between the big imperialist powers, and if it sided with one, it was Russia which provided most of its weapons and oil. Indian prime minister Narendra Modi is now drawing India closer to the US. He was recently feted on state tours to Australia and the US (even as he rejects US pressure to abandon Russia). Having its own contested border with China, India is keen to partner with Japan, the US and Australia in the revived Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (the Quad) in targeting China.

The US is also pushing its NATO partners



in Europe to join its offensive against China. The statement issued after the June 2022 NATO Summit was the first to cite China as a threat, a “challenge to our interests, security and values”. In 2021-22, Britain, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Canada dispatched warships to the South China Sea, indicating that the US is preparing its allies for war.

China is not lying idle. The CCP has been determinedly modernising and enhancing China’s fighting capacity over recent decades, in line with its growing desire for a piece of the global pie. While China still lags the US, it is far ahead of any other power in terms of military capacity. According to the 2020 US Defense Department report to Congress, “China has already achieved parity with – or even exceeded – the United States in several military modernisation areas”, including shipbuilding, land-based conventional ballistic and cruise missiles, and integrated air defence systems.

China’s ground-launched ballistic and cruise missile systems are designed to destroy US bases and naval assets scattered across Asia and the Pacific. Its sophisticated anti-access/area denial system could now have the capacity to neutralise US bases in Japan and South Korea, along with the previously unassailable US Pacific fleet, in particular its aircraft carriers.

Both sides are sharpening their swords in preparation for war.

ECONOMIC WARFARE

Growing imperialist tensions have also made themselves felt in the economic and industrial sphere. Both sides are seeking to reduce their economic entanglement with the other.

While the US exercised global hegemony, effectively suppressing inter-imperialist military conflict for a period, big corporations could freely choose how and where to invest and trade. This allowed for a partial severance of commerce and statecraft. Even in sensitive sectors such as armaments, where the Pentagon is the main customer, US companies outsourced the production of steel and key electronic components to China. The increased tension between the two powers is now forcing commerce to align with state priorities as trade and investment barriers go up. For decades after World War II, global oil reserves were at the forefront of strategic thinking, but the front lines today are advanced semiconductors and the machinery and inputs, such as rare earths and other minerals, required to manufacture them.

For China, there is nothing new about this. Beijing has long regarded business as a handmaiden to national power. China has for years been trying to foster greater self-reliance in core sectors, particularly in computing, semiconductors and satellite technology. This

underpins the “China 2025” program, which aims to stimulate local production in a range of high-tech sectors.

The US state is now playing catch-up. War in Europe, a potential clash in Asia and the disruption to trade caused by the COVID pandemic have all driven home to policymakers the risks inherent in supply chains involving China. There is bipartisan agreement that the business of imperialism is too important to be left to business people and that business must bend to the will of the State Department and the Pentagon. As the Biden administration puts it: “Economic security is national security”. “Made in America” is now replacing globalisation as the guiding principle in industries of strategic importance.

The US is attempting to reconfigure its industrial base to bring industry “home”—or at least to its close allies and away from China. Those industries most connected to the military are the priority. In the latter half of 2022, the White House signed off on billions of dollars in subsidies for local production of semiconductors, artificial intelligence, robotics and quantum computing. More tens of billions of dollars in grants will encourage the US production of solar panels, electric batteries and electric cars.

The other side of what one Financial Times commentator described as the US’s “total economic war” against China is its attempt to crush that country’s ability to upgrade its industrial base. In October last year, the US Commerce Department introduced export controls to limit Beijing’s access to cutting-edge technologies, whether for civilian or military applications. This is a trade war with teeth, propelled by imperialist rivalry. History has shown that trade wars are often just the precursors to shooting wars.

Energy security has been a big driver of imperialist policy, both East and West. This has been a US priority for years: if the Pentagon were forced to rely on imported oil, it could not be confident that its tanks and jet fighters would be able to operate in wartime. The US has now achieved self-reliance in energy and is a major oil exporter and supplier of LNG after billions of dollars in investment in fracking.

China lacks sufficient coal and gas supplies to power industry and must secure a supply from friendly nations. Connections with Rus-

sia and Iran have grown, but also with Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, which have bridled at US attempts to regulate Gulf oil exports.

HOW LIKELY IS IT THAT WAR WILL BREAK OUT?

Some observers hope war will not break out because of close economic interconnections between the US and its allies and China. They believe these might hold each side back from a conflict that would wreck financial and trade relations.

The most likely scenario is not one of a full-blown war between the US and China in the next four or five years. Neither side currently feels it is yet ready for that. The more likely but still dangerous scenario is a prolonged period of escalating tensions, shoring up of alliances and military build-ups on both sides that make a showdown inevitable at some point—a showdown that could easily be unleashed by some miscalculation or entirely unpredicted event. That happened with World War One. In the Spring of 1914, nobody would have imagined that by Autumn, one of the deadliest wars in human history, with a death toll of between 15 and 22 million, would break out.

Being an anarchic system driven by competition, capitalism does not operate based on what makes sense to the mass of humanity but on what will give one ruling class or another an advantage over its rivals. In a contest for domination over the world system, short-term financial calculations, such as lost markets and disrupted international trade, are dispensed with as it becomes apparent that whoever falls behind will perish. That was what threw Britain and Germany into war in 1914, and it is the same logic pushing the US and China ever closer to a military showdown today.

The capitalist world order has undoubtedly changed substantially since 1914, but the underlying competitive logic of capitalism remains entrenched. Capitalism is still a system based on the exploitation of the labour of workers and in which the pursuit of profit triumphs over all human needs. The relentless competitive logic of capitalism leads to poverty and degradation, repeated economic crises, the destruction of the environment and ongoing clashes over markets, investment opportunities and access to raw materials. The consequence is repeated outbreaks of war.



The fact that the major powers have not gone to war in the nuclear age leads some to suggest that the threat of mutually assured destruction (MAD) will hold each side back.

MAD did help underpin the so-called *détente* between the two superpowers, Russia and the US, with their relatively evenly balanced destructive capacity. But nuclear war was only very narrowly avoided during the October 1962 Cuban missile crisis. The slightest miscalculation could have led to Armageddon.

With the relative decline of the US and the rise of China, the balance of imperialist forces has changed decisively over the last two decades, making for a much more unstable and uncertain situation. The US-Soviet *détente* that began in 1969 has long gone.

And even if MAD makes the great powers hesitant to unleash nuclear weapons on each other, it did not prevent the outbreak of war in Ukraine—the greatest military conflict in the heartlands of Europe since the end of World War Two.

The Ukraine war has shown how massively destructive so-called conventional weaponry has become. And while it has so far not triggered a broader European war or a nuclear war, a future major conventional war could well do so.

Taiwan will be a flashpoint. It is home to the world's most sophisticated semiconductor factories, a glittering prize for whoever controls the island. The territory has long been aligned with

the US, but the CCP regards it as a renegade province, a piece of unfinished business from the colonial era. It is not just a matter of national pride for the CCP. As long as Taiwan is aligned with the US, China sees it as an obstacle to its control over the South China Sea. Leader Xi Jinping has watched as the US mobilised NATO against Russia and fears China might be subjected to the same coercion if it moves on Taiwan. He is doubling down on building China's military and economic self-reliance to escape this fate. At the same time, President Biden has in the past two years repeatedly stated that the US will back Taipei in the event of a Chinese invasion.

One era in world politics is ending, and a new era is unfolding. Imperialist rivalry is becoming more dangerous. Military budgets are on the rise. Nationalism is ascendant. The logic of developments is pushing toward all-out imperialist war. The terrible weapons the imperialists have at their disposal, and the consequences for each should it lose, warn us of the catastrophe that lies in store for the world's population if a new regional or world war breaks out.

War is not inevitable, but we can't rely on diplomacy or the good sense of our rulers. And we cannot sit back and wait to see what happens. We need to lay the basis for a mass anti-war movement with socialist politics at its core that challenges the powers that be and halts their preparations for war. 🐞

What is CHINA?



BY CARLOS CARCIONE AND VICENTE GAYNOR

In the last decade, the U.S.-China relationship has changed dramatically. From an economic collaboration and some diplomatic agreements that were intended to guarantee a certain global geopolitical stability, it went to a dynamic of growing confrontations. What China is and what role it plays in the world are cardinal debates for revolutionaries.

Economic warfare, warlike tensions and provocations in areas sensitive to China's sovereignty, attempts to stop its technological progress, and intense pressure on its commercial and financial partners, all aimed at slowing down and reversing China's economic penetration at the global level. What started as economic and diplomatic pressure gradually incorporated the shadow of a growing danger: that of military confrontation.

This change is taking place in a context of acceleration of the systemic crisis of capitalism and of US imperialist domination, which, although still the predominant power, has fully entered into an ongoing decline. This deepened after the US failure to turn Russia into a semi-colony after the collapse of the USSR. At the same time, there was an exponential economic growth and a rapid structural change in China that took it from being essentially a peasant country to becoming the world's factory and leading global exporter of goods. China's structural mutation took place at all levels:

At record speed, a working class of more than 300 million was formed, which replaced the old one that had arisen under the counterrevolutionary workers' State, as well as a powerful bourgeoisie based on the appropriation of a colossal mass of profit extracted through the brutal super-exploitation of the workers.

The armed forces were also transformed: from being based on the army, designed for national defense, they became organized around naval forces of an offensive character.

From the production of low-quality and low-

priced industrial knock-offs, it became part of the vanguard of research and development of cutting-edge technology, being among the most advanced countries in artificial intelligence.

From an egalitarianism of poverty and miserable salaries of its population, it went on to multiply its GDP per capita by 50 in ten years.

These transformations were accompanied by an aggressive expansionism that turned China into a dynamic world power and the second or first global economy in barely half a century. Such changes were driven from above by a totalitarian political regime, a one-party dictatorship and an absolutist bureaucracy, part of whose members became the “red princes” that constituted the new bourgeoisie. These structural changes, their speed, dimension, record economic growth and the leadership of these modifications by the Chinese Communist Party open debates in the global left. According to some, China is on its own road to socialism, which they explain with all kinds of justifications. Others, accepting that China has become a capitalist country, say that it faces US aggression and does not have an imperial expansionist policy. Our thesis is that the Chinese bureaucracy, today led by Xi Jinping, has for over three decades led a bourgeois counterrevolution that restored capitalism in China and turned it into an imperialist country, which, with its peculiarities and contradictions, acts as such on the global scene.

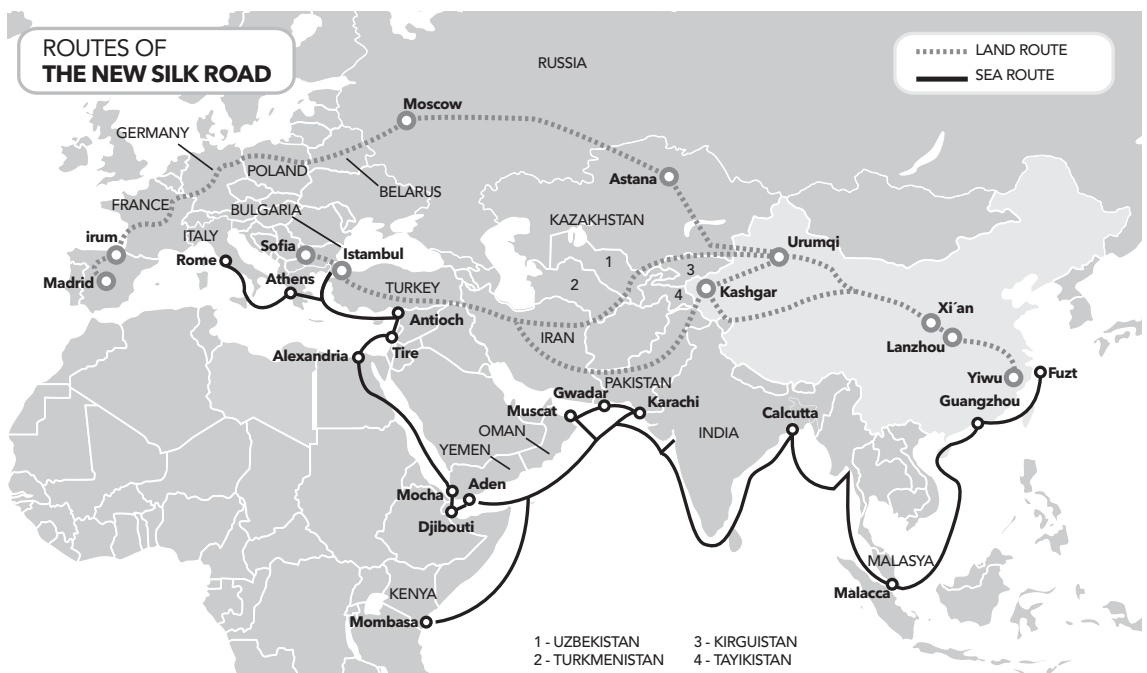
CAPITALIST RESTORATION

The process that led to the capitalist restoration of the Chinese deformed workers’ state was turbulent and prolonged, crossed by major events in the class struggle, resounding economic failures of the Chinese bureaucracy and the beginning of the global capitalist crisis at the end of the sixties. This process lasted for more than two decades and included the failure of the Great Leap Forward (1962), the Cultural Revolution led by Mao and a sector of the party leadership (1966), the opening of the Special Economic Zones (1980) and the Tiananmen Massacre (1989). A process of counter-revolution developed which would lead to the consolidation of capitalist restoration throughout the country from the nineties onwards.

The famine caused by the failure of the Great Leap Forward exceeded 20 million deaths and caused the removal of Mao, who took refuge in the leadership of the armed forces. In the mid sixties a struggle between rival cliques of the ruling bureaucracy began, which culminated with Mao’s death and the return to power of Deng Xiaoping, who had been imprisoned. A profound shift towards capitalist restoration started, the first steps of which had already been taken in the countryside with the opening of economic incentives for the peasants. But what we could call the foundational step

Robotized car factory in Shenyang





was the installation of the special zones where free market policies reigned.

The opening of capitalist relations for large investments, with enormous advantages to participate in international trade, in fact meant the elimination of the state's monopoly in this area. In the countryside, peasants were authorized to sell production from their private lands on the market. The process of privatization of state companies accelerated from 1995, dropping from 118,000 companies controlled by the state and the party to less than 50,000. The number of state workers was drastically reduced from 145 million to 75 million. As the law preventing internal migration from the countryside to the cities was not enforced, a young working class developed, composed of illegal internal migrants without labor rights, wages or basic public services like health, education and social security, areas where privatization also advanced.

At the same time there was a shift in the countryside from the authorization to sell goods in the market to the expropriation of large areas for the construction of new cities, many of which remain empty ghost towns. This boom generated a bubble as demonstrated by the recent crisis of Evergrande, a private corporation dedicated to the real estate and financial business. The boost to real estate activity in the first decades of capitalist restoration generated a Western-style private market and speculation. It is estimated that 20% of housing is still unoccupied and that insolvent mortgage debts total \$340 billion.

This process of barely 30 years was consolidated in the midst of the great changes that shook so-called real socialism, that is, the states under the control of the counterrevolutionary bureaucracy of the USSR, since 1989. This also occurred in China, but with a different result. While the demonstrations in the USSR put an end to the dictatorship of the CP, which imploded with a contradictory result in the consciousness of the mass movement, but of a generally positive sign in dismantling that worldwide counterrevolutionary apparatus, in China things happened in a different way. In 1989 huge demonstrations of students and workers were crushed ruthlessly in the Tiananmen Massacre, which consolidated the dictatorship and accelerated the pace of the ruling bureaucracy towards restoration.

The propaganda of the Chinese regime tries to portray this process of return to capitalism as its particular path to socialism. The truth is that a system was set up which re-established in China the law of value, the extraction of surplus value by exploiting or over-exploiting wage labor and the formation of the social classes essential for the existence of capitalism with imperialist characteristics.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In just 40 years, China has made the journey that took other world powers two centuries. Today it is the world's second largest economy and, according to the U.S. stock market, it could

overtake the U.S. by 2035. But if GDP is measured in terms of share of purchasing power, it is already the world's leading economy. Its GDP per capita has increased a hundredfold since the reforms began and will exceed \$12,000 in 2022. It has become the main trading partner of more than 50 countries and the majority of higher education students abroad are Chinese. Other data confirm the so-called Chinese miracle.

However, inequality and super-exploitation of labor also grew at the same pace. Its population is aging and the government has raised the family limit from two to three children and is restricting the right to abortion. At the same time, the country is beginning to experience the typical crises of capitalism, as shown this year by the real estate crisis. Since the pandemic, China has not been able to recover its former dynamism and growth: in 2022 it barely exceeded 3% year-on-year growth. But what kind of system prevails in China? How was its growth possible?

There are different approaches to this debate. Different forms of ownership coexist in China today: a large part of the economy is under state control, but the largest contribution to GDP is made by the private sector. In recent decades, the Chinese economy as a whole has become mercantile and the law of value prevails, albeit with strong state planning and intervention. In 2007, the National Assembly passed a law recognizing private property and protecting it on an equal footing with public property.

In a book analyzing the Chinese phenomenon, German economist Isabella Weber describes the debates that took place within the bureaucracy on how to approach reforms. Between a very controlled gradualism and a shock towards the markets, after Tiananmen, the course was inclined towards strict control. Thus, the CCP maintains a direct involvement of its leaders in the boards of directors of private corporations to control the fulfillment of the objectives set by the government. This supervision is political and complementary to the dictatorial control over the working class, whose right to strike has been banned since 1982. But the bureaucratic planning of a capitalism of supposedly Chinese qualities cannot avoid the fundamental contradiction in capitalism's metabolism: the permanent clash between the need to increase the productivity of labor and the growth of the profitability of capital. The

Chinese capitalist economy does not escape this contradiction. This is what drives the explicit objective pointed out by Xi Jinping: to inaugurate a century of Chinese world domination. The accelerated development achieved by China in the last decades, described as a miracle by bourgeois analysts, did not happen outside the class struggle. On the contrary: in essence, it was the product of workers' super-exploitation. The country became the world's factory because in its special zones it offered the biggest multinational corporations a semi-slave labor force, without any trade union or democratic rights.

As national industry grew and became more technified, the working class became segmented and a middle class emerged, forming a vast domestic market. Workers have been fighting hard and striking, mostly for wages, for the last 15 years.

There is one more explanation to understand the accelerated Chinese development: the law of uneven and combined historical development, discovered by Marx and completed by Trotsky, which shows that backward countries do not have to follow the entire path taken by advanced countries, but can incorporate the development of the latter and thus benefit -so to speak- from their backwardness. In order to define what China is, one could also speak of state capitalism, understood in its classic sense: a capitalist economy managed directly by the bourgeois state or with strong state control.

But the use of this categorization is always relative to what type of state we are referring to. Lenin used it for the USSR when the serious economic crisis in 1922 forced the Bolshevik government to take some partial capitalist measures: the so-called NEP. Even so, since it was the revolutionary workers' state that maintained power and political control, he understood this state capitalism as a necessary tactical retreat in the transition to socialism.

The dynamics of China today are the opposite of those of revolutionary Russia a century ago: not towards socialism, but towards capitalism and imperialism. Although much of the economy is in the hands of the state and the state exercises direct and indirect control over the private sector, its central matrix is capitalist, its class character is bourgeois and its development is imperialist.

INTERNATIONAL EXPANSION

Those who fight the idea that China is an imperialist power usually point out that it has no colonies, does not invade countries and does not promote coups d'état. But we must evaluate everything according to current global capitalism. Colonies are today a fringe aspect of even the main imperialist powers. The political domination of imperialist powers over semicolonial countries derives, above all, from economic intervention via capital investment, resource extraction, commercial agreements, and loans and their conditions. The military inequality between central power and semi-colony plays an obvious role of permanent blackmail, but military interventions and invasions as a condition for defining a power as imperialist would be limiting to the extreme today. It would leave powers such as Japan out of the definition and leave in debate others such as Germany, whose participation in military operations via NATO has been only marginal since World War II. In turn, intervention in political processes where a power has invested interests is no longer alien to China, as we have recently seen in Myanmar and other countries.

China is not qualitatively different from Western imperialism in its relations with dozens of semi-colonial countries. In dozens of countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia it is already the main power pillaging resources, exploiting cheap labor and granting loans with conditions of applying austerity and ceding sovereignty. Fifteen years ago, China displaced the US as the largest trading partner of the European Union, Africa and South America. With its 3.8 trillion dollars in reserves, it has become the main financier of "developing" countries. The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) was founded in 2014 as an overt competitor to the IMF in Asia, while the China Development Bank already lends more than the World Bank. But the clearest expression of the state of Chinese capitalist development is its Belt and Road Initiative.

THE NEW SILK ROAD

The "project of the century," as announced by Xi Jinping in 2013, is a pharaonic investment plan in infrastructure, ports, highways, railways, gas and oil pipelines that already spans more than 150 countries to bolster China's capacity in international trade.

The magnitude of the project is overwhelming. The participating countries account for 75% of the world's population and more than half of the world's GDP. According to the Chinese government, the country's companies have signed \$305 billion worth of BRI-related contracts, in 2014 it created a \$41 billion fund allocated to such projects, and much of the \$105 billion AIIB will also be invested in them. According to Chinese officials, Beijing has already invested or is about to invest more than \$400 billion in AIIB projects over the next five years, mostly in loans. By comparison, the Marshall Plan, at today's values, invested less than \$200 billion in the reconstruction of Europe after World War II.

In Africa, in addition to investing billions of dollars in extracting natural resources, China has also invested considerable industrial capital. It is estimated that 12% of African industrial production is in the hands of some 10,000 Chinese companies. Beijing has financed the construction or renovation of more than 6,000 km of railways, among other infrastructure works. The BRI's plans include a rail connection and trade highway from the port of Dakar, on the Atlantic, to Djibouti, at the other end of the African continent on the Indian Ocean, where China built its first overseas military base in 2022. But China's commercial and political expansion has thus far mainly taken place through bilateral agreements and regional treaties. The BRI takes China's international projection and its incipient challenge to the US as a hegemonic world power a step further, by seeking to articulate a commercial network that spans regions and continents. For the economies and peoples of the participating countries, the BRI has consequences similar to those of Western imperialist intervention and extractivism in the world. BRI projects receive majority financing from Chinese entities, although they require a significant proportion of local investment, secured, in turn, by Chinese loans with predatory interest rates that generate huge public debts. In addition, they require the employment of a large Chinese workforce and the signing of memorandums of understanding with local governments, with secret clauses that tend to compromise their sovereignty. Subsidiaries of China's state-owned CITIC will finance 70% of the \$7.3 billion to build a port in Myanmar and operate it for 50 years. It is highly doubtful whether the local economy will be able to repay the debt involved in the other 30%, especially since the fall of the government that signed

the agreement with China. There is the precedent of Hambantota, a port that China built in Sri Lanka that passed into Chinese hands in 2017 after the Sri Lankan government was unable to service the debt contracted to build it. Pakistan hosts the BRI's largest single project: the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, which includes a 700 km high-speed railway and oil pipelines, with a total budget of \$20 billion. The political crisis that has shaken the country during the past few years has as one of its central issues the dispute over whether to seek additional loans from China or new programs with the IMF.

In 2018, the Center for Global Development think tank published a study on eight countries at high risk for debts incurred on BRI-related projects. A highway represents a quarter of Montenegro's GDP, for example. And a railroad from Laos to China started in 2016 may cost almost half of Lao GDP.

All this entails austerity measures and increases in the exploitation of the peoples of the countries where BRI projects are being developed. In Latin America, where an organized current of academics defend its supposedly progressive role, China acts essentially in the same way as US imperialism. It negotiates extractivist contracts to take lithium and other resources, grants loans at rates even higher than those of the IMF and builds scientific bases with potential military use. China's relationship with the dozens of semi-colonial countries in which it invests in infrastructure projects and extraction of raw materials, to which it grants loans, with which it establishes trade treaties, is the same kind of relationship that Western imperialism maintains and uses the same mechanisms with the same objectives: ultimately, the net transfer of wealth and added value from the semi-colonies to the dominant power. Although China's military intervention has not yet played a significant role in its economic and geopolitical expansion, its state is determined to rapidly develop its military capacity, both to defend its expansion against the resistance of the current hegemonic power of the US and to impose its domination on other countries by force when necessary.

MILITARY DEVELOPMENT AND PERSPECTIVE

China's expansion has led to increasing competition with the US, especially since the economic crisis of 2008. The global weakening of

the US and the shrinking of the global surplus pie contribute to intensifying this competition, generating friction and growing conflict. China is still far behind the US in global military capability and total military spending. This is often pointed out to mark a qualitative difference between the two. But the progress China has made and is projecting paints a more complex picture.

China's defense budget increased by an average of more than 9% per year since the late 1990s. By 2023, its official military budget is projected to be \$224 billion, second only to the U.S., which is four times larger.

But not all military spending is equal. In the case of China, the transition it has been making from mainly land-based and defensive armed forces to a modern, outward-looking force is decisive. In the last two decades, China's navy has



evolved from an insignificant coastal force to a largely modern, homegrown force capable of carrying out missions far from home. It now has some 340 battle-force ships (able to contribute to combat), including aircraft carriers, submarines, frigates and destroyers. That number is likely to reach 400 by 2025 and 440 by 2030, according to the Pentagon.

The US Navy, by comparison, had a battle force of 296 ships in April (half its Cold War peak) and plans to drop that to 290 by the end of this decade. Moreover, while China focuses its military buildup on Taiwan, the US must maintain a global presence.

One of China's advantages is its vast shipbuilding industry, which is the largest in the world and accounted for 44% of commercial ships produced globally in 2021. A single state-owned company, China State Shipbuilding Corporation, accounted for more than one-fifth of global orders that year. But it also produces most of the Chinese



Tiananmen Square,
1989

navy's ships, often in the same shipyards where it builds commercial vessels. Combining production in this way helps to sustain shipyards in recessions and to apply civilian technology and mass production techniques to shipbuilding. Meanwhile, US shipbuilders focus almost exclusively on defense contracts, making it difficult to increase production or maintain a steady supply of skilled workers. China has also been building up its nuclear arsenal and capabilities, to some extent through agreements with Russia, which has the world's second largest nuclear arsenal and beat the US in the race to develop, with Chinese collaboration, a precision hypersonic missile in 2021. Although China is still far behind the US in global military power, it is striving to close the gap as soon as possible and in the most accurate way. Although neither China nor the US wish to provoke a direct global confrontation today, no change in world hegemony has ever occurred without a world war. China is ultimately accelerating its preparation for such an event.

THE DEBATE ON THE DEFINITION

Argentinian economist Claudio Katz has developed, from the left, the position that it would be mistaken to define China as an imperialist power. He argues that it is wrong to take as a reference the characteristics of imperialism

developed by Lenin in his classic work *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, since they are outdated and do not describe present-day reality: "The dogmatic attachment to that book induces to look for forced similarities of the present conflict between the US and China with the conflagrations of the First World War." This may have a lot of truth to it. But Katz then takes one of those characteristics, the military aspect, as an absolute condition for defining a power as imperialist or not. And he asserts that China cannot be considered an imperialist power because its "economic expansion has been consummated, so far, without firing a single shot outside its borders... [China] does not share the compulsion for territorial conquest that afflicted German or Japanese capitalism."

The fact is that Lenin understood imperialism as a global system, as a stage of capitalism characterized by the fusion of industrial and financial capital, monopolistic concentration, the export of capital and the divvying up of the world by the biggest capitalists backed by their states. But he presented these characteristics as an empirical description of imperialism at that specific moment, and not at all as prerequisites to be fulfilled to consider a power imperialist or not. Katz correctly states that "Lenin did not intend to elaborate a classificatory guide to imperialism, based on the capitalist maturity of each power."

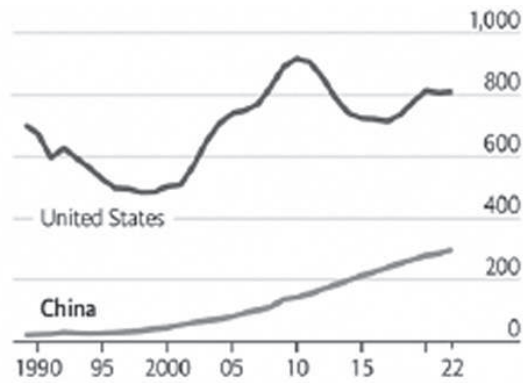
But Lenin did point out that the growing and extreme unequal concentration of wealth in capitalism generates dominant states and dominated states, and he classified different imperialist powers in a certain hierarchy of relations of dependence, considering that the great powers of the time were not equal. At that time, he observed the following hierarchy: “1. Three main (completely independent) forces: Great Britain, Germany, United States; 2. Second line: France, Russia, Japan; 3. Italy, Austria-Hungary.”

At that time, much of the world was ruled by direct colonial regimes, almost always based on military occupation. Logically, the military aspect was decisive. Today, the military aspect is always present, yet more often than not in the background. Economic tools predominate, but the mechanisms and relations of power and dependence are the same. In fact, all the elements that define imperialism as a world system and a stage of capitalism in decadence have only become more acute. Undoubtedly, the hegemonic imperialist power in the world, the only “main (completely independent) force” in Lenin’s words, is the United States. Even European imperialism has a high level of dependence on the US. There are also countries like Russia that play a clearly imperialist role in their region. Others, like Brazil, India or South Africa, play a similar role, on a smaller scale, in their own regions. They could be considered sub-imperialist powers.

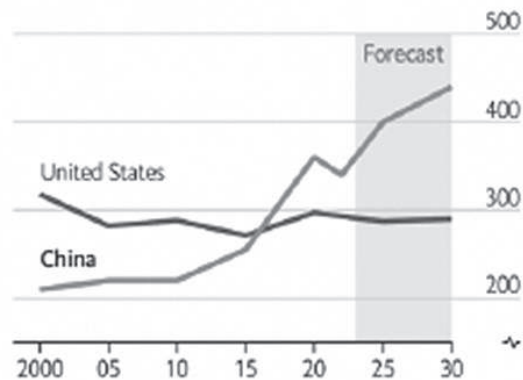
China has long played such a role on a regional scale, but it has long moved beyond that stage and is assuming a more global role, competing in all areas and regions and coming into conflict with US hegemony. Even the absence of a “compulsion for territorial conquest” pointed out by Katz is questionable if we look at the brutal Chinese repression unleashed on Hong Kong in recent years to impose the rule of the central government and the manifest intention to take Taiwan by force when they see fit. It is true that China maintains some economic dependence on the US and there is still a level of transfer of capital gains from the former to the latter. But we do not see any element that would merit defining China a semi-colony of the US. At the same time, it is a fact that the transfer of wealth from dozens of semi-colonies to China is astronomical and the economic dependence that many have towards China is already significant. This situation has developed with relative speed in recent

BUILDING UP TO SOMETHING

Military spending, \$bn, 2021 prices



Total battle-force ships



Sources: SIPRI; Congressional Research Service; Department of Defense; Office of Naval Intelligence

decades and its military aspect is not far behind. China is not yet a power similar to the US, but it has already left behind regional powers such as Russia, India or Brazil and far surpasses imperialist powers such as those of Europe or Japan. Because of its position within the global capitalist system, and because of its strategy and dynamics, China is today an imperialist power, of a second level, if you will, still behind the US, but clearly on the rise and with the perspective of contesting global hegemony.

This definition is not an academic exercise. For revolutionaries, it is key to position ourselves correctly in the global class struggle in the face of the conflicts generated by the growing inter-imperialist tensions and especially in the face of an eventual World War. The Chinese bourgeoisie and state do not represent a progressive alternative to Western imperialism; they are enemies of the working class and the global revolution has among its tasks to defeat them, as well as their Western counterparts. 🌍



500 DAYS of war in Ukraine

BY RUBÉN TZANOFF, SOL - SPANISH STATE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP

The Russian invasion causes devastation and death. The war went through different moments, the current one is the Ukrainian counteroffensive. There are changes in the mood of the masses and in the regimes of the Kremlin and Kyiv. Western imperialism continues to support Zelenskyy, although it maintains contacts with Russia without Ukraine. Revolutionary socialists deploy a principled policy.

The consequences of the war are felt in the entire planet, but the greatest harm is suffered by Ukraine. Putin's army destroyed or damaged a third of energy installations, several nuclear power plants, dozens of heating plants, 150,000 buildings and homes, 2,000 schools, 25,000 km of roads and 7,000 km of railway lines.

According to different sources, in the first months of 2023 some 25,000 Ukrainian civilians have died and there are 8.2 million refugees outside the country. The exact number of fallen soldiers in each army is not known, since figures are unofficial or appear distorted with propa-

gandistic ends. Regardless, in all estimates, human losses are of a severe magnitude.

DIFFERENT MOMENTS OF THE WAR

There was a first moment of the “special operation” characterized by the advance of the Russian troops toward Kyiv, with the intention of seizing the capital, overthrowing Zelenskyy and achieving a blitzkrieg triumph. It was a failure. The invaders found a resistance reinforced by the people's participation in the Territorial Defense.

Nevertheless, the Russian army conquered great extensions in the south and in the east of the country. In some cities there were fierce battles, as in Mariupol and Bakhmut. The Ukrainian forces recovered some settlements such as Bucha, where crimes against humanity were found have occurred.

There was also the resurgence of generalized tension because of Putin's allusions to the possibility of using tactical nuclear weapons and because of the military operations carried out in the areas around the nuclear power stations of Chernobyl, Zaporizhzhia and the hydroelectric plant of Kakhovka.

There were unsuccessful mediation attempts,

such as the ones led by Chinese president Xi Jinping and his Turkish counterpart Erdogan, which intended to reach a cease-fire with Russia retaining the occupied areas. Contacts between Russia and Ukraine were limited to exchanging prisoners and allowing the export of cereals through the Black Sea. Since late summer of 2022 up to this day, the so-called Ukrainian counteroffensive has acquired prominence.

WHAT IS THE PARTIAL RESULT OF THE COUNTEROFFENSIVE?

The assessment of the military operation is the object of several suppositions. Ukrainian troops succeeded in freeing more than 20 small towns, which is progress. However, it is a quite modest result compared to the expectations generated over a quick recovery of Crimea and other occupied territories. In addition, it has a high cost in loss of soldiers.

In the face of these facts, there are Ukrainians who feel betrayed or even deceived. Still, the majority of workers and the people stay strong in their will to free the country without sitting down to negotiate with Russia under any pretext.

Ukrainian troops are slowly approaching three defensive lines built by order of the former commander Serguéi Surovikin, in the regions of the east and south. The battle continues in the first defensive line on the way to the second one, which is more fortified. According to several sources of Kyiv, they will strengthen the counteroffensive with 12 or 15 squads specially armed and trained. Meanwhile, the army demands F-16 multirole fighters, ATACMS missiles and the questioned cluster bombs to supply the shortage of ammunition in the theatre of operations.

Ukrainian generals continue stating that the counteroffensive will succeed, although in a more prolonged span than initially expected.

The fact is that the situation of the armies seems to reflect a relative stagnation in which neither of the contenders is managing to strategically defeat its adversary, at least in the short term and with conventional weapons. In these circumstances, drawing a perspective would have a high margin of error. What is certain is that, as long as the resistance continues firmly, the possibility of expelling the invaders will prevail.

WHO BENEFITS financially from the war?

The crisis of the capitalist economy and the war have serious consequences worldwide. But not everyone suffers equally. While workers and the poor become poorer, others increase their profits. From 2021 to 2022, profits came mainly from three sectors: arms manufacturers, energy companies and banks.

Among US arms companies, Lockheed Martin increased its income by 7.1%, Northrop Grumman by 11.2% and Raytheon by 18%. In the energy sector, profits exceeded \$250 billion. Europe's major banks increased their profits to record levels, helped by inflation. Among the beneficiary countries, the US increased revenue by 49.1% from the sale of arms and gas. China and India profit by buying cheaper Russian oil and gas that is no longer exported to the West. Russia continues to sell weapons to Asia and increased its trade with China by 31%. Norway recorded \$114 billion in oil and gas sales. South Korea signed arms sales agreements with Poland, Estonia and Norway. And Qatar posted its highest surplus in eight years from rising energy prices.

The war implies hardships for the many and gains for the few, exacerbating the inequality that prevails under world imperialist capitalism. 🦋

TENSION BETWEEN ZELENSKY AND WESTERN IMPERIALISM

The NATO summit held in Vilnius, Lithuania, last July 11 and 12, exposed contradictions between the interests of Western imperialists and the Zelenskyy regime. Previously only a few subordinates expressed dissatisfaction with NATO, the US and the European Union for their failure to deliver the promised weapons when the counteroffensive was planned. This time the dissatisfaction was expressed by the Ukrainian president himself.

In response to Zelenskyy's request for an invitation to Ukraine to join NATO, Biden made it clear that admission will not be possible until the war is over. For the imperialists this is Ukraine's war and, at most, they will supply weapons from abroad. Bilateral agreements with Alliance countries with "security guaran-

tees” do not include the participation of their troops. Zelenskyy’s policy of joining NATO is a complete meaningless failure. Ukrainians’ opinion of the Alliance is at an all-time low.

Several US and German media justify the slowdown in the supply of weapons on the basis of the doubts generated by the high level of corruption in the Zelenskyy administration, especially in the Ministry of Defense. A few days ago, the pro-US publication *Zerkalo Nedeli* announced that, in the early months of the war, this Ministry received billions of dollars from the US and diverted them to offshore accounts.

Another point that is clouding relations is that the US military supplies are carried out on the condition that they are not to be used inside the Russian Federation. However, part of this arsenal is being delivered to formations operating at the service of the Ukrainian army, inside Russia’s borders.

PUTIN NO LONGER APPEARS AS ALMIGHTY

Changes have come to the institutions of the belligerent countries. Putin was successfully portrayed as a fearless leader, backed by an unwavering regime. That image of an almighty man was blurred after the military mutiny carried out by Wagner PMC mercenaries and their leader Prigozhin, who have nothing progressive about them either.

For the first time, Putin was seen as a politician terrified of a possible attack against him and of having lost his iron grip on the country. On a mass level, doubts are growing about

the veracity of the information given by the authorities. In free Russian media, social networks and Telegram channels there is a tendency to demand truthfulness in the information about combat losses, the political situation and the prospects of the “special operation.”

The mutations have reached the public channels controlled by the state. There, Russian propagandists are forced to explain why there is no qualitative progress in the invasion, arguing that “*we are fighting against NATO and their member countries, not against the Ukrainian army*” and “*we want peace through negotiations, but it is impossible to come to an agreement because Ukraine refuses.*”

This is something new that was previously buried under predominantly militarist and chauvinist language. The weaknesses of Putin’s regime have come to light and it is probable that they will have new expressions. The key will be whether the Russian working class occupies center stage, mobilized together with the people to defeat the imperialist ambitions of Putin.

SOCIAL PROBLEMS AND CRITICISM OF ZELENSKYY’S GOVERNMENT

In regards to the war, the majority of the population persists in its will to resist and not sitting down to negotiate with Russia under any pretext. At the same time, disagreements and criticism of the government are growing. This has several motives, among them the improvised and chaotic speeches of its officials, the concentration of power and imposition laws against

Nurses of Kryvyi Rih mobilized for their wages, defying the government’s ban of protests. They reflect the growing discontent of the Ukrainian working class.



workers that benefit business profits. Dissatisfaction is also fueled by the rise of inequality and the loss of jobs and income in which many people between 18 and 60 years old have fallen.

NEW MOBILIZATION IN UKRAINE?

According to some military experts, Ukraine needs an additional mobilization of 200,000 soldiers. It is no coincidence that, faced with such situation, authorities appeal more and more to the “*national-patriotic spirit*” of the population. If compulsory military service is implemented, the majority of recruits will not have the same combat conviction and training than those who were at the front in the early days of the war, since in a high proportion they are between 50 and 60 years old. Furthermore, in several cases, enlisting is being forced, which does not contribute to the necessary motivation for the military operations. The population sees a massive and flagrant injustice when millions of common people are blocked from crossing the border in the face of a possible mobilization and a handful of privileged individuals are granted a clear path to do so when they wish it.

IS THE U.S. PREPARING THE GROUND TO NEGOTIATE WITH RUSSIA?

According to Zelenskyy, he maintains the intention of recovering all Ukrainian territories to restore the borders that existed in 1991. It is possible that he sets the bar higher as a way of pressuring to negotiate in better conditions. Another element to consider is that, in the last weeks, there were secret contacts between operators of different sectors of the US and Russia. What is this about? Is the US preparing the ground to negotiate with Russia or is it simply maintaining open channels of exploratory dialogue for future agreements?

The majority of Ukrainian analysts believes that the US provides enough weapons for the army to resist Putin’s attack, but it would not allow the country to gain a full victory over Russia. The U.S. wants to be the moderator of the conflict for its own interests. Western imperialism is concerned about the Russian regime, equipped with nuclear weapons, culminating in total collapse, becoming more unstable and unpredictable and a massive uprising of the work-

ZELENSKY, an anti-working-class government

Since he came to power, Zelensky formulated labor deregulation proposals recommended by the IMF and consultants that were rejected by the trade-unions. However, the neoliberal orientation was consolidated after the Russian invasion, which was used as a justification to impose regressive reforms, and ban mobilizations, strikes and free expression. In this regard, Parliament approved and Zelensky promulgated Law 5.371, which excludes workers from companies with fewer than 250 employees from the Labor Code, deprives them of entering into collective agreements and transfers the scope of labor regulations to individual contracts that employers can terminate at will.

In a situation of war, unemployment, low wages and deficient social benefits, the law pushes workers to accept the worst working conditions. The liquidation of conquests is intended to create better conditions for exploitative corporations to arrive and pocket large profits with the reconstruction of the country projected by the EU and the US.

Our organization supports the resistance with a policy that is independent of the government and imperialism. From this perspective, we participated in the European Network of Solidarity with Ukraine in Catalonia and the ISL carried out various international campaigns, including a collection for the “Zahyst Pratsi” Independent Labor Protection Union and the visit of an ISL delegation to Kiev, Bucha and Irpin to support our comrades in the Ukrainian Socialist League. 🐞



Alejandro Bodart in Irpin



The USL in Ukraine

ing class erupting. Thus, for the time being, it considers it dangerous to cross the “red lines” that comprise Putin’s support.

THE LIBERATION OF UKRAINE IS A JUST CAUSE

From our point of view, the war combines two aspects: the invasion of a semi-colony like Ukraine by a big power like Russia and inter-imperialists tensions. The dual nature of the war makes it erroneous to ignore or to give less importance to one aspect over the other.

Our comrades of the Ukrainian Socialist League (USL) fight in the first line of the resistance raising the principled policy of the ISL. Russian troops out of Ukraine, support the resistance. The Ukrainian people have the right to defend themselves with all the means available. NATO out of Eastern Europe. Dissolution of NATO and the CSTO¹. For the self-determination of Crimea, Donetsk and Lugansk without the presence of the Russian troops of occupation.

We uphold a revolutionary policy independent of Zelenskyy’s government and competing imperialist powers. We want a just peace, without annexations or pacts behind the backs of the Ukrainian people. We stand in solidarity with our class sisters and brothers of Russia and Belarus who condemn the invasion. We call on the workers and the peoples of the world to mobilize for the Ukrainian

cause and to prevent the inter-imperialists disputes leading to a new world war.

Up until now, North American imperialism has supported Ukraine with weapons and logistics, but with not with intervening troops nor the delivery of strategic arsenal. If the conflict would take qualitative leap towards a world war, with troops from different countries in combat, the politics of revolutionaries would change to center on the defeat of both imperialist factions and the governments at their service.

To avoid humanity falling into barbarism, it is necessary to defeat the domination of imperialist capitalism and build a world without borders, without exploiters and exploited, without oppressors and oppressed. This solution can only be achieved if the workers rule with a socialist system and full democratic liberties. 🌍

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1. Collective Security Treaty Organization, military alliance of six states lead by Russia.



Read important dates here



Read stories of Ukrainian refugees here

What kind of RECONSTRUCTION will be needed?

According to Ukrainian estimates, the reconstruction of the country requires 750,000 million dollars. That is why the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, and the German Chancellor, Olaf Scholz, raised the need to apply a “Marshall Plan for the 21st century.”¹ American leaders had already spoken in the same vein.

It is not a humanitarian concern of Western imperialism, but the projection of profits and political influence. If the investments come to fruition, it is most likely that they will arrive in the country with “recommendations” to carry out labor reforms, adopt austerity measures and take on foreign debt. These are tasks that always requi-

re local complicity and, if imposed, would condemn the working class to decades of sacrifices.

Today, the main task is to drive out the Russian invaders and stop the destruction. When the hour of reconstruction arrives, it will be essential that it not be conditioned by the speculative criteria of vulture funds, international exploiters, local oligarchs and corrupt officials. It must be the working people who democratically define the destination of aid funds and control the design and execution of reconstruction plans. 🌍

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1. International Expert Conference on Recovery, Reconstruction and Modernization of Ukraine. Berlin, October 2022.

Notes on IMPERIALIST WARS AND “PACIFISM”

BY OLEG VERNYK, PRESIDENT OF THE “ZAHIST PRATSI” INDEPENDENT TRADE UNION OF UKRAINE!
UKRAINIAN SOCIALIST LEAGUE.

The Russian aggression against Ukraine that started on February 24, 2022 has raised a number of problematic issues in Marxist theory, as well as problems putting into practice basic principles that initially seemed clear to all Marxists. There are organizations that vindicate Leon Trotsky and the Fourth International and have produced many documents on the nature of the Russian-Ukrainian war which sometimes differ diametrically from each other. At the same time, there are organizations that do not come from this tradition but have adopted political positions quite close to those of revolutionary Marxism.

At a certain level of the discussions to obtain a positive result it is necessary to return to the basic categories of 20th century Marxism. And to be clearly defined in regards to our attitude towards such concepts, often speculative, which are used by supporters of imperialist aggression to disguise their transition to the camp of the imperialist bourgeoisie and to justify the new colonial aggressions of the 21st century.

Sometimes it is very difficult to cut through the thorns of the “anti-imperialist” rhetoric and discover behind them the support for the recent aggressive imperialisms. It is no less difficult to reveal the interests of one or another imperialism under the apparently attractive rhetoric of *pacifism*. And it is even more complex to reveal between the deafening growls of *revolutionary defeatism* the real work of the imperialist agents within the labor movement. We will have to do it, because only the truth is revolutionary as it can point us to the mistakes of the past and guide us correctly towards the future.

IMPERIALIST WARS

One of the key elements of current discussions is the category of *imperialist wars* and the problem of shaping the attitude of Marxist organizations towards them. Already at the beginning of the 20th century, Lenin wrote that “*It is customary in literature to call any war of conquest im-*



Massacre of civilians in Bucha

perialist.” He also wrote that “*imperialist wars... were also those based on slavery (the war between Rome and Carthage was an imperialist war on both sides), and in the Middle Ages, and in the era of commercial capitalism*”. The desire to seize foreign lands by military means has taken place throughout all the centuries of class society. “*Both the struggle for the colonies (for the ‘new countries’) and the struggle for the ‘possession of the territories of the weaker countries’, all this existed before imperialism. What is characteristic of modern imperialism is something else: at the beginning of the 20th century all the land was occupied by one or another State, distributed. That is the only reason why the redistribution of ‘dominion over the world’, on the basis of capitalism, could take place only through a world war.*” (Lenin). It should be noted that both

semi-colonial State, victim of imperialist aggression. Lenin pointed out that Japan’s aggressive and predatory war against China (1894-1895) should be considered an obvious imperialist war of the modern imperialist epoch, where Japan acted as an imperialist aggressor state and a backward, economically weak and dependent China was a victim of imperialist aggression. Lenin also identified as imperialist wars the Spanish-American War of 1898 and the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902.

Of course, the actual political position of marxists in Lenin’s time was completely different (!) in relation to *imperialist wars* where two competing imperialist powers are directly involved, and those *imperialist wars* where we have a single imperialist power that commits an aggression against a non-imperialist dependent state.

It would be much easier, deeper and more efficient for us to analyze the problems of the *imperialist wars* if our classics had made a fairly clear distinction in the definition between these two types of imperialist wars. For example, designating the first type of war - where the interests of two imperialist predators collide - as an *inter-imperialist war* which differs in a more serious and profound way from the usual aggressive *imperialist wars* in which a single imperialist power participates. But, unfortunately, this need to clearly separate these definitions was not fulfilled by the classics of Marxism, which now allows many pseudo-Marxist forces to manipulate this terminology, misleading the workers regarding the development of a correct political position.

Marxists who followed Lenin in the early twentieth century very clearly separated their attitudes towards these two types of *imperialist wars*. Faced with the situation of the clash of two or more imperialist predators, the Bolshevik-Leninist Guard took a clear and unequivocal position of *revolutionary defeatism*, that is, to call for the defeat of each imperialism participating in the massacre. It is this tactic, in the opinion of the Leninist wing of the Zimmerwald Left, which contributes most directly to the outbreak of the world revolutionary process.

León Trotsky in his work *Lenin on Imperialism* points out the main question and the fundamental methodological premise in the formation of the Marxist position regarding the first type of imperialist war (*inter-imperialist*): “*With the outbreak of the war in August 1914 the first question*



Ukrainian women receiving military training

within the framework of his appeals to history (Rome vs. Carthage) and within the framework of the analysis of contemporary imperialism, in his application of the category of *imperialist war* Lenin uses the idea of the need for at least two rivals, relatively equal and powerful imperialist competitors. “*Any war where both belligerents oppress foreign countries or peoples... must be called imperialist*” (Lenin²).

At the same time, in several works Lenin also uses the category of *imperialist war* to describe those colonial wars in which only one of the belligerents is imperialist. In other words, it has already achieved basic characteristics that allow capitalism to be identified with an *imperialist* phase, as a higher and last stage of capitalist development, its absolute limit, on the eve of a socialist revolution.

The second participant in the imperialist war can also be a weak, dependent, backward and

which arose was this: Should the socialists of imperialist countries assume the “defense of the fatherland?” Lenin and Trotsky’s answer was obvious: in a situation where imperialist predators faced each other the only correct line of revolutionary Marxism would be that of the defeat of every imperialist government that participated in such a massacre.

But as for the *imperialist wars* where there is only one imperialism that attacks a non-imperialist dependent state, the position of our classics was already diametrically opposed. Traditionally, Lenin and Trotsky added the categories of *national liberation war, revolutionary war, democratic war, just war* to the definition of an *imperialist war* which was clearly insufficient for a similar analysis. And the fundamental position in a similar situation was completely different: it was the call for the defeat of imperialism.

“The defense of the homeland is a lie in an imperialist war, but it is not a lie in a democratic and revolutionary war. Talking about ‘rights’ seems ridiculous during a war, because every war puts direct and immediate violence in the place of rights, but we must not forget for that reason that there have been in history (and probably will be, must be in the future) wars (democratic and revolutionary wars), which, replacing during the war any ‘right’, any democracy by violence, served in their social content, in their consequences, the cause of democracy and, consequently, socialism”(Lenin, our emphasis).

“A war against the imperialist, that is, oppressive powers, by the oppressed (for example, colonial peoples) is a truly national war. It is possible even now. The ‘defense of the fatherland’ by a nationally oppressed country against an oppressor is not a hoax, and socialists are not at all opposed to ‘defense of the fatherland’ in such a war” (Lenin).

“In a War of India, Persia, China, etc. against England or Russia, wouldn’t we side with India against England etc.?” (Lenin).

Perhaps it was Leon Trotsky who formulated these ideas with the utmost clarity and depth in his 1938 document, *The agony of capitalism and the tasks of the Fourth International (Transitional Program of the Fourth International)*: *“The imperialist bourgeoisie dominates the world. In its basic character the approaching war will therefore be an imperialist war. The fundamental content of the politics of the international proletariat will consequently be a struggle against imperialism and its war. In this struggle the basic principle is: ”the chief*

NO MORE PERSECUTION in Russia



As soon as the invasion decided by Putin began, there were demonstrations in rejection that were repressed and followed by hundreds of arrests. With a police state and a powerful propaganda apparatus, Putin goes out of his way to prevent the emergence of a nationally organized movement behind the No War banner. The persecution did not stop, it was suffered by left-wing organizations, feminist, LGTB and environmentalist groups, political and trade-union leaders and activists, journalists, academic, artistic and cultural critics.

Just to cite a few examples, in 2020, neoliberal opponent Alexei Navalny was hospitalized in serious condition due to poisoning and is currently incarcerated with a 30-year sentence. Russian Marxist sociologist Boris Kagarlitsky was also arrested on charges of “justifying terrorism.” Although in 2014-15 Kagarlitsky was a supporter of the annexation of Crimea and Russian military operations in Donbass, the real reason for his imprisonment is that he has publicly spoken out against the current invasion and Putin’s regime.

The ISL repudiates Putin’s dictatorship, demands an end to the repression, the release of all political prisoners, and the annulment of the falsified cases that have led to years of imprisonment. It supports the democratic and social demands of the working class and the Russian people, the actions of boycott against the invasion and active solidarity with the brother Ukrainian people. ✊

enemy is in your own country” or “the defeat of your own (imperialist) government is the lesser evil”.

“But not all countries of the world are imperialist countries. On the contrary, the majority are victims of imperialism. Some of the colonial or semi colonial countries will undoubtedly attempt to utilize the war in order to ease off the yoke of slavery. Their war will be not imperialist but liberating. It will be the duty of the international proletariat to aid the oppressed countries in their war against oppressors (...) The defeat of every imperialist government in the struggle with the workers’ state or with a colonial country is the lesser evil..”

By analyzing the two different types of imperialist wars and the disparate Marxist attitude towards their analysis, it is easier to detect the lies and falsifications (conscious or unconscious) associated with the formation of a pseudo-Marx-



Biden and Zelensky in Kyiv

ist political agenda. The falsification and deception reside in the fact that the position of *revolutionary defeatism* - applicable and justified for inter-imperialist wars of the first type - is applied to *imperialist wars* of the second type.

Numerous quasi-Trotskyists (ICFI, SEP, IMT, PO and similar sects) spread the narrative of Russian imperialism and justify their aggression against an extremely weak and dependent non-imperialist Ukraine, while disguising themselves with a Marxist methodology that applies to a completely different type (*inter-imperialist*) of imperialist war.

Is it a methodological error? Or in some cases is it a deliberate deception financed by Russian imperialism? The question is still open. In the current situation of the 21st century the interests of competing imperialisms are present not only in

Ukraine but in almost all the regions of the globe where there is a struggle for national liberation. However, their presence does not provide a reason to renounce supporting the right of the peoples in their struggle for national independence. We have to simultaneously raise the banner of support for the right of self-determination and independence of the peoples and the call to clear these territories of imperialist interests and influences.

I consider that the most significant contribution to the debate on the nature of Russian imperialist aggression against Ukraine, without a doubt, is the article by our comrade Alejandro Bodart, *A contribution on the war and the debates on the left*. In my opinion, it has fundamentally defined the position of the ISL towards the analysis of the Russian-Ukrainian war. Alejandro Bodart indicates clearly and unequivocally that the war in Ukraine combines two parallel processes. On the one hand, it is about a just defense by Ukraine of its sovereignty, and, on the other hand, the aggravation of inter-imperialist tensions between NATO powers and the younger, but no less aggressive, Russian and Chinese imperialisms. Comrade Bodart indicates that the separation within the analysis of one process from the other, as well as the exaggeration of a single process, evidently leads to an equivocal orientation of the Marxist forces and to a mistaken understanding of the current situation.

Some are trying, based on Ukraine’s economic and military dependence on the NATO imperialist bloc countries, to deny the Ukrainian people their right to self-determination and free development. This is accompanied by false statements that Ukraine does not have its own rights, interests, and its own subjectivity. They try to point out that it is not the Ukrainian people who are face to face with a terrible aggressor on the battlefield, but rather the NATO imperialist bloc that is fighting against Russian imperialism. But it is quite obvious that the NATO bloc has no intention of directly entering this war. It prefers to limit participation to the supply of arms to Ukraine, which is not enough to liberate the Ukrainian territories occupied by the aggressor.

In this sense, the approach of the Leninist wing of the Zimmerwald Left of 1915 in relation to Serbia and its national liberation struggle against the Austro-Hungarian Empire will be very indicative for our analysis. In his work *The collapse of the Second International* Lenin noted in

Internationalism AGAINST LUKASHENKO'S REPRESSION

Protest at Brandenburg Gate



After the massive mobilizations in 2020, Belarusian president Alexander Lukashenko deployed a systematic persecution with the closure of the media, arrests and trials based on false charges. The KGB (the Committee for State Security) is the repressive pillar of a regime with Stalinist features. The Russian invasion of Ukraine sparked protests that were punished to show subservience to Putin and prevent the development of an anti-war movement.

Even so, railway workers sabotaged the transfer of Russian military equipment by train and the *Belarusian Congress of Democratic Trade Unions (BKDP)* spoke out against the invasion and the presence of Russian troops in the country, for which it was persecuted. Over the past two years, more than 700 organizations have been liquidated, including the Belarusian Independent Trade Union (BNP). There is no reconciliation with the dictatorship, and activities continue underground and in exile.

The ISL stands in solidarity with the Belarusian comrades and all those persecuted. That is why it has supported the “Trade-union activity is not extremism” campaign initiated by the Solidarnast Association, which brings together labor activists exiled in Germany. Among the activities carried out, the participation in the information agitation in front of the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, the collection and delivery of signatures for the freedom of political prisoners and the actions before Belarusian diplomatic representations in different countries stand out. 🐞

Unitary delivery of signatures in Barcelona



particular: *“In the present war the national element is represented only by Serbia’s war against Austria (...) It is only in Serbia and among the Serbs that we can find a national-liberation movement of long standing, embracing millions, “the masses of the people”, a movement of which the present war of Serbia against Austria is a “continuation”. If this war were an isolated one, i.e., if it were not connected with the general European war, with the selfish and predatory aims of Britain, Russia, etc., it would have been the duty of all socialists to desire the success of the Serbian bourgeoisie; this is the only correct and absolutely inevitable conclusion to be drawn from the national element in the present war.”*

As we can see, Lenin does not support the national liberation struggle of the Serbs only (!) because the inter-imperialist war of the main imperialist powers is already raging and in it Serbia is an integral part of the Entente imperialist bloc (England, France, Italy, Russia, USA). It is not about the supply of weapons from the Entente countries to Serbia: it is about the fact that all the Entente countries are fighting directly in the European theater of operations, and the Serbian front against Austria-Hungary is only one of the fronts of the inter-imperialist war.

“I consider it theoretically mistaken and practically harmful not to distinguish between types of wars. We cannot stand against the wars of national liberation. You take an example: Serbia. But if the Serbs fought alone against Austria, would we not stand with the Serbs?” Lenin wrote in 1915. As we see, the key aspect of the formation of his political position is once again the fact of Serbia’s involvement in the united front on the side of the Entente imperialist bloc.

The club of supporters of Russian imperialism will fail in their attempt to pass off the heroic resistance of the Ukrainian people and their army against Russian imperialist aggression for a NATO war against Russia. As I have already pointed out, the fact that there is an imperialist war in no way defines its imperialist character for all its participants. Even in the vile and greedy world massacre of 1914 there were peoples for whom participation in the war was associated with self-determination and national liberation.

Can the current Russian-Ukrainian war change its character and be transformed from a national liberation war of the Ukrainian people in one part to a global inter-imperialist war and under what conditions? Alejandro Bodart gives a



Thousands trying to flee Lviv seeking refuge

clear answer to this question: *“If any of the imperialist countries in NATO were to declare war on Russia, for whatever reason, the character of the entire conflict would change (...) We would effectively enter an inter-imperialist armed conflict and would have to adapt our policy and orientation to the new situation”.*

Do we see the premises for the development of the situation in this direction? Not yet. Should we always be prepared for such a possible transformation of the situation? Obviously yes.

IMPERIALIST INTERESTS AND “PACIFISM”

Numerous organizations that proclaim themselves as *pacifists* have appeared whose “voices for peace”, by strange coincidence, increase when the situation of the Russian army worsens. Currently the Putin regime is doing everything possible to turn the war into a *frozen conflict* and keep the occupied Ukrainian territories. For this objective all the resources and all the agents of Russian influence have been activated.

Drawing on history, since the 1960s in the US and Western Europe *pacifism* has been associated with the progressive anti-imperialist anti-war youth movement which in many ways played a really positive role against the shameful US aggression in Vietnam. Will this historically positive connotation of *pacifism* now play a role of

support and justification for another imperialist aggression? Let us see how and under what conditions the Marxist attitude towards *pacifism* was formed.

Pacifism is the ideology of resistance to violence for the sake of its disappearance. In the mid-19th century, free trade ideas gained popularity among the bourgeoisie of Europe and America. People who reasonably linked their *pacifism* with the economic interests of key sectors of the bourgeoisie had a rapid political and social career. The bourgeois economist Frédéric Bastiat, who considered wars an unfortunate obstacle to the development of international trade, moved to the front rank of the “fighters for peace”. His ideas won sympathy among the elite and he was elected to the French parliament. Throughout the second half of the 19th century and up to 1914, the ideas of *pacifism* and *eternal peace* dominated European and American bourgeois circles. Capitalism was developing the productive forces and key segments of the capitalist class viewed any war as an unnecessary and damaging obstacle to the development of the world market and the making of super profits in international trade. These illusions so firmly penetrated the heads of the representatives of the ruling classes that, voluntarily or involuntarily, they began to spread within the nascent socialist movement.

However, from its emergence to development, the revolutionary Marxist current was well aware that the popular rhetoric of *eternal peace* and *pacifism* concealed the class nature of capitalism at its height. The transition of European and American capitalism to its imperialist phase, as well as the beginning of the imperialist struggle for the redistribution of markets, drastically reduced the popularity of pacifist slogans among key sections of the capitalist class that were already oriented towards militarism and the chauvinistic rhetoric of a future imperialist world war. The slogans of *pacifism* were often voluntarily adopted by the reformist leaders of the Second International, who used them to deceive the workers and distract them from the fundamental tasks of the revolutionary destruction of the capitalist system.

The revolutionary wing of the Marxists confronted bourgeois and reformist *pacifism*, which flourished with renewed vigor with the outbreak of the first imperialist world war. “*One way to deceive the working class is pacifism and the abstract preaching of peace. Under capitalism, and especially in its imperialist stage, wars are inevitable*” Lenin wrote in his famous 1914 work *The tasks of revolutionary social democracy in the European war*.

Lenin’s 1917 slogan on the need for a “*peace without annexations or indemnities*” has nothing to do with bourgeois or reformist *pacifism* and it is only an urgent transitional claim, dialectically associated with the unfolding of the world revolutionary process, not only in the territory of the Russian Empire, but in Europe and Asia. “*Those who repeat the general, meaningless, non-committal, goody-goody desires of pacifism are not really working for a democratic peace. Only he is working for such a peace who exposes the imperialist nature of the present war and of the imperialist peace that is being prepared and calls upon the peoples to rise in revolt against the criminal governments.*” (Lenin).

Leon Trotsky supported Lenin’s critical attitude towards *pacifism*. In his work *Pacifism as the Servant of Imperialism* he wrote: “*Theoretically and politically, pacifism has just the same basis as the doctrine of social harmony between different class interests.*” In his 1926 work, *Once more on Pacifism and Revolution (Response to Bertrand Russell)*, Trotsky pointed out, in a polemic with British reformist socialists who harbored considerable illusions in *pacifism*, that “*Pacifism only to a very insignificant extent affects the military machine of the ruling class.*”

In his work *Lenin and the imperialist war*, Trotsky - relying on Lenin’s ideas - emphasizes the problem of the attitude of revolutionary Marxism towards different *pacifist phenomena*: “*The struggle against the sleepy and relaxing illusions of pacifism is an essential element in Lenin’s doctrine. With particular loathing, he rejects the claim for ‘disarmament’ as obviously utopian under capitalism and capable of diverting workers’ thinking from the need for their own armaments...An oppressed class that does not make an effort to learn to use weapons, to have weapons, such a class would only deserve to be treated as slaves*”. And also: “*Our slogan must be: arm the proletariat in order to defeat, expropriate and disarm the bourgeoisie... Only after the proletariat has disarmed the bourgeoisie can it, without changing its world-historical task, dispose of and scrap all weapons...*”

In the 21st century, *pacifism* continues to play an instrumental role in the service of certain social and class interests. Unfortunately today predominantly of the imperialist class. Nixon’s Vietnam adventure found support from a certain influential section of the US military-industrial bourgeoisie, but significant sections of the same bourgeoisie were not interested in the war. Not to mention the Western European bourgeoisie. Their interests coincided in the conjuncture with the anti-war mobilization of the youth of the United States, Western Europe and a significant part of the working class. In the late ‘60s, *pacifism* objectively played a role, but it was purely subservient and instrumental. What social role can *pacifism* play in 2023, if from the beginning it was ordered, organized and financially supported by aggressive Russian imperialism?

In the post-Soviet space an expression associated with the so-called *Hegel’s paradox* has become popular: “*History teaches us that it teaches us nothing.*” We do not accept this thesis that prompts us to abandon the Marxist method of analysis. The history of class struggle has taught us a lot and will continue to do so. Imperialism retains its anti-human nature, which has increasingly catastrophic consequences for the existence of humanity. These are the reasons why we cannot give up analyzing contemporary imperialisms and we must develop a useful socialist program for the anti-imperialist struggle. 🇺🇸

1. Labor Defense, in Ukrainian.

2. All underlined parts are by the author.



THE POLITICS of the revolutionaries

BY PABLO VASCO

To design its line of action, revolutionary socialism uses a scientific method: on the basis of analyzing a given situation, it makes a characterization of it and hypotheses about its dynamics, and on this basis defines the policy to be followed. In this increasingly agitated and polarized world, in order to build a revolutionary policy in the face of wars, the first thing to do is to characterize the States and factions in conflict. The fact is that not all countries play the same role on the world stage and therefore not all wars are the same, and such differences condition our policy.

Today two competitors are disputing imperialist hegemony: the US, which after the fall of its Stalinist partner in the 1990s has had to tackle all regional conflicts and is in retreat,

and China, whose global intervention is advancing in the economic, commercial, geopolitical and military spheres. If they go to war, which we do not believe to be an immediate possibility but the risk is growing, there will be two camps. European imperialism, bourgeois parties, social democracy and neo-reformist sectors will support the US and NATO to defend the “values of democracy” against “oriental totalitarianism” or some similar hypocrisy. And countries like Russia and Iran, Stalinist sectors and semi-colonial bourgeois nationalism will align themselves with China for considering it progressive or the lesser evil against the U.S. As variants, “pacification” proposals may arise mediated by the UN or the diplomacies of each camp.

As we explained earlier in this issue, to consider China as a lesser evil is out of touch with reality. While the U.S. is still the major imperialist power, China does not play any progressive role either, but seeks to replace U.S. he-

gemony with its own. There is no progressive multilateralism. If among the Chinese masses it is necessary to dispel all illusions in Western “democracy” and “freedom,” in the West it is necessary to denounce the danger posed by Chinese domination.

REVOLUTIONARY DEFEATISM

In the event of a global military confrontation for imperialist hegemony between the blocs commanded by the U.S. and China, the only revolutionary policy would be raising revolutionary defeatism in each of the countries in conflict, calling on workers not to fall into the trap of patriotism promoted by all the bourgeois, reformist and bureaucratic leaderships in the service of defending their privileges and the domination of the imperialist gangsters. A U.S.-China war would have the same essential character of rapine as the first and second world wars. It would involve at least a carnage that would lead to the death of millions of workers, youth and civilians. With the aggravating factor that today’s military and nuclear power is qualitatively superior to that of 80 years ago and would put humanity and the planet in danger of catastrophe and even extinction. It is because of all this that if the situation advances towards a world confrontation the revolutionary policy should be *defeatism on both sides* and the call to transform war into revolution against the governments that lead humanity to barbarism, raising as the only alternative the need to organize to fight *for socialism worldwide*.

Just as the consolidation of the U.S. as the dominant imperialism since World War II has had nothing positive for humanity, neither would a triumph of China, which would follow the same path, consolidating itself as a world police force at the service of ensuring the survival of an increasingly decadent capitalist system that is predatory, authoritarian and exploitative of workers and peoples. This policy should be extended to all the countries that align themselves on each side: the NATO members, Japan, South Korea and Australia -via the AUKUS military pact- with the U.S., as well as Russia, North Korea, Iran, Turkey, Venezuela and other possible allies of China.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RIGHT TO NATIONAL SELF-DETERMINATION

Regardless of the dynamics that events may take, we are not yet in the midst of an open world conflict. That is why our orientation and policy cannot be the same as if we were already in a Third World War, as unfortunately various reformist sectors of the left are proclaiming.

What exists today are growing inter-imperialist frictions and at the same time a series of regional conflicts, among which the war between Russia and Ukraine stands out. And we cannot rule out that in the near future such conflicts will develop in other latitudes, for example in Taiwan or in Niger and North Africa. This forces us to specify the policy without falling into unilateralism or yielding to the pressures of any of the imperialist camps in dispute. The Russian invasion of Ukraine forces us to



combine the defense of the right to self-determination of the Ukrainian people and the denunciation of the invader with the utilization of the conflict by the U.S. and NATO. Unfortunately, few organizations have managed to pass the test in a revolutionary way in the face of this conflict. Some because of their open alignment with one of the imperialist sides. Others because of theoretical confusion and ideological weakness.

As Lenin remarked about the World War: “*The general staffs in the current war are doing their utmost to utilise any national and revolutionary movement in the enemy camp: the Germans utilise the Irish rebellion, tire French—the Czech movement, etc. They are acting quite correctly from their own point of view. A serious war would not be treated seriously if advantage*

were not taken of the enemy's slightest weakness and if every opportunity that presented itself were not seized upon, the more, so since it is impossible to know beforehand at what moment, where, and with what force some powder magazine will "explode". We would be very poor revolutionaries if, in the proletariat's great war of Liberation for socialism, we did not know how to utilise every popular movement against every single disaster imperialism brings in order to intensify and extend the crisis".¹

If an imperialism uses to its advantage the right of a people to self-determination and national liberation, no one should be confused. That fact that, in pursuit of its own interests, NATO supports Ukraine against Russia, does not have to imply that revolutionaries abandon and sacrifice the Ukrainian people. As Lenin said: "*The fact that the struggle for national liberation against one imperialist power may, under certain circumstances, be utilized by another "Great" Power in its equally imperialist interests should have no more weight in inducing Social Democracy to renounce its recognition of the right of nations to self-determination*"². Prior to World War II, Trotsky posed the challenges as follows: "*Class struggle and war are international phenomena, which are decided internationally. But since every struggle permits of but two camps (bloc against bloc) and since imperialistic fights intertwine with the class war world imperialism against world proletariat), there arise manifold and complex cases... The proletariat of all countries, the only international solidarity – and not least of all because of that, the only progressive class – thereby finds itself in the complicated situation in war-time, especially in the new world war, of combining revolutionary defeatism towards their own bourgeoisie with support of progressive wars.*"³.

The war in Eastern Europe has three actors. Ukraine is a semi-dependent or semi-colonial country. As for Russia, it could be debated whether it is imperialist or sub-imperialist, that is to say, a regional imperialist power. But even if it is considered only a military imperialism, as the international organization of the Argentine PTS underestimates it to justify its capitulation, Russia is a great power. The third actor, NATO, with growing involvement, is the imperialist military alliance led by the US.

Well then; this war combines two aspects: the

invasion by Russia, a great power, of a semi-colony like Ukraine, which defends itself, and the US imperialist intervention –so far indirect, with arms and logistics but still without troops– to weaken Russia and advance in encircling China, its great competitor. Revolutionary politics must respond in a comprehensive manner to this double character of the war:

An inter-imperialist confrontation and at the same time a just war of national sovereignty against an invader. It is wrong to omit or underestimate one or the other aspect.

- Thus, for example, neo-reformist currents such as Podemos in Spain, which, in the name of "pacifism" equate both sides, err. A year after the invasion, Podemos, Argentine President Fernandez, his Colombian counterpart Petro, the French Mélenchon and the British Corbyn called for "a negotiation for a peaceful solution"⁴, a position beneficial to Putin and similar to that of Stalinist *campism*.
- In turn, sectors of Trotskyism such as the United Secretariat, and also the LIT and the UIT prioritize the aspect of Ukrainian self-determination and fall into a sort of *stagism* that minimizes the current political struggle against Western imperialism and its ally Zelensky.
- In an opposite mistake, the Trotskyist Fraction of the PTS puts forward bilateral defeatism. By defining it as a proxy war⁵, that is, on behalf of NATO, it gives the Ukrainian troops and people the same negative role as the Russian invader and ends up acting in favor of Russian imperialism.

According to the TF, the "*element of national self-determination remains more and more in the background to determine our policy as it is subordinated to the military confrontation between powers*"⁶. But in its concrete policy this "second plane" disappears completely, since it calls for "*constituting a pole against the war in Ukraine which puts forward the international unity of the working class with an independent policy, for the withdrawal of Russian troops, against NATO and imperialist armament, for a working class and socialist Ukraine, in the perspective of the united socialist states of Europe.*" Even if one speaks of "*withdrawal of the*



Russian troops,” to propose in Ukraine “*a pole against the war*” is in fact to work for Putin’s victory, since those who are fighting to drive out the Russian invaders are the Ukrainian troops. The TF had already celebrated, months ago, a port boycott of arms shipments to Ukraine in Italy. In the NATO countries it is logical not to demand more arms because it strengthens their imperialist bourgeoisie, but to boycott a shipment to Ukraine -as the *campists* do- is to disarm the invaded country.

“LEARN TO THINK”...

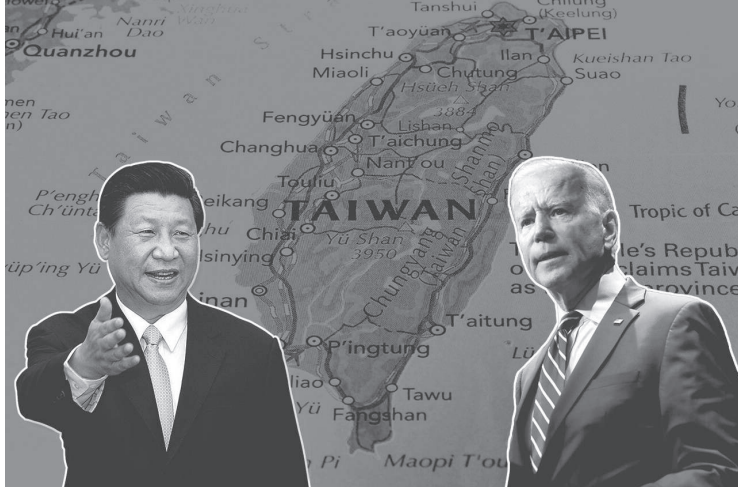
This is how Trotsky titled a text in debate against a position similar to that of the TF: “*Let us assume that rebellion breaks out tomorrow in the French colony of Algeria under the banner of national independence and that the Italian government, motivated by its own imperialist interests, prepares to send weapons to the rebels. What should the attitude of the Italian workers be in this case? I have purposely taken an example of rebellion against a democratic imperialism with intervention on the side of the rebels from a fascist imperialism. Should the Italian workers prevent the shipping of arms to the Algerians? Let any ultra-leftists dare answer this question in the affirmative. Every revolutionist, together with the Italian workers and the rebellious Algerians, would spurn such an answer with indignation. Even if a general maritime strike broke out in fascist Italy at the same time, even in this case the strikers should make an exception in favor of those ships carrying aid to the colonial slaves in revolt; otherwise they would be no more than wretched trade unionists – not proletarian revo-*

lutionaries.

At the same time, the French maritime workers, even though not faced with any strike whatsoever, would be compelled to exert every effort to block the shipment of ammunition intended for use against the rebels. Only such a policy on the part of the Italian and French workers constitutes the policy of revolutionary internationalism.

Does this not signify, however, that the Italian workers moderate their struggle in this case against the fascist regime? Not in the slightest. Fascism renders “aid” to the Algerians only in order to weaken its enemy, France, and to lay its rapacious hand on her colonies. The revolutionary Italian workers do not forget this for a single moment. They call upon the Algerians not to trust their treacherous “ally” and at the same time continue their own irreconcilable struggle against fascism, “the main enemy in their own country”. Only in this way can they gain the confidence of the rebels, help the rebellion and strengthen their own revolutionary position.”

Trotsky held the same position in the face of a war between regular armies. In 1935-36 there was a war between the army of imperialist Italy led by Mussolini and the troops of Ethiopia under the command of the semi-feudal negus Haile Selassie, supplied by Nazi Germany. Refuting the pacifism of the centrist British Independent Labor Party, which spoke of “two rival dictators,” Trotsky was clear: “*If Mussolini triumphs, it means the re-enforcement of fascism, the strengthening of imperialism and the discouragement of the colonial peoples in Africa and elsewhere. The victory of the Negus, however, would mean a mighty blow not only at Italian imperialism but at imperialism as a whole and*



would lend a powerful impulsion to the rebellious forces of the oppressed peoples.”⁸

The fact that Ukraine is not a colony but a semi-colony, and that its bourgeois government receives NATO support, does not deny the elementary right of that nation to confront the Russian imperial invasion.

In 1937, a war began between imperial Japan and semi-colonial China, led by the bourgeois nationalist and enemy of the workers and peasants revolution Chiang Kai-shek, who had the support of Great Britain and the U.S. In criticism of certain ultra-leftists who proposed revolutionary defeatism, Trotsky defended the same policy as in the Italian-Ethiopian war: *“But Japan and China are not on the same historical plane. The victory of Japan will signify the enslavement of China, the end of her economic and social development, and the terrible strengthening of Japanese imperialism. The victory of China will signify, on the contrary, the social revolution in Japan and the free development, that is to say unhindered by external oppression, of the class struggle in China. But can Chiang Kai-shek assure the victory? I do not believe so. It is he, however, who began the war and who today directs it. To be able to replace him it is necessary to gain decisive influence among the proletariat and in the army, and to do this it is necessary not to remain suspended in the air but to place oneself in the midst of the struggle. We must win influence and prestige in the military struggle against the foreign invasion and in the political struggle against the weaknesses, the deficiencies, and the internal betrayal.”*

That is to say, Trotsky was not defeatist towards the attacked backward country, beyond its form of government and the maneuvers of other powers, but he defended its victory over the imperialist aggressor. He did not confuse

the type of government with the type of country, nor military support with political support, as some “suspended in the air” do confuse today. And as for what would happen if Ukraine wins the war, we are clear: not only would its working people be strengthened to confront its government, but also the decisive working class and peoples of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and other oppressed nations of the region in their struggle against Putin, Lukashenko and the other capitalist dictators.

That is why we reaffirm the comprehensive, principled, revolutionary and internationalist program that the ISL and our Ukrainian Socialist League have put forward since the beginning of the war: Russian troops out of Ukraine; support for the Ukrainian resistance; NATO out of Eastern Europe and for its dissolution; free self-determination of Crimea, Donetsk and Lugansk without Russian troops; and denunciation of Zelensky and his anti-working class measures, with class political independence from his capitalist and pro-imperialist government

This policy is part of the global struggle against the capitalist governments and their plans of austerity and plunder, promoting the workers’ and peoples’ struggle and the building of revolutionary parties, for the strategy of taking power and advancing towards a socialist world, without borders, exploitation or oppression of any kind. 🇺🇸

1. *The Discussion On Self-Determination Summed Up, 1916* <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/jul/x01.htm>
2. *The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination* <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/jan/x01.htm>
3. *Principles and tactics in war* <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/revhist/back-iss/vol1/no1/printact.html>
4. https://podemos.info/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Declaracion-por-la-Paz_firmas.pdf
5. Also called subsidiary or delegated war.
6. <https://www.laizquierdadiario.com/La-reactualizacion-de-la-epoca-de-crisis-guerras-y-revoluciones-y-las-perspectivas-para-una-izquierda-revolucionaria-internacionalista>
7. *Learn to Think A Friendly Suggestion to Certain Ultra-Leftists*, May 1938 <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1938/05/think.htm>
8. *On Dictators and the Heights of Oslo* <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/britain/v3/ch02i.htm#s1>

THE LIMITS of the PSOL and THE CONSTRUCTION of the revolutionary

BY VERONICA O'KELLY AND DOUGLAS DINIZ, OF THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP OF REVOLUÇÃO SOCIALISTA, BRAZIL

In Brazil the Broad Front headed by Lula (PT) and Alckmin (PSB) governs in alliance with bourgeois parties. We have no confidence in this government; therefore, the independent left must be in opposition.

At the same time, the PSOL faces a liquidationist process that is advancing and consolidating, posing a great challenge to the revolutionary left. Here is our perspective on the ongoing debates:

THE FAR-RIGHT CANNOT BE DEFEATED WITHOUT A RADICAL LEFT

Bolsonaro's electoral defeat in 2022 was a popular victory, but a contradictory one. The defeat through elections and not mobilizations, made it less powerful as a means to put an end to the far-right and its project against the workers and poor people.

After its first six months, Lula's government has shown how it has failed to consolidate the electoral defeat and, therefore, with an agenda of capitalist austerity and cuts, it revitalizes the far-right and Bolsonaro himself with a high level of support among the masses. Despite being judged ineligible by the Electoral Justice for a period of eight years, he remains unpunished for the multiple crimes committed during his term. This impunity is guaranteed by the class conciliating Lula-Alckmin government.

Without a radical left political alternative the extreme right will not be defeated. The masses that have experienced progressive governments that push forward the agenda of capital, dismantling rights and conquests, quick-



ly break with these governments allowing the growth of the extreme right. Only the socialist left has a real alternative project and a way out in favor of workers. As long as it remains unable to overcome its dispersion and become a tool for the masses, the circle of bourgeois governments of center, right and far-right will continue.

THE LIQUIDATIONIST PROCESS OF THE PSOL IS ADVANCING

The PSOL, at its foundation, set out to overcome the PT and its project of class conciliation when the latter abandoned its historic program to adapt itself to the regime and administer the bourgeois state. This foundational project was promoted by currents of the classist left, which was the majority in the nascent party. With the passing of time, more sectors left the PT and joined the PSOL, among them centrist and reformist currents which produced a qualitative change in its composition and politics. This strengthened a refoundation project that sought to liquidate political independence and the foundational program. We are now witnessing a consolidation of this pro-



cess which aims to assimilate the party to the bourgeois regime.

The refoundation is a project of the majority leadership, of the Popular PSOL Camp (Socialist Spring and Solidarity Revolution), unfortunately supported by the Semente Camp (Resistance, Insurgency and Subversion, currents of the Mandelist international), who form the “PSOL of all struggles” Bloc. This leadership is taking the PSOL down the same path taken by the PT. It is responsible for the party not having its own candidacy in the last presidential elections of 2022, thus abstaining from participating in the electoral political dispute with its own program. It is responsible for its transformation into a base of support for the Lula-Alckmin government - accepting that party spokesperson Sônia Guajajara became minister and the federal congressman Pastor Henrique Vieira took up the vice-chairmanship of the Government in the Chamber of Deputies. It is also responsible - with the unfortunate support of the MES - for the conformation of the Federation with a party of green capitalism - Rede Sustentabilidade - a great setback in the class independence of the PSOL.

The next period after the 8th National Congress of the party will define the future of the PSOL: either it deepens the path of adaptation and assimilation to the regime, or it recovers its foundational project, restoring class independence as a necessary condition for its continuity.

WHY IS IT STILL CORRECT TO BE IN THE PSOL?

It is a fact that the contradictions are many and have been accentuated in recent years. We

agree in that particular analysis with the comrades who have disaffiliated in recent times. However, we believe that it is a mistake to abandon the dispute for the political project that has managed to regroup the socialist left. Within the PSOL there is still a vanguard that can be won for a revolutionary project and not swell the ranks of class conciliation.

Unfortunately there is also a great dispersion in the Brazilian left, and both opportunist and centrist mistakes, as well as those derived from self-proclamation and sectarianism, have made it impossible to strengthen the socialist left within the PSOL or the emergence of something new on the outside. This is not a minor debate. It is not correct to isolate ourselves from the processes of organization and reorganization; pretty speeches without impact on the masses and their processes of struggle are of no use. At the same time, we also need to move away from opportunist parliamentarism, one of the faces of reformist adaptation to the system.

Although the Lula-Alckmin government tries to convince the people that democracy solves everything, the exploited, oppressed and impoverished masses are not willing to lose their conquests and that is why struggles arise. Our task is to strengthen each of these struggles and build the political tool capable of positioning itself as an alternative before the masses. We make the call to strengthen an anti-capitalist political alternative with class independence. We continue to wage this battle within the PSOL -with its next Congress as an important task- on the road to the construction of a socialist, internationalist and revolutionary party in Brazil. 🌍

COP-30 in Brazil: **BLAH BLAH BLAH** is coming to Amazonia

BY MAURÍCIO MATOS, ECOSOCIALIST STRUGGLE, SOCIALIST REVOLUTION COLLECTIVE-PSOL

In January 2023 Science magazine, one of the most prestigious scientific journals in the world, published an article stating that the global warming projections made between 1977 and 2003 by scientists from the US multinational oil company ExxonMobil were consistent and accurate in the vast majority of cases. This dismantles the charade mounted by oil giants that they “did not know” or were “unsure” of the impact of burning fossil fuels on planet Earth’s climate: *“for decades, some members of the fossil fuel industry tried to convince people that a causal relationship between fossil fuel use and climate warming could not be established because the models used to project warming were too uncertain.”*

In the United States, the discovery in 2015 of internal Exxon memos written in the late 1970s was followed by eight years of intense search for more information. During this period, a British researcher found in the archives of a museum in the small state of Delaware, near Washington-DC, the transcripts of a 1959 oil conference held at Columbia University in New York. Among the hundreds of pages one passage caught his attention. It was the speech by one of the scientists who helped create the destructive thermonuclear bomb -the H-bomb- talking about fossil fuels to an audience of U.S. industry executives: *“whenever conventional fuel is burned, carbon dioxide is created... Its presence in the atmosphere causes a greenhouse effect... all coastal cities would be covered”* by rising sea levels due to melting ice caps, the scientist warned, if fossil fuels continued to be used on a large scale.

The discovery that these multinational oil companies already knew about the catastrophic global climate impacts of burning oil, gas and coal, hid this data and created a disinformation network to discredit academic studies that reached divergent conclusions, led to dozens of lawsuits filed by US cities, counties and states against oil and gas companies. In parallel, social movements such as #ExxonKnew have emerged, calling on “the U.S. Department of Justice and state attorney generals to investigate Big Oil and make polluters pay.”

DENOUNCE COP-30 AND ORGANIZE THE PEOPLE’S SUMMIT!

Despite already knowing about global warming and climate change, oil companies and imperialist govern-

ments have for decades hidden from public opinion the harmful effects of unlimited exploitation of fossil fuels. Only in 1992 did the UN raise the issue at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio-92. The first summit of polluting countries to specifically discuss climate change was not held until 1995 in Berlin: COP-1.



Since then, there has been a lot of *blah blah blah*, many broken promises, many broken agreements and no action strong enough to avoid a planet-wide social and environmental catastrophe. It is a clear demonstration that capitalism will not offer real solutions to avoid a socio-environmental collapse.

Unfortunately, the position of the national majority and the PSOL leadership in the city of Belém -capital of the State of Pará in the North region- administered by Mayor Edmilson Rodrigues, of PSOL, that hosts of COP-30, is to use the tactic of greenwashing while celebrating the event as a possibility to obtain financial loans to “dress up” the city in search of his re-election to the mayor’s office in 2024. The militancy of the PSOL has the duty to denounce the farce of COP-30 and organize a parallel event, the People’s Summit, that presents alternatives beyond capitalist profits.

The task of defending biodiversity and peoples on an international scale must be taken into our own hands from below. Defend Mother Earth, the Pachamama. In this sense, the words of comrade Hugo Blanco, who passed away on June 25 of this year, take on a new and planetary meaning: “Tierra o Muerte”(Land/Earth or Death). We will prevail! 🌿

WHAT STRATEGY for the Left Front?

BY SERGIO GARCÍA, MST - ARGENTINA NATIONAL LEADERSHIP



Our country is in shock after the electoral results of the primary elections (PASO) that gave the win to far-right candidate Javier

Milei. The country was already in an acute economic-social crisis, with the province of Jujuy standing out as an example of the bourgeois attempt to attack social and democratic rights.

It embodies the plan that they will try to impose nationally after the October elections and that Milei's progress reaffirms, giving rise to a perspective of greater street confrontations. In this context, the Left Front Unity passed the primaries and will be one of the five lists in the October general elections, while

it also maintains important debates and there are different strategies at stake. What differences exist and what strategies are under debate? What project did our list of the MST and the Partido Obrero raise within the FIT-U? What were the results of the August 13 elections? How significant is our victory in the FIT-U primary in the country's capital? We address these issues.

Argentina has a long history of struggle and a bourgeois regime in permanent crisis. After the overthrow of the dictatorship by the revolutionary action of the mass movement in the early 1980s, the bourgeois democratic regime did what it could through times of relative rise and ebbs of mass struggle, such as the early 1990s. As the 20th century came to an end, the crisis and the rise in struggle took a great leap, reaching the historic days of the 2001 Argentinazo, which put an end to De la Rúa's Radical Party government and the existing bipartisan regime, shouting "they must all go" and provoking a qualitative change in the situation. Unfortunately, the absence of a left-wing alternative with significant influence in the masses was a limit to the process, which allowed Peronism to regain power over time, albeit much weaker in its political and trade union structure.

We begin with this brief historical review to better understand what we are experiencing today. Since the Argentinazo, the big bourgeoisie and imperialism have held political control, but

have been unable to stabilize the regime or advance significantly with structural changes in their favor. The governments that have passed tried to do so but failed. One after another, they attempted to control the situation in the streets and the economy, without success. In fact, the emergence of Macri, with the strong bourgeois support his government enjoyed from 2015 to 2019, had the central objective of “normalizing” the country. He did not achieve this and was repudiated by large swaths of the masses.

That government was succeeded in 2019 by Peronism with Alberto Fernández as president, appointed by Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, who became his vice president. Today we are witnessing the final days of this government, in the midst of a strong economic and inflationary crisis, a jump in the levels of poverty, extreme poverty and social inequality. Along with the submission to the IMF through Peronism’s legalization of the fraudulent debt contracted by Macri with the Fund under his government. This disaster ended up expressing itself in the August 13 elections.

MILEI’S RISE, THE CRISIS AND ITS PROSPECTS

Now the country is beginning the electoral campaign of the general elections of October 22 for president and legislative positions, after having passed the primary elections that **shook the entire political landscape, with the defeat of the two main coalitions - Peronism and Macrism - and the victory of an ascendant Javier Milei, the far right leader of La Libertad Avanza.**

The electoral campaign took place in the context of the critical international and Latin American situation, of strong social tensions and polarization. In this context, given the failure of successive governments, including the current one with a progressive discourse but with the application of IMF instructed austerity, **an evident electoral turn to the right, which expresses a bitter vote of more politically backwards sectors against those who govern, a phenomenon that Milei capitalized on, combined with a right-wing fascistoid sector that clearly expresses an anti-rights program.** Another sector also decided not to vote or to vote blank. Argentina has thus arrived at the gates of a possible victory in the general elections of a kind of Bolson-



aro, with a far right discourse, with uncertain but real possibilities of becoming president.

Both Peronism with Sergio Massa and Macrism with Patricia Bullrich received a strong blow that disrupted all their plans. And the result further destabilizes a political regime that was already in crisis. Of course, now they will try to pull themselves together to win the general elections, in the case of Peronism stirring up fear in sections of the population of a future Milei government. We will see if that works for them while a Peronist government is ruling and applying austerity. For now, Milei has taken advantage of them and anything can happen.

The backdrop of the electoral result is that, in the midst of significant working class and broader struggles, which are not yet generalized, **Argentina is heading towards the hypothesis that these first chapters of crisis are the prelude to greater confrontations to come.** The country’s near future brings a new bourgeois attempt to control the streets, curtail the right to protest, prosecute those who struggle, legislate new laws to implement that plan and everything at the service of guaranteeing the brutal austerity plan of the IMF, the implementation of labor and pension reforms and a greater plunder of our wealth in association with large international, US and Chinese corporations. That plan has already been seen in the province of Jujuy, where a reactionary constitutional reform was voted and imposed with repression that curtails democratic rights and guarantees legal cover for the theft of lithium. There was also a very powerful rebellion against that reform, large mobilizations of teachers and state employees, the emergence of coordination committees, pickets and roadblocks. **Jujuy is the preview of what is to come, so is Milei’s victory. In the medium term, after a new government takes office, more social tensions and polarization will come, new rebellions, sudden changes and twists in the**



situation, possibly a revolutionary crisis. The revolutionary left must prepare for all of this.

THE LEFT FRONT THAT WE NEED FOR THIS PERSPECTIVE

Our starting point is the defense of having formed the Left Front Unity years ago, an electoral coalition of unity of the left formed by our MST together with the Partido Obrero, the PTS and Izquierda Socialista. This front has gained the support of important sectors of the vanguard and working class and social activism and of a broader layer of workers and youth in the elections. Since its foundation, the front took advantage of the absence of significant center-left variants, since they were assimilated within Peronism through Kirchnerism, and has now been somewhat blurred out of the political map. However, in these elections, Grabois's presidential candidacy appeared with a progressive discourse against the IMF, which, although he remained within Peronism, he did so with his own list, gained a decent number of votes (5%) and prevented a layer of votes from coming to the left. In the future, we will have to see if this new political actor breaks with the PJ or not, and if he does, how it will affect the space to the left and the possibility of growing when a new mediation emerges. We will have to deal with this new political phenomenon, starting with telling them that if they stand against the IMF, they should break with the PJ that co-governs with the Fund and join the struggle in the street against the austerity of whatever government emerges in October.

In this context, the Left Front has a positive aspect in its fundamental program and the political space it has conquered, confronting all capitalist variants. That is why we must defend it and fight for its permanence and development. In fact, in these primaries, we achieved a total of 650,000 votes from workers and young people (2.6%), close to the results of the previous presidential election

in 2019 (2.8%), which shows a consolidation of our social-electoral base, albeit not achieving a new leap. Compared to the 2021 legislative elections, it is a step back. Although that was a different election, not a presidential one, we failed to sustain those votes. The fact that we have an important layer of consolidated voters is something we can value and they may even grow more in the October general elections. In contrast to this achievement of the FIT-U, there was a very poor performance in the left by Castañeira's Nuevo MAS and its weak international current, SoB, which fell to a painful 0.3% of the votes due to its sectarianism and rejection of the unity of the left.

Along with its strong points, the Left Front has strong limitations that are reflected in its inability to advance further. These limitations should not be hidden, but debated frankly, with the membership of our parties, the vanguard, and the thousands of sympathizers who support us.

It is important to understand what debates there are. Since there were two lists in the primaries, the debate may tend to be reduced to a fight over candidacies, which is very mistaken. Although the reality is that the Left Front presented two presidential tickets in the primaries, **what we have is a debate about the project, about strategy.** Now, towards October, we will all be part of common lists in unity against the capitalist parties. However, the substantive and strategic debate will continue beyond October. It is about what the FIT-U should be, and on this central issue we do not agree with the PTS and the Trotskyist Fraction that this party leads, nor with the smallest and weakest group of the FIT-U, Izquierda Socialista, a member of the UIT-CI.

In the MST, and in these primaries in agreement with the PO comrades who have modified their position from years back, **we question the merely electoral character that the FIT-U has today. We propose a front that acts in the struggles every day, that wholeheartedly fights for leadership in the working class and in the popular neighborhoods, capable of making thousands of activists see themselves reflected in our front, not just calling on them to vote every two years.** We are in a country where new attacks on democratic and social rights will be attempted. The working class and the people will respond in strength against those attacks, and the left has to stand solid and promote the struggles together. We are fighting for a FIT-U that can respond to this challenge.

Unfortunately, the comrades of the PTS reject

this necessity and give the FIT-U an electoralist character, organized around certain electoral marketing of its public figures and leaving aside any perspective of greater political unity. In addition, they refuse to seriously coordinate with the rest of the front in the struggles and in the fight for the leadership of the labor movement. In the popular neighborhoods they have adopted, incredibly, an attack on the independent *piquetero* movement, with positions that are alien to our class, saying that the workers in the neighborhoods do not mobilize “consciously and voluntarily.” It is the same argument used by the politicians and media of the regime. Thus, the PTS, and also Izquierda Socialista, have been belittling the struggle and organization of hundreds of thousands of working families in the neighborhoods.

BEFORE AND AFTER OCTOBER, TWO STRATEGIC PROJECTS UNDER DEBATE

The Left Front is running in the general elections with the Bregman-Del Caño ticket and the MST will participate with candidates in all the country’s provinces, reflecting a strong accumulation and national expansion, confronting the rise of Milei and his program and standing against all capitalist candidates. For the FIT-U project that we defend, **the Solano-Ripoll ticket that we presented in the primaries made an important contribution** and garnered significant support despite not being winning, though it did win in some provinces, such as the emblematic and combative Salta, with Andrea Villegas of the MST leading the list of national deputies. **Also, in the province of Buenos Aires, we carried out an outstanding campaign with Alejandro Bodart** as a candidate for governor, strongly sowing our ideas in broad layers.

The national results express the contradiction between militant force and electoral figures, since the MST and PO are clearly the most extended forces and most inserted in popular neighborhoods and labor structures, but the result marks the significance of public figures that are more installed and focused on the electoral performance. In this case, accompanied by Izquierda Socialista, which has a weak organization and was not visible throughout the campaign given its unfortunate coat-tailing of PTS figures.

We have expressed what we want for the FIT-U for years now, and also in the campaign, with proposals to improve the front: we convened massive



plenary meetings that were open to the front’s membership and sympathizers, we democratically debated the politics, the program and the candidacies **and we decided with the method of the working class, with more than 20,000 comrades voting with their hands raised.** That plenary session in Plaza Congreso was a historical event that marked a turning point in the practice of the anti-capitalist and socialist left. And it was a great example of the strategic debate for the FIT-U to convene openly after the elections, open up, democratize all its decision-making mechanisms and break with an electoralist model that closes and limits us.

There is an ongoing political struggle for the leadership of the front and this electoral campaign and its results are a first photograph, a moment of a profound struggle for the perspectives of the left. Due to electoralism and certain pessimism, the comrades of the PTS and a sector of the left are content with what has been achieved. **We have another strategy: starting from what has been achieved, to strive for much more. To wholeheartedly promote the construction of a left project that aims to fight for political power supported by the mobilization of workers and the people.** No project is revolutionary if it does not fight for that objective. Now we fight with the entire FIT-U united in the general elections, but this strategic debate will continue strongly after the elections.

THE STRENGTHENING OF THE MST AND THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR VICTORY IN THE CAPITAL

We come out of this electoral process strengthened, adding to the achievements of past elections. We have won new seats, strengthened ideas and political figures, we took a leap with **Cele Fierro** winning the Capital, **Alejandro Bodart** became better known in the province of Buenos Aires and **Vilma Ripoll** made an important contribution as vice presidential can-



didate with a high commitment. We also managed to **win the combative province of Salta**, with **Andrea Villegas** heading the category of national legislators, which places us at the head of the FIT-U in that province.

Taking the electoral year as a whole, we managed to renew the legislative seat in Córdoba with Luciana Echevarría, enter the City Council of that province's capital; In Neuquén we got Priscila Otton re-elected to the City Council and we will participate in the rotation of a provincial legislator, we also achieved Betina Rivero's continuity as councilor in Palpalá for a full term and will participate in the rotation of provincial legislators with Leo Rivero in Jujuy. A few weeks ago, we ensured our entry into the Chubut Legislature. Furthermore, on the first Sunday of September we have the possibility of electing a councilor to the Bariloche City Council, with significant chances of success. And later, we will rotate into a national congressional seat and a legislative seat in the Province of Buenos Aires, summarizing what we have achieved in the 2021 legislative elections. All these seats are conquests to promote social demands, defend our program, strengthen the left and build our party, as part of the strategy of fighting to lead the vanguard and the mass movement.

As we said, it is no less important and of great relevance that **our list won the FIT-U primary in the country's capital and will have Cele Fierro of the MST as the first candidate for legislator of the City of Buenos Aires** and Vanina Biasi as Chief of Government in October's election. We achieved this with 65% of the Front's votes and 5% of the general vote. It was in this key district where we were able to make the most progress. This is the district **where there are greater possibilities of electing left legislators** and where we will have the challenge and pride of heading the list of the Left Front.

We will fight against all the parties of the right and progressivism, we will fight to grow even more in October so that more than one seat can be won for the revolutionary left. It is the most concrete possibility that the FIT-U has and we are all in to take advantage of it. Because **it is within our reach and because those seats will be at the service of the coming struggles and of strengthening and extending the ideas of the left project** that we aim to make more powerful and massive.

FINAL CONCLUSIONS

We have years of hard struggles and social tensions ahead of us in Argentina and Latin America. As part of the task of growing and strengthening the unity of the left that we achieved, we need to incorporate thousands to our front and to our party. For that objective, **we have our anti-capitalist and socialist program, which is the guiding political base that drives our struggle for a workers' government and socialism.** If we organize thousands of workers and young activists, we strengthen the struggle for that program. If the Front does not open up and instead encloses itself in sectarianism, the program, no matter how correct, will actually weaken. **Because a program is strong and solid not only because of what it says, but also if it has thousands of militants who defend it and carry it forward.**

We want a Front that takes part in the political and social struggles, organizes thousands and throws out any hegemonic and closed conceptions. These days, after Milei's win and the concern it generates, we are already seeing many supporters and voters approaching and wanting to join us. We have to encourage that process by actively organizing more activists and placing all our strength into **politically appealing to people to confront Milei and his reactionary program** on the streets, in the October campaign and everywhere.

The MST in the ISL wages this fundamental political battle in defense of the FIT-U and of a comprehensive socialist strategy. We do so for the left to gain a better position from which to face the challenges that the convulsed country we are heading into will bring us. The revolutionary left can do no less than prepare thoroughly for the inevitable class confrontations that are on the horizon. ✊



I ISL Pan-African Congress

Africa is a continent of immense wealth, but it concentrates the most extreme levels of poverty and inequality in the world. The plunder and genocide perpetrated by colonial and imperialist capitalism did not end with the formal independence achieved last century. Multinational corporations, together with a handful of local capitalist associates, continue to accumulate fortunes and plunge the people of the continent into poverty and hunger.

But the African peoples have never accepted domination, they have fought, they are fighting and they will continue to fight heroically for their liberation. In the context of the current global systemic crisis of capitalism, a new generation of revolutionaries has emerged, inspired in particular by the Arab Spring of the past decade.

Our International Socialist League began to connect with them with the incorporation of the Kenyan Revolutionary Socialist League in 2021. Through them, we have established ties with revolutionary organizations in dozens of African countries, with whom we intend to build a continental and global revolutionary organization.

With this objective, the I ISL Pan-African Congress is being held from August 28 to September 1 in Nairobi. Delegates from revolutionary organizations in Nigeria, Western Sahara, Ghana, South Africa, Senegal, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, Tanzania, Kenya, Togo, Le-

sotho, and Swaziland are meeting in Nairobi, and representatives from several other countries are participating online.

The diverse experiences developing in each country are being discussed and progress will be made in the elaboration of a common program and strategy to fight for the definitive liberation of the African peoples from imperialist neocolonialism, to defeat the bourgeoisie and the complicit governments of our countries, and to lead the working masses to power in a united socialist Africa.

We are particularly discussing the situation in West Africa, where a series of coups in Burkina Faso, Mali and most recently Niger have deposed French-controlled regimes and Western imperialism is poised to intervene militarily to recover its dominion. We are developing a revolutionary policy of defense of the right of self-determination of the peoples against imperialist intervention from a position independent of any capitalist regime and imperialist power.

Above all, we are discussing how to build a revolutionary pan-African and internationalist political tool across the continent in the framework of the International Socialist League to fight for a socialist world, together with our class comrades throughout the rest of the planet.

Class brothers and sisters from all Africa, let us unite! We have nothing to lose but our chains. We have, instead, a world to win.