

Unable to See the Wood for the Trees (PTS/FT and China)

Eclectic empiricism and the failure of the PTS/FT to recognize the imperialist character of China

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La Izquierda Diario – the daily internet publication which has been launched by the *Fracción Trotskista* – has recently published an interesting article on China. ¹ The *Fracción Trotskista* is an international organization with the strongest section – the PTS – in Argentina where it has several deputies in national and regional parliaments. Esteban Mercatante, the author of the lengthy article, is a prominent intellectual of the PTS and co-editor of the Economics section of *La Izquierda Diario*. In other words, his article is representative for the analysis of the PTS/FT.

In the following we will critically discuss Mercatante's article mainly for two reasons. First, the rise of China and the accelerating rivalry between Washington and Beijing – the two largest imperialist Great Powers – is one of the key features of the current historic period. A Marxist organization can only find a correct orientation in the current historic period if it accurately understands the China question.

And secondly, the PTS/FT – one of the largest organizations claiming to stand in the tradition of Leon Trotsky and the Fourth International – fails to elaborate such a proper understanding of the China question. It rejects the notion that China is an imperialist power without providing any clear alternative class characterization. It evades clarity hiding behind eclectic empiricism which makes them vulnerable for the danger of opportunist adaption to pro-Chinese social-imperialism – a position enthusiastically advertised by the *Partido Obrero* ², another self-proclaimed Trotskyist organization in Argentina which is a close partner of the PTS within their alliance FIT-U. ³

The Marxist analysis of Chinese imperialism

As Marxists have pointed out since a number of years the rivalry between the Great Powers has become a key issue of the world situation. Since the beginning of the new historic period of capitalist decay in 2008 China and Russia have emerged as new imperialist powers which challenge the long-standing domination of Western imperialism with the U.S. as the absolute hegemon. As a result, the inter-imperialist rivalry is one of the most important lines of contradiction of decaying capitalism in the early 21st century.

In the past decade, the RCIT has analyzed these crucial developments in a number of books, pamphlets and articles. We have elaborated in detail not only the decline of U.S. imperialism but also the rise of China as the second largest imperialist power. This is reflected in China's strong position in most relevant areas like output and production of capitalist value, trade, capital accumulation, foreign investment, global leading corporations, number of billionaires, military strength, etc. ⁴ As a result, the most important feature of the inter-imperialist rivalry is the conflict between the U.S. and China – the two largest Great Powers on this planet. Since the beginning of the trade war in 2018, this conflict has

steadily escalated and has been transformed into a full blown Cold War with protectionist measures, sanctions, military tensions, etc. ⁵

At this point we will not repeat our analysis of these developments rather limit ourselves to brief summarize the programmatic consequences. Clarity in the analysis of the class character of China is not solely a theoretical task. It has profound programmatic consequence since Marxists consider it as it as impermissible to side with any Great Power. It is therefore of utmost importance to recognize the imperialist character of *all* Great Powers involved, i.e. not only of the “old” imperialist states in the West but also of the “new” imperialists in the East. Hence, revolutionaries today must neither side with the U.S., EU and Japan, nor with China and Russia.

The only legitimate strategy of Marxists is the anti-imperialist program of *revolutionary defeatism*. This policy has been initially elaborated by Lenin and the Bolsheviks and was later defended by Trotsky and the Fourth International against the revisionist distortion by Stalinism and opportunist centrism. ⁶ The basic principles of this program have been famously summarized in the slogans “*The Main Enemy is at Home!*” and “*the transformation of the imperialist war into civil war*”. This basically means that revolutionaries must oppose any form of chauvinism, militarism and aggression of *all* imperialist states, that they must refuse to side with *any* Great Power and that they must utilize all difficulties of “their” imperialist government in order to advance the class struggle towards the overthrow of the ruling class. ⁷

The RCIT has emphasized repeatedly that without a proper analysis of the imperialist nature not only of the Western but also of the Eastern Great Power, it is impossible to find a correct orientation in the complex and convulsive world situation which is characteristic for the current historic period. Without such a correct analysis, socialists are doomed to vacillate and to opportunistically adapt to this or that Great Power, i.e. to fall into the trap of social-imperialist policy.

Unfortunately, many self-proclaimed socialists have failed to recognize the emergence of China and Russia as new Great Powers in the past decade. Consequently they are incapable of understanding the imperialist nature of the global rivalry between the U.S., China, Russia, EU and Japan. As we have shown in our works, most Stalinists, left social democrats, Bolivarians and various centrists support – openly or disguised – one or the other Great Power. PODEMOS and the PCE in Spain, SYRIZA in Greece or the French PCF are examples for “socialist” parties serving EU imperialism as part of coalition governments. ⁸ The Russian KPRF, the Venezuelan PSUUV, various Stalinists regime parties in Cuba and Eastern Asia, etc. praise China and Russia as a kind of “anti-imperialist pole”. ⁹ In short, these parties are pro-Western or pro-Eastern social-imperialists. There are also various “Trotskyist” organizations – like the Argentinean PO – which adapt to such reformist positions. ¹⁰

Others, most of them are centrist forces which consider themselves as “Trotskyists”, do not arrive at such tactical conclusions. However, they fail to recognize the imperialist character of China and Russia and shy away from spelling out the necessary strategic conclusions for their program. ¹¹ Which position will they take in the conflict between the imperialist Great Powers? What do they say about the sanctions, the trade war, etc.? What will they say in case of a military conflict let us say in the South China Sea? The answer of these centrists to these most important questions of the current historic period is ... silence.

Problems of the PTS/FT analysis

Esteban Mercatante's article provides a number of facts which demonstrate the rapid rise of China in the past one, two decades. He shows, among others, that China's share of global output, in foreign investment or the number of globally operating Chinese corporations have dramatically increased. He also discusses various problems of China, in particular the lower productivity compared with its Western rivals and its lagging behind in key areas of high-technology.

All this is fine in itself. But what are the conclusions? The title of the lengthy article (more than 4,000 words) is "*China in the World Disorder*". Hence, one could expect to get an answer to the question what exactly is China's place in this world (dis)order. What is the character of China's relationship with the other Great Powers, what is the character of its relationship with countries of the South? However, the author writes many words but fails to give a clear answer to this question which is obviously of utmost importance for any Marxist! Instead, the article limits itself to vague descriptions. The author states: "*This allowed China to be an exceptional case of 'exacerbated unequal and combined development.'*" This is true.¹² But what has been the result of this "*unequal and combined development*"? What is the class character of China today? Is it imperialist, is it a semi-colony, or is it "sub-imperialist"? No answer.

Sometimes, the author suggests that China plays a role which resembles imperialist powers but he refuses to draw such conclusions explicitly. "*Since the 2000s, the Asian giant has made every effort to strengthen the growth of its "national champion" companies. By supporting the expansion of these firms around the world, China increasingly seeks to play the same game the imperialist powers have played in recent decades: the concentration and centralization of capital around the world, which allowed multinational firms to consolidate their dominance of the value chains and take advantage of wage differences and competition between countries to attract capital by lowering taxes and granting other concessions, and thus appropriate a larger share of the surplus value generated around the world.*"

The conclusion of the PTS/FT article is that "*China still has a long way to go*". "*Today, when the United States has been challenging various aspects of the transnational capitalist order it built after the end of World War II (while at the same time retaining any prerogatives that might benefit U.S. companies) as a way to fight more aggressively to sustain its leadership, the challenge is not that China will attack this order but rather that it poses a threat to the position of the United States and other powers. China's goal of continuing to increase its influence and advantages within that order increasingly involves questioning the "exorbitant privileges" of the main power, especially attacking the disproportionate monetary and financial prerogatives the United States maintains. (...) Undoubtedly, China still has a long way to go and will face more resistance from the great powers to any change in the status quo. If there is any doubt about that, the last few years show that this path will be fraught with internal and international upheaval and will inevitably not be a peaceful one. It has been one of the greatest sources of geopolitical tensions in recent times, and will continue to be so even if Trump (the other great disruptor) leaves the scene if he is defeated in November.*"

This conclusion is unclear and this is not accidental. The article confuses two issues which are related to each other but which are definitely not identical. One question is if China can *replace* the U.S. as the hegemonial power. The other question is if China *has already become* an imperialist Great Power. As we have pointed out repeatedly, China could replace the U.S. only if it had become the strongest imperialist power by defeating the old hegemon. In other words, China could become the hegemon

only via another World War with devastating consequences for humanity. Such a scenario is indeed still far away.

However, as we have also emphasized, Marxists don't consider the U.S. to be the *only* imperialist Great Power. Likewise, we reject the Kautskyian notion that the Western imperialist states would constitute a kind of united "ultra-imperialist" bloc. No, there have been always several imperialist powers in the past many decades (e.g. Japan, Germany, France, UK, etc.). More recently, new Great Powers like China and Russia have emerged. (We note in passing that South Korea has also become an imperialist state recently. ¹³)

In fact, there has never been only *one* imperialist power. There always existed *several* Great Powers—stronger and weaker ones, more modern and more backward. Before 1917 there was Britain, Germany, the U.S., but also Russia as a backward power, etc. In the 1930s, Japan – another "backward" imperialist power – challenged the hegemony of the U.S. and UK in Asia. Since the PTS/FT suggests that the lower labor productivity of China would be an argument against its imperialist character, we refer to the fact that in the first half of the 20th century there did also exist several imperialist states with substantially lower labor productivity (e.g. Russia before 1917, Austrian-Hungarian Empire until 1918, Italy, or Japan). ¹⁴

We note, as an aside, that the PTS/FT seems to be even not completely convinced if capitalism as such has been restored in China. At least this is what one has to conclude from a remark in a balance sheet article about the debates on the world situation at the recent FIT-U conference on Latin America and the U.S. In this article, two leading PTS comrades – Christian Castillo and Claudia Cinatti – note: "*We are developing a discussion in the FT-CI about the specific nature of the current Chinese social formation, assuming that it does not seem to us, in principle, that the capitalist restoration process remains unfinished.*" ¹⁵

We can not hide our astonishment about such a discussion. First, it is remarkable (to use a diplomatic word) that the PTS/FT has announced now for a number of years that "*it is discussing the character of China*". In other words, it is discussing and discussing for years but still not able to arrive at definite conclusions! One wonders, if the whole China question is a *philosopher's stone* for the PTS/FT for which it is looking for years but never discovering it!

Anyway, as we have demonstrated in our works, China is characterized since many years by capitalist property relations, forms of exploitation of labor, creation of capitalist value, and the formation of a large bourgeoisie with numerous monopolies at the top. It's capitalist character can remain obscure only for those who *identify* capitalism as a social formation with the specific model of neo-liberalism. But neoliberalism is only *one of several forms* of the capitalist mode of production. Marxists, however, have always recognized that state capitalism is also a form of capitalism. In fact, state-capitalism (or state-monopoly capitalism as Lenin also called it) has played a central role in the 1930s during the period of depression. Likewise, we see currently a growing number of bourgeois economists in the West who, impressed by China's success, advocate an abandonment of neo-liberalism and a turn to forms of state-capitalist etatism. ¹⁶

“China can never become imperialist before a world war?” Really?

The evasiveness of the PTS/FT is not accidental but deliberate. We see this in various documents of that organization dealing with this issue. Again and again, the PTS/FT denies not only the imperialist character of China (as well as of Russia). It even denies that Russia and China have “*yet seen the consolidation of a capitalist class*”. Most importantly, it excludes the possibility that China could become imperialist without *first* defeating the U.S. in a military confrontation. This is the position adopted at the last international congress of the FT in 2018:

*“In recent years, China’s imperialist tendencies have deepened (...) In short, China is not currently disputing the global leadership of the United States, which will continue to be the main imperialist power in the coming years. China’s per capita GDP is still very low (...) On a military level, although China is modernizing its armed forces, the disparity continues to be overwhelming, even in the technological sphere. Furthermore, due to the particularities of capitalist restoration, neither China nor Russia have yet seen the consolidation of a capitalist class, and the role of the state continues to prevail in both countries. However, China is too big, too self-sufficient and too well-financed to succumb to direct economic pressure by the US or a group of imperialist powers. The tensions in the current relationship between the US and China emerge from, on the one hand, the difficulties China faces in freeing itself from the constraints imposed by its attempts to extend imperialist domination on a world scale; and, on the other hand, the difficulties faced by the US in attempting to subjugate the Chinese state, which has grown significantly stronger since it suffered the brutal imperialist oppression of the mid-19th century to the mid-20th century. This fraught relationship of codependency lies at the heart of the the neoliberal, globalizing consensus, which is running out of steam. (...) This has shown that a “peaceful route” to China’s imperialist development is impossible.”*¹⁷

The essential conclusions of this document are simply wrong and lack logic. In fact, as we have shown many times, China has the largest or second largest – depending on the counting methods – number of billionaires as we as of capitalist corporations in the world. Well, you cannot “consolidate” much more as a capitalist class! (See Table 1 and 2)

Table 1. Top 10 Countries with the most Fortune Global 500 Companies (2020)¹⁸

Rank	Country	Companies	Share (in %)
1	China (without Taiwan)	124	24.8%
2	United States	121	24.2%
3	Japan	53	10.6%
4	France	31	6.2%
5	Germany	27	5.4%
6	United Kingdom	22	4.4%
7	South Korea	14	2.8%
8	Switzerland	14	2.8%
9	Canada	13	2.6%
10	Netherlands	13	2.6%

Table 2. The Millionaires and Billionaires by Country, 2018 ¹⁹

Country	Wealth Range (in Million US-Dollar)					
	1-5m	5-10m	10-50m	50-100m	100-500m	500+m
United States	14,520,885	1,855,679	902,736	50,144	19,253	1,144
China	3,094,768	235,858	132,701	10,113	5,690	708
Japan	2,627,845	125,377	51,947	2,478	1,027	71
United Kingdom	2,247,529	124,244	56,535	3,125	1,422	117
Germany	1,985,627	127,157	63,678	4,078	2,042	203
France	2,002,967	99,252	42,117	2,087	886	64

Even more wrong is the statement that China could not become imperialist *before* waging war against the largest Great Power on the planet. Why should this be the case?! Neither Germany, Japan nor any other country had *first* to wage a major war against Britain or the U.S. *before* they did become imperialist. In fact, any new power would hardly risk a war against the imperialist hegemon if it would not have already developed sufficient strength before as an economic and military power!

At the same time, the PTS/FT leaders are intelligent empiricists so they recognize that China is rising as a power. Hence, they are ready to accept the empirical data documenting China's rise. They are even prepared to accept that there are certain "*imperialist tendencies*" in China. However, they refuse to draw the necessary conclusions. They say that China is not an imperialist power. But what is it? Is it a semi-colony? Is it a sub-imperialist power (as other socialist organizations wrongly claim)? ²⁰ The PTS/FT is silent on this crucial issue! They recognize the trees but they don't see the wood!

Why is this silence so dangerous? As we mentioned above, theoretical clarity in the analysis of the class character of China is the precondition to elaborate a correct programmatic approach in the face of the Great Power rivalry. The RCIT's recognition of the imperialist character of the Great Powers in the West as well as in the East allows us to advance the Leninist position of revolutionary defeatism against all these imperialist rivals. Recognizing the imperialist character of only the "old" Great Powers (U.S., EU and Japan) but not of the new ones in the East, inevitable pushes socialists objectively into the camp of pro-Chinese and Russian social-imperialism. True, the PTS/FT has not spelled out this consequence (in contrast to the PO, its partner within the FIT-U). But their dangerous silence on the issue of the class character of China opens the door to such a capitulation.

At this point, it is worth referring to an interesting discussion at the recent FIT-U conference. In the debate Miguel Sorans – a central leader of the UIT-CI – explained that his organization raises the slogan "*Down with the Chinese capitalist dictatorship*". He noted that, in contrast, the PTS and PO do not raise such a slogan. He asked the present leaders of the PO and the PTS to explain why they are not doing so. They avoided giving an answer. ²¹ In the case of the PO the reason is pretty obvious. As we have shown in several above-mentioned documents, they are undisguised and proud pro-Chinese and Russian social-imperialists. In contrast, and fortunately, the PTS is not. But their refusal to raise the slogan "*Down with the Chinese capitalist dictatorship*" could be an indication that they are open to follow the PO's shameful path towards social-imperialism.

There are also other hints which reflect the potential danger of pro-Chinese social-imperialism in the logic of the PTS/FT position. Jimena Vergara, one of their leaders, said the following in a speech at the FIT-U conference which recently took place. She (rightly) recognized the importance of the Cold War

between the U.S. and China: *"The most strategic aspect of this agenda from the point of view of the interests of U.S. imperialism is the confrontation with China that is being hailed as a 'new cold war.'"* However, she characterized this conflict as follows: *"Likewise, both U.S. parties are on the same page concerning the task of preserving the global leadership of the United States and sending China back to the status of a subordinated nation, an issue in which they have so far failed."* ²²

So if the PTS/FT emphasizes that China is not a imperialist power and if they characterize the Cold War as an attempt of the U.S. to *"send China back to the status of a subordinated nation"*, there can be only one conclusion: that the whole conflict would objectively reflect the struggle of China against its impending suppression as a semi-colony by U.S. imperialism. If this really would be the case, could one arrive to any other conclusion than that it would be the duty of socialists to side with China against the U.S. in this conflict?!

Another hint that the PTS/FT is prone for pro-Chinese social-imperialism is the following statement in the above-mentioned balance sheet article about the debates at the recent FIT-U conference on Latin America and the U.S. In this article the PTS/FT state not only that it does not characterize *"China as just another imperialist country"* but they also indicate, albeit algebraically, the possible conclusion from this for their tactics. They explicitly reject the idea the PTS/FT would take a defeatist position in a military conflict between the U.S. and China. *"This, however, does not imply that we define China as just another imperialist country or that in the event of war with the United States, the position should be one of "defeatism" on both sides equally, but rather that the confrontation should be seen specifically."* ²³

If the position in the war between the U.S. and China is not defeatism concerning the latter, which position would the PTS/FT leadership take instead? Well, for Marxists there is only one alternative to defeatism, and this is *"defensism"*, in other words, defending China against the U.S. Again, we see that while the PTS/FT leadership does not openly arrive to pro-Chinese social-imperialist positions, the objective logic of its whole analysis pushes it into such a direction.

Lacking concepts and categories is tantamount to lacking science

As we have shown, the PTS/FT leadership refuses to give a clear characterization to China. In numerous documents over a number of years, it has claimed that China is not imperialist without providing a positive answer, i.e. it has not said what it is. The PTS/FT might say that China is in a process of transition and that it is not possible to give it a clear designation. But China did become imperialist already a decade ago! For years, the PTS/FT leadership has avoided to provide a clear class characterization. How long does the PTS/FT leadership feel incapable to arrive at a conclusion?! And as we have shown above, it effectively denies the possibility that China could become an imperialist power *before* a major war with the U.S. Since such a war is unlikely to start in the near future, this could mean that the PTS/FT leadership will continue to refuse any clear statement about China's class character for another period of years!

Such confusion is totally incompatible with a scientific, Marxist approach! In fact, the PTS/FT leadership's confusion, its limitation to description of a phenomenon instead of characterizing its essence, rather represents a capitulation to eclectic empiricism. It is a way of thinking which is influenced by bourgeois post-modernism – a thoroughly counterrevolutionary ideology which has

spread at the universities and in intellectual circles in the past decades. Essentially, post-modernism represents an ideological regression, a bourgeois-idealist outlook which refuses the possibility to recognize the objective reality (or it even denies its existence at all). Hence, this trend rejects clear, scientific categories and relativizes everything to subjective perceptions, individualism, isolated examples, etc.²⁴

Naturally, self-proclaimed Marxists like the PTS/FT reject ideologies such as post-modernism. But they are not aware that by allowing confusion and ambiguity on crucial questions for years and years they objectively adapt to the influence of petty-bourgeois post-modernist poison.

All this is thoroughly alien to Marxism! It is impossible to be a Marxist without applying a scientific method which analysis concrete developments in their relationship to each other, viewing them within the totality, and integrating them into a system of thought of interconnected and correlated concepts and categories. Hegel once noted: *"To understand means to express in the form of notions."*²⁵

In fact, as Lenin once stated in his *Notebook on Philosophy*, it is impossible to recognize the objective reality, to make progress in science, *without concepts: "The concept (cognition) reveals the essence (the law of causality, identity, difference, etc.) in Being (in immediate phenomena) — such is actually the general course of all human cognition (of all science) in general."*²⁶

Notions or categories are the language of the method, its mode to express itself. Without clear notions or categories, the scientific method is condemned to silence. But without a scientific method – and for Marxists this means without the method of dialectical materialism – it is impossible to recognize and understand the essence of things and processes. Hegel's famous statement has not lost any relevance: *„The method (...) is therefore soul and substance, and anything whatever is comprehended and known in its truth only when it is completely subjugated to the method“*²⁷

Hence, as Lenin explained, notions are absolutely necessary in order to recognize the essence and the laws of development of the objective reality. *"The formation of (abstract) notions and operations with them already includes idea, conviction, c o n s c i o u s n e s s of the law-governed character of the objective connection of the world. To distinguish causality from this connection is stupid. To deny the objectivity of notions, the objectivity of the universal in the individual and in the particular, is impossible. Consequently, Hegel is much more profound than Kant, and others, in tracing the reflection of the movement of the objective world in the movement of notions. Just as the simple form of value, the individual act of exchange of one given commodity for another, already includes in an undeveloped form all the main contradictions of capitalism, — so the simplest generalisation, the first and simplest formation of notions (judgments, syllogisms, etc.) already denotes man's ever deeper cognition of the objective connection of the world. Here is where one should look for the true meaning, significance and role of Hegel's Logic."*²⁸

A refusal of such a scientific Marxist approach, as we see it in the case of the PTS/FT's approach to Chinese imperialism, means remaining trapped in confusion and eclectic empiricism. Abram Deborin, the leading Soviet philosopher in the 1920s (before the persecution by Stalin's bureaucracy) appropriately called such an approach as *"crawling empiricism"*. We fear that this is also an accurate characterization of the PTS/FT method.

Some “pragmatic” considerations?

It is certainly not only theoretical considerations (or lack of such) which drive the PTS/FT leadership towards refusal to characterize China as imperialist. There exists probably also a pragmatic (to use a polite word) consideration among their leadership given their orientation in Argentina. As it is known the PTS is an important component of the *Frente de Izquierda y de los Trabajadores-Unidad* (Workers' Left Front) – an electoral alliance which includes, in addition to the PTS, the *Partido Obrero* (which was the leading force in the now defunct international organization CRCI), *Izquierda Socialista* (the leading force in the international organization UIT-CI ²⁹) as well as the *Movimiento Socialista de los Trabajadores* (the leading force in the international organization LIS). FIT-U has currently 2 deputies in the national parliament and 20 in regional parliaments. While the FIT-U alliance is principally composed of centrist organizations, recent major capitulations – the vote of its deputies in the regional parliament of Buenos Aires for a pro-Zionist bill ³⁰ and its support for the state-bonapartist lockdown policy ³¹ – are major capitulations of a reformist type.

Since the PTS has become the largest force within this alliance in the last years, it is pushing now for the transformation of this alliance into a single “Trotskyist” party (which they would be able to dominate most likely). The second-largest component of FIT-U is the PO. As mentioned above, this centrist organization sides with the imperialist powers China and Russia. Hence, the PTS/FT leadership might have opportunistic considerations not to elaborate positions which could create “unnecessary obstacles” for uniting with the PO in a single party.

We note in passing that the whole idea of the PTS leadership to build a “Trotskyist” party on a national basis, i.e. without taking into account the key issues of the international class struggle, is in itself something fundamentally alien to the internationalist principles of Marxism. Leon Trotsky who observed a similar approach among various centrist parties in the 1930s (often affiliated to the so-called London Bureau) condemned such a national-centered approach unambiguously: *“Marxist policies ‘in one country’ are as impossible as the construction of a socialist society ‘in one country’ . Any group that attempts to develop a political line confined to national questions is inevitably doomed to sectarian degeneration.”* ³²

In short, building a national party by excluding crucial issues of the international class struggle is a characteristic of national-“Trotskyism”, not of authentic, internationalist Trotskyism.

We hope that the comrades of the PTS/FT will advance in their discussion about their position on China so that they can overcome the current confusion and elaborate a clear Marxist analysis. As the comrades are surely aware themselves, the Cold War between the two largest Great Powers is a crucial issue for Marxists today. Failing on this issue does not only mean to remain trapped in an intellectual cul-de-sac but also opens the road to opportunist adaption towards social-imperialism. We hope that the PTS/FT will soon correct this major mistake!

¹ Esteban Mercatante: China in the World Disorder, 29 July 2020, <https://www.leftvoice.org/china-in-the-world-disorder>; China en el desorden mundial, <https://www.laizquierdadiario.com/China-en-el-desorden-mundial>

² For some critical documents on the PO see e.g. the following documents by Michael Pröbsting: Russia and China: Neither Capitalist nor Great Powers? A Reply to the PO/CRFI and their Revisionist Whitewashing of Chinese and Russian imperialism, 28 November 2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/russia-and-china-neither-capitalist-nor-great-powers-reply-to-po-crfi/>; The Catastrophic Failure of the Theory of “Catastrophism”. On the Marxist Theory of Capitalist Breakdown and its Misinterpretation by the Partido Obrero (Argentina) and its “Coordinating Committee for the Refoundation of the Fourth International”, 27 May 2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/the-catastrophic-failure-of-the-theory-of-catastrophism/>; The New Global Wave of Class Struggles and the Slogan of the Constituent Assembly. How to apply a crucial revolutionary democratic tactic (and how not) – a critique of the opportunist deviations of the Argentine-based PTS/FT and PO/CRFI, 26 November 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/new-global-wave-of-class-struggles-and-slogan-of-constituent-assembly/>; Some Thoughts on the Split in the Argentinean “Partido Obrero”, 10 July 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/split-in-argentinean-partido-obrero/>; Social-Bonapartism in Argentina. The Partido Obrero (Tendencia) of Jorge Altamira supports the State of Emergency, 29 April 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/latin-america/social-bonapartism-in-argentina/>

³ For some RCIT documents concerning FIT-U see e.g. RCIT: An Opportunity To March Forward – An Opportunity Which Should Not Be Missed! Open Letter to all participants of the virtual Latin American and US conference organized by FIT-U (Argentina) on 30 and 31 July and 1 August, 30 July 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/rcit/open-letter-to-all-participants-of-the-virtual-fit-u-conference/>; RCIT: For an International Conference on the Struggle against the Global Capitalist Crisis! Open Letter to the Frente de Izquierda y de los Trabajadores Unidad (FIT-U) in Argentina, 31 March 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/rcit/open-letter-to-fit-u-for-an-international-conference-on-the-struggle-against-the-global-capitalist-crisis/>; Michael Pröbsting: Important Omissions. Some observations on the final unitary resolution of the FIT-U Latin America and U.S conference, 3 August 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/some-observations-on-the-final-unitary-resolution-of-the-fit-u-latinamerica-and-u-s-conference/>.

⁴ On the RCIT’s analysis of China and Russia as Great Powers and the inter-imperialist rivalry see the literature mentioned in the special sub-section on our website: <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/china-russia-as-imperialist-powers/>. In particular we refer to our book by Michael Pröbsting: Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry. The Factors behind the Accelerating Rivalry between the U.S., China, Russia, EU and Japan. A Critique of the Left’s Analysis and an Outline of the Marxist Perspective, RCIT Books, Vienna 2019. The book can be read online or downloaded for free here: <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/anti-imperialism-in-the-age-of-great-power-rivalry/>. See also chapter 10 in our book by Michael Pröbsting: The Great Robbery of the South. Continuity and Changes in the Super-Exploitation of the Semi-Colonial World by Monopoly Capital. Consequences for the Marxist Theory of Imperialism, RCIT Books, Vienna 2013, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/greatrobbery-of-the-south/>; see also Michael Pröbsting: Chinese Imperialism and the World Economy. An Essay published in the second edition of *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Imperialism and Anti-Imperialism* (edited by Immanuel Ness and Zak Cope), Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2020, https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007%2F978-3-319-91206-6_179-1.

⁵ The RCIT's documents on the Global Trade War have been collected at a special sub-page on our website: see <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/collection-of-articles-on-the-global-trade-war/>; our fundamental position has been summarized in a programmatic statement "*Global Trade War: No to Great Power Jingoism in West and East!*" which has been published in 10 languages (in English: <https://www.thecommunists.net/rcit/joint-statement-on-the-looming-global-trade-war/>). The latest RCIT statement is: TikTok, Consulate Closures and the Cold War between the U.S. and China. Socialists must oppose all Great Powers! 10.08.2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/tiktok-consulate-closures-and-the-cold-war-between-the-u-s-and-china/>

⁶ See e.g. G. Zinoviev / V. I. Lenin: Socialism and War (1915); in: LCW Vol. 21, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1915/s-w/index.htm>; Leon Trotsky: War and the Fourth International (1934), in: Trotsky Writings 1933-34, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1934/06/warfi.htm>

⁷ See on this e.g. RCIT: Theses on Revolutionary Defeatism in Imperialist States, 8 September 2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/theses-on-revolutionary-defeatism-in-imperialist-states/>; see also chapters XVI to XX in our book *Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry*.

⁸ See on this e.g. chapter XXIII in our book *Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry* as well as chapter 13 in our book *The Great Robbery of the South*.

⁹ See on this e.g. chapters VIII and XXIV in our book *Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry*.

¹⁰ See on this e.g. chapters IX and XXV in our book *Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry*.

¹¹ See on this e.g. chapters X, XI, XXVII and XXVIII in our book *Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry*

¹² For a discussion of the law of unequal and combined development see e.g. Michael Pröbsting: Capitalism Today and the Law of Uneven Development: The Marxist Tradition and its Application in the Present Historic Period, in: Critique: Journal of Socialist Theory, Volume 44, Issue 4, (2016), <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03017605.2016.1236483>

¹³ See on this e.g. our pamphlet by Michael Pröbsting: South Korea as an Imperialist Power. On the nature of South Korean monopoly capital and the ensuing programmatic tasks of the workers vanguard, December 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/study-on-south-korea-as-an-imperialist-power/>

¹⁴ For a historic analysis see e.g. Michael Pröbsting: Lenin's Theory of Imperialism and the Rise of Russia as a Great Power. On the Understanding and Misunderstanding of Today's Inter-Imperialist Rivalry in the Light of Lenin's Theory of Imperialism, August 2014, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/imperialism-theory-and-russia/>; see also chapter VII ("*Imperialist Great Powers: Some Historical Comparisons*") in our above-mentioned book *Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry*.

¹⁵ Christian Castillo, Claudia Cinatti: Un primer balance de la conferencia virtual de América Latina y EE. UU. Publicamos a continuación un primer balance de la Conferencia Virtual de Latinoamérica y

los Estados Unidos convocada por el Frente de Izquierda Unidad de Argentina, que se realizó entre el 30 de julio y el 1° de agosto., 7 de agosto 2020, <https://www.laizquierdadiario.com/Un-primer-balance-de-la-conferencia-virtual-de-America-Latina-y-EE-UU> (our translation)

¹⁶ We have dealt with this issue most recently in chapter II in our book by Michael Pröbsting: The COVID-19 Global Counterrevolution: What It Is and How to Fight It. A Marxist analysis and strategy for the revolutionary struggle, RCIT Books, April 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/the-covid-19-global-counterrevolution/>.

¹⁷ Trotskyist Fraction – Fourth International: The United States’ Preparation for Conflict Between World Powers, Document of the XI. Conference, 14 May 2018, <https://www.leftvoice.org/the-united-states-preparation-for-conflict-between-world-powers>

¹⁸ Fortune Global 500, August 2020, <https://fortune.com/global500/> (the figures for the share is our calculation)

¹⁹ Credit Suisse Research Institute: Global Wealth Databook 2018, October 2018, p. 125

²⁰ For our criticism of the theory of sub-imperialism we refer readers to Michael Pröbsting: Semi-Colonial Intermediate Powers and the Theory of Sub-Imperialism. A contribution to an ongoing debate amongst Marxists and a proposal to tackle a theoretical problem, 1 August 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/semi-colonial-intermediate-powers-and-the-theory-of-sub-imperialism/>

²¹ Saúl Rocca (Izquierda Socialista): La crisis capitalista y el debate sobre el rol de China, Ago 05, 2020, <http://www.izquierdasocialista.org.ar/2020/index.php/blog/elsocialista/item/17896-la-crisis-capitalista-y-el-debate-sobre-el-rol-de-china>

²² Jimena Vergara: The United States in the Global Crisis: Perspectives for Revolutionary Struggle, 6 August 2020, <https://www.leftvoice.org/the-united-states-in-the-global-crisis-perspectives-for-revolutionary-struggle-organic-crisis-and-unrest-in-the-u-s>

²³ Christian Castillo, Claudia Cinatti: Un primer balance de la conferencia virtual de América Latina y EE (our translation)

²⁴ For an extended Marxist critique of Post-Modernism we refer to an essay which our movement published long time ago: League for a Revolutionary Communist International: Marxism versus Post-Modernism (1997), <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/marxism-versus-post-modernism/>

²⁵ Quoted in V. I. Lenin: Conspectus of Hegel’s Lectures on the History of Philosophy; in: LCW 38, p. 256

²⁶ V. I. Lenin: Plan of Hegel’s Dialectics (Logic) (1914); in: Collected Works Vol. 38, p. 316

²⁷ Hegel’s Science of Logic, translated by A.V. Miller, Humanity Books, New York 1969, p. 826

²⁸ V.I. Lenin: Conspectus of Hegel’s Book the Science of Logic (1914); in: LCW 38, pp. 178-179

²⁹ See on this e.g. RCIT: Summary of our main differences with the UIT-CI, October 2015, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/critique-of-uit-ci/>

³⁰ See e.g. RCIT and CEP: FIT (Argentina): A Scandalous Betrayal of the Heroic Palestinian Masses! 2 July 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/latin-america/fit-argentina-a-scandalous-betrayal-of-the-heroic-palestinian-masses/>

³¹ The RCIT has published more than 50 documents on the COVID-19 crisis (a number of them in several languages). They are all collected at a special page on our website: <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/collection-of-articles-on-the-2019-corona-virus/>. In particular we refer readers to the RCIT Manifesto: COVID-19: A Cover for a Major Global Counterrevolutionary Offensive. We are at a turning point in the world situation as the ruling classes provoke a war-like atmosphere in order to legitimize the build-up of chauvinist state-bonapartist regimes, 21 March 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/covid-19-a-cover-for-a-major-global-counterrevolutionary-offensive/>. In addition, we draw attention to our book by Michael Pröbsting: The COVID-19 Global Counterrevolution: What It Is and How to Fight It. A Marxist analysis and strategy for the revolutionary struggle, RCIT Books, April 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/the-covid-19-global-counterrevolution/>. See also by the same author a new pamphlet as well as an essay: The Second Wave of the COVID-19 Counterrevolution. On the ruling class strategy in the current conjuncture, its inner contradictions and the perspectives of the workers and popular resistance, 20 July 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/the-second-wave-of-the-covid-19-counterrevolution/>; The Police and Surveillance State in the Post-Lockdown Phase. A global review of the ruling class's plans of expanding the bonapartist state machinery amidst the COVID-19 crisis, 21 May 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/police-and-surveillance-state-in-post-lockdown-phase/>. See also RCIT and CEP: The COVID-19 Counterrevolution and the Betrayal of the Lockdown Left, 29 June 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/joint-statement-the-covid-19-counterrevolution-and-the-betrayal-of-the-lockdown-left/>.

³² Leon Trotsky: Unifying the Left Opposition (1930); in: Writings 1930, p. 99, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1930/02/unity.htm>