

In this issue

Since October 7, the Palestinian question has come to the forefront of global politics. The counter-offensive of the Palestinian resistance was followed by a genocidal onslaught by Zionist Israel against the civilian population of Gaza, which in turn met with heroic resistance within the Gaza Strip. A people living in a space no bigger than an average Western city, counting 2 million souls with most of them children, have spent the last two months under the incessant attacks of one of the most well-funded armies on earth, lavishly supplied and encouraged by the imperialist world. Yet the resistance and resilience of Gaza against this ongoing slaughter have been nothing short of historic. Whereas Zionist Israel's list of allies reads as a "who's who" of imperialist countries, it turned out that Palestine, too, had its friends. Neither in the shiny headquarters of an alphabet soup of international institutions nor in the palaces of reactionary Arab regimes, the slogans of freedom chanted in Gaza found their echoes on the streets across the world. In addition to colossal acts of solidarity in the Middle East, North Africa, and almost all predominantly-Muslim countries on earth, one would be hard-pressed to find an imperialist capital that did not witness a mass mobilization in support of Palestine. Popular support across the world and resistance in Palestine – by any means necessary – offer us glimmers of hope in the midst of one of the biggest atrocities of the 21st century.

Accordingly, the 2023 issue of *Revolutionary Marxism* starts with a dossier, particularly close to our hearts and minds, titled "Palestine and Revolutionary Marxism." The dossier consists of three crucial documents. The first two are from 1947, just before the Nakba or the Catastrophe of Palestinian people, and immediately after the infamous partition decision. The first document, published as the editorial of the official French publication of the Fourth International (FI), *Quatrième Internationale*, clearly illustrates the principled stance of the FI, and stands in stark contrast with Stalinist support for the Partition and the creation of the state of Israel. The second, published the same year, is the expression of the same revolutionary Marxist position but this time uttered by the Palestinian section of the FI. The final document is the joint statement by the Christian Rakovsky

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International Socialist Center and the RedMed web network, issued on October 2023 as the irrefutable proof that revolutionary Marxists remain steadfast in their anti-Zionist fight.

2023 was a special year for Turkey. The 100th anniversary of the Turkish Republic coincided with the five-year presidential and general elections, which were characterized by many people as a matter of life and death. The opposition forces were generally optimistic about the results, since the weary Erdoğan was deteriorating in every poll. After 20 years of his rule, the economy was in a very bad shape, inflation had spiralled out of control, prices were increasing almost daily, and the discontent of the masses was evident. The pandemic process of the previous years had caused more than 100 thousand deaths (officially 102.000, but in reality perhaps two or three times this figure). To make matters even worse, a series of earthquakes had hit the mid-Eastern parts of the country in February, affecting more than 10 million people, and killing tens of thousands (the official figure is around 50 thousand, but a more realistic estimate is around 200 thousand or more).

Under the circumstances, one would normally expect the end of an already exhausted reign. Yet Erdoğan managed to continue his presidency, with some decrease in his party's share of the vote, but no significant change in the overall balance of forces. Five years ago, he had won the presidency by an easy 52 per cent in the first round. This time he got 49.5 per cent in the first, and again 52 per cent in the second round.

The results proved the incapacity of the bourgeois opposition. This point is beyond dispute. However, the almost complete submission of the Turkish socialist left to this bourgeois opposition from the start was also remarkable. There was no left candidate for presidency, and only a minority (primarily the Revolutionary Workers' Party) stood for the political independence of the working class. To be sure, there is a long tradition of "sitting on the tail of the bourgeoisie" in the Turkish left, yet this time even the "revolutionary" rhetoric was laid aside. Like the Biden vs. Trump, or Macron vs. Le Pen races, the Kılıçdaroğlu vs. Erdoğan constellation also worked its magic on the so-called "left", which supported a bourgeois leader and programme even in the first round, but to no avail.

Our readers will read the back story and class analysis of these elections in Levent Dölek's article, which is the first one in our dossier on Turkey. The article goes beyond an evaluation of the election results, and by using the elections as a starting point, it reveals the class foundations of the political alignment in Turkey, pointing out a great contradiction: "The economy, which is the main burning and decisive issue for the working people (we can also say the vast majority of the electorate), has been the least debated issue of the election period". The explanation for this situation lies in the reconciliation and even unification of the conflicting camps of the bourgeoisie against the working class. In the article, the fact that socialists, who are supposed to be the representatives of the working class, have joined this bandwagon and stayed as far away from class agendas as the bourgeois parties, is explained by the petty bourgeois class character of most of the socialist movement. Dölek's class analysis demolishes the widespread myth that not supporting Kılıçdaroğlu would help Erdoğan and demonstrates with evidence that,

on the contrary, supporting Kılıçdaroğlu, i.e. the TÜSİAD wing of the bourgeoisie, has helped Erdoğan win the election.

As mentioned above, 2023 marked the 100th anniversary of the Turkish Republic. Our second article by Alp Yücel Kaya, entitled “Bourgeois Revolution in Turkey (1908-1923)”, analyzes the making of bourgeois revolution in Turkey. Kaya argues that although 1908 was the first and 1923 the final stage of this revolution, it is a product of class struggles that spread over an even longer period of time, and which emerged in the process of the development of capitalism. In the article, he therefore discusses the main stages of these struggles and the making of the bourgeois revolutions of 1908 and 1923. Accepting that there are some very competent studies on the question of the bourgeois revolution in Turkey and the revolutions of 1908 and 1923 (those of Hikmet Kıvılcımlı and Sungur Savran) he proceeds through the framework laid out by these studies, but unlike them, he pays more attention to the making of the bourgeoisie, intra-class and inter-class conflicts, and especially to the legal regulations that these conflicts have produced; in other words, he discusses the making of the bourgeois revolution through the making of bourgeois law. He focuses on the making of bourgeois law to reveal better the struggles within the bourgeois class as well as the struggles between classes, and in this way, he develops a different perspective on Turkey’s long bourgeois revolution.

The submission of the Turkish “left” to the political guidance of the bourgeoisie is not an accident, nor this tendency is limited to the Turkish case. Indeed, this is a global problem with deep roots in the class composition produced by contemporary capitalism.

Our second dossier in this issue is on the class structure of modern capitalist societies. In the first article of the dossier, Özgür Öztürk examines a critical issue that is not often discussed among socialists. He re-evaluates the theoretical and practical aspects of the phenomenon of labor aristocracy, which is an objective obstacle to revolutionary aspirations, especially in imperialist countries. According to Öztürk, the labor aristocracy thesis in its original form in Marx and Engels actually includes two interrelated phenomena. One is the “labor aristocracy”; the split in the working class, the privileged upper layer(s) of this class socially and politically “arm in arm” with the petty bourgeoisie. The other is the “embourgeoisement” of the entire working class in the context of colonialism-imperialism; the workers of the oppressor nation moving closer (again, both socially and politically) to the bourgeoisie. These two phenomena make it necessary to address the stratification within the working class in both its national and international dimensions.

Öztürk then evaluates Lenin’s concept of labor aristocracy and argues that the two dimensions of Marx and Engels are combined in Lenin. More specifically, Lenin does not speak about the “embourgeoisement” of all workers in the core countries, but rather of the bribery of some of them through imperialist surplus profits. Throughout the twentieth century, various Marxists have criticized this approach, claiming that the workers in the core countries as a whole constitute a reformist aristocracy. In a comprehensive assessment, Öztürk critically analyzes the interpretations of writers ranging from Tony Cliff to Herbert Marcuse, and from Third Worldists to Western Marxists such as Mark Neocleous and Charles Post.

After this theoretical-critical tour d'horizon, Öztürk discusses the question of how to think about the labor aristocracy today. By evaluating issues such as the labor aristocracy, labor bureaucracies, trade unions, and social democracy from a historical perspective, he tries to develop some original formulations. He then examines, using concrete data, the stratification of the world working class today, the evolution of the traditional labor aristocracies, and the new sections of the labor aristocracy. In this context, he pays particular attention to the position of public sector workers. In the most general terms, he discusses the possibilities for revolutionary struggle created by the weakening of the traditional labor aristocracies in the core countries in the neoliberal period.

In the second article of the dossier, Sungur Savran takes up the question of the division of society into the different classes in a typical capitalist country of the early 21st century, whether of the imperialist type or those countries that are described as “emerging” or “middle-income”. Apart from the major classes of capitalist society, the capitalist class and the proletariat, Savran dwells carefully on the state bureaucracy as a category on its own. Turning to the petty-bourgeoisie, he draws a distinction between the traditional petty-bourgeoisie, i.e. the small peasant, the artisan and the petty tradesman, and the modern petty-bourgeoisie, that is to say the entire set of professions in which highly-educated and highly-skilled individuals run small businesses of their own, pharmacies, doctors' cabinets, vet clinics, small software companies etc. Savran attributes great importance to this class together with its “soul mate”, the highly-educated semi-proletariat. He thinks these two strata, often in collusion culturally and politically, are a new force in capitalist society to be reckoned with and should be studied very carefully. Savran goes through many other strata such as the workers' aristocracy and the workers' bureaucracy, the lumpen proletariat, the urban poor, as well as two of the non-class groups in modern society, the intellectuals and students. He ends up stressing that the constitutive locus for class is neither the family nor the neighborhood, but the workplace. So the organizing of the proletariat should attribute a special priority to the workplace.

Our last dossier on this issue covers the recent political developments by focusing on important political developments that unfolded in France.

Hasan Refik's article focuses on the revolt of the urban poor that shook France to its core. The article initially delves into the context of the revolt and analyzes the recent years in France, marked by the rise of both fascism and working-class militancy. Refik argues that France has reached a critical turning point that could potentially change the political landscape of Europe, although foreseeing which side will prevail is a challenging task.

Following this general context, the article offers an analysis of the state, bourgeoisie, and various reactionary forces. He points out that the cracks within the French state have become more pronounced in the wake of the rebellion, and French President Emmanuel Macron has found himself mired in a struggle for hegemony, particularly to maintain control over the police apparatus. Then, Refik observes the peculiarities of the trajectory of French (and Italian) fascism. Hasan Refik, while discussing the growth of fascist organizations hand in hand with proto-

fascist parties, concludes that the uneasy alliance between these two forces could be one of the determining factors in the future development of fascism.

The final part of the article is dedicated to assessing the performance of the French left during the uprising. Our comrade draws attention to the exceptional role played by Jean-Luc Mélenchon, highlighting that French organizations rooted in the revolutionary Marxist tradition have wasted invaluable 18 years since 2005, dooming them to irrelevancy during the revolt this summer.



A 2023 poster by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the socialist resistance movement that is fighting against the Zionist entity in Gaza today, along with other Palestinian factions. The Arabic text reads: “We are carrying our revolution forward to victory”.

Artist: Guevara Abed Al Qader

Source: <https://www.palestineposterproject.org/posters/forward-victory>