

Greetings from the ICFI to the SEP (US) 2022 Congress

# The Theory of Permanent Revolution in Turkey and throughout the world

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*These remarks were delivered by Ula? Ate?çi to the Seventh National Congress of the Socialist Equality Party (US), held from July 31 to August 5, 2022.*

*Ate?çi is a leading member of the Sosyalist E?itlik Grubu (Socialist Equality Group, SEG) in Turkey. On June 19, the International Committee of the Fourth International unanimously approved the application of the SEG to be its section in Turkey.*

*Read the full report on the Congress and the resolutions adopted at it.*

On behalf of the Sosyalist E?itlik Grubu (Socialist Equality Group) in Turkey, I am very glad to have the opportunity to participate in this Congress. I think I can say that the most distinctive feature of the Congress is its historically based, international character. It is clearly devoted to the development of a revolutionary vanguard that will lead the working class to take power.

Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to personally meet Comrade Wije Dias, whom we lost last week. After this great loss, the world Trotskyist movement, which he devoted his life to building, honored and will continue to honor Comrade Wije adequately. It is not necessary to personally meet him in order to see and be educated by the contribution of this great revolutionary to the international struggle for socialism.

Comrade Wije and the Sri Lankan section of the ICFI as a whole have made a tremendous contribution to the development of the Trotskyist movement in Turkey and internationally.

Sri Lanka and Turkey have many differences, but also many similarities. In these countries, both with belated capitalist development, the entire last century has witnessed repeated vindication of the Theory of Permanent Revolution elaborated by Leon Trotsky: The inability of the bourgeoisie to fulfill basic democratic tasks, especially the national question (the Tamil and Kurdish questions) and to ensure independence from imperialism; these tasks can only be fulfilled if the proletariat, united across ethnic and communal divisions, rallying all the oppressed masses behind it, takes power as part of the international struggle for socialism. I think this fundamental concept is clearly expressed and developed in party's call "For a Democratic and Socialist Congress of Workers and Rural Masses in Sri Lanka."

The opposition of the young Sri Lankan Trotskyists to the great betrayal of 1964, their principled advocacy of the revolutionary socialist unity of the working class and their defense of the oppressed Tamil people without any concessions to nationalism, and their carrying forward of the perspective of Permanent Revolution, played a critical role in the development of our group and in our assimilation and adoption of the historical foundations and perspective of the ICFI.

As you all know, this development reached an important milestone last June. The approval of the SEG's application to join the ICFI, following an

IC delegation's visit to Istanbul, represents a major step towards the establishment of the SEP in Turkey. But more importantly it points to the global expansion of the ICFI and the growing objective importance of the subjective factor in the developing world socialist revolution, confirming our analysis of the fifth stage of the Trotskyist movement, as discussed from the beginning of the Congress.

This expansion is not based on unprincipled and pragmatist calculations on national grounds, but on the very solid international historical foundations and political principles of the Trotskyist movement.

Before the October Revolution of 1917, when Lenin prepared the Bolshevik Party for the uprising and warned that missing the right moment to take power would be fatal for the Russian and world socialist revolution, he emphasized that all the objective conditions for revolution were ripe. This included the European revolution as well as the political consciousness of the masses of workers and poor peasants. The masses were ready for socialist revolution, but it required a Marxist party.

Today, under conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic, the growing danger of a nuclear third world war, the ruling class's drive towards fascism and authoritarian dictatorships, the rising cost of living and social inequality, and the growing movement of the international working class, we are witnessing the maturation of a worldwide revolutionary crisis. And we rightly point out the divergence between the maturity of the objective conditions and the immaturity of political consciousness and organization of the masses.

As the New Year statement explained, however, "the interaction of the objective and subjective factors is complex. 'Society does not change its institutions as need arises, the way a mechanic changes his instruments,'" Trotsky explained in his monumental *History of the Russian Revolution*.

Entirely exceptional conditions, independent of the will of persons and parties, are necessary in order to tear off from discontent the fetters of conservatism and bring the masses to insurrection.

The swift changes of mass views and moods in an epoch of revolution thus derive, not from the flexibility and mobility of man's mind, but just the opposite, from its deep conservatism.

I think we are increasingly living through such "entirely exceptional conditions" globally. There is no doubt that the ICFI is the only political tendency capable of raising and fighting to raise the political consciousness and organization of the working masses worldwide to the level required for socialist revolution. The fact that we are the only movement that fights against the pandemic, the danger of world war, the

drive towards fascism from the socialist point of view of the international working class. And we are the only movement that provides an independent revolutionary political program and organization to the developing movement of the working class. I think these prove this fact undeniably. I must add that Comrade Will Lehman's internationally significant campaign is the most conscious political expression of a growing rank-and-file movement of the international working class against the corporatist unions and capitalism.

As Trotsky wrote in his 1928 *Critique of the Draft Program of the Communist International*:

The revolutionary party of the proletariat can base itself only upon an international program corresponding to the character of the present epoch, the epoch of the highest development and collapse of capitalism. An international communist program is in no case the sum of national programs or an amalgam of their common features. The international program must proceed directly from an analysis of the conditions and tendencies of the world economy and of the world political system taken as a whole in all its connections and contradictions, that is, with the mutually antagonistic interdependence of its separate parts. In the present epoch, to a much larger extent than in the past, the national orientation of the proletariat must and can flow only from a world orientation and not vice versa.

What political tendency in the world, other than the ICFI and its sections, can seriously claim to have this uniquely Marxist approach?

The resolutions submitted to Congress are concrete and powerful examples of the Trotskyist analysis and perspective on the most critical problems facing the American and international working class. And indeed, these documents can be adapted to any country with the necessary changes.

Although Turkish President Erdoğan's government declared the pandemic is over a few months ago, it did not take long for objective scientific facts to expose the class-based and criminal political lies. According to the very limited official data released for the week leading up to July 24, the average number of daily cases has exceeded 50,000. Public health specialists in Turkey say that we have entered the worst period of the pandemic and they estimate that the actual number of daily infections could be ten times higher amid no widespread testing or contact tracing.

Despite this mass infection and death policy of the ruling class continues, in Turkey, as in the US and the rest of the world, the only political tendency advocating a global elimination policy to end the pandemic is still the ICFI. As for the pseudo-left forces, they are competing with the far right in ignoring the pandemic.

Ankara has been seeking to play a mediating role since the beginning of the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine. But as Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu himself exposed, the NATO powers want to prolong the war, not end it, and to weaken and replace the Putin regime for in order to fully subjugate Russia.

Ankara's effort to secure a peace or ceasefire agreement in Ukraine does not, of course, mean that the Erdoğan government has a principled opposition to the war. Rather, this policy stems from its fear of the potentially dangerous consequences of the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine for Turkish ruling class.

The very same Erdoğan government withdrew its veto threat against Sweden and Finland's NATO membership after various negotiations. In Iraq, operations against the outlawed Kurdish nationalist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) guerillas and the deaths of Iraqi civilians last

month have escalated tensions between Ankara and Baghdad, while Erdoğan is preparing to launch a military operation against the US-backed, PKK-linked People's Protection Units (YPG) in Syria.

In both countries, which have been destroyed by the imperialist powers and their regional allies like Turkey over the last three decades, Ankara is trying to prevent the emergence of a Kurdish enclave led by the PKK-YPG, while at the same time trying to deflect rising class tensions at home by promoting militarism and nationalism.

While the Erdoğan government resorts to war and the legal Kurdish nationalist Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) calls for renewed "peace negotiations" between the Turkish state and the PKK, the Kurdish issue, an international question more than a century old, has no nationally based bourgeois solution.

As in Sri Lanka, the only way forward in Turkey and the Middle East is for workers of all ethnicities to unite in the struggle for a Socialist Federation across the region that will abolish borders and implement basic democratic rights, as part of the world socialist revolution.

The Erdoğan government's policies of war and anti-democratic repression are unfolding against a backdrop of rising living costs and growing working class anger and militancy. Official annual inflation has reached 80 percent (a rate higher than in Sri Lanka), while 90 percent of the population is estimated to live below the poverty line. Indeed, the Turkish bourgeoisie is sitting on a social powder keg.

Haunted by the specter of Sri Lanka and fearing a major social explosion, the Turkish government therefore declared on July 9 that it was "concerned" about developments in Sri Lanka.

As wildcat strike activity escalated in Turkey in 2022, national strikes by health workers were witnessed almost every month. Anger at the government's policies in favor of finance capital and growing impoverishment of millions is turning into outbursts against the pro-corporate unions. Just today, Salcomp Xiaomi workers in Istanbul occupied the factory against the layoff attack carried out by the company and the union together.

In these conditions, the pseudo-left forces are trying to subordinate the growing working class movement to the unions and the capitalist political establishment. They argue that the only way forward is next year's presidential and parliamentary elections and that the pro-NATO bourgeois opposition front against Erdoğan must be supported. We, on the other hand, strongly reject this nationalist and class collaborationist outlook of the pseudo-left and seek to provide the vanguard of the working class an independent and international socialist perspective.

The establishment of the Socialist Equality Party as a section of the ICFI in Turkey, a country at the center of geopolitical conflicts and on the brink of major class battles, will be a crucial step forward. Its greatest strength and ability to lead the revolutionary struggles ahead will be based on the fact that it is an integral part of the ICFI, and it is built entirely on the history, principles and perspectives of the world Trotskyist movement.



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