



Dear friends of the IFDDR and the Zetkin Forum,

On 13 and 14 November, the Global South Academic Forum met for the third time in Shanghai, China. Organised by East China Normal University (ECNU), the University of Johannesburg and the Tricontinental Institute for Social Research, the forum brought together over 200 academics and media professionals from 29 countries to discuss current challenges in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Since 2023, the forum has aimed to promote exchange and knowledge production beyond Western hegemonic claims.

The main focus of this year's conference was the increasing aggressiveness of the US towards the Global South. The Trump administration's attacks on Venezuelan ships and its support for the ethnic cleansing of the Gaza Strip show how far the US is willing to go when it uses its military power. At the same time, the trade war has revealed how Trump intends to use US economic superiority to subjugate countries in the Global South.

One of the most recent examples, which was hotly debated at the conference, is the new trade agreement between Malaysia and the US, which was signed in October. To prevent US tariffs on Malaysian goods from being raised above 19 per cent, Malaysia has agreed to purchase US aircraft, gas and machinery, comply with Washington's digital regulations and grant privileged access to rare minerals. The country has thus 'completely surrendered its sovereignty,' as John Pang of the Belt and Road Initiative Caucus for Asia Pacific denounced.



Conference participants agreed that the response to such aggression must lie in strengthening unity in the Global South. Professor Li Shenming of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) emphasised that today, 'hegemonic politics and emerging fascism' pose the greatest threat to peace and progress in the world.

On the occasion of the 80th anniversary of liberation from fascism, this year's Global South Academic Forum focused on commemorating the World Anti-Fascist War (as it is known in China). Collective consciousness surrounding the Second World War has long been shaped by Hollywood films. Even in the Global South, many people think primarily of American GIs or British Tommies as liberators. Western history books cite 1939 as the start of the Second World War, even though Japanese aggression against China began as early as 1931. As we reported in our newsletter at the beginning of the year, we are also seeing new attempts in the European Union to rewrite history and declare the Soviet Union an accomplice in the Second World War rather than a victim of fascism.

As the Zetkin Forum, we were invited to speak about the increasing historical revisionism in Europe. In our presentation, we addressed the latest resolutions in the EU Parliament and the demolition of monuments to the Red Army, describing these as measures of ideological war preparation in NATO countries. By rewriting history, the aim is to reinforce the false threat narrative about 'the Russians' and prepare the population for war. Standing up for peace therefore requires fighting against historical amnesia.



A new empirical study by the Tricontinental Institute, which was presented at the conference, serves precisely this purpose. The study, entitled '[The 80th Anniversary of Victory in the World Anti-Fascist War – Understanding Who Saved Humanity](#),' provides a

comprehensive and data-based overview of developments surrounding the Second World War. It shows in detail how Western states deliberately pursued delaying tactics to enable imperialist Japan and fascist Germany to attack the socialist USSR and national liberation movements:

*The timeline of Western betrayal speaks for itself. From 1931 to 1941, as Japan carved up China, Western banks maintained their offices in Tokyo, Western oil fuelled Japanese warships, and Western scrap metal became Japanese bullets.<sup>3</sup> When full-scale invasion erupted in 1937 – the Rape of Nanjing, the terror bombing of Chinese cities – the Allied imperialists’ response was to sell more oil to Japan. The US provided 80% of Japan’s petroleum until 1941.*

*This was not isolation but calculated provision – fascism executing what the failed White Encirclement could not accomplish. By 1941, 250 US corporations operated in Nazi Germany. Thomas Watson of IBM automated the Holocaust while maintaining personal friendships with both US President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Secretary of State Cordell Hull. General Motors’ German subsidiary Opel produced Wehrmacht trucks until 1944, with GM later claiming a \$22.7 million tax write-off for its ‘abandoned’ Nazi operations. The US continued strategically to be economically, politically, and militarily committed to the destruction of the Soviet Union.*

With well-founded data, the [study](#) also refutes many myths propagated by Western historians about the inferiority of communist forces and clearly shows that the Soviet and Chinese peoples bore the greatest responsibility for the victory over fascist Germany and imperialist Japan:

*By the war’s end, Soviet offensives routinely destroyed entire German army groups across thousand-mile fronts. The same army that collapsed in 1941 was by 1944 conducting operations of complexity and scale that no capitalist military could match.*

*This was not heroism alone, but the fusion of Marxist science with mass creativity. Where capitalist armies preserved professional forces, the Soviet system mobilised everyone. By 1942, women in the Red Army numbered 800,000. By 1945, there were 246,000 women in uniform on the front line – snipers, pilots, tank crews, not just nurses. Partisan warfare tied down 500,000 German troops with locally organised forces; approximately 205,600 partisans were organised behind German lines by 1 July 1944. Despite losing most of its prewar industrial base, the USSR outproduced Germany in every category that mattered: 112,100 combat aircraft to Germany’s 89,500. Of Germany’s 3–3.5 million military deaths, 2.6–3.1 million died fighting the Red Army; of their 11.1 million total casualties, 9 million came on the Eastern Front. From 1941 to 1942, Germany had to deploy 72–80% of its entire military strength along this 3,000-kilometre front – and lost them there. While the Allied imperialists faced 54 German divisions on D-Day, the Red Army was simultaneously dismantling and destroying 156½ divisions in the East.*

*Meanwhile, Chinese innovation overcame the Japanese superiority in arms. The CPC transformed China's weakness into strength. Its Eighth Route Army and New Fourth Army tied down 60% of Japanese forces through guerrilla warfare. Its 'comprehensive resistance' turned every farmer into a supplier, every worker into a saboteur, every student into an organiser.*

We are currently working on a German translation of the study so that its findings can be brought into the public debate here in Europe – get in contact if you'd like to help us with the translation! Write us at [contact@zetkin-forum.org](mailto:contact@zetkin-forum.org).

## Conference of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation Brandenburg: 'Discharged. Debates on militarisation, conscription, and imperialism'

On 21 and 22 November, the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation Brandenburg organised a conference in Potsdam entitled '*ausgemustert. Debatten über Militarisierung, Wehrpflicht und Imperialismus*' (Discharged: Debates on Militarisation, Conscription, and Imperialism). The Zetkin Forum was invited to participate in the panel discussion 'NATO as a warmongering peacekeeping force?' The discussion focused on assessing and evaluating the role and history of NATO and the current shifts in the world order.



Based on Tricontinental's publication '[Hyper-Imperialism](#),' we have pointed to the genesis of imperialism centred on the United States. Six hundred years of (settler) colonialism, the extermination of indigenous peoples, the slave trade and racism are inscribed in imperialism and form the basis for the continuity from the colonial system to fascism to genocide in Gaza. Between 1776, the year of independence from Great Britain, and 2019, the US has been at war or involved in conflicts for 228 out of 245 years, spending only 17 years in 'peace'.

Under US leadership, NATO has been integrated into a global structure that can also draw on the more than 900 US military bases as strongholds of its hegemony. **NATO, 'the most dangerous organisation in the world'** is the title of the [dossier](#) on the military alliance published in June by Tricontinental and Zetkin Forum. The quote from George Kennan, the Truman administration's senior foreign policy adviser, succinctly summed up NATO's purpose one year before its founding in 1948, which remains valid to this day:

*We have about 50% of the world's wealth, but only 6.3% of its population. (...) Our real task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships which will permit us to maintain this position of disparity without positive detriment to our national security.*

We warmly recommend reading the dossier on [NATO](#), as well as the brochure on [Hyper-Imperialism](#). Both are also available in German. We would like to thank the RLS Brandenburg for inviting us to this important and exciting conference. The audio recordings of the panel discussions are to be published on their website.

## „Every Artist Must Take Sides“

On the 3rd of November, the IFDDR was invited to lead a workshop on Paul and Eslanda Robeson and their relationship to the GDR for students of the Theodor Heuss School in Berlin. The workshop took place alongside the ongoing exhibition on Paul and Eslanda Robeson, titled [“Every Artist Must Take Sides.”](#)

Paul Robeson (1898–1976) was a world-renowned singer and actor, and one of the most famous figures of his time. Together with his wife, Eslanda Robeson (1895–1965), an author and anthropologist who travelled extensively, they dedicated their lives to fighting racism and discrimination. In doing so, they also maintained a staunchly pro-Soviet stance, consistently asserting that the only solution to racism in the United States was socialism. This conviction brought the Robesons into the crossfire of McCarthyism and they were subjected to many repressive measures.

Nonetheless, the Robesons travelled frequently to both the Soviet Union and the GDR. In fact, they chose the GDR as the home for their archive, which was housed at the Akademie der Künste der DDR (Academy of Arts) and is still located there today. Together with students from the Arts Intensive Course of the Theodor Heuss Gesamtschule, we explored why the Robesons chose the GDR as the place to store their archival materials. We also examined common misconceptions the students held about the GDR and discussed Paul Robeson's views on socialism, internationalism and the arts.



*Paul Robeson was accepted as a corresponding member of the Academy of Arts of the German Democratic Republic in 1960. Source: Wikimedia Commons, Federal Archives, image 183-76851-0001 / CC-BY-SA 3.0.*

We emphasized the importance of verifying information independently and engaging with archival material, and we presented several archival materials from our own collection. Finally, the students drew parallels between Robeson's time and the present, noting the persistence of racism, for example through Friedrich Merz's racist remarks about the "cityscape", ICE raids in the US, police violence, and many other issues. We concluded that racism endures because capitalism endures, and that overcoming racism ultimately requires overcoming capitalism.

We hope to have the opportunity to get in conversation with students again in the future!

The exhibition can be visited until 24.01.2026 – further information [here](#).

## Support the work of the Zetkin Forum

The work of the Zetkin Forum and the IFDDR is only possible through donations. We appreciate any support that helps us to continue our scientific work in these difficult times and to make it available to the public, whether through our website, events or printed brochures – every contribution helps!

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Warm greetings,  
Your team at the IFDDR and the Zetkin Forum