

SECTION X: DISCUSSIONS, DEBATES, HISTORICAL CONTROVERSIES

European Parliament Adopts Resolution Condemning Communism

On the 80th anniversary of the Hitler-Stalin-Pact, the European Parliament adopted a controversial resolution on the initiative of the conservative European People's Party alliance. The resolution "On the Importance of European Remembrance for the Future of Europe" deals with the dangers of historical revisionism in general, condemning the rise of xenophobic and racist parties and movements as well as the glorification of Nazi collaborators in several European countries and the tendencies of Stalinist revisionism in contemporary Russia. At the same time, however, in the vein of totalitarianism theory, it systematically equals in several paragraphs Nazism and communism as such, without explicitly highlighting the crimes of Stalinism, as criticized by several European political forces such as the DiEM25 party. The text of the resolution can be consulted at http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2019-0021_EN.html.

"Trotsky": Controversial Russian TV Series

In 2017, the Russian state TV channel "Pervyi Kanal" released an 8-episode series dedicated to Lev Trotsky, one of the leaders of the October Revolution and most vocal critic of Stalinism. Directed by Aleksandr Kott, and featuring Russian star actor Konstantin Khabenskii playing the title role, the series enhances the basic outline of Trotsky's life with numerous fictitious plotlines and portrays Trotsky not only as a highly dislikeable character driven by megalomania, but also, in a fashion reminiscent of antisemitic propaganda of the White forces in the Russian Civil War, as an "alien element" – being not only on the payroll of foreign powers, but also, as a "cosmopolitan" Jew, having no organic connection to Russian life. As historian and INCS correspondent Aleksandr Reznik told *The Independent*, this particular aspect answers a political demand by the Russian regime to denounce any prominent protest figure as being on a foreign payroll and serving shady interests: "[T]he message for young Russians is obvious: your Navalny might be charismatic and speak well but, like Trotsky, he is destructive, savage, unpatriotic and probably working for foreign governments." (See the *Independent* coverage here: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/russian-revolution-centenary-leon-trotsky-biopic-channel-one-ussr-bolshevik-marxist-joseph-stalin-a8002636.html>). After having been shown on Pervyi Kanal, the series was purchased and aired by the Netflix streaming service. The series caused worldwide indignation and protest letters, most prominently one co-initiated by Trotsky's grandson Esteban Volkov, and signed, among others, by Slavoj Žižek, Fredric Jameson, Srecko

Horvat, Helmut Dahmer, and numerous other distinguished academics and political activists. It can be consulted at <http://www.ceip.org.ar/Netflix-and-the-Russian-Government-Join-Forces-to-Spread-Lies-About-Trotsky>. A historical and political critique of the series by Benjamin Stephens has been published by Jacobin magazine: <https://jacobinmag.com/2019/03/trotsky-miniseries-soviet-union-antisemitism>.

Controversy Around Victor Arnautoff's Murals

“Life of Washington” is a series of 13 fresco murals painted at the George Washington High School by Victor Arnautoff, US communist painter and collaborator of Diego Rivera. It depicts the life of the nation’s founding father without whitewashing its critical aspects – including Washington stepping over the corpse of a Nativ American and being depicted with his slaves. Nevertheless, in June 2019, the San Francisco Unified School District voted for painting over the murals, citing student discomfort over the violence depicted in the murals. Proponents of the murals’ destruction even denounce them as bearing racist depictions. Opponents of the decision, on the other hand, point out the progressive intention and subversive nature of Arnautoff’s take on Washington’s life. The dispute is still ongoing. A summary of the debate, written from a point of view sympathetic to the murals, was published in September 2019 by the *New York Review of Books*: <https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2019/09/16/the-problem-with-canceling-the-arnautoff-murals/>.