

Revolutionary change is our goal

We're not here to maintain the status quo, M'membe tells Diamond's COSTA

Chambwa Moonga

SOCIALIST Party president Dr Fred M'membe told Zambian TV viewers, "We are not coming to maintain the system that has exploited our people for over 400 years. Our strategic objective is not to win an election, [but] to change society."

Dr M'membe, an accomplished journalist himself, featured on Diamond TV's COSTA programme this month.

He told interviewer Costa Mwansa that there appeared to be no limits to what the current leaders of Zambia could do, and that the situation today was "grave, compared to the way it was under the five Republican presidents up to Michael Sata's tenure".

He explained that the political environment the media was currently operating under was much more difficult than the one *The Post* newspaper (in liquidation) operated under.

"I don't know how I would fare under the conditions you are operating under. Yes, I was arrested a number of times. But the environment was still much better, it was still much better and much easier than the environment you are in," Dr M'membe, the former editor-in-chief of *The Post*, said.

"Today, [when] they (the government) don't want you, they will just close you. They will not arrest you and take you to prison, they will just close your station, your newspaper."

He said it was difficult to close a newspaper in the past.

"There was restraint. Those who exercised power had restraint. There was a limit

• NO LIMIT – turn to Page 2

The situation today is grave compared to the way it was under the five Republican presidents up to Michael Sata's tenure

Socialist Party president Fred M'membe talks to Diamond TV's Costa Mwansa



Christine Musole

24-year-old to stand as socialist MP in Mongu

24-YEAR-OLD Christine Musole is to stand as Mongu Central Constituency's Socialist Party MP in next year's general election.

Socialist Party national spokesperson Rehoboth Kafwabulula, 21, said the party would field no less than 50 per cent female candidates in parliamentary and local government elections next year.

She said it was the party's policy to integrate young people into leadership positions, even at the national level.

Kafwabulula said the Socialist Party was hoping to have a member of parliament under the age of 25.

According to Kafwabulula, Musole is the Socialist Party's first parliamentary candidate to be adopted by majority party structures in Mongu Central Constituency.

"She is under the age of 25 and has been nurtured by the party politically and ideologically," Kafwabulula said.

"She began her journey as a community activist at the age of 13 when she was presenting an HIV/AIDS programme on Mongu FM radio."

Musole thanked the Socialist Party in Mongu for adopting her as a candidate.

"The faith and trust that (Socialist Party president) Dr Fred M'membe has in youths has made it possible for us to gather here and has made it possible for my adoption," Musole said.

"I'll not betray the faith of the working class of this country. I will always remain faithful and loyal to the party leadership, to the working class, because they are the majority in this country," Musole said.

Lizards to be fed \$5m to give the govt old advice

Move casts doubt on faith in Zambia’s institutions

Socialist Monthly reporter

AFTER arrogantly failing to listen to the free advice of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and many others, including the Socialist Party, to rationalise its borrowings and infrastructure projects, the government has now turned to Lazard to advise on restructuring its \$11bn foreign debts that have threatened to become Africa’s first sovereign default during the coronavirus pandemic.

The investment bank was hired on a \$5m contract to advise on “liability management” of the country’s debt.

Zambia is facing \$1.5bn of debt payments this year, more than its official international reserves as of January. Fitch Ratings cut Zambia’s credit rating to double C in April and said that default was “probable”.

Scapegoat

Clearly, this government is in very serious trouble. It has failed to manage its debt. It has borrowed beyond what it can manage.

It is now looking for a scapegoat in Lazard. Tomorrow it will say, “We were advised by most competent institution.”

But we all know the right thing to do. We all knew the government could not sustain the debt it was accumulating from the most expensive sources. We are now looking for some institution to tell

us what to do – at a fee of \$5 million – even though the government knows already what is required.

Going to seek advice from Lazard – from lizards – is also an indication that the government considers our institutions – our ministry of finance, our central bank, our ministry of national planning, our legal ministry – not competent enough to provide correct advice. It is a vote of no confidence in those managing these institutions. This is an admission that as a political party and as a government, they are not competent enough to manage our country’s economy.

Is the government telling us that all our institutions – universities, research institutions, professional firms – are not competent enough to help manage this debt?

But how different is Lazard’s advice going to be from what has already been given locally and internationally? We already know that the purpose of these institutions is to serve the interests of the powerful nations that dominate them – the IMF and the World Bank. They gave the government advice – right or wrong – but it was overlooked.

So now the government is in deep trouble, it wants to look for a messiah, a saviour, in Lazard. This government is going to pay the company \$5 million to tell it what it already knows!

This is what happens when leaders stop listening to advice and listen only to their own inner demons. They used to arrogantly brag that their government would not stop borrowing. Can they say that today?

We are reminded in Proverbs 12:15, “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice.”



Idah Chifitai: the interview on Diamond TV brought a smile to my face

It gives me hope that all is not lost for Zambia’s youth

Idah Chifitai

IDA CHIFITAI is the Socialist Party’s youngest member, and this is what she had to say about the plight of young people in Zambia.

“Listening to Dr Fred M’membe’s manifesto launch speech on June 17, and the interview on Diamond TV last night brought a smile to my face.

“It gave me great hope that not all is lost for a Zambian child. I hope that we can make Zambia great again; hope that we, the children under the Socialist Party government, will indeed have a future; and hope that there still exists a committed and genuine leadership that has the children and youth’s interests at heart.

“Dr M’membe, among others, has pointed out that when voted in power, he would rather renegotiate Zambia’s worrisome huge debt and talk to the lenders, than allow any Zambian child to suffer and not go to school. That statement warmed my heart.

“This is the leader that Zambia needs, a leader that truly puts us, the children, the youth, first – a leader and party that understands the value of free education from nursery to university.

“There is no doubt that the Socialist Party will change the face of our country for the better and give many of us young people confidence to face the future with hope and optimism.”



Cloudias Musoma

Don’t be fooled by ‘panic mode’ projects

THE SOCIALIST Party in Central Province says the developmental projects being undertaken by the PF government are meant to corruptly hoodwink the electorate ahead of next year’s general elections.

In an interview monitored by KNC news, Socialist Party Provincial Spokesperson Cloudias Musoma has charged that the PF is simply in panic mode, further wondering where they have been all this time.

“The Zambian people shouldn’t be fooled with the massive infrastructure development they will see between now and the next election.

The PF government will make sure they start working on all the roads and buildings which they could have worked on some two to three years ago. This is nothing but political development.

There are alot of things they should concentrate on. As a country we would love them to concentrate on stabilising the economy at least before they are kicked out of power.”

Musoma has challenged Zambians, especially the young people, to open their eyes and see if they really have been seeing any form of consistent, tangible, development under the PF leadership.

There appears to be no limit

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to what Dr [Kenneth] Kaunda could do, there was a limit to what Mr [Frederick] Chiluba, there was a limit to what Mr [Levy] Mwanawasa could do, there was a limit to what Mr [Rupiah] Banda could do and there was a limit to what Mr [Michael] Sata could do,” he said. “[But] there appears to be no limit to what the current leaders of our country can do.”

Asked how he felt that *The Post* was no more, Dr M’membe said, “For a revolutionary, setbacks are there in life.”

“That (closure of *The Post*) was a setback. I cannot talk about it much because the matter is still in court, in the Court of Appeal,” he said.

“So, I’ll be cited for contempt and I don’t want to do that – I’m a lawyer. Well, it’s sad. But the sad part of it is not necessarily me but the many people who benefited from *The Post* who are suffering. And also it was delivering a service to the society.”

Post Newspapers Limited was closed by the PF government, using the Zambia Revenue Authority (ZRA), over a tax dispute, on June 21, 2016.

Asked if *The Post* was a business or a political machinery to bring change from a one party state to achieving multiparty democracy, Dr M’membe said, “It was a political project and it died politically.”

“But to survive it had to be commercially viable be-

cause there was nobody who was going to fund every edition of *The Post*,” Dr M’membe said. “So, we had to make it viable, but it was a political project – it was not a business, per se. But we had to adopt a business approach to survive.”

On whether he regretted the path he took, with *The Post*, Dr M’membe said: “I have no regrets.”

“It’s the price we have to pay for liberties. A better society does not just come like that. People have to pay the price,” he said.

Asked if he agreed that in the past he was an influential kingmaker, credited with helping people to assume the Republican presidency, Dr M’membe answered in the negative.

He explained that it was a mistake to think that one person could make a king, stressing that, “the only people who can make kings are the masses themselves”.

“I come from many royal families in this country but I’m not a king. I come from the Bemba royal family, but I’m not Chitimukulu. So I’m not a king. I was simply doing a job, and every job that I do I try to put in the best that I can and I put in the best that I could that time,” he said. “I’m not a kingmaker. The only people who can make kings are the masses themselves – no individual makes a king. It’s a mistake to think that one person can make a king.”

Dr M’membe, asked whether or not he abused a media platform in *The Post* to fight personal battles, said the newspaper had a mission statement. “It states clearly what it was about and we stuck to that. We had an editorial team. It was not one person doing what I wanted to do,” Dr M’membe said. “I had a life before *The Post*. I joined revolutionary struggles when I was 18 at the University of Zambia.”

He reiterated that *The Post* was a political project to bring about political changes in Zambia and the commitment was to creating the democratic space that was needed at that time.

Corruption

“I was not against Dr Kaunda [but] I was against the one-party state. If you read our manifesto, we still state clearly that one-party states, save for their moments in life, are a recipe for tyranny. We know from the Soviet experience, also from the African experience what the one-party state can do, by one party calling itself the vanguard of this or that,” he explained.

“We know the tragedy of that. So we don’t believe in the one-party state and we had to work to dismantle the one-party state.”

He clarified that it was not *The Post* that brought down Dr Kaunda.

“No! It’s a mistake to think a newspaper can change a government. A newspaper cannot change a government. A radio station cannot change a government. It’s only the masses of the people who can bring out the political changes,” Dr M’membe said.

“You (the media) communicate the ideas of the people. The media, like anybody else who is a political participant, can set the agenda for public discourse and participate in that discourse, disseminate ideas. The media’s role is to disseminate ideas.”

He said the success of *The Post* was that it was able to set the agenda. “On its own, *The Post* could have not done what it did. So, if we were against corruption, we were not the only ones. If we were the only ones, we could have not done much. You can’t do much alone,” Dr M’membe said.

He also asserted that *The Post* never got any favours from government, under any regime.

“*The Post* made money from the readers and advertisers. The books are there,” he said.

On President Lungu, Dr M’membe said he (the president, as a lawyer) never defended *The Post*, “never defended me.” “He was a friend, he used to come when I was arrested,” Dr M’membe recalled.

Asked if they were still friends, Dr M’membe responded: “I haven’t seen President Lungu since he became president. I have not met him.”

More wild and malicious claims aimed at putting pressure on us

‘Theft’ lies a political move as the Socialist Party grows in strength

Fred M’membe
Mwika Royal Village,
Shiwangandu

IT IS very sad that wild and malicious allegations have once again been made against me, this time by Lewis Moshosho.

I was recently summoned by the police in Chinsali, Muchinga, and made to believe that my house in my village in Chinsali, which was taken from me over a year ago with no evidence of wrongdoing by myself, was going to be returned.

However, I was instead charged with two counts of the theft of proceeds of the sale of Post Newspapers Limited property located in Lusaka, sold by the company prior to it going into liquidation.

Those who have brought these charges against me know very well that I was never involved in the sale of Post Newspapers Limited property, and never used proceeds from the same for my personal benefit. These transactions were conducted through banks, thus, records relating to this sale and use of the proceeds are easily available.

These allegations are being brought by people who are stuck in their criminal activities and have therefore opted to concoct lies. They have found nothing against me since the liquidation of Post Newspapers Limited and the illegal occupation of my house in Chinsali over a year ago. It is well known that they will not be able to prove these lies. But all this is being done as the masses of this country are looking for alternative



Socialist Party comrades at Chikanta Palace Museum after taking part in a two-day literacy workshop for trainers in Dundumwezi constituency

Tonga chief praises literacy campaign

Kelvin Phiri

CHIEF Chikanta of the Tonga speaking people in Dundumwezi constituency in Southern Province has commended the Socialist Party for its Fred M’membe literacy campaign.

Speaking at his palace when the Fred M’membe literacy campaign team donated school materials to teachers in his chiefdom, the traditional leader expressed his gratitude that the programme had been extended to his chiefdom for the benefit of his people, especially those who were illiterate.

He said from time immemorial he had never seen political organisations thinking that impacted the people, particularly those who were vulnerable.

Chief Chikanta also thanked the team for offering a two-day workshop to the trainers of the learners in his chiefdom.

“First, let me thank the party and its team for bringing this training to my chiefdom as it’s a first political organization to bring such development here, we really appreciate and we are even asking you to expand this wonderful program to many parts of my

chiefdom and the constituency at large,” said Chief Chikanta.

Meanwhile, chief Chikanta has urged the teachers to make use of the training and ensure that the targeted beneficiaries received the requisite knowledge intended to improve their literacy levels.

“You have gotten the books and other materials which will help you teach the learners, so it’s up to us now to use this logistical support efficiently so that the people who benefit are the members of the community,” he advised.

He said the project was indicative of the party’s robust agenda in uplifting the living standards of the people.

And Fred M’membe literacy campaign team national coordinator Martha Daka has commended chief Chikanta for allowing them to launch the program in his chiefdom.

Daka assured the chief that the party would work hard and ensure that the majority of the people in his chiefdom accessed the literacy programme.

The Fred M’membe literacy campaign team donated various teaching materials.

leadership and our party is growing very fast.

With our rising political fortunes, my being smeared with the filth of fraud and theft doesn’t come as a surprise. It was expected. Post Newspapers Limited wasn’t a kantemba – a briefcase company – it was a big company with a professional accounting staff.

It wasn’t possible for any individual person to take that amount of money, let alone for a prop-

erty sale, without being noticed or traced.

Although I owned almost all the shares in the company, I never treated the assets and liabilities of the company as mine. The finances and assets of Post Newspapers Limited were handled and managed by its accounting staff. And I did not handle the sale of the property. It was handled by the accounting staff and other responsible managers, and all are still alive.

The payment was made through

the bank and so were the disbursements, which, I am told, were mainly to the Zambia Revenue Authority. All these transactions can be traced from the bank records.

If the police were professional in their dealing with Mr Moshosho’s complaint, they would have gone to the bank to check how the money moved from the buyer to Post Newspapers Limited’s bank accounts. And it could also reveal how it was disbursed from that account. But because of clear

political pressure that has surrounded the whole liquidation of Post Newspapers Limited police professionalism, objectivity, and fairness, have been lost.

They know very well that this case is going nowhere but that does not bother them because their intention is not punish wrongdoing but to politically, morally and otherwise humiliate me.

Will they succeed? No. The Zambian people know very well what is going on and cannot be

swayed by such malice, lies and calumny.

They are the thieves, not me.

I challenge Mr Moshosho to render an audited account of the assets of Post Newspapers Limited he has collected and sold.

However, this will not deter us from fighting the injustice and inequity that is growing in our country. We will continue to mobilise Zambians to fight corruption, greed and injustice.

to what our leaders can do

“So, I don’t have a relationship with him that is close. He is president – of course, his status has changed. He is not the Lungu I knew. He is President Lungu now,” Dr M’membe said.

“So his status has changed and his friends have changed.”

On debt, he said money lenders cannot be amenable to debt relief when dealing with a reckless and light-fingered leadership.

He asked how Zambia found itself in the current huge foreign debt, considering that such was written off under the auspices of president Levy Mwanawasa.

Dr M’membe, an economist, was answering a question on whether or not Zambia was in danger to China and the Western World where debt is concerned.

“How did we get ourselves into this debt? This debt was written off under president Mwanawasa. We started clear. President Rupiah Banda left the balance sheet a bit better. He didn’t get into debt. We have just gotten into this debt very quickly. How did we get into it?” Dr M’membe asked.

“When we were voicing against this over-borrowing, what was the response of our leaders? They said they will continue borrowing, no matter what we say. Are they saying the same thing today? No!”

He indicated that whoever takes over government next year will have to deal with the ballooned debt.

“Look, this is a country; it’s not a company. Nobody will come and liquidate Zambia and share its assets. Nobody will put this country into liquidation. When you owe people and you can’t pay, you have difficulties paying, you talk to them,” he said, stressing that one should never run away from their creditors. “Don’t let a person you owe money pursue you – pursue the person you owe money. If you owe somebody money, you should be knocking on their door every day to tell them your problems [about paying back]. Eventually, they will understand.”

Dr M’membe said one had to renegotiate the terms of debt and seek write-offs.

Credibility

“But also that will depend on what you are doing and what type of a person you are. What leadership do you have in your country for the people who have lent you money to listen to you?”

“You’ll need a leadership that is doing something positive to be able to renegotiate your debts, to re-schedule your debts,” he said.

“You’ll need a credible leadership. If it’s a reckless leadership that even if they (lenders) reschedule, they write-off, you are going to steal money, are they going

to give you? They won’t give you the debt relief you may seek. If you show signs of credibility, they will talk to you [and] some of the debts can be written off, some of the debts can be rescheduled.”

Dr M’membe also said he would, as a national leader, rather not pay the debts “than have my people die for want of medicines.”

“If people die, what’s the use of paying the debts? Also this debt, how did it arise? Yes, there was reckless borrowing on our part. But there was also reckless lending on the other side. There is a due diligence you do,” Dr M’membe said.

“So, it’s not only our leaders who were reckless in borrowing [but] the lenders were also reckless and they have to take some responsibility for that as well.”

On the same programme, Dr M’membe explained that he was not a politician, but a revolutionary.

He said the difference was that a politician sought a political career.

“[But] I’m not seeking a political career; I’m seeking revolutionary change in this country. We are not here to maintain the status quo, it’s not business as usual,” he said.

“If we win next year’s elections, this country within a very short time will not be the same. We are not coming to maintain the system that is there which has exploited our people for over 400 years. Our strategic

objective is not to win an election [but] to change society.”

Asked by programme host Costa Mwansa if Zambia now needed another *Post* newspaper to stop Bill 10, like the newspaper ‘stopped Frederick Chiluba’s third term in 2001’, Dr M’membe said, “It was not *The Post* that stopped Mr Chiluba from getting a third term”.

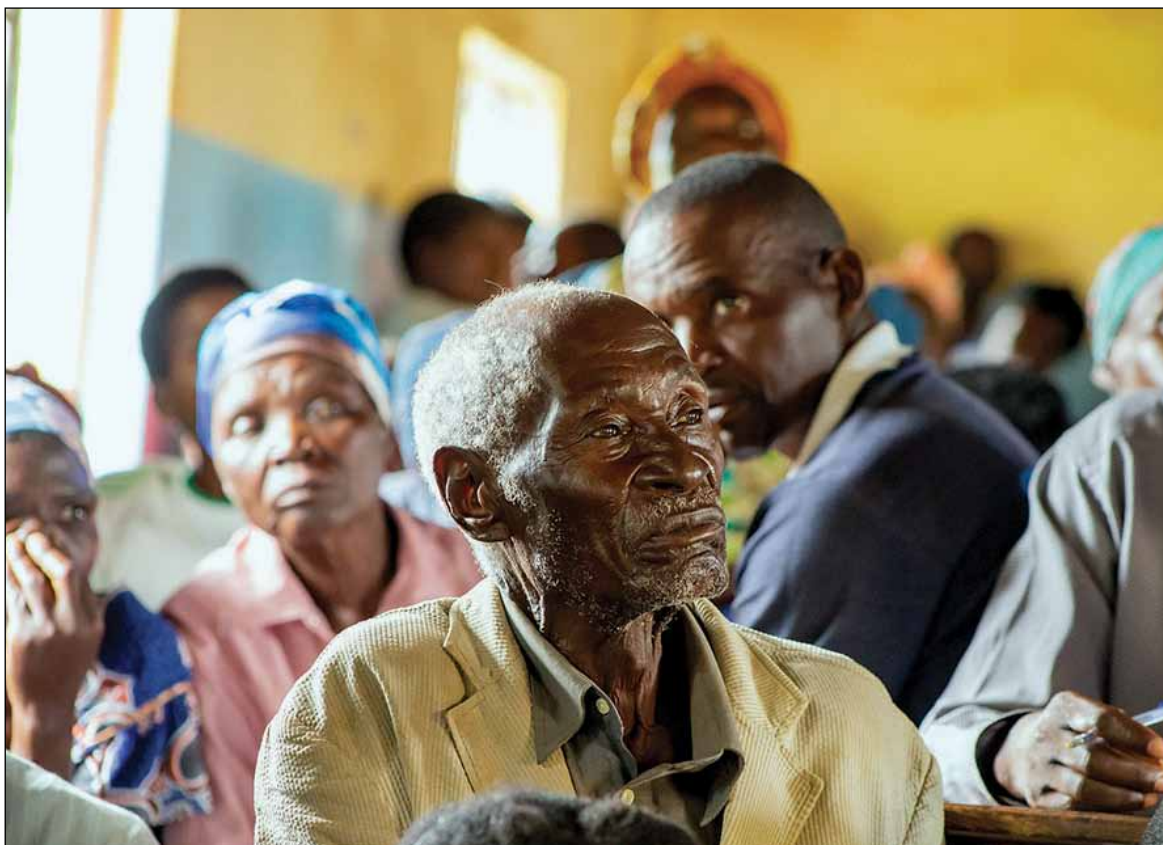
“There were many people who were involved; the Law Association of Zambia, NGOCC, the civil society, in general, the Church mother bodies. Society rose. Even members of Chiluba’s own cabinet refused. Many of them resigned en masse, including the vice-president, General [Christon] Tembo,” Dr M’membe said.

“Zambia now needs a society that should stop what is not desirable. It needs you, me and many others.”

Asked for the SP’s position on Bill 10, he said: “It is unacceptable.”

“Any constitutional process should be a product of maximum consensus. You need maximum consensus on constitutions,” Dr M’membe said.

“It’s not just about having a majority in Parliament. No. It’s an abuse of that majority if you want to go that way. It’s not a party document but a national document.”



Fred M'membe told Mongu's Oblate Radio listeners that only they could end political lies and suffering by voting for leaders they related to, and only the Socialist Party could offer an alternative.

SOCIALIST Party president Fred M'membe says the mission of his party is, like that of Jesus, fighting against the degradation of human beings.

Dr M'membe was featured on Mongu's Oblate Radio Lise-li recently and he urged poor Zambians to identify with the Socialist Party to fight against injustices and inequality in society.

He told the listeners that the Socialist Party was a party of the humble by the humble and for the humble.

He said it was a party for the poor and the working class, including peasants and working intellectuals, students and other marginalised groups.

Dr M'membe said the Socialist Party was committed to fighting injustice, human degradation and wanted to see justice and equity in society.

"By society, I mean the whole of humanity," Dr M'membe said.

Asked what distinguishes the Socialist Party from other parties, Dr M'membe said from the time John Cecil Rhodes colonised Zambia in 1891 and ran the country with his British South African Company, "we have been on a capitalist path".

Dr M'membe said UNIP was not a socialist party, it was a capitalist party, leaning to the social democratic side of capitalism.

However, he said UNIP was run by honest, decent human beings, who did a lot of good things that even socialists would admire and emulate.

Dr M'membe said that for the first time in history, Zambia has a serious socialist party that is competing for power and wants to transform the country completely.

He said the pillars of SP are justice, equity and peace.

"You can't have peace where there is no justice and where there is no equity. You can't have dignified life if you are not living in a society that is anchored on justice and equity.

"Inequality brings a lot of pain to human beings. The feeling of being nothing, being made to feel you are nothing, you are inferior to other human beings because they've got more material possessions than you, they have got

We're fighting degradation, just the same as Jesus did

M'membe urges poor to join the SP in struggle for justice

better access to education, they've got better access to health services, they've got better access to nutrition, housing, sanitation, water and all other things that are required in an organised society, just the feeling that you are inferior dehumanises you.

"So the feeling of being equal to others is important in human life. It brings dignity and happiness to a human being," he said.

"Even if the material possessions are low, where there is equity, there is happiness, there is harmony. Injustice also breeds a lot of pain. It dehumanises human beings, it degrades the lives of human beings and without justice, without equity, there can't be peace."

Dr M'membe said there can't be peace where there is no happiness.

He explained that the pillars of the Socialist Party programme are translated into equity in terms of access to education, health services, water, sanitation, food, among other things.

He said these things could not be achieved in a society not anchored on honesty.

"If you are honest, truly honest with yourself and others, you can't be corrupted. You can't humiliate other people, you can't engage in injustices against others, you can't exploit others, you can't suppress others," Dr M'membe said.

"It is also a society that is anchored on humility. Humility puts you on an equal footing with others. If you lack humility, you place yourself above others. You place yourself above others because you have a bit of money or more money in your accounts than others, you have more expensive clothes, you live in a big house, you drive a big car, you have a chain of degrees to your name that makes you

feel you are more important than others. If you feel that way, you cannot advance equity, you can't struggle for justice, it's very difficult to do that."

He said Jesus Christ was the best teacher in humility who, as the Son of God, was born in a manger from a carpenter father and whose mother described herself as a "nobody".

Dr M'membe said Jesus' close friends, disciples, were poor people – fishermen – and that his life on earth was one of humility and suffering.

"Jesus was here fighting every day against injustices on this planet, fighting against the degradation of human beings. That was his entire mission. This is what the Socialist Party's mission is," Dr M'membe said.

Humility puts you on an equal footing with others. If you lack humility, you place yourself above others ... if you feel that way you cannot advance equity

"To us Jesus' teachings are part of our teachings. And we focus much more on material things as a political party because we are not a church. We focus more on the material needs of a human being, of course, without ignoring the spiritual development of a human being because without the spiritual development of the human being, the human being becomes an animal.

"Without values of honesty, without a commitment to equity, without humility, without solidar-

ity, a human being becomes an animal. So you can't ignore the spiritual development of the human being while you are focusing more in material things."

Dr M'membe said what he was talking about had never been heard from any other political party in this country.

He said that other than the Catholic Church, through its social teachings, no political party in Zambia had 100 per cent committed itself to the cause of the poor.

Dr M'membe was quick to state that words were one thing and deeds were another.

He said that for the Socialist Party, a dry programme that could not transform people's lives was useless.

He said a socialist party that couldn't carry out a socialist revolution was useless.

"We are not a debating club. We are a serious revolutionary party. If we win elections next year, this country, within a few weeks, will not be the same again, it will not be recognisable. We are not coming to fix anything that is broken; we are coming to transform this society, to change everything. If there is broken furniture in the house in this country, we are not coming to glue it up, fix it; we are coming to remove it completely and replace it with a different type of furniture," Dr M'membe said.

"Fixing is not for us, we are revolutionaries. Revolutionaries change, transform, society. Christ was a revolutionary par excellence. He did not come to fix things. He came to change this society. And you can see the changes He brought to our lives."

Dr M'membe said a better society was possible and that people could not continue to live the way they were living.

"Western Province, where I

was born, has 82.2 per cent poverty levels. This is the poorest province of this country. Number two is Luapula Province with 81.1 per cent. Number three is Northern Province with 79.7 per cent. Then we have Eastern Province at 70 per cent, and Muchinga Province 69.3 per cent. We have North Western Province with 66.4 per cent, we have Southern Province with 57.6, we have Central Province with 56.2, we have Copperbelt with 30.8, and we have Lusaka, the capital province, with 20.2. Just look at the inequalities, the disparities," Dr M'membe said.

Asked what the party was doing by way of checks and balances, Dr M'membe said it could not do anything at the moment because it was not in control of the state budget.

He said to change the inequality, one had to be in government and controlling government budgets.

"If Western Province has poverty levels of 82.2 per cent, Lusaka has 20.2, Copperbelt has 30.8 ... if we are one country, truly one country, we should live the same type of life, shouldn't we? Poverty levels should be the same. If Western Province is lagging behind, the first thing that you do as a serious government that is committed to equity and peace, is to try and bring Western Province to where others are. You start by bringing Western Province from 82.2 per cent to 81.1 per cent where Luapula is; move to 79.7; move to 70 until you reach where the others are. Those that are lagging behind, to catch up with others in front, what do they do? They have to move faster, they have to run," Dr M'membe explained.

He said those in front have to walk slowly or wait for those behind to catch up.

Dr M'membe said this meant that more resources would have to be given to the poorest provinces for them to catch up with others.

Many non-governmental organisations had failed to fight inequality and poverty because they did not control state power.

Dr M'membe said the Socialist Party did not want to be in opposition for two or three decades offering checks and balances.

He said the party was an alternative to what was failing people today and wanted to assume state power next year.

Dr M'membe said the capitalist system, as the Pope has pointed out, was enemy number one because it was degrading people's lives.

He agreed that people had lost faith in politicians because they had been cheated for a long time.

He noted that each election time, people were cheated with salt, sugar, chitenge and t-shirts, and small notes.

Dr M'membe told the people that only they would end political lies and their own suffering by voting for leaders they relate to.

He said he was not a messiah and he would never be one.

"And I am not pretending. I am not coming with a lot of wisdom that is better than yours. We are not looking for a MacGyver, za bu MacGyver zale kuli MacGyver will fix this, will fix that ki zabuhata, ba mipuma (it's all lies, they are cheating you). Kuzamaisa naha aki MacGyver, kuzamaisa naha ki sichaba kusebeza amoho.

"We are not looking for a single genius. We are looking for a collective genius. A single genius is useless, can't deliver," said Dr M'membe, who emphasised that the people must unite to change their lives.

Shortage of health staff a COVID-19 challenge

Public resources squandered on unnecessary purchases

Cosmas Musumali

ZAMBIA faces a huge challenge because there is a glaring shortage of health workers to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our country lacks close to 15,000 to 16,000 health workers for a normal work routine.

Given the shortages, today's deepening crisis in the era of Covid demands more work from the few available health workers.

More than 70 to 80 percent of all the health workers in Zambia are in the public sphere. As such, it is the public sector that should be taking a lead in terms of the employment of health workers. Yet, over the years, the country has not recruited enough health professionals.

Each year, the country produces close to 4,000 health workers, and recruitment is around 2,000 to 2,500. The attrition rate is around 2,000 to 3,000.

Our health workers are the soldiers we are sending into battle to help us fight the virus. Instead, what we have seen is a leadership that has failed to act in a timely manner, and has wasted public resources on unnecessary purchases.

What we should have instead seen is a leadership that is more committed to addressing the COVID-19 crisis through channeling efforts to staff recruitment through the Ministry of Health.

Recent pronouncements for the Ministry of Health reveal promises to increase the recruitment of more health workers.

However, the Socialist Party's findings in most of the districts across the country show that no new health workers have joined the workforce.

As a result of this lack of priority and incompetence from our government, we are today faced with a crisis of inadequate health workers to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Zambia is yet to reach the peak of the crisis. The growing number that we are seeing today is just the beginning of a far much deeper crisis ahead. Our levels of preparedness to handle a far much larger crisis is very low.

With the low numbers of health workers we have today, what should we do?

We have armies of trained young people that are not on the payroll. What should we do?

Where are we channeling the health resources? We need answers!



Workers disinfect Zambezi market in Lusaka as Zambia reels from a shortage of health workers to combat COVID-19

Debt and disease hit Zambian workforce

THE REALITY that the corona virus pandemic will leave for our already limping economy in shambles has already dawned on our people – from street vendors to people who run their own small businesses to employees of big companies – they are all already feeling the pinch, writes Dr Fred M'membe.

And this has been confirmed by projections that the Zambian economy for the first time in over 20 years, will experience negative growth this year, as it will shrink by at least 2.6 per cent.

We are already beginning to see many Zambians lose their jobs. This will increase with the prolonged pandemic, but again, we must

not believe that this is a result of the pandemic alone. A stronger economic performance, prior to the pandemic, would have minimised job losses and forced pay cuts.

We have time and time again warned this government about the careless contraction of unsustainable debt – but we have not seen things change.

Last year, our debt to GDP ratio increased from 35 per cent in 2014 to about 80 per cent in 2019. It was clear prior to the pandemic that servicing this debt would prove difficult for this country. But today, the government will blame the projected defaulting on loan obligations on this pandemic.

We must also remember that the failure to improve the standard of living of our people prior to this pandemic has endangered many lives.

With more than 60 per cent of our population living below the poverty line, over 350,000 people don't have access to regular food supply, and an astonishingly high proportion of our fellow citizens in Kwa and villages do not have access to clean running water.

Our people need a leadership that acknowledges that the coronavirus pandemic has revealed to us that poor leadership and continued reliance on the "each one for himself" way of life cannot bring solutions for our people.



Residents of Kanyama, Chibolya, Makeni and Garden compounds receive donations of hand sanitisers and face masks

Team donates sanitisers and face masks

THE SOCIALIST Party through the Fred M'membe literacy campaign team has donated hand sanitisers and face masks to Kanyama, Chibolya, Makeni and Garden compounds.

In an earlier statement, Dr M'membe reminded people that there is currently no vaccine to prevent coronavirus disease and to heed the advice of Minister of Health, Dr Chitalu Chilufya, that the best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to the virus.

"The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person. Through respira-

tory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.

"We urge all our people to follow the Ministry of Health guides and take steps to protect themselves," Dr M'membe said.

"Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.

"If soap and water are not readily avail-

able, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 per cent alcohol.

"Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

"Take steps to protect others. Stay home if you are sick, except to get medical care.

"Please, please take the instructions or advice of the Ministry of Health very, very seriously.

"The impact of this virus on our economy can already be seen. Let's brace ourselves for very difficult times ahead."



Vigour, vitality 'in the bloom of life like the sun at 8am'

The youth are not only leaders of tomorrow but also of today

TRUE TO its conviction that youths are the leaders of today, the Socialist Party's Central Committee has appointed Comrade Rehoboth Kafwabulula as the national spokesperson of the party.

Comrade Kafwabulula is a member of the central committee of the Socialist Party and also general secretary of the Socialist Youth League.

Currently, Comrade Kafwabulula is in the last phase of her law studies. She has been a member of the party from its inception, which she joined immediately after leaving secondary school.

A graduate of the party's Pan-African ideological and political school, Comrade Kafwabulula has also undergone ideological and political training in other parts of the world.

There is jubilation in the Socialist Youth League camp. They have welcomed this historical move by the party's central committee to appoint Comrade Kafwabulula, and wish her well.

Socialist Party president Fred M'membe welcomed Comrade Rehoboth Kafwabulula's appointment.

"We mean what we say when we say that youths are not only leaders of tomorrow but also of today. And that the future is not built in the future but on the threshold of what we do today," he said. "This is how we view the appointment of Comrade Rehoboth Kafwabulula as the party's national spokesperson."

"Zambia is theirs, as well as ours, but in the last analysis it theirs."

"These young people, full of vigour and vitality, are in the bloom of life like the sun at eight or nine in the morning. Our hope is placed on them. Zambia belongs to them. Zambia's present and future belongs to them."

"In her capacity as the general secretary of the Socialist Youth League, Comrade Rehoboth has served the membership of the league with distinction, building the structures, coordinating its programmes, and setting its political policy, and we are confident she will serve with the same distinction in the office of the national spokesperson."

"Comrade Rehoboth's ideological strength, commitment to the Zambian masses and work ethic saw her elected into the Central Committee of the Socialist Party at its First National Congress in September 2019."

"The Socialist Youth League congratulates the central committee for its continued commitment to developing the capacity of the youth to lead."

"The Socialist Party is truly the only political home for Zambian youths. It is a party of the young."

"In the past year, the Socialist Party and Socialist Youth League have received a sea of applications from youngsters all over Zambia to join the

all sorts of useful activities with their agreement," he said.

And the Socialist Youth League also congratulated Comrade Kafwabulula on her appointment.

Kyle Haselsteiner, Socialist Youth League deputy general secretary, said the league welcomed and celebrated the move.

"We will work to bring into full play the energy of our youth. The party structure will not treat them the same as everybody else"

"Young people are the most active and vital force in society. They are the most eager to learn and the least conservative in their thinking. This is especially so in the era of revolutionary change."

"We will work to bring into full play the energy of our youth. The party structures will not treat them in the same way as everybody else and ignore their special characteristics."

"Of course, young people should learn from the old comrades, and should strive as much as possible to engage in



Rehoboth Kafwabulula: joined the party after leaving secondary school

organisations. The youth under the guidance of the Socialist Party and its youth league will be the chief force in the transformation of society."

"The Socialist Youth League is proud to stand beside the Socialist Party and introduce the youngest female national spokesperson of a political party in Africa, Comrade Rehoboth Kafwabulula."

"We encourage all Zambian youths to register to vote for the Socialist Party the 2021 general election," Comrade Haselsteiner said.

● Comrade Kafwabulula was born on February 18, 1999, at the University Teaching Hospital in Lusaka.



Mayase Daka

REVOLUTIONARY greetings comrades!

The great leader Thomas Sankara said: "There is no true social revolution without the liberation of women."

Women in our country and beyond have suffered deep oppression both in public and private spaces.

Gender-based violence continues to be on the rise.

Women also continue to be subjected to all sorts of abuses and a violent political space that has prevented many of them from meaningfully engaging and participating in these important spaces.

Our mission is 'each one, teach one'

Rachael Chimozi Zulu

EACH ONE, teach one. We are the leaders of today! As a passionate youth and Zambian, I consider myself fortunate to belong to the Socialist Party and its youth league movement. Being a part of the SP has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life so far, at the many levels.

This experience has ignited the activism and revolutionary spirit that has helped instill in me values of humility, honesty, equity and solidarity. I strive to practice these values and they have helped me move away from my previous individualistic tendencies to focus on matters and issues that benefit the collective, my society, my country and continent. The four socialist noble values have ignited a revolutionary consciousness of love for others above self. Since consciousness, spreading goodness, liberating and fighting for justice has become a passion that fires my soul to wake up every day and continue to struggle for my country and a better Zambia. The SP has provided me the space to contribute to ideas and efforts in the programmes of the youth league that focuses on political education, and on broader Party efforts. My voice and my ideas count in this Party.

Today, we are a country that is burdened with so many endless struggles, worries, socially, politically, economically and otherwise.

As such, being a part of the Socialist Party that I joined in 2017 gives me space to meaningfully contribute to ideas around the common struggles that we all face today, particularly, on issues and concerns that have affected us the youth. These include challenges around access to education, lack of quality and free health care, poverty and many more. In my view,



Rachael Chimozi Zulu: revolutionary spirit

what the Socialist Party, my party, has presented to the nation in the last few days - is a rich document - a peoples manifesto that is indeed an exact portrait of the pain and suffering we have faced and in many aspects continue to endure as a nation every day.

The manifesto covers a wide range of concerns ranging from the Socialist Party's commitment to free education, free health care, jobs, women and gender, as well as often neglected concerns of children, the disabled, the elderly citizens, and prisoners.

Today, thanks to the Socialist Party, I count myself fortunate to be among the many young people that have benefited from the assistance rendered by the Party to cover my university tuition fees. I am currently studying for a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration in Economics at the University of Bugema in Uganda.

This for me is an opportunity of a life time that I would never have imagined.

The SP's initiatives on education goes beyond a traditional focus on the classroom. The various leaders such as Dr Fred M'membe, Dr Cosmas Musumali, Dr Chris Ngenda Mwikisa and Dr Cecilia Lwiindi Nedziwe have provided the mentorship programme to many youths in the Socialist Party movement and beyond. The Party is committed to the idea of empowering us the young people to take charge of our today, and has encouraged us to take up leadership positions today, and not tomorrow.

As such, it is with great revolutionary pride to belong to the Socialist Party, and the Youth League movement. The experience in the Youth League movement has helped raise my levels of consciousness, of activism, to shift from "me me me self-centered approaches", to care more about my country, my people, my today, and my tomorrow.

It has raised my levels of consciousness to be moved with indignation in the face of injustice, of other people's suffering, pain, anguish and hopelessness.

Being a part of the Socialist revolutionary agenda has ignited a strong need for me to wake up every day and contribute to Zambia's vision of Justice, Equity and Peace.

I invite the Zambian youth to join his fast-moving train of the Socialist Party in order for us to collectively deliver Justice, Equity and Peace to Ourselves.

We encourage you to take time to read the Socialist Party's manifesto: Then Each one should Teach one. Each youth should teach another youth. As Dr M'membe has repeatedly reminded us: We are the leaders of today.

JUSTICE • EQUITY • PEACE

Now it's only the SP that can fight for the rights of the people

DR FRED M'MEMBE supported the Patriotic Front and Michael Sata to win the 2011 elections because it was the only option for a socialist at that time – it had the most progressive constitution.

The PF was the only party that committed itself at that time to fight against capitalism and to struggle for socialism.

In its preamble, the PF constitution states, among other things, that it is “determined to pursue a policy of equality, justice, liberty, solidarity, peace, political economic and social progress and prosperity for all”, declaring that the party recognises the inalienable right of all people to self-determination and national independence, that people have a right to wage liberation struggles, and pledging that the party would work to enhance the development of an African Union.

These are the things the Socialist Party constitution, programme, and manifesto seeks today.

In articles 1, 4, 13 and 15 the PF further states that the party's philosophy is to be guided by “humbleness and self-criticism” and to be a “militant organisation of revolutionary peasants, workers and intellectuals”.

Article 4 says, “The party shall wage a relentless struggle against all domestic and international forces of reaction. It shall fight for the eradication of capitalism, with its offshoots, poverty, hunger, ignorance, disease, crime, corruption and the exploitation of man by man.”

Article 13, referring to the quality of leadership, says:

(i) In addition to fulfilling the membership requirements as provided in this constitution, a leader must be selfless and prepared to spread the benefits of independence to all citizens without regard to tribe, race, colour, sex, religion, region of origin.

(ii) In order to have the above qualities realised, a leader must not:

(a) Use his official position for personal or private gain or benefit or practise favouritism contrary to the purposes for which he holds the office; or

(b) Engage in any corrupt practices or receive any secret income, accept bribes or participate in any criminal activities; and,

(iii) A leader who indulges in any of these prohibited practices shall be deemed to have himself created conditions for his removal from office.

Article 15, referring to the obligations of a member, says a member of the party should:

(a) Be fully committed to the realisation of the aims and goals of the leadership of the party;

(b) Be devoted to the party, the state and the working class movement in the country,

(c) To practise criticism at party meetings as a way of ensuring that all shortcomings in the party, government and the state are removed in comradely spirit;

(d) To support and implement all socialist-oriented decisions and projects proposed or adopted by the party;

(e) To cultivate labour habits aimed at raising labour productivity, and the general improvement of skills of workers;

(f) To improve ideological knowledge and awareness against detractors, counter revolutionaries and saboteurs;

(g) To fight against all manifestations of over-indulgence tendencies, bourgeois tendencies, tribalism, regionalism, corruption, nepotism, racial discrimination and the exploitation of man by man.

Which socialist can be opposed to this or fail to support it?

Did the PF adhere to its constitution? No. It has actually practically abandoned it.

And the PF of Sata is in so many ways very different from that of Edgar Lungu.

Zambia has never been a socialist state, it's a myth

A bourgeois narrative driven by the agents of capitalism

ANALYSIS

Faston Mwale

RECENTLY, there has been a growing debate contending that the UNIP government ran a socialist state which failed and ultimately led to the ouster of the party from government.

This is a popular bourgeois narrative driven by agents of capitalism to counter the resurgence of socialist consciousness in Zambia and across the world.

In the context of limited space, and given the widespread nature of the topic, it will be practically difficult to delve into all the complexities of the debate.

Be that as it may, I will try to highlight a few salient issues that perhaps could be of help in the creation of the correct context.

The very fact that socialism is openly being the subject of a public discourse with more intensity than ever before is, first and foremost, a reflection of the crisis in the capitalist-imperialist mode of production, exchange and distribution.

My rebuttal to the erroneous popular notion is not intended to generate unnecessary controversy, but to lay the groundwork for further ideological discourse on the subject.

In the wake of the re-emergence of socialist consciousness across the world, there has been an insidious attempt from the bourgeoisie world to identify the failures, evils, calumny, and the social, economic and political maladies of the capitalist system, with the noble struggle for socialism.

Brutality

Zambia was not and has never been a socialist state.

The truth is that UNIP pursued state capitalism. Anti-apartheid activist and economist professor Ben Turok described state capitalism as the concentration of political power in the state, the predominance of the state in the economy and the persistence of profit as the principle economic criterion in a class-divided society.

This characterisation includes ownership, market and political relations, each being an essential aspect of state capitalism.

In the Zambian context, key production forces, such as land, industries, banks, transport, telecommunications, energy, and retail chain stores, were under state ownership.

Having had experience of the brutality, exploitation, oppression and inequality perpetrated by colonial capitalism, the first crop of African leaders rightly aspired for a more humane and just socio-economic system – socialism.

In one of my articles recently, I alluded to the fact that socialism does not arise of itself, it emerges as a response to the unjust nature of the capitalist system.

The abysmal material conditions under colonial capitalism ultimately created the necessary conditions for the overthrow of colonial rule in pursuit of a better society.

On the premise of socialist thought, the masses were mobil-



Land, industries, banks, transport, telecommunications, energy, and retail chain stores, were under state ownership

ised and coalesced around socialism, waging a decisive struggle against colonial rule.

The colonial masters did not underestimate the growing strength of socialism during the approaching end of colonial rule.

It is worth noting that at the attainment of independence from Britain in 1964, Zambia was not only given a certificate of political independence, but the exiting colonial powers also dictated the economic system that Zambia should follow.

They also prescribed how and where Zambia's mineral resources should be sold, and at a price determined by them. In order to buttress the capitalist mode of production, they provided the intellectual and ideological cover for capitalism through perpetuation of Eurocentric education.

In attempting to dispense with the prescriptions of the former colonial powers, the majority of the first crop of African leaders made genuine strides to entrench socialism in their respective territories.

History is replete with accounts of the consequences of this option. Dr Kwame Nkrumah was overthrown, Thomas Sankara was toppled and assassinated, while Seiko Toure of Guinea faced massive repression from France. Under the circumstances, the much envisaged genuine working class democracy failed to materialise. Scientific socialism did not fail, it did not exist.

An ideological attempt was made to humanise state capitalism through humanism.

The truth is that capitalism has no human face, but in my view, this is what perhaps has been misconstrued as socialism.

Humanism

I reject this notion on three grounds.

● One – socialism without the socialisation of the principle means of production does not amount to socialism at all,

● Two – humanism, misconstrued as socialism, was a utopian ideol-

ogy that did not underscore class struggle and,

● Three – it lacked a radical transformative content, in other words, it lacked the revolutionary theory.

So those claiming that Zambia was a socialist state should test their analyses against these key premises.

At best, humanism served to manufacture a kind of a “consenting attitude” of the working class to the unjust nature of the capitalist system.

Humanism, to a certain extent, worked to conceal oppression, exploitation, expropriation and the yawning inequalities that had emerged under state capitalism.

Since 1891, when the territory now called Zambia was first colonised by Cecil John Rhodes, Zambians have been subjected to a series of the crudest forms of capitalism.

In all phases of capitalism, Zambians have resisted with enduring pain and extraordinary sacrifice.

The struggle for socialism is a historical vocation. We are merely

taking over from where our forefathers left off.

The possibility of creating an egalitarian society in which all kinds of inequalities, repression, exploitation and malice are eradicated lies within our reach, but to realise this possibility, we have to wake up, get organised and fight for that which is rightfully ours together.

Be wary, however, of the petty bourgeois elements around the world who are carrying an ideological onslaught against socialism and its theoretical weaponry provided by Marxism.

By slandering socialism and stigmatising those committed to the struggle, capital is trying to extinguish the fire that illuminates the road to the liberation of the struggling masses.

Masses of Zambians from all walks of life are joining the bandwagon for the struggle for justice, equity and a peaceful Zambia, a duty that must be accomplished against all odds.

M'membe answers a question that the media is always asking him

SOCIALIST Party leader Dr Fred M'membe has often been asked the question whether he is a committed socialist. People have repeatedly questioned his support of the Patriotic Front in 2011, which espouses and promotes capitalism.

Dr M'membe said, “In my recent interaction with the media, this question came up again and I need to clear it up.

“Comrades, I am not in the PF to speak for the PF. I am running a socialist party.

“When you look at the constitution of the parties that existed at that time, there was only one party that had an anti-capitalist position in its constitution.

“The PF committed itself to fighting against capitalism and to supporting the working class. I have been a socialist from the age of 19 to this day and that – the PF position – appeared attractive to me.



Fred M'membe: I need to clear this up

“But are they socialists? Are they committed to the calls of the working class? Are they decent people, are they honest people who are committed to equity, who are committed to humility, who are committed to solidarity? My answer is NO.

“If they were socialists we would have not

started the socialist party to defend the calls of the working class, to defend the calls of the poor, to defend the calls of the poor peasants.

“I don't know how Zambians will decide. It is their decision to elect or not to elect the PF. That I can't predict, but what I am sure about is that there will be no more money in the pockets, that will not be achieved. That I can guarantee you, they will not be able to put more money in your pockets before the August 2021 elections.

“Whether you elect them or not, having failed to put more money in your pockets after promising to do so and have driven you into deeper poverty, that is your choice, but we are dealing with rational human beings here.

And if this rationality of human beings is something to go by, I have difficulties seeing how the PF will be re-elected.”

The Socialist Party manifesto is about us working together This is our chance to

Fred M'membe
Socialist Party president

OUR MANIFESTO is a document of revolutionary change. It's a manifesto that will bring fundamental changes to our country and to our lives.

It's a manifesto of revolutionary democracy, of transforming our country and our lives together, of working together side by side, like beavers.

It's a manifesto of fraternal love.

It's a manifesto about the construction of a just society – a society anchored on economic, social and political justice.

It's a manifesto that will bring about equity in terms of access to education by making education totally free from nursery at the age of three to university. And compulsory from nursery to grade 12.

It is a manifesto that will bring about equity in terms of access to health services by making it totally free and fundamentally improving its quality.

It's a manifesto that will bring about equity in terms of access to nutrition by investing heavily in, and reorganising, peasant agriculture.

It's a manifesto about jobs. Without being able to find work in an economy one cannot truly benefit from it.

It's a manifesto about peace, a society free from all sorts of economic, social and political violence. It's about a society where we can all go to bed without fear of being "gassed".

But they will tell you all this is not possible; that we are lying, we are dreaming, that it can't be done. They will ask: where will the money for all these services come from?

Principles

We know today what is happening. They are buying motor vehicles at exorbitant prices, they are building roads at three to four times the average prices in the region; they are buying presidential jets; they are building toll gates at exorbitant prices. We can go on and on – the list is endless. They are not asking where the money is coming from because they are spending it on themselves.

Yes, money will be needed. But money is not the starting point, money isn't everything. The first thing is to establish the principles behind these free services – why do we need free education and health services? A nation that is not well educated, that is not healthy, cannot be efficient and productive, cannot be competitive in today's highly technological world.

Our approach is that children are not only born to a mother and father. They are born in a much bigger family, community and nation. They belong to the family, community and nation. The mother and the father cannot deal with them as they wish or please because they are not theirs alone. They are ours collectively and as such we must take collective responsibility for their education, health, nutrition and other services they require to grow up as good human beings and responsible citizens.

As for money, your Socialist Party government will do what the individual



households do when money is little, is short, remove unnecessary expenditure, luxuries when the going is rough. The Socialist Party government will remove unnecessary expenditure to save money for the provision of free education and health services to our children and all our people.

Those who have exploited and abused you, marginalised you for years, and their supporters, are going to be telling you that everything in this manifesto is impossible because they don't want revolutionary change in your lives and your country.

Benefits

And why should they? Everything is going on very well for them and their children. They have no problems with education and health services. Everything is going well for them. But it's not going well for you.

This manifesto is about addressing the distressing situation of our young people who have to stop school because their parents have no money to pay fees, who have passed but can't at-

tend college or university because they don't have money.

This manifesto is about creating jobs for many of our people who can't find work and earn a living; the trained teachers, nurses, clinical officers, agriculture extension officers who can't be employed.

This manifesto is about addressing the problems of the retirees who are not been paid their retirement benefits for years while their leaders are paying themselves midterm gratuities and are getting their benefits before even their terms of office have come to an end and are selling themselves expensive government motor vehicles for next to nothing. They have no shortage of money for themselves, but they have for the poor and marginalised.

This manifesto is about serving the lives of our people who are ill, and instead of being given medicines at our clinics or hospitals are given prescriptions to go and buy drugs from pharmacies when they have no money. In the meantime your leaders fly out for treatment at taxpayers' cost, at your cost.

If things continue like this, what is your future and that of your children? What hope is there for a better life for you and your children and your children's children?

Your incomes are not increasing, jobs are being lost, your businesses are failing but the things you have to pay for are increasing everyday; mealie-meal prices are skyrocketing, water, electricity, transport, school, medicines, clothes, rentals, and the cost of borrowing from kaloba are all going up. This system, this order, is not working for you. It's working for them but not for you.

Heaven

And that's why so many people today think all politicians are liars, are the same, they promise heaven but can't even deliver purgatory. They are there just to enrich themselves.

This is understandable. You have been cheated, betrayed by politicians, your leaders, for too long to trust anyone. You are now giving up on politics and politicians.

This is where this manifesto comes in, to give hope, restore confidence by showing our people that this party, this manifesto is different, it is not any other party, it is not any other politician. It is a revolutionary party, a revolutionary manifesto to bring about revolutionary change. It is not about empty, false promises. It is about revolutionary democracy – deciding together, creating together, building together and thereby increasing our people's confidence in themselves and their future.

The Socialist Party is yours. This manifesto is yours. And that is why in the coming days, weeks, months, despite their petty differences and mock engagements, all of them will gang up against your party, your manifesto.

If they thought we represented politics as usual, that we could be compromised, bought off, and that nothing was really going to change, they wouldn't be so ferociously and virulently against us.

They know we mean business, they know we mean what we say. We are honest people.

They know our chances of winning

together, side by side, to construct a more just society to change everything



next year's elections are very high. And they know we will deliver on your programme and your manifesto. And they are all not sleeping over this prospect.

That's why they are throwing all their spanners in our works, denying us space to freely mobilise.

They're very scared of a revolutionary transformation of this country.

All sorts of unscrupulous elements are pumping in a lot of money in the leading capitalist parties of this country. They own and control them. But they don't own and control you and your party – the Socialist Party.

Powerful

The humble workers, peasants and working intellectuals own the Socialist Party.

When you're serious about revolutionary change and your chances of winning are high, those who draw gigantic benefits from the current corrupt order will mobilise against you, they will fight you to preserve their benefits, their privileges.

Clearly, this manifesto will usher in a different kind of society.

That's what our manifesto is all about. All that remains to realise it is your vote. And that your vote is more powerful than all their money.

So get your national registration card and register to vote for yourself, for your future and that of your country.

It can't be denied that for the great majority of our people next year's elections will be offering a once-in-a-generation chance of revolutionary change.

We have a chance to end despair and hopelessness.

It's gets dark sometimes, but the morning comes. Let's not give up, let's not lose hope.

With some effort, great effort, and the watch, protection and guidance of the spirits of our ancestors, of that courageous Ngoni warrior commander Nsingu we will triumph and make Zambia what it was meant to be – our paradise here on earth!

The time has come for revolutionary change in Zambia.

The manifesto at a glance



EDUCATION

It's a manifesto that will bring about equity in terms of access to education by making education totally free from nursery at the age of three to university. And compulsory from nursery to grade 12.

JUSTICE

It's a manifesto of fraternal love. It's a manifesto about the construction of a just society – a society anchored on economic, social and political justice.

HEALTH

It's a manifesto that will bring about equity in terms of access to health services by making it totally free and fundamentally improving its quality.

NUTRITION

It's a manifesto that will bring about equity in terms of access to nutrition by investing heavily in, and reorganising, peasant agriculture.

EMPLOYMENT

It's a manifesto about jobs. Without being able to find work in an economy one cannot truly benefit from it.

PEACE

It's a manifesto about peace, a society free from all sorts of economic, social and political violence. It's about a society where we can all go to bed without fear of being "gassed".

SOCIAL DIMENSIONS

The manifesto also addresses a wide range of the social dimensions and the implications of its programme. These include: the dignity of the working class; women's rights and equity; enhanced social security; a better deal for children; recognition of senior citizens; rights of prisoners; and the disabled.





Overcoming the fear of danger to benefit others

Say a prayer of remembrance for those who served our nation and then one of thanks for your liberty

Fred M'membe

JULY 6 was Heroes' Day and it is on days like that we pay special tribute to our Ngoni ancestors who were killed by the British colonial forces of Cecil John Rhodes while defending their land and minerals.

Rather than being forgotten

with the passing of years, their exemplary lives, their selflessness, and their heroism should be remembered by all of us. We should see them live again, we should note their presence in the revolutionary struggles we are today waging: above all, they should remain alive in our consciousness and hearts.

On days such as those we should remember more than just those who died fighting alongside Commander Nsingu from December 1897 to February 4, 1898; we should remember all those who gave their lives for our country's independence and our freedoms.

On days like that we should remember Mama Alice Lenshina Mulenga Mubisha and all the members of her church who died defending their church, beliefs, and their people's right to have a place of worship of their own creation – Lumpa Church.

Every commemoration should be like a synthesis of our people's glorious history, a history written with great sacrifices and the loss of many valuable lives and much blood.

But as we commemorate our heroes, let's ask ourselves: who is a hero?

Our simple answer is: it is a person who is admired for their courage, outstanding achievements, or noble qualities.

A hero is someone who gives of him or herself, often putting their own life at great risk, for the greater good of others.

However, in situations such as war, what is good for others will always divide opinion into opposing camps. Outside of the stan-

dard dashing war portraits of men and women facing the gates of Hell, the most heroic are often the most ordinary of people doing ordinary things for a greater humane purpose.

The word "hero" is far too often applied these days without much thought. Its meaning has become muddled and not, as it was meant to be, an extraordinary example of human achievement that makes the rest of us gasp in wonder or question the validity of the honour.

A hero is any man or woman who refuses to live in an utterly passive manner. However, recognising that virtue as "heroic" depends on who benefits as a result of that refusal – another person, a tribe, a nation, and so on and so forth.

Heroes overcome their fear of danger in order to do good for others.

Sacrifice

True heroes – revolutionaries – have always fought for the future. We think that the idea of the future society, nation, world, is the most important, most noble idea that a hero, a revolutionary can harbour.

But to fight for the future does not mean to avoid doing everyday what must be done for the present. These two ideas must not be confused.

Heroes' Day is the special day we listen to solemn tributes paid to those who made the ultimate sacrifice of giving their lives for our independence and our freedoms.

It is the day we hear stories of their valiant service and

poignant memories shared by those who loved them. We are always touched by the sadness that comes from wondering how life would be different had they continued to live among us.

It is always a mixture of gratitude and grief we feel at these moments.

As we consider the two emotions these commemorations evoke – grief and joy – we should realise both are important and appropriate.

We must honor our fallen heroes. We must remember their lives and their sacrifices. We must pay tribute. We must let the full weight of the cost of our struggle for independence and freedoms sink in – blood, sweat, struggle, life itself. But, then we must shake off the dust of grief. Our heroes, after all, did not die so that we would sink into the grave with them. They died so that we could live free.

So, on occasions such as Heroes' Day, consider the cost of your own freedom.

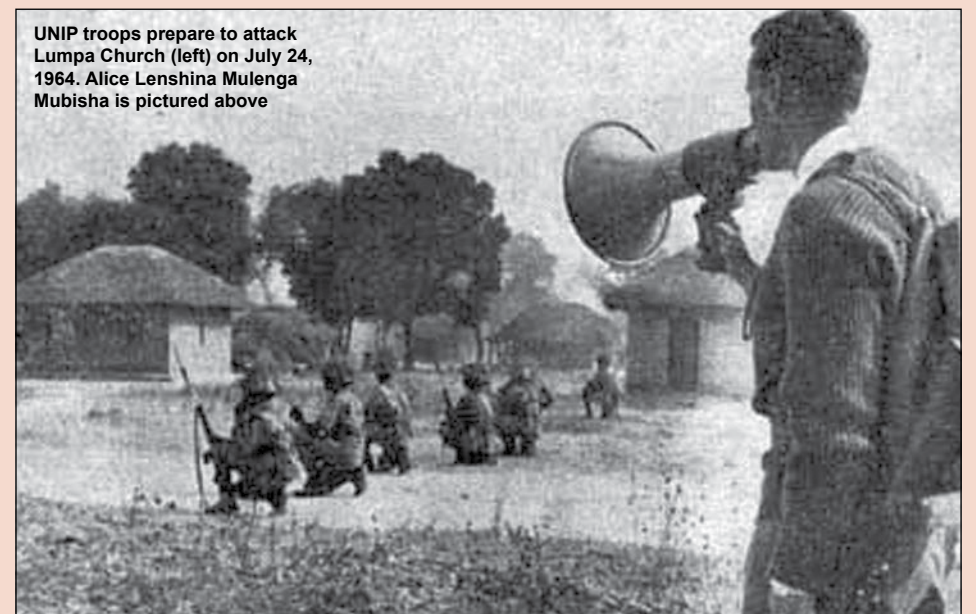
But then, celebrate. Spend time with those you love. Be kind to those you don't.

Most of all, bow your head.

Say a prayer of remembrance for those who served our nation – giving their own lives in sacrifice for ours.

Remember their families and those who loved them; pray for their comfort and peace, their protection and provision, and that they will find a way forward through their grief and pain.

Say a prayer of thanksgiving for your own life and your liberty.



UNIP troops prepare to attack Lumpa Church (left) on July 24, 1964. Alice Lenshina Mulenga Mubisha is pictured above

● AT FIRST Lumpa Church was close to the main Black organisation fighting for independence, the Northern Rhodesia African National Congress (ANC). However, when Kenneth Kaunda left the ANC in 1958 and formed the more militant United National Independence Party (UNIP) there arose a competition for members between the new church and the new party. Villages were split as Lumpa leaders ordered

their members to establish separate villages by moving out of villages where they lived alongside UNIP's members. The conflict between UNIP and the Lumpa Church reached a climax in July to October in 1964, just before Northern Rhodesia's independence. On July 24, 1964, a gunbattle broke out between UNIP and Lumpa Church members. The resulting riots were only quelled by the intervention of State troops, and

the proclamation of a state of emergency by new independence Prime Minister, Kenneth Kaunda. About a 1,000 people died in the clashes between Lumpa Church adherents, UNIP's members and the security forces. Approximately 15,000 Lumpa Church members fled and took refuge in Congo, some of them never returned to Zambia. The Lumpa Church was banned on August 3, 1964 and Lenshina surrendered to police

a few days later. Hardly anyone faulted Lenshina for the violence that took place. This was evident when her biggest critic, Kaunda, never called for her trial in court. Even though she was the symbol for Lumpa Church, she adamantly denied any involvement in the political disturbances. The political aspirations of her contemporaries took precedence over the Lenshina's desire for a religious and cultural revival. *Wikipedia*

JUSTICE • EQUITY • PEACE

Parties come and go – now it's time for a new political order

Poverty, hunger, healthcare and education 'a nightmare' since 2016

Faston Mwale

THE PREMATURE termination of the mobilisation campaigns for the National Democratic Congress and the United Party for National Development earlier this year and the eventual hounding out of the leaders from Chilubi to create a campaign space for President Edgar Lungu and the Patriotic Front, who had arrived in the area to drum up support for their candidate, beats the logic of democracy.

The unprecedented act is inconsistent with the basic tenets of electoral democracy.

More recently, the PF has used the police to deny opposition political parties permits to hold public rallies. Regular in-house update and mobilisation meetings have also come under threat of arrest.

More precisely, Zambia's current political space is contaminated with apprehension, torrents of slander, hate-speech, ethnic denigration, calumny and fabrications of all kinds.

The prevailing toxic political

climate that has been occasioned by the PF is a serious negation of democracy and sets the path for a swing towards anarchism.

Of crucial concern is the fact that the growing undemocratic tendencies seem to have the blessings of the Electoral Commission of Zambia. The commission seems unmoved by the blatant disregard of the basic electoral rules by the PF. The neo-fascist tendencies emerging within their ranks are posing a central threat to the budding democracy. Zambia is a democratic state and elections are an

indispensable root of democracy.

The systematic narrowing of the political space for the opposition arises from fear of losing next year's general elections. But this is no good reason for the ruling party to take to fascism.

UNIP came and went, the MMD came and went, and so the PF came and is now on the way out. It is normal. Dialectics teach us that "everything that goes up, must come down at some point."

The going out of existence of the PF paves way for the birth of a new political order. The contradictions

we are witnessing today in the PF signify the beginning of the end of the PF empire, and, conversely connote the beginning of the socialist transformation of society.

Ever since the current regime came to power in 2016, poverty has been rising, hunger has been on the upswing, public healthcare has virtually collapsed while education has become a nightmare. Unemployment has risen to crisis levels and many are without jobs.

Alternative coping strategies are a real nightmare in the face of the persistent energy crisis, high trans-

port costs and unaffordable food prices. Our relentless fight for a dignified life is not thwarted by natural phenomena but by the perversity of the political and socio-economic system under which we live. Capitalism causes inequality and in turn inequality generates corruption, greed, poverty, hunger and conflict.

What Zambia needs is a leadership that is not motivated by material goods or lust for power and prestige, but one with a track record of dedicated service to the cause of humanity.

Copperbelt youths support artists and reject Lusambo's 'empty threats'

Haggai Silunjili

SOCIALIST Party Copperbelt Youths have pledged to stand with artists B-flow, Chellah Tukuta and the entire nation at large.

"We condemn Lusaka province minister Bowman Lusambo's action towards these young activists."

In June, Lusambo gave photographer Tukuta, gospel artist Chisenga Mumbi, and hip-hop artist Brian Bwembya (B-flow) 24 hours to apologise and "stop demeaning" president Edgar Lungu.

The three are alleged to have criticised the Lungu's government and the Patriotic Front on social media for "oppression" and the state of the country.

Lusambo said his office would not tolerate "lawlessness" and insults aimed at the presidency.

But Socialist Copperbelt youths rejected Lusambo's threats and said they would not be silenced over the issue.

Emotions

"We pledge to support these brave men. Young soldiers know that you are not alone in this fight for our human rights. We will together fight and win against these bullies, oppressors, the capitalist Patriotic Front leaders.

"We will not keep quiet on things that matter and concern us (Zambian youths). We will speak out without fear or favour as long as it is in the interest of serving the lives of the marginalised fellow Zambians.

"The PF government shall not deprive us of our right to speak, to write, or to publish our views the way they do to our resources.

"We will speak for our beloved country Zambia. We will speak out because it's our right, It's our free-

dom and you shall not take that away from us.

"Our dear Ministers in case you have forgotten your social studies. Allow me to remind you that freedom of expression refers to the ability of an individual or group of individuals to express their beliefs, thoughts, ideas, and emotions about different issues freely.

"We will not be intimidated by your empty threats. We will not allow ourselves to be bullied by our leaders, we refuse such leadership, we refuse to be silenced. We will not keep quiet on things that matter most in our lives.

"How is the nation going to develop if we citizens keep quiet because of threats from our elected leaders? How are we, the people, going to know what is happening in our lives? Criticisms drive this nation to be a better society. Diminishing freedoms does the opposite.

"I urge all youths out there, from north to south, east to west in different political parties, civil society and church organisations, to unite and stand against the threats and outright impunity being perpetuated by the PF government and its officials.

"The behaviour of PF officials is totally unacceptable. We demand an apology from them and not the other way round.

"Change will not come if human effort is not applied. Let's get involved and bring the change we seek.

"This call to fight for our brothers is not just for B-flow, Chellah or about Socialist Party youths, but about all the youths of Zambia.

"Youths who are concerned about a better tomorrow for our country, arise.

"Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time.

"We are the ones we have been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.

"Let's rise up and fight for our rights, we are the future we have been waiting for."



Copperbelt youths speak up to oppose oppression and the bullying of artists

Photo: David Uzi, Enah's Photography

Artists are very rare human beings and deserve state support, says M'membe

SOCIALIST Party president Dr Fred M'membe was asked recently by comrade Ngawa Mumba, what he was going to do for artists – especially female artists – in Zambia, if elected president. This is an edited version of his reply:

"I have an artist background. I was a music student from Form 1 to Form 5, and wrote music exams with the London School of Music and Drama. I played the trumpet in the St John's Secondary School brass band for three years, and I played the trumpet, the French horn, the melophone, and the baritone horn for two years in the St Francis Secondary School Band, Malole. I can read and write music," M'membe said.

"I am a collector and lover of Zambian and African art, and have a reasonable art collection. I have a close relationship with many Zambian artists. Artists are very rare human beings, and a progressive society pays a lot of attention to these rare human beings. They surely deserve state support.

"The Socialist Party government will take a keen interest in their work and will be the biggest collector of their work, literally guaranteeing them a market.

"The party envisages a society that actively engages the arts as a constructive influence and

vehicle to communicate its values, while embracing a diverse and pluralistic world.

The Socialist Party government will look for ways to stimulate capacities for, and activity in, research, thought, teaching, dialogue, innovative performance and exhibitions, addressing the role of the arts in their multiple forms and combinations, within and between communities.

"These endeavors are founded on the conviction that the arts influence both individuals and communities in deliberate and inadvertent ways. Artistic expression is a universal fact of human life, but its content, uses and influences are of a changing character over time and between societies.

"The arts do not shape events – the arts shape human beings – human beings shape events.

"The arts can help to contribute to a constructive national identity and pride; addressing cross-cultural and social differences through dialogue, impactful symbolism and shared experience, instead of confrontation and conflict.

"They can enrich societies through diversity; reconciliation of contemporary or historically-rooted hostilities through shared memory and the revealing of common fundamental goals; balance between individualism, community

and representational roles of the arts, interests in free expression and social responsibility in service of a healthy human society; and the use of the arts and leadership of iconic institutions to draw attention to select social issues for constructive policy response.

"Art is everywhere around us, and not just in the museums and galleries. Art fills the creator, as well as the admirer, with joy, as it provides us with inner calmness and happiness. Art doesn't discriminate between people and is equally special for the admirers of it.

"It is a common fact that every culture is associated with art. Art facilitates the preservation of culture, in the form of music, paintings and movies. With the help of art, we're able to learn the past culture and heritage of societies and facilitate future generations with the same. A lot of things in society stay preserved in the form of art, which otherwise cannot be retained by any other means.

"Art makes people optimistic about their future. Art can be used to help spread a message of inspiration, making people achieve great things in life. Art can be a form of communication between people, to focus on common issues for the betterment of humankind. Inspirational music is the best form of creative art."



I have been able to work on a project with the Socialist Party that involves using my personal land to promote farming and local food production, says Khotiye Mwikisa (above)

It is time for us to take back our country and bring about change

Khotiye Mwikisa

AS YOUTHS and citizens of Zambia, we must take an interest in issues that are affecting our people – it is time for us to take back our country.

Too many times we have chosen silence, too many times we have looked the other way and accepted things as the norm. This has to change.

We have to change our mind-sets, our mentalities, and work together to bring change to this country. We must not only ask the right questions, but must begin implementing change now.

Some of the major issues we are currently facing are poverty-increased disease and theft, corruption, mismanagement of funds, high inflation, unemployment, high electricity tariffs, a lack of empowerment, and a lack of investment in the people, the education system, healthcare, infrastructure.

What saddens me the most is the fact that these issues continue to worsen, and the current government refuses to disclose to us why and how we got here.

If we don't know the whys and wherefores, how do we progress? Do we have any functioning systems in place that help those in hardship? Does our welfare system actually function? Do the structures that have been put in place actually work?

One of the main reasons joined the Socialist Party is because youth empowerment is a priority, the younger generation is our future.

Real progress in society, by investing in our younger generation, must be made through the cooperative efforts of the people.

The people make the country, and the future generation is needed for its economic growth and sustainability

We are in the best position to define our expectations through experience and exposure, define what we want for the future of this country.

80 per cent of rural Zambia lives on less than a dollar a day with zero support from the govt

The Socialist Party has created a platform that caters specifically for the youth and younger generation, where we can bring our ideas and our initiatives and discuss how we can grow as individuals and grow our economy.

The party wants to create future leaders. We are needed in the progress of this country.

In addition, when we look at Dr Fred M'membe, an accomplished entrepreneur and philanthropist, we should consider him a leader because he continues to help our people in the community.

He has helped our people get educated, assisted with providing healthcare, sponsored people to go to university, both locally and internationally, helped people gain employment, provided jobs for a number of people, and created a platform for freedom of speech through his media business.

Dr M'membe, and comrades such as Dr Cosmas Musumali and Dr Ngenda Mwikisa, have taken part in the sustainable development of poor communities, and have many ideas and initiatives. Also, with a significant focus on social development, Dr Musumali continues to be actively involved in encouraging and promoting individuals to reach their full potential with his philanthropic measures.

These leaders have done all this by their own means without creating any attention to themselves. They have implemented this for public good, focusing on quality of life. These are qualities of leadership.

So, what am I trying to say? These leadership qualities indicate initiatives that an economy needs. The Socialist Party leaders have vision, placing value on future generations and promoting sustainability. They understand the importance of investing in the basic necessities

for our youths and future leaders, and this has been their main focus; education, agriculture and health.

In order to know where we are going, we need to know what our focus and investment should be.

We can see that Zambia is deteriorating disgracefully. Our education system is poor, so how then can we have a knowledgeable society? How can we implement what we do not know? How do we expect the Zambian economy to do better when the people are not being invested in? Does our welfare system protect and promote the economic and wellbeing of our citizens? Do we have access to financial aid in times of need? How high are the requirements to gain access to this funding? Statistics tell us that 62 per cent of the Zambian population survive on

Real progress in society . . . must be made through the cooperative efforts of the people. The people make the country, and the future generation is needed for its economic growth and sustainability

less than a dollar a day, and 80 per cent of people living in rural Zambia live in poverty. They have no access to clean water, no education system, no healthcare, and have close to zero support from the government. This is why we have 40 per cent of our children suffering from malnutrition. This is why we are not able to increase our civilisation as a country, why we cannot advance.

What is an economy without its people? A government should be able to provide the necessary training to improve the citizens' skills

This is why knowledge sharing is very important. It is the key

driver of economic growth. However, this is what we are lacking as a country.

The government has refused to invest in its people. Instead, it prefers to bring in experts from overseas, people who eventually return and re-invest in their own countries. Is there any chance of working in alliance with these organisations to train the citizens of Zambia? How can we create a platform where knowledge is shared, skill sets are improved, systems updated or upgraded?

I understand the current government claims that foreign direct investment (FDI) has increased and that the Chinese are "improving" our infrastructure, building our roads and therefore investing in our economy.

Apparently, the beautiful shop-

ping centres and malls are examples of this improvement.

Well, what do the numbers say? What is the actual impact? In the last four years, our FDI flow has significantly reduced from \$1.1 billion to about \$550 million, and the economy has nothing to show for it.

We do not need strategies and tactics that make us feel good, we need strategies and tactics that work for the benefit of the people. Where are our morals as a country? Since when did we become second-class citizens?

Also, in the last four years we have seen an increase in our im-

ports of 17 per cent, and this has only decreased by 2 per cent over the last couple months because of the pandemic. In terms of exports, 95 per cent of our profits come from copper.

Are we planning to diversify? Wouldn't agriculture be a great sector to invest in? How about energy? If these policies have been created by our policymakers but are not being measured or tracked, how then do we know which procedures and processes actually work?

These are the issues. We know what they are, and yes, we are speaking up about them, but what are the important things we need to do rather than simply condemn the current government?

As a part of the Socialist Party and understanding its purpose, I have been able to approach the party and put forward my initiatives and ideas that have been taken on board.

I simply asked, what can we do right now as youths, what changes can we make as abled citizens of Zambia, that portray confidence and hope.

I am all about knowledge sharing and I care about the wellbeing of the many.

With the assistance of the Socialist Party I have been able to work on a project that involves using my personal land to promote farming and local food production, and also to create an innovation platform to provide training and employment by working closely with other farmers, encouraging innovative ideas.

This is a choice I made, and the Socialist Party has helped by providing so much information, networks, and by connecting with others with similar ideas.

If I am in a position to help by teaming up with leaders who see

my vision and want to help me grow as leader, and if this will have a significant impact on the overall economy, then why not? I have keyed into that vision.

I urge my fellow youths and citizens to stand up for their rights. We must continue to demand answers. Yes, the issues in Zambia are not being addressed. Yes, the current government is trying to rule by instilling fear in us. But yes, we will continue to speak and our voices will be heard. We are the people of Zambia, and we will remain significant.

Change really begins with us, and it begins today. If you have any ideas, initiatives, or concerns, we have leaders who may not be in power yet, but will listen to you, take your initiatives on board and help you as long as it is for the benefit of the people, the economy, and it is the right thing to do.

So, avoid placing much focus on the issues, focus instead on the solutions. If you want to be a part of the movement and begin implementing change, reach out to leaders who not only say they will assist you once they are in office, but who are helping right now with the limited resources they have.

Lastly, business owners, or those who are privileged, educated, those in the diaspora: please step forward and speak for the majority of Zambians living in poverty. Think of ways to work with the Socialist Party for the benefit of the people.

Together we can accomplish so much more, and give the Socialist Party the opportunity to achieve even more as a nation.

● Khotiye Mwikisa MCIPS, is a procurement specialist in the Victoria Rail industry, a law student at Victoria University, and a member of the Socialist Party Youth League



Africans in solidarity over 'black lives matter' campaign

IN RESPONSE to the murder and lynching of African-American George Floyd by the US racist police, "African singers, artists, academics, journalists, civil society and business leaders," including International League of Peoples' Struggle (ILPS) vice-chair for Africa and the Middle East Demba Moussa Dembele, have released a statement of solidarity.

Addressing African-Americans, the statement reads, "We are waging ... struggles to advance our common causes: democratic freedoms, dignity, equality, social justice, the rights and wellbeing of women and all minorities, the integrity of leaders and institutions, economic independence, and finally the control of our cultural and historic destiny."

It says, "We, the people of Africa, are one people, and one nation. We are a 1.3 billion-strong nation stretched out over a whole continent, and with you in the African Diaspora, we are millions more. Together we can build the global African nation."

Various solidarity protests against the killing of George Floyd were held in Africa, whether directly, as in the case of two protests in Nigeria, or indirectly, as in South Africa.

Sabatho Nyamsenda of the Makerere Institute of Social Research offers his views about the interconnectedness of struggles against racism and capitalism: "Our right to breathe can only be guaranteed in a different system – free of capitalism and racism." And Johannesburg-based social and political commentator Tafi Mhaka says the US "cannot lecture Africa on human rights". According to him, "The truth is the West does not really care about human rights, especially the human rights of African-Americans and Africans, it just cares about preaching about human rights and striding the world stage with hypocritical pride and a pompous air." South Africa-based publication *New Frame* released four editorials in relation to the uprising in the US.

"What is won, or lost, in the streets of American cities in the rebellion now under way will not only matter in Minneapolis, Philadelphia, Baltimore and cities across the US. It will also matter in the streets of Sao Paulo, Paris and Johannesburg," the first one said.

Africa Anti-Imperialist Monthly

Illegal annexation of the West Bank is under way

Israel defies the world, ignoring treaties and UN resolutions

Vijay Prashad

ON JULY 1 this year the Israeli government began the annexation of the West Bank in defiance of the world and The Oslo Accords of 1994.

The accords provided the basis for a "two-state solution" in which the Palestinian people would control the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza in a future Palestinian state, but Israel was never going to allow that to happen.

The imposition of prison-like conditions on Gaza and the relentless bombardment of that congested and impoverished area has left its people bereft, and the open annexation of East Jerusalem through land grabs has changed the status quo of the city.

The Israeli state-backed policy that sent close to half a million Israeli settlers to occupy Palestinian land in the West Bank – often with the best water sources – has erased the possibility of any sovereign Palestinian state.

For years, Israeli settlers have encroached upon Palestinian land with the full backing of the Israeli state. Now, Israel has begun to incorporate these settlements – which the United Nations has called illegal – into Israeli territory.

Since UN Resolution 237 (1967), the United Nations has cautioned Israel not to violate the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949), which sought to ensure civilian protections in war zones, in the areas that Israel seized from the Palestinian people in the 1967 war.

UN Resolution 2334 in 2016 described the Israeli settlements as a "flagrant violation" of international law and had "no legal validity".

Apartheid

The current annexation by Israel shows disregard for international law and for the democratic aspirations of the Palestinian people.

What does this annexation of the West Bank mean?

It means that Israel has grabbed the land that it had formally ceded to a future Palestinian state, and it means that Israel is willing to incorporate the Palestinian natives of this land as non-citizen residents of Israel.

The land grab violates international law; the second-class status of Palestinians affirms Israel's status as an apartheid state.

In 2017, the UN's Economic and Social Commission of West Asia published a report called *Israeli Practices towards the Palestinian People and the Question of Apartheid*. The report showed that all Palestinians – regardless of where they live – are impacted by the apartheid policies of the Israeli state.

The annexation of the West Bank will only deepen Israel's apartheid policies. The Zionist state will not permit Palestinians full citizenship rights.

There is no intention to incorporate the Palestinian people into



Nabil Anani (Palestine), *Demonstration #2*, 2016, from a collection depicting the plight of Palestinians at the hands of Zionist colonialists

Israel with full citizenship nor to cede even a threadbare Palestine. This is barefaced colonialism of the old type.

Inside this kind of colonial aggression comes the demolition of Palestinian neighbourhoods in East Jerusalem and the destruction of olive groves.

In the few months of 2020, the Israeli state has arrested 210 Palestinian children and 250 students, as well as 13 Palestinian journalists. These moves are reported

by human rights groups and condemned by Palestinian civil society organisations but are otherwise ignored. This is the attrition of dignity.

All of this is illegal: the demolitions, the settlements, the apartheid wall that encircles the West Bank. UN resolutions, International Court of Justice rulings, civil society condemnations: none of it seems to make an impact.

Since 1948, Israel has acted with impunity as it has sought to anni-

hilate Palestine and Palestinians, to steal the "dowry" and dispose of the "bride".

Not far from the wall that Israel built surrounding the West Bank to humiliate the Palestinians are the traces of walls that Israel has knocked down to turn homes into dust. Those walls, which once held up roofs, were shelters for a people who have been thrown off their axis, made to walk at a tilt, always afraid of the settler's bullet or the soldier's handcuffs.

Prison walls are made of stone. Settlement walls are made of stone. But the walls of the homes of a Palestinian are made of that odd combination of fear and resistance.

There is fear that the cannons of the coloniser will blast through them, but there is resistance that acknowledges that the walls of the home are not the real walls. The real walls are the walls of fortitude and perseverance.

Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research

Campaign calls for Cuban medical heroes to get Nobel Peace Prize

A US campaign to award the 2021 Nobel Peace Prize to Cuba's Henry Reeve International Medical Brigade has been endorsed by prominent intellectuals, artists, politicians and ordinary citizens from around the world who recognise the brigade's outstanding contribution to world health.

Prominent endorsers include Nobel Peace Prize winner Adolfo Pérez Esquivel; former president of Ecuador, Rafael Correa; actors Danny Glover and Mark Ruffalo; writers Alice Walker, Noam Chomsky and Nancy Morejón; filmmakers Oliver Stone and Petra Costa; musician Tom Morello; and singer/songwriter Silvio Rodríguez, among numerous others.

They are joined by more than 10,000 people, who have so far signed the petition, as well as numerous organisations, including La Via Campesina (International Peasant's Movement), which represents 182 groups in 81 countries.

The campaign says, "Selflessness, solidarity and working for the common good characterise what the Nobel Peace Prize should be about, and these traits aptly describe Cuba's Henry Reeve International Medical Brigade, which has saved more than 80,000 lives since 2005, and has been fighting COVID-19 in 27 countries.



Henry Reeve International Medical Brigade

The campaign's letter to the Nobel Peace Prize Committee reads:

"In the midst of this global pandemic unprecedented in modern history, there is one group from a small country that has provided hope and inspiration to people around the world: the Cuban doctors and nurses who are part of the Henry Reeve International Medical Brigade now working in 22 countries to fight Covid-19. "In recognition of their magnificent solidarity and selflessness, saving thousands of lives by putting their own lives at risk, we urge you to award them this year's Nobel Peace Prize."

Henry Reeve was a 19-year-old American who left his home in Brooklyn, New York, to join the Cuban struggle for liberation against the Spanish in the late 1800s. The brigade named after him was formed by late Cuban

leader Fidel Castro in 2005 after the US rejected an offer to send 1,500 Cuban doctors to provide assistance in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

Since its formation, the medical personnel of the brigade, now composed of 7,400 voluntary healthcare workers, have been on the front lines providing disaster relief.

Before COVID-19, it treated more than 3.5 million people in 21 countries ravaged by the world's worst natural disasters and epidemics. An estimated 80,000 lives have been saved as a direct result of the Brigade's front-line emergency medical treatments.

One of their most heroic acts was in 2014-2015, when the Brigade sent more than 400 doctors, nurses and other health workers to West Africa to confront the ebola pandemic, working in regions where healthcare facilities and even basic infrastructure, such as roads and communications systems, were minimal.

The team constituted the single largest medical operation on the ground in Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia.

In recognition of the work of these specialists, the World Health Organisation (WHO) awarded them the prestigious Dr Lee Jong-Wook Memorial Prize for Public Health in 2017.

● You can sign the online petition here: www.cubanobel.org/nobelcuba

THE FIRST cases of COVID-19 were detected in December 2019 in Wuhan, China. In early March, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the rapidly expanding illness a pandemic.

With more than ten million people infected across the world as of late June, the effects of the pandemic on the world system reach far beyond the realm of public health; indeed, a reconfiguration of social life is underway.

The crisis spread by neoliberal capitalism is intensifying, as is the increasing necessity for an urgent transformation of the system along an alternative path.

In Latin America, the first cases of the disease were detected at the end of February. Four months later, at the end of June, the number of people infected in Latin America has reached for more than 23 per cent of the global total and 22 of daily deaths as the rapid spread of the virus has turned the region (particularly South America) into the new global epicentre of the pandemic.

The pandemic has furthered – sometimes dramatically – a series of economic and social processes that were already under way before the virus emerged. Capitalism's crisis of legitimacy and increasingly authoritarian neoliberal reforms have put these policies and the US-led imperialist offensive into question. The expansion of the virus has also shined a light on the dismantling and privatisation of public healthcare – the result of decades of neoliberalism – as well as on the increasing precariousness of labour and the living conditions and quality of life of the people. The pandemic has put on display the resounding failure of neoliberal policies to effectively combat the health and social crises.

Finally, the current situation puts into question the effects, actions, and challenges that these processes pose for people's movements and the alternatives that they are creating.

This crisis is not natural

NUMBERS of those infected and killed by the virus began to sharply increase in May 2020. These numbers, threatening to serve as the straw that causes the collapse of health systems throughout the region, clearly show the disproportionately impact of the crisis on the poor and the working class. This is especially true in Brazil, Chile, Peru, Panama, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, and Bolivia, where the number of those infected has (drastically, in some cases) surpassed 2,000 cases per million residents.

At the end of May, Brazil tragically became one of the first places in the world to reach such a high level of infections; by the end of June, it became the country with the second-highest number of deaths and infections, after the US. Meanwhile, migration from the Dominican Republic to Haiti has accelerated the rapid spread of infections and is edging towards a humanitarian tragedy.

This is not about a natural curse; the pandemic was not biologically predetermined. Its emergence – as is the case with all of the pandemics that we have experienced throughout the twenty-first century – is linked to the processes of the industrial production of food and the destruction of native forests and jungles, which is characteristic of neoliberal capitalism. In addition, the transformation of the pandemic into a health and humanitarian crisis is linked to public policies and the approach of governments as well as other social, institutional, and historic resources that the people count on.

In the case of Latin America, COVID-19 emerged at a time when people were already questioning the wave of neoliberal policies that has been developing in the region since 2015, from structural adjustment to privatisation and other regressive reforms.

Following the defeat of a wave of progressive governments in much of the region throughout the 2000s, in the last few years public health budgets were cut across most of these countries. These policies have resulted in the growth of poverty, precarisation, and inequality, as well as the dismantling of public health systems. In Argentina, for example, the ministry of health was combined with the ministry of social health and downgraded to a secretariat in 2018. This shift was part of the process of struc-



tural adjustment imposed by the International Monetary Fund through its agreement with former president Mauricio Macri. Such waves of neoliberal policies have confronted Latin America since the 1970s, never failing to trigger deleterious social consequences.

The current crisis, therefore, is not an isolated or anomalous event. Rather, it rests on top of decades of disastrous neoliberal policies and shines a light on neoliberalism's failure and inability to combat the underlying health crisis that it caused through its very own framework. It was the conditions of neoliberalism that triggered the crisis; not an inevitable series of external events. It is not a coincidence that the countries that are suffering the most from the impact of the virus are the countries whose governments are most closely aligned with the neoliberal project – the same countries that have ignored the recommendations of the WHO. The most dramatic case of this has been in Brazil, where the government, led by President Jair Bolsonaro, has underestimated the pandemic and created a permanent campaign in favour of maintaining unrestricted economic activity.

On the other hand, the state of public health is in less dire straits where progressive governments have respected the recommendations of the WHO. Argentina, for example, is undergoing an extended quarantine and bolstering its public health system, including developing tests through its national public science system. Cuba, which has a public health system that is well-known for its quality, has adopted policies of selective physical distancing and testing and is implementing a model of community medicine. Venezuela has among the lowest rates of infection and deaths per number of residents – despite the extreme commercial, financial, and media blockade and the permanent threat of the hybrid war led by the US. In the midst of the pandemic, this hybrid war threatens to compound the impacts of the health crisis with economic difficulties that could be used to justify external intervention.

Meanwhile, the pandemic has accelerated a deep global economic recession. The current crisis has compounded the slow economic growth that the region has experienced over the last seven years and which increased even further under the harsh neoliberal offensive. Regional and international organisations anticipate the worst economic contraction at a regional level since 1930. In April, the United Nations Economic

Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) anticipated a 5.4 per cent decrease in the GDP in 2020; by June, an estimate from the International Monetary Fund predicted that it would fall by 9.4 per cent. The economic crash particularly impacts countries, regions, and sectors that rely on the export of oil, gas, and minerals (where the fall in international prices of natural resources has been felt the most acutely); tourism and remittances from migrants; the flow of global finance (the Brazilian economy has been among the most deeply impacted by capital outflows); and participation in global commerce and global production chains. In addition to the recession and capital outflows, the people have been adversely affected by the devaluation of their currencies, and, in some countries, by bloated external debt.

This ominous economic reality has disastrous consequences for the majority of the population. International organisations warn of a substantial increase in unemployment; according to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), in 2020, unemployment will increase by at least 3.4 per cent – on top of the 8.1 per cent unemployment rate recorded in 2019 – placing the unemployment rate at 11.5 per cent in the region. This means that roughly 37.7 million people or more will be unemployed. Poverty levels are also expected to increase by an average of 4.4 per cent according to ECLAC, impacting 34.7 per cent of the population. This increase in poverty will mean a step backwards towards the reality that prevailed in the early part of the twenty-first century before the wave of progressive governments. Along the same lines, the United Nations World Food Programme has warned that roughly 14 million people across Latin America and the Caribbean may suffer from hunger and food insecurity this year. This current economic landscape, managed within a neoliberal policy framework, informs whether or not – and how many – resources are allocated to confront the pandemic. More often than not, protecting “the economy” comes before protecting the people.

Throughout 2019, the almost non-existent economic growth at the regional level, combined with neoliberal reforms, has opened Latin America to conflicts and to the collapse of the credibility of its governments. While the public health emergency reinforced presidential authority in many cases, as time pro-

gressed, the gravity of the current crisis and the profound impact of decades of neoliberal policies have made neoliberalism's growing crisis of legitimacy crystal clear.

Neoliberalism's use of the pandemic, part I: authoritarian reinforcement

THE IMF has referred to the global economic crisis unleashed by the pandemic as the “Great Lockdown”, drawing an analogy to the Great Depression that began in 1929. This reference not only highlights the similarities between the magnitude of both situations and their impact, but also attributes the crisis to the restrictive public health measures, particularly the implementation of physical distancing policies commonly referred to as “quarantine”. There is nothing new in the history of capitalism – from its very beginning to today – about economic powers opposing quarantine. The expansion of plagues has long been closely linked with commercial circuits, its transportation networks, and processes of capitalist globalisation.

In contrast, the strategies of isolation and physical distancing recommended by the WHO, as well as by the general dynamic of the crisis that the pandemic has provoked, have granted a new role to the state in the areas of health, social, and economic policies. Serious questions are being asked about the new role of the state under conditions of deep inequalities produced by neoliberal policies. However, the new role of the state does not necessarily imply a contradiction with the neoliberal order; during the financial crisis of 2008, for example, the state intervened to bail out banks and corporations.

The logic of quarantine and state intervention justified by the crisis has been used – especially by neoliberal governments in the region – to reinforce a politics that is increasingly repressive and authoritarian. This shift was already underway in many of the countries under siege by the neoliberal offensive – especially in the face of the increasing scrutiny that this model and its advocates have faced from the public, which has intensified over the last year.

This has also occurred in most countries throughout Central America. There, the sparse presence of social and health policies stands in contrast to the imposition of curfews and a state of emergency, the reinforcement of militarisation, and increasing punishment of those who disobey isolation measures, which in many cases has led to new violations of human rights, especially in Guatemala,

Honduras, and El Salvador. Along the same lines, the assassination of leaders of social movements and former guerrilleros in Colombia has increased since the emergence of the pandemic. In Peru, the Police Protection Act (bill N° 31012), approved in 2019, has been put into effect, granting impunity to security forces for repressive actions and brutality.

In Chile, the pandemic has pushed back the referendum to reform the country's constitution, giving a breath of air – at least for now – to a government that has been under scrutiny by sustained protests. Now the government is raising the possibility of going back on the call for the referendum, instead strengthening the security apparatus with the purchase of new equipment, putting the military back on the streets, instituting a curfew, and continuing to use repression to disperse the protests that are resurging in this new context.

Surely, the most dramatic example of this deepening of authoritarian logic is the situation in Bolivia, where a coup in November 2019 removed the government of the legitimate president, Evo Morales, refused to recognise the electoral results, and imposed a self-proclaimed “transitional” government led by Jeanine Áñez, a conservative senator from the Department of the Beni. The de facto government led by Áñez – marked initially by massacres in Sacaba and Senkata and by the return of neoliberal policies – has postponed the elections that had been set for 3 May in the context of the pandemic; it has used the logic of the quarantine to persecute its critics, attack the primarily indigenous majority, and deepen its policies of dispossession and corruption.

Among other measures, in May Áñez enacted Supreme Decree 4231, which makes it criminally punishable to publish written, printed, or artistic information that generates “uncertainty among the population”. This is a serious violation of the freedom of expression and the right to information. In addition, the government has responded with repression to protests that are demanding food, healthcare services, work, and the execution of the postponed elections.

Yet another example of the continuous threats to the last glimmers of democracy took place in May, when a group of military personnel led by Carlos Orellana, the Commander in Chief of the Bolivian Armed Forces, barged into the Plurinational Legislative Assembly with an ultimatum demanding the ratification – with no changes – of the Armed Forces' proposal for promotions. The proposal

had been sent by self-proclaimed president Áñez in February. This is a new level of authoritarianism for a government that is increasingly dabbling in corruption scandals. Now the government has attempted to postpone the elections once again, now proposed to take place in September – perhaps because Luis Arce, the candidate of the Movement for Socialism (Evo Morales's party) – is leading in the pre-election polls.

There is an increase in the power of the military in much of the region. In Bolivia, the military has gained power since the coup. In Brazil, the military has a substantial presence in Bolsonaro's government. In countries throughout the region, the military forces have been empowered to control security mechanisms and public spaces and have used the pretext of quarantine to exercise control over the population. The application of authoritarianism and neoliberal policies have become increasingly militaristic, using a range of tactics such as lawfare (or judicial warfare) and the restriction of democratic life. In other words, a neofascist beltway is emerging in the region.

Neoliberalism's use of the pandemic, part II: policies of structural adjustment

IN MID-APRIL, a group of right-wing politicians from Spain and Latin America – alongside the writer Mario Vargas Llosa, who has turned into a spokesperson for neoliberalism in recent years – released a declaration titled “The Pandemic Should Not Be a Pretext for Authoritarianism”. In this declaration, they react to the emergence of state interventionism, socialism, and populism by accusing “many governments” of taking “measures that indefinitely restrict basic freedoms and rights”. For them, following the tradition of Hayek and Friedman, liberty is considered only in an individualistic sense, linked to the protection of economic freedom. They characterise any policy that restricts the free market as being authoritarian, even if this policy is instituted by democratic institutions and governments, and/or by the masses. This same philosophy has been used to support and justify the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet in Chile (1973-1990). Along the same lines, Brazil's minister of foreign affairs, Ernesto Araújo, criticised the policies of the WHO and denounced what he calls the “communavirus”.

Alongside these discourses and policies, many of the region's neoliberal governments have taken advantage of the pandemic to advance neoliberal socioeconomic reforms



and socialism

and authoritarianism in the midst of a pandemic



Politics and the pandemic in Bolivia, Venezuela and El Salvador

— many of which were already part of the programme underway before the emergence of the virus — or to promote aid packages that benefit the economic powers. For example, in Paraguay, the government of Mario Abdo announced a “structural reform of the state” whose objective is to shrink the state apparatus, reduce public spending, privatise public sector enterprises, and decrease salaries and pensions. In Colombia, the government of Iván Duque approved Decree 444, which takes away economic resources from local governments in the country in order to subsidise banks and companies. Duque also managed to approve the Law of Economic Emergency, which gives the government superpowers to advance neoliberal labour reform and pension reform. However, he has not yet been able to implement either. Along the same lines, the dictatorship in Bolivia continues to dismantle the gains won by the government of Evo Morales and has deregulated the economy, incurred a new cycle of external debt, and approved transgenic agricultural reform.

Yet another tragic example of a neoliberal structural adjustment policy that has been implemented in the era of the pandemic is the case of Ecuador under President Lenin Moreno. Since the beginning of the pandemic, Moreno’s administration has continued the policies of structural adjustment that were imposed as part of its agreement with the IMF (approved in early 2019) despite the massive discontent and protests that it has faced. Between March and April 2020, in the midst of the pandemic, Moreno’s administration made significant debt payments in order to receive new IMF loans. To be able to access these new loans, Moreno’s administration is required to adhere to even harsher neoliberal policies. Finally, in May 2020, Moreno’s government obtained parliamentary approval for two bills: the Organic Law for Humanitarian Support to Combat the Crisis Derived from COVID-19 and the Organic Law for the Ordering of Public Finances. These bills advance the state’s structural adjustment policies, close or privatise public businesses and offices, facilitate the payment of lower salaries, and worsen the precarious conditions under which the working class lives and works. The structural adjustment package imposed by the IMF, and that Moreno’s administration agreed to, also includes substantial cuts to university budgets, which provoked student protests; the budget cuts to universities have been temporarily suspended by the supreme court as

a result. This austerity package has been criticized by large sections of the population and by the political opposition, creating a situation that could trigger a new crisis.

Instability and political crisis in Brazil

BRAZIL has become the regional epicentre of COVID-19 and one of the centres of the pandemic on a global level. The failure of the federal government to adopt sufficient measures to combat the pandemic has created a catastrophic situation that is edging towards a humanitarian tragedy. This inaction by the federal government is accompanied by President Jair Bolsonaro’s approach of underestimating, or even denying the problem, and placing concern for the economy before concern for the people. The gross underreporting of cases, mainly due to the scarcity of tests being carried out, does not allow us to have a true grasp of the health crisis underway. The Imperial College of London estimates that the total number of active cases of COVID-19 as of the end of June is at least three times higher than the official count (1.23 million active cases), bringing the estimate of active cases in the country to at least 3.7 million.

This health crisis is the greatest expression — and one of the causes — of the political and social instability that faces Bolsonaro’s government. This government has increased its political isolation, amplifying a tendency that was already in place. Bolsonaro has picked fights with legislative and judicial powers and has intensified conflicts with governors and mayors, breaking with his past allies and pressuring them to open up the economy (as is the case with the governors of the states of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, for example). On top of this, Minister of Health Luiz Henrique Mandetta resigned — as did his replacement — due to differences over the health policy pushed forward by Bolsonaro. Minister of Justice Sérgio Moro resigned and denounced the president while attempting to manipulate the federal police to guarantee impunity for his relatives from a variety of investigations that are underway. All of this has further isolated Bolsonaro’s government. As a judge, Moro was a main force in pushing forward the court case known as Lava Jato, which led to former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva’s imprisonment and his exclusion from the 2018 elections. Moro’s resignation in particular both exemplified and accelerated the declining support for Bolsonaro’s government by an important section

of the population — particularly the middle class — that had supported him from the beginning.

While Bolsonaro still has the support of a resistant core that rallies for him in the streets, carrying out caravans, actions, and encampments, the president has sought higher approval among low-income sectors. This effort has been based on two main discourses: the defence of the use of Chloroquine to treat COVID-19 and a supposed concern about employment. In the first case — contrary to scientific evidence — Bolsonaro seeks to instil the idea that there is a quick solution to the disease. In the second case, he uses a discourse that economic activities should return to ‘normal’, which could garner support from those who are in desperate situations and have seen their incomes diminish or disappear. In addition, Bolsonaro has tried to take credit for the economic aid created and approved by the National Congress (despite having initially opposed it and then attempted to decrease the amount of the aid package).

Bolsonaro has increasingly attempted to gain more support from the armed forces, whose members have increasingly been appointed to government positions. The most extreme example of this is their complete control over the Ministry of Health following the resignation of two former ministers of health in the middle of the pandemic. The position of interim head of the ministry and 40 other strategic positions are occupied by military personnel who lack training in the arena of health. More than 2,800 members of the armed forces have been appointed to administrative state roles under Bolsonaro’s administration.

Faced with efforts to remove Bolsonaro from the presidency, his administration has established alliances with legislators from parties that do not have any ideological commitment and who instead sell their votes to whoever is willing to pay more. This is what is called *centrão*. Leading the charge in these negotiations are military leaders who are generally critical of this kind of alliance but who are now seeking it out in exchange for positions in the civil government (some have been appointed to high-level positions in Bolsonaro’s cabinet).

It is important to note that the weakening of the government does not necessarily mean that Bolsonaro will be ousted, though it does allow society to see the correlation of political forces more clearly. A political dispute is currently being played out within the establishment

between neofascists — symbolized by the current president — and the traditional right wing, which is represented by other institutions (such as the parliament and legal system) and some state governors. In this context, Bolsonaro’s challenge is to avoid impeachment and to organise a parliamentary alliance that guarantees him support from the heads of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate.

The effort to defeat Bolsonaro has taken on an unprecedented central role and has created awareness among wide-ranging sectors of society: the Left, institutions (such as the parliament, legal system, and especially the federal supreme court), intellectuals, public figures, civil society organisations, and political parties — even those that represent the right wing. However, such advances bring up debates and challenges within the Left, such as the difficulty of creating a tactical alliance in defence of Bolsonaro’s impeachment among the most diverse sectors of society. This is indicative of the difficulty of bringing forward a left front that is capable of building a people’s project in Brazil and engaging in a dialogue with society about an adequate and uniting exit from the crisis.

Political organisations and people’s movements in Brazil have raised two important initiatives along these lines. The first is the construction of a Popular Emergency Plan in defence of life, health, income, and employment. This platform, in addition to denouncing the neoliberal and neofascist project that is underway, is based on the understanding that it is impossible to dissociate the social mobilisation that is confronting the pandemic from a qualitative and programmatic government plan. However, the current government — which is guided by private business interests and acts against scientific evidence — limits the possibility of state action in the fight against the crisis and makes it extremely difficult to overcome the challenges that the country is faced with.

The second initiative of political organisations and people’s movements in Brazil is the construction of a Politics of Solidarity in Brazil’s major peripheries, which helps coordinate a platform of people’s movements that encompasses their diverse initiatives. Based on solidarity, the battle of ideas, and grassroots work, this process aims to strengthen the organisation of the masses through a coordinated, popular project and to strengthen the people’s struggle as a whole. Solidarity in this context goes hand in hand with the struggle for rights: the right to quarantine with

physical distancing, guaranteed income, and access to water, food, and health.

A fierce struggle is necessary to win these rights and to gain access to public resources — and it is people’s organisations that channel this resistance and seek to embody hope for the people. Fighting for people’s rights in the context of the pandemic requires putting in the work to support building this process at all levels — from the local level to the national level — in a coordinated way. Either the working class will organise, fight for its life, and prepare for a political struggle, or it will witness the bourgeoisie pillage the country and bury the corpses of thousands of predominantly working-class and poor people.

People’s movements and the challenges ahead

IN OCTOBER 2019, a new wave of struggles spread throughout much of Latin America in response to the neoliberal offensive. Within just a few months, the challenges and confines presented by the pandemic would force the actions and demands of people’s movements in the region to take on a different shape, each in their own way. But this change in the conditions of struggle has not meant their disappearance. New forms of organising have arisen through social media, with Twitter storms and virtual meetings; *cacerolazos* (the banging of pots and pans in protest, often from balconies and windows in the era of COVID-19); street demonstrations adhering to social distancing with protesters wearing masks; and, more recently, the return of strikes and the blockading of streets and highways. This new face of people’s protests has become more and more present in the context of the worsening health, social, and political conditions facing the poor and the working class.

The effects of the pandemic and its use to further the capitalist agenda have manifested through a significant increase in layoffs; reductions in salaries; the increasing precariousness of work, especially in the private and informal sectors; and a notable advance in the digitalisation of work (such as the increasingly precarious “uberisation”) that capitalists had already begun to promote before the emergence of the virus. Faced with this daunting reality, workers in the region have responded with various actions, including delivery workers’ and other essential workers’ strikes on both a regional and global level. It is worth paying particular attention to the conflict and demands of health

workers throughout the region. The situation is even worse in sectors with precarious or occasional work that is insufficient for sustaining life. The absence of social policies has had a disastrous impact, aggravating and triggering plagues of hunger and illness (to read more about this on a global level, read our twentieth newsletter (2020), *Hunger Gnaws at the Edges of the World*). In this context, people’s movements have carried out heroic work, often in very difficult situations, organising canteens for the people; providing food and basic goods that are necessary for public health; contributing to collective organisation; and demanding effective solutions from governments. Among these efforts, it is worth mentioning the distribution of food by organisations in poor neighbourhoods in Chapare (Bolivia) that have been persecuted by the dictatorship. In Brazil, more than more than 1,200 tonnes of food were delivered to shantytowns in cities throughout the country by the Landless Workers’ Movement (MST) and other people’s movements. In Argentina, organisations linked to the popular economy have led such efforts, demanding food and measures that guarantee assistance to poor neighbourhoods that are suffering from the rapidly spreading virus.

In Guatemala, El Salvador, and Ecuador, women hang white flags along the highway and families hang white flags from their homes to symbolise widespread hunger and the demand for food. In Panama, the poor are protesting by blockading the streets and organising *cacerolazos*. In Santiago, Chile, residents of poor neighbourhoods who have protested and constructed barricades are being repressed by the same government that only offers them scraps. In El Alto, La Paz, and elsewhere in Bolivia, workers and neighbours protest, denouncing the lack of work and food. Similar events have unfolded in Bogotá (Colombia) and other large urban centres in the region. The rejection of the neoliberal agenda in Ecuador; *cacerolazos* and exploding fireworks in the streets of Bolivia demanding elections; and *panelazos* (*cacerolazos*) in Brazil alongside the chants *Fora Bolsonaro!* (‘Get out, Bolsonaro!’) seem to indicate the reinvigoration of people’s struggles under the new conditions raised by the pandemic.

The spread of the virus in poor neighbourhoods threatens to provoke a social and health catastrophe. This reality is not limited to urban areas and has been denounced by movements across the region, from the Amazonian departments in Colombia (among the poorest regions in the country) to Haiti. Organisations of indigenous peoples have also denounced the dire situation looming over their homelands; as of late May, there are at least 20,000 cases of infection in the Amazon basin according to the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).

The pandemic has also exposed and aggravated the traumas of injustice and the double exploitation, oppression, and violence against women and against people across the LGBTQIA+ spectrum. Poor women in particular have been impacted by the loss of income, the responsibility of domestic caretaking, and the increase in violence, as seen by the growing numbers of femicides. In Chile, the Coordinadora Feminista 8M has played an important role, taking a lead in organising collective feminist caretaking for families and populations in these areas; shedding light on and demanding urgent attention towards the need for the eradication of intrafamilial violence and the protection of women, children, and adolescents; and demanding the right not to leave home to work during the pandemic and the right to guaranteed income and other emergency health measures.

Feminist women’s movements and other movements with a feminist analysis have voiced loudly and clearly that caring for human life is worth more than profits.

● This is an edited extract from *Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research’s study, CoronaShock and Socialism. You can read the full report here: <https://www.thetricontinental.org/dossier-30-coronashock-in-latin-america/>*



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