



One hundred new bicycles from a goal of 10,500 have been distributed to educators volunteering for the Fred M'membe Literacy and Agroecology Campaign – full story Page 4

# We are committed to free education, and that will never change

Fred M'membe  
Socialist Party president

IN OUR campaigns for the August 12 elections we repeatedly and consistently said, "For us, there is no choice between being principled and unelectable; and electable and unprincipled. We should win because of what we believe in." This remains our position, forever.

While others flip flop on many issues, positions and promises, we remain consistent and committed to our principles and programmes. There will never be a U-turn, capitulation, ifs or buts on free education on our part.

Today, we have an increasing number of young people from poor families who are not attending school at all levels because they are not able to pay school fees. No young person should be excluded from

attending school because they cannot afford to pay fees. No one should be sent home from school or refused results of exams because fees have not been paid. All our young people must be entitled to free, quality education.

When any young person fails to acquire the basic skills needed to function as a productive, responsible member of society, the entire society – not to mention the individual young person – loses. The cost of educating our young people is far outweighed by the cost of not educating them. Adults who lack basic skills have greater difficulty finding well-paying jobs and escaping poverty.

Education for girls has particularly striking social benefits; incomes are higher, and maternal and infant mortality rates are lower for educated women, who also have more personal freedom in choices. And why should the burden of educating



There will be no fees; uniforms, books, pens, pencils and school meals will be provided

our young people be solely left on the already overburdened shoulders of the parents?

The Zambian masses need to take the economy and political power into their own hands in order to provide decent education, public services and standards of living for all – a society in which all can enjoy the full benefits of economic development.

Capitalism, by its very nature, cannot provide this. It is only a socialist transformation of society that holds a brighter future for our people.

A free education policy is therefore necessary to ensure access for all, despite a citizen's wealth. Without a free admissions and school fees policy, equal access is impossible.

The Socialist Party in govern-

ment will provide compulsory, quality, free education from nursery school to Grade 12. College and university education will be free for all Zambians. There will be no fees; uniforms, books, pens, pencils and school meals will be provided.

The socialist government will provide state-of-the-art 21st

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**THE SOCIALIST PARTY** stands for #realchange with policies based on justice, equity and peace. Manifesto/policies download details and information about how to join the party are on our back page

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# Musumali: we believe in youths, the future

## They are the majority and can carry Zambia forward

Socialist staff reporter

SOCIALIST Party general secretary Cosmas Musumali has reaffirmed the party's belief in young people to work for a better Zambia.

"As comrade Fred M'membe has repeatedly said, 'The future is not built in the future, but on the threshold of what we do today'," he said.

"While the number of young people who have been elected in the last general election is truly disappointing, the Socialist Party continues to believe in the youth and their potential to carry this great country forward. After all, they are the majority, more than 66 percent of our population."

Speaking in the run-up to the election, Dr Musumali said he was impressed with the way young people had "flocked to swell the ranks of the party".

"It is heartening and encouraging to see the ever-growing numbers of young people joining the ranks of the Socialist Party," he said. "Our party is becoming more and more youthful, and that's in addition to the already established dominance of women in our membership."

"To understand this development, you have to look at the misery of the masses of our people and the cruelty of the capitalist system that has caused it."



Henry Mwelwa: the Socialist Party is a school of life

Dr Musumali said women and youths were most affected and deprived under the capitalist system.

"It is therefore not a coincidence that these two groups in society are at the forefront of a search for genuine, revolutionary change. This is the change they seek through their self-organisation in the Socialist Party. SP is their party, their vehicle for political, economic and cultural self-emancipation."

But he said Zambian young people would not be unique in serving as key drivers of a revolutionary process.



Socialist Party general secretary Cosmas Musumali with elected SP councillors (left to right): Bright Mukupa, Mwiche ward, Shiwang'andu constituency, Northern Province; Mike Musenge, Chifwenge ward, Chilubi constituency, Muchinga Province; Mumba Zulu, Katipa ward, Nyimba constituency, Eastern Province; and Kelvin Mwenda, Kilale ward, Mufumbwe constituency, Northwestern Province

"Young people have been the pillars of transformative change throughout the history of humanity," he said. "They have been the energy behind the overthrowing and dismantling of many oppressive and exploitative systems."

"Frantz Fanon (a medical doctor, internationalist, and freedom fighter, from the Caribbean island of Martinique) stated, 'Every generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfil it, or betray it.'"

"It is this mission that the revolutionary youth of Zambia are today discovering."

### Questions

"Prominent Guyanese historian, political activist, and academic, Walter Rodney said, 'Most youth in Africa will have heard the axiom that each generation rewrites its own history. It does so not merely for giving different answers to the same questions, but by posing entirely different questions based on the stage of development that a particular society has reached.'"

Dr Musumali cited Henry Mwelwa as an example of the positive resilience of youth after he recounted his experience of losing a ward election.

"A lot has been said about my

election loss," Mwelwa said. "I equally lost friends and loved ones just after the election results were announced. It was truly a dark day but my great thanks to the comrades and family who have remained steadfast, who continued to encourage and give me hope."

"As a young person, it may look like a big loss in the eyes of some, but truth be told, I have equally gained more."

"The experience with the Socialist Party is a school of life, an experience of learning and re-learning, of improving oneself at many levels. It is a process that teaches one to read, to be patient, to self-critique and learn to listen to others."

"I have no doubt that I have a bright future in politics and in our democratic dispensation."

"A million thanks to the Socialist Party Zambia and to my comrades, president Dr Fred M'membe and general secretary Dr Cosmas Musumali, for believing and trusting a youth like me to contest on the party ticket as a ward councillor. You are truly great leaders."

Dr Musumali said: "To all young people: don't give up, don't lose hope. Again, as comrade Fred M'membe has always said, 'It gets dark sometimes, but the morning comes.'"

## Very serious planning will be needed if jobs are to be generated

ACTION needs to be taken today if employment is to be found and a bright future guaranteed for "our children and grandchildren", Socialist Party Fred M'membe says.

"As I have often said, the future is not built in the future; it is built on the threshold of what we do today – the actions we take and decisions we make today."

"And as it is often said, no one has a crystal ball, but we are in a time of great change, and many of the traditional jobs our people used to have are disappearing very fast," Dr M'membe said. "Many of the skills our people have are increasingly becoming irrelevant and are not needed going forward."

"So, what jobs will be there for our children and grandchildren for them to have happy and fulfilling lives? Many jobs are disappearing or are becoming obsolete."

"The jobs we had in the mines in the 1900s are fast disappearing, are being replaced by more efficient high-tech machines."

"The telephone companies used to employ many people but today technology has changed and very few people are needed to provide a more extensive, efficient and effective service."

### Obsolete

Dr M'membe said that what he wanted to highlight was that all of these new ways of doing things were impacting jobs.

"People who worked in these soon-to-be obsolete lines of work will have no jobs. Today, no one knows for sure which jobs will or will not exist or how they will morph into new incarnations of themselves," he said.

"The old days of having a real estate agent pick out a home for you to tour are swiftly slipping away. There are so many sites to help you choose the location of a new home. The jobs of real estate agents are starting to disappear."

"It won't be long before truck and taxi drivers start losing their jobs to driverless vehicles. Driverless technology is advancing quickly. It's estimated that roughly 33 million autonomous vehicles

will be on the road by 2040. "It pains me, but gone will be the days of researching or reading in a library. The digital library is at everyone's fingertips. The jobs of librarians are fast disappearing."

"In the old days, there had to be a person to check you out, take your money and give you change or charge your credit card. We are rapidly moving into becoming a cashless society. Gone will be the need even to learn the life skill of making change, our computers will perform all of the banking needs we have."

"As drones get more sophisticated, there will not be a need for humans to deliver packages and mail."

"Banks are going to physically downsize, as much of our monetary transactions are done digitally. Bank branches will begin to close as online banking increases. Even FIFA is relenting to pressure to introduce more technology into football with video assistant referees."

"We have overfished our waters in many places, and global warming is negatively impacting remaining species of fish. If we are to eat fish in the future, it will most likely be farm raised. The typical fisher will no longer be able to go out and fish."

"Many legal jobs could soon be automated. It is similar to the medical profession. Our digital world can instantaneously provide case history and feed your data into a system to find your legal solutions. The documentation could also be filed electronically. Again, jobs gone."

Dr M'membe added that automation was already interrupting factory jobs.

"Before the internet, it was really great to talk to a live person who could help you cobble together your whole travel schedule. Today, there are many easy-to-use websites and apps that can help you research and book every part of your journey. Jobs gone! Where will jobs come from?"

"Very serious planning is required. It's not just a question of how many foreign investors you bring in. More needs to be done and considered in our engagement with foreign capital or we won't get the jobs we are so desperately seeking," he said.

## This journey is about caring and sharing

SOCIALIST Party Copperbelt coordinator Gilbert Mumba says the socialist journey is about caring, sharing, teaching, learning, teamwork and team spirit.

And he adds that his personal journey has taught him that, "no one person can do everything alone, we all need each other and we make decisions collectively".

"Raised in the Copperbelt Province, I had always wanted to work in the mines so that I could contribute effectively to the development of my country," he said.

"After graduating as a metallurgist from Copperbelt University I joined one of the mining giants so I could achieve what I dreamt of in life. However, one thing struck me the most, although I had a good job and good position, our general workers had very bad working conditions and the worst treatment you could imagine."

"I consulted the weak trade union leadership, who seemed to be lost without direction, and it was at that point I began to understand the importance of system change."

"I realised then that although we could change union leaders, as long as the entire system remained the same, nothing would be achieved. I therefore left my employment and became a full time member of the Socialist Party."

Mumba says it was it was "the greatest decision" he ever made.

"My journey in this revolutionary movement has been a life-changing one, and I have come to understand that human life should come first before anything else. If we



Socialist Party Copperbelt coordinator Gilbert Mumba (right) gets his team into the revolutionary spirit before the business of the day gets under way

all become concerned about each other, then the world will be a better place to live in and that's what socialism is all about."

"On this journey I have learnt that no one person can do everything alone. We all need each other and we make decisions collectively. We learn to make decisions collectively and although at times these decisions may be wrong we learn from them and become even better decision makers."

"This journey is not about becoming number one, it's not about being the best, it's not about being the smartest or wisest person."

"This journey is about sharing ideas and perfecting these ideas together, it's about teaching what you know and learning what you don't know, it's about teamwork and team spirit."

"Every human being has a high chance of contributing effectively to this life if given the basic necessities in life, which include:

- Good health and health facilities
- Good food
- Good education
- Decent shelter

"A country like Zambia – and many other African countries – can certainly achieve these basic needs for all if their systems of governance allow."

"At present, socialism is the only life saver for our African continent with its high levels of poverty, high unemployment and many diseases."

"I have no regrets that I took this journey, and with each day I look forward to the next one because I know that very soon socialism will triumph."



# Socialist Party has a vital role to play in opposition – M’membe

## Checks and balances are important for democracy

Socialist staff reporter

THE SOCIALIST Party has a vital role to play in Zambia’s multiparty system, party president Fred M’membe says.

Interviewed by Costa Mwansa on Diamond TV’s Costa programme, Dr M’membe said political opposition was an important part of a democracy.

“Without an opposition, governance becomes very difficult and dangerously so. We saw what happened with the Patriotic Front. The PF tried very hard to obliterate, to cripple the opposition,” Dr M’membe said.

“The ending is what we have now and that happens to any regime that tries to suppress the opposition, to suppress critical voices.

“If they had allowed the proper functioning of multiparty political dispensation, they would not have ended up the way they did.”

He said the PF’s mistake was to pursue absolute power without checks and balances.

### Dictators

“Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. And we can see it in the way the PF ended. The beginning of any regime is usually on a popular note. The people today we call dictators when they came to power were celebrated. Even Idi Amin when he came to power was celebrated, Mobutu was celebrated, Ceausescu in Romania was celebrated, but look at the ending.

“That’s how power that is not checked, power that has no breaks, ends.”

Dr M’membe said the exercise of power must be a constant practice of modest self-limitation, and that without that the ending will be disastrous.

“I hope all of us, including our brothers and sisters who are in government today, have learnt from this and many other aspects

of history. Power must be shared with others,” he said.

Asked about the Socialist Party’s election result, Dr M’membe said there were many factors involved, not the least of which was the fact that the electorate wanted the PF out at any cost.

“The people decided to change the government. It was a swing from one end of the pendulum to the other and that it is difficult to stop,” he said.

“The result was surprising. It’s not the result we expected. It’s not the result we wanted but the whole process was not just about one election. It was a process. We were 15 candidates, almost like 14, 15 parties. Definitely only one party would win,” he said.

“We are not the first party to lose an election and moreover after losing an election you have to take stock of what happened. Where did you go wrong? There were many factors that can explain our performance.”

Dr M’membe told Mwansa the outcome had nothing to do with the party’s message and that many external factors played a part.

“One factor among others was the administration of the election that we did not pay attention to, which in some way was created by the PF’s own practices over the years that led to their opponents organising in a much smarter way, literally outdoing them at their own game,” he said.

But he added that while the practices might have been necessary to remove the PF, they must end there. If they continued, the country’s electoral process would be in chaos.

Dr M’membe said the appointment Nelly Mutti as the first woman to serve as speaker of the National Assembly and Attractor Chisangano as first deputy speaker was a positive development.

“It’s good to have females leading key organisations, key institutions of the state,” he said. “It is the first time we are having a female Speaker. It is a delight to all of us.”



● The Fred M’membe Literacy Programme has been extended to Shangombo. Illiteracy levels average out at about 55 percent nationwide, with majority females. Literacy and agroecology – Page 4



Juliet Mwape

## The election was neither free nor fair because of restrictions

THE AUGUST 12 election was neither free nor fair because of the Patriotic Front’s restrictions on opposition parties, Juliet Mwape, former parliamentary candidate for Chinsali constituency, Muchinga Province, says.

But she adds the election was “the most crucial one we have ever had in Zambia”.

“We witnessed a lot of violations of the electoral code of conduct in so many ways,” she said.

“The Socialist Party had the theme of ‘the poor must rule themselves’, which was OK because the majority Zambians are poor.

“Our campaign message as a party was OK and people welcomed it. Unfortunately, this year’s election did not base itself on messages. All people wanted was to have change because the PF government’s economy was so bad. There was rampant mistreatment by cadres and many other things that frustrated voters to change the government,” Mwape said.

“Electoral violence didn’t happen to female candidates only male candidates. If our goal is to have more women in politics such violence should stop, but social media lies and cyber bullying was experienced at every level of candidature.”

Mwape says the election was expensive because of money “being dished out like no man’s business”.

“If all that money had been channelled into development projects and school fees for the vulnerable, PF could have been through. It wasn’t worth buying votes, slaughtering cows, giving out mealie meal and cooking oil, and also cooking nshima for the voters. It destroyed the process of having a fair election and this is what has led us to having 400 petitions.

“We can’t get the development we want as a nation when anyone with money can buy votes and concentrate on personal matters,” she said.

“The Socialist Party didn’t carry the day, but we won in some way because we were disciplined. Had it not been for the propaganda the results would have been OK.

“The buying of councillors and constituency executives was a big drawback, which also made for poor results.

“We have learned a lot. Our beginning should start today for us to expect a better tomorrow,” she said.

# The Socialist Party is committed to free education

● From Page One

century education. Computers, science laboratories, and quality teaching aids will pave the way for a science-based curriculum.

Under the socialist government, everyone will be provided with an opportunity to learn to read and write. The literacy campaign started by the party in June 2018 in Lusaka will be extended to cover the whole country. Illiteracy will be completely eradicated within 10 years.

This ambitious programme for education will be possible through:

- Mobilisation of the country’s social capital. All Zambians with secondary school certificates will be incentivised and encouraged to volunteer hours towards the literacy campaign and formal school programme.

- Building a system of high-quality childcare places owned and controlled by local communities and directly supported by government.

## This is what equal access can achieve

I BELONG to a generation that was extremely lucky when it came to education, Dr M’membe writes. We were the first children of this country to start school in an independent Zambia in January 1965.

Before independence on October 24, 1964, there was no free education – people had to pay for everything. We didn’t have to pay anything at any level of our education.

We were given free uniforms, exercise and text books. We went to school, not only to learn, but also to eat. We were given milk and biscuits.

Humble workers and peasants’ children went to the same schools as the children of our leaders, including the children

of our president, Dr Kenneth Kaunda.

Today, it is almost impossible for humble workers and peasants’ children to be in the same class, sleep in same dormitory and eat in the same dining hall with the children of ministers and presidents.

In those days, even children from rural schools could easily make it to the University of Zambia. The best Cambridge ‘O’ Level student in 1976 was my classmate, Charles Malata, from St Francis Secondary School, Malole, Kasama – the son of a humble mine worker from Luan-shya. Today, Charles, based in Cambridge, is Professor Malata, one of the world’s best plastic surgeons.

The best student in geography that year for the whole Commonwealth came from Kalabo Secondly School, Dr Cosmas Musumali, now the general secretary of the Socialist Party.

Two years later Cosmas got a scholarship to study in West Germany where he obtained his bachelor’s, master’s and PhD in economics.

This is what equal access to education can do. Can the son of a humble worker or peasant achieve this in today’s Zambia?

There are millions of working-class people who agree that free education, despite all its problems, was a historic gain that must be brought back and defended.

We are not short of money to fund them. And, moreover, the children of the well-to-do will have free education, paid for by the same hum-

ble workers whose children cannot go to school because of fees.

We should also not forget that workers generate all the money in government coffers and in private enterprises. There is a lot of workers’ money – NAPSA and other pension funds – sitting in banks and being misused to build shopping malls and other symbols of wealth of little or no benefit to the workers.

Instead of leaving it up to individual profit-seeking capitalists and their agents in government to decide how this money ought to be invested, the working class should decide on a democratic basis where and how the wealth generated by them is invested. Without a doubt, there would be reasonable amounts available for investment in free education at every level.

This is what we promised and this is what will always be our principle, programme and position on free education.



# AGROECOLOGY CAMPAIGN



A Fred M'membe Literacy and Agroecology campaign class in Vubwi district, Eastern Province. Inset: national campaign co-ordinator Graster Mundi

# The cost of using chemicals

Socialist staff reporter

THE CONSEQUENCES of using conventional farming practices with chemical seed, fertiliser and sprays are devastating, Graster Mundi, Socialist Party agroecology national campaign coordinator, says.

"For a very long time now, Zambia has used conventional farming practices devastating to the country, both in terms of health and also environmental degradation," he said.

"The practices also strangle our peasant farmers economically as the chemical inputs are extremely expensive.

"The Socialist Party has a running programme dubbed the Fred M'membe Literacy and Agroecology Campaign, the primary objective of which is to teach the elderly illiterate how to read, write and speak in English, but it is also a programme of healthy food production using agroecology.

## Struggle

"So, this campaign seeks to achieve two things at the same time; to give our people the dignity of knowing how to read and write, and also to liberate them from an exploitative mode of farming.

"To achieve this, training workshops are being conducted across the country teaching farmers how to make organic fertilisers, how to preserve natural soil fertility, water management, and ecological insect-pest control.

"This is not an easy undertaking but we simply have to struggle for

it because it's the only way out for the poor. It is beneficial on many fronts because farmers can sustain themselves economically, and it is also environmentally friendly and socially viable. The party will continue with this struggle with or without electoral victory," he said.

The campaign kicked off in May this year in conjunction with Brazil's MST Samora Machel Internationalist Brigade and focused initially on three provinces; Lusaka, Eastern and Western.

Paxcina Mundia Imikendu, local coordinator of the campaign in Western Province and a resident of a region of the Lozi people, says the number of illiterates in English in her area is very high and the initiative will enable 600 people, divided into 30 on-site classes, to become literate.

"The campaign has a great acceptance in the region, in the sense that people understand that they will be able to write, read and speak English, as this initiative will reduce the number of illiterates in our region," Imikendu said.

For her, the campaign is also important because as people become literate, they become multipliers of agroecology. In her words, "train one person (in agroecological practices) so they can train other people in the region".

In Malambo, Eastern Province, local coordinator Emmanuel N'mbanda said agroecology was important for the local population.

He said there were already agroecology experiments in Malumbo, but the campaign, "Will help more people get their hands dirty, while raising awareness about not using chemicals that destroy the land."



● DURING the first half of August, a "Bicycles for Zambia" programme distributed 100 new cycles – from a goal of 10,500 (new and/or used) – to all educators who volunteered for the Literacy and Agroecology Campaign, developed jointly by the MST Samora Machel Internationalist Brigade and the Socialist Party.

The international solidarity campaign "Bicycles for Zambia" is a project that initially is trying to raise 30,000 euros for the purchase of 10,500 bicycles (new and/or used) for students and educators of literacy and agroecology classes in the country and help people attend difficult-to-access classes.

In addition to individual con-

tributions, the campaign is supported by international organisations, such as Whyhunger, USA. The next step will be to acquire 2,000 bicycles to give to all the students at this first stage of the campaign.

Zambian educator Judite Mwalemb says access to a means of transport will contribute to the promotion of the campaign. "This bicycle will help me and the other teachers visit our students," she said. "There are times when some cannot come to us because they are too far away, others are close, but it's hard to visit them."

The displacement of a large part of the population is a challenging issue with many people having to walk between 15 and 30km daily to get to school.





## The social mission in daily life faces many challenges

ONE OF the great challenges for Christians is as old as our faith. How do we connect worship on Sunday to work on Monday?

How is the Gospel proclaimed, not only in the pulpits of our parishes, but also in our everyday lives? How does the church gathered on the Sabbath act as the people of God are scattered and active every day of the week? How can we best carry the values of our faith into family life, the market place and the public space? How do we love our neighbour, pursue peace and seek justice in everyday choices and commitments?

Every believer is called to serve “the least of these”, to “hunger and thirst for justice”, to be a “peacemaker”. We are called by God to protect human life, to promote human dignity, to defend the poor and to seek the common good.

This is an essential part of what it is to be a believer.

This social mission is advanced in many ways – by the prophetic teaching of our religious leaders, and by many structures of charity and justice within our community of faith. But the most common and, in many ways, the most important Christian witness is often neither very visible nor highly structured. It is the sacrifice of parents trying to raise children with concern for others, the service and creativity of workers who do their best and reach out to those in need, the struggle of business owners trying to reconcile the bottom line and the needs of employees and customers, and the hard choices of public officials who seek to protect the weak and pursue the common good.

The social mission is advanced by teachers, farmers, sales persons and entertainers. It is also carried forward by believers who join unions, neighbourhood organisations, business groups, civic associations, groups working for justice, or environmental, civil rights or peace groups. It is advanced by Christians who stand up for the values of the Gospel.

This mission is the task of countless Christians living their faith without much fanfare or recognition, who are quietly building a better society by their choices and actions day by day. They protect human life, defend those who are poor, seek the common good, work for peace, and promote human dignity.

Working for justice in everyday life is not easy. There are complex and sometimes difficult challenges encountered by women and men as they try to live their faith in the world. We applaud the efforts of all who try to live the Gospel by pursuing justice and peace in their everyday choices and commitments.

## Safeguarding political and social stability is a priority

EVERYTHING possible was done to remove the Patriotic Front from power, and justifiably so.

They had terribly mismanaged the affairs of our country and introduced a very bad political culture based on gross intolerance and unbridled violence.

But in the efforts to remove them some of their own bad methods and practices were deployed. They were literally beaten at their own game in all aspects of the political and electoral processes. It really was a case of violence begets violence and electoral malpractices generating counter electoral malpractices.

But what does the future hold in terms of these bad methods and practices? Are they going to be continued even after the Patriotic Front is gone? Or have they become a permanent feature of our political culture and electoral processes?

If they continue what will become of our country's politics and elections?

Is this a recipe for political and social stability? I believe we should make safeguarding political and social stability our basic task, promoting political and social fairness and justice as core values, and ensuring a happy life for the people as our collective fundamental target. Laws must be enforced fairly and justice administered impartially.

We shouldn't forget that political ideas are

worthless if they are not inspired by noble, selfless sentiments. Likewise, noble sentiments are worthless if they are not based on correct and fair ideas.

## Diversity, pluralism are vital

EVERYONE'S life in this country is inevitably mixed with every other life and, no matter what laws or constitutions we come up with, no matter what precautions we take, unless the people we meet are kindly and decent and human we are going nowhere.

Decency, integrity, and love come from human beings, rather than from constitutions, laws and institutions. In any true democracy, more is needed than just laws and institutions. We must hold on to some values and norms, some expectations and aspirations. This is the environment, the atmosphere that makes democracy work.

The fundamental value we must have is a respect for diversity and acceptance of pluralism. Gone are the days when everyone was supposed to think the same way, belong to the same party, and support the same programme.

## We need to figure things out

LET'S learn to argue with facts and figures. Let's learn to have a head for figures. That is to say, we must attend to the quantitative aspect of a situation and make a basic quantitative analysis.

Every quality manifests itself in a certain quantity, and without quantity, there can be no quality. To this day, many of our politicians still do not understand that they must attend to the quantitative aspect of things – the basic statistics, the main percentages and the quantitative limits that determine the qualities of things. They have no figures in their heads and therefore cannot help making mistakes and wrong conclusions.

Zambia's problems are complicated, and our brains must also be a little complicated. Today our population is 17,426,623 (July 2020 est) and at our current population growth rate of 2.89 per cent (2020 est) in the next 15 years our country's population will more than double. What will life be like for a doubled Zambian population in 15 years' time in terms of food, water, sanitation, housing, education, health, transportation and so on?

## Solutions are an uphill task

AS A people and nation, we must continue to search for intelligent, effective and real solutions to problems that confront us, and not head towards Calvary.

I think we have been struggling uphill long enough. We have suffered not only the torment of Calvary but also that of Sisyphus, who had to keep pushing the boulder up a hill and every time he was about to reach the top, it would roll back down and he would have to start all over again.

Our situation is worse than Calvary because Calvary was climbed quickly, we have been climbing our hill for a long time, and we keep on having to start over.

Calvary is preferable to Sisyphus' torment, and if we have had our Calvary, we should also have a resurrection.

## We are hungry for changes

LET US keep in mind that the biggest priority comes from the biggest challenge that we face. What is the biggest challenge today?

Currently, we are among the fourth hungriest countries on the African continent and fifth in the world. Whatever we want to do, if we are not able to feed our people, we will have challenges. We will not even have the type of human beings that we want to have, healthy human beings are what we need.

A lot of attention needs to be paid to the agriculture sector for a healthy nation and for more job creation.

● THE GAP between the haves and the have-nots is huge. If we are One Zambia, One Nation, we should live similar lives; our conditions should not be so different.

You can't be one people when some are eating, others are not eating, some are living well, while others are not living well.

Can we have peace under such conditions?

# Don't endanger lives with COVID vaccine deceit

You can help beat this virus, says Mfunne

Socialist staff reporter

PEOPLE should reject misinformation and deceptions about the coronavirus vaccines to avoid endangering lives, Socialist Party Central Committee member Faith Natasha Mfunne says.

Mfunne, who is also a member of the party's youth league, adds that the vaccines have been deceitfully attached to fallacious and inaccurate claims such as; if you get the vaccine you will die in the next two years, it's a microchip, the vaccine can affect women's fertility, getting the vaccine gives you the virus, and the side effects of the vaccines are dangerous.

“If we adhere to these deceptions and refuse to get vaccinated we end up putting our lives in danger, allowing the pandemic to last longer and rejecting an opportunity to regain the freedom we had before,” she said.

Mfunne says the vaccinations provide a range of benefits and, “if you are not yet vaccinated think again”.

● The vaccines reduce your risk of infection.

● The vaccines can help your unborn baby or newborn.

● The vaccines protect you against severe illness.

● The vaccines are our path toward ditching masks.

● The vaccines will help you reconnect with your friends and family.

“COVID-19 sent the world into a random panic because it was thought it was taking us down the road of unknown human evolution,” she said.

“What has come to be known as the ‘new normal’ is characterised by country lockdowns, social isolation, use of face masks and hand sanitisers, loss of jobs and the mushrooming of multiple online businesses, among other things.

“Without a shadow of a doubt, since the intervention of the coronavirus our lives have drastically



Faith Mfunne: get your vaccine, your freedom, your protection

changed in all facets of our existence. Not only has the epidemic affected our health, but our development has also been retarded economically, socially and politically.”

Mfunne says COVID-19 has affected all spheres of life. “It has contributed to our already expanding levels of poverty and social injustice, as well as causing economic deflation because many workers have lost their jobs,” she said.

## Tragedies

“Businesses have shut down, schools have closed and hospitals that were supposed to be treating other diseases have been transformed into COVID-19 centres. These are just a few of the tragedies and calamities caused by this pandemic.”

Mfunne says she is asking people to ensure they get vaccinated be-

cause “efforts to thrive against this virus don't end with preventative measures such as using face masks or hand sanitisers.

“These don't afford any immune protection against the virus. They reduce the spread and chance of getting it, but they are not very reliable alone. Therefore, scientists and others in the medical fraternity came up with vaccines capable of surmounting COVID-19. With the vaccines at least we can return to business as usual.

“If you get the vaccinated together with your family and neighbours you can help reduce the numbers and prevent the virus from lasting longer. Get your vaccine, get your freedom, get your protection today,” she said.

As of September 30, there have been 233,136,147 confirmed cases of COVID-19 globally, including 4,771,408 deaths (WHO figures).

# Pursuing peace in a brutal world

WRITING on International Day of Peace on September 21, Socialist Party president Fred M'membe said, “At no time since the Second World War has there been greater need for our solidarity, our shared vision and our loud voices.

“Since 1981, the International Day of Peace has been commemorated worldwide in an effort to recall and rekindle the spirit of hope – the “never again” belief that led to the founding of the United Nations in 1945,” he said.

“Today we raise our voices, from bottom of our hearts, to promote peace. Today, in countries across the globe, there is more chaos and brutality than at any time since the Second World War; conflicts, a degraded climate, inequalities, emergencies that send millions fleeing their homelands

in search of safety, violation after violation of fundamental rights – on paper and in practice.

“Each failure, each child living without hope, each life cut short, each future dimmed because of a lack of will to brighten it is more than an individual tragedy – although that is reason enough for us to act. It can also result in a loss of faith. A loss of faith in fairness, in governments, and in the international institutions, including the UN itself, and most alarmingly, a loss of faith in the values that all of us cherish. The values enshrined in the UN Charter.

“Peace is one of the three core pillars upon which the UN was founded, joined inextricably with two others: development and human rights. These three mutually reinforcing pillars are the founda-

tion upon which countries, members of the United Nations, are asked to stand.

“As I reflect on the three pillars of the UN, a word emerges that captures for me why all the work that we do to reach the poorest, to support the most vulnerable is so important – that word is dignity.

“When we promote tolerance, treat equally, provide opportunities, promote participation, ensure quality social services for all our people, then we are honouring the dignity of each child, each citizen and we are creating an environment where they will not only survive but they will thrive and contribute in great ways to their communities.

“The equality of approach, leaving no one behind is what human rights treaties demand of us.”1



# Surviving perils of COVID

The year 2020 exposed the risks and weaknesses of the market-driven global system like never before. It's hard to avoid the sense that a turning point has been reached, writes **Adam Tooze**

IF ONE word could sum up the experience of 2020, it would be disbelief.

Between Xi Jinping's public acknowledgment of the coronavirus outbreak on January 20, 2020, and Joe Biden's inauguration as the 46th president of the United States a year later, the world was shaken by a disease that in the space of 12 months killed more than 2.2 million people and rendered tens of millions severely ill. Today, the official death tolls stands at 4.51 million. The likely figure for excess deaths is more than twice that number.

The virus disrupted the daily routine of virtually everyone on the planet, stopped much of public life, closed schools, separated families, interrupted travel and upended the world economy.

To contain the fallout, government support for households, businesses and markets took on dimensions not seen outside wartime. It was not just by far the sharpest economic recession experienced since the second world war, it was qualitatively unique. Never before had there been a collective decision, however haphazard and uneven, to shut large parts of the world's economy down. It was, as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) put it, "a crisis like no other".

Even before we knew what would hit us, there was every reason to think that 2020 might be tumultuous. The conflict between China and the US was boiling up. A "new cold war" was in the air. Global growth had slowed seriously in 2019. The IMF worried about the destabilising effect that geopolitical tension might have on a world economy that was already piled high with debt. Economists cooked up new statistical indicators to track the uncertainty that was dogging investment.

The data strongly suggested that the source of the trouble was in the White House. The US's 45th president, Donald Trump, had succeeded in turning himself into an unhealthy global obsession. He was up for reelection in November and seemed bent on discrediting the electoral process even if it yielded a win. Not for nothing, the slogan of the 2020 edition of the Munich Security Conference – the Davos for national security types – was "Westlessness".

Apart from the worries about Washington, the clock on the Brexit negotiations was running out. Even more alarming for Europe as 2020 began was the prospect of a new refugee crisis. In the background lurked both the threat of a final grisly escalation in Syria's civil war and the chronic problem of underdevelopment. The only way to remedy that was to energise investment and growth in the global south. The flow of capital, however, was unstable and unequal. At the end of 2019, half the lowest-income borrowers

in sub-Saharan Africa were already approaching the point at which they could no longer service their debts.

The pervasive sense of risk and anxiety that hung around the world economy was a remarkable reversal. Not so long before, the west's apparent triumph in the cold war, the rise of market finance, the miracles of information technology, and the widening orbit of economic growth appeared to cement the capitalist economy as the all-conquering driver of modern history. In the 1990s, the answer to most political questions had seemed simple: "It's the economy, stupid." As economic growth transformed the lives of billions, there was, Margaret Thatcher liked to say, "no alternative". That is, there was no alternative to an order based on privatisation, light-touch regulation and the freedom of movement of capital and goods. As recently as 2005, Britain's centrist prime minister Tony Blair could declare that to argue about globalisation made as much sense as arguing about whether autumn should follow summer.

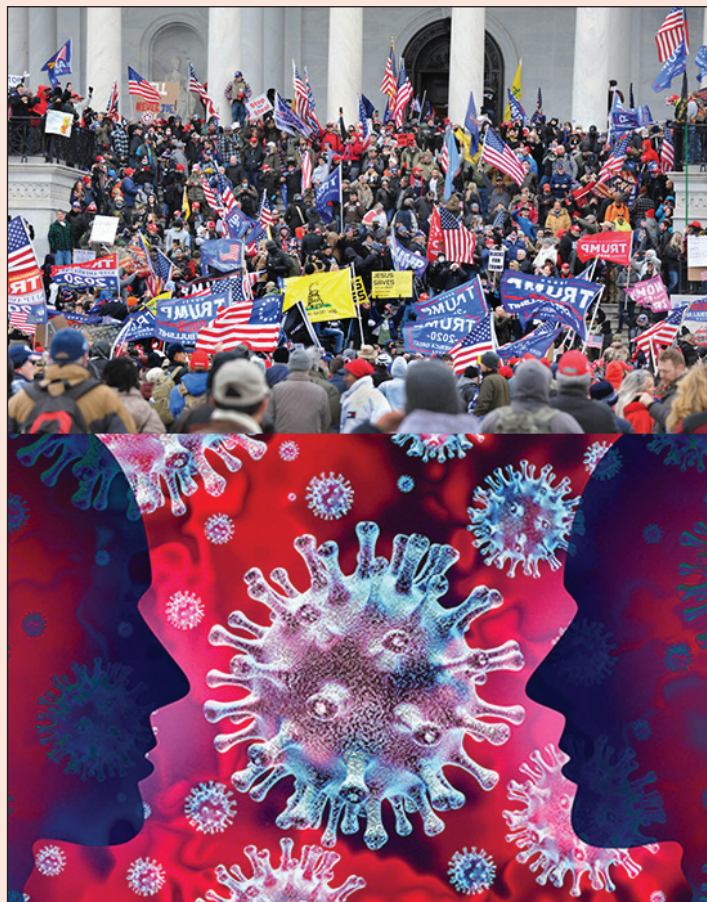
By 2020, globalisation and the seasons were very much in question. The economy had morphed from being the answer to being the question. A series of deep crises had shaken confidence in market economics. All those crises had been overcome, but by government spending and central bank interventions that drove a coach and horses through firmly held precepts about "small government" and "independent" central banks. The crises had been brought on by speculation, and the scale of the interventions necessary to stabilise them had been historic. Yet the wealth of the global elite continued to expand. Whereas profits were private, losses were socialised. Who could be surprised, many now asked, if surging inequality led to populist disruption?

## Blowback

And then, in January 2020, the news broke from Beijing. China was facing a full-blown epidemic of a novel coronavirus. This was the natural "blowback" that environmental campaigners had long warned us about, but whereas the climate crisis caused us to stretch our minds to a planetary scale and set a timetable in terms of decades, the virus was microscopic and all-pervasive, and was moving at a pace of days and weeks. It affected not glaciers and ocean tides, but our bodies. It was carried on our breath. It would put not just individual national economies but the world's economy in question.

There have been far more lethal pandemics. What was dramatically new about the coronavirus in 2020 was the scale of the response. It was not just rich countries that spent enormous sums to support citizens and businesses, poor and middle-income countries were willing to pay a huge price, too.

Coronavirus glaringly exposed our institutional lack of preparation. It revealed the weakness of basic apparatuses of state administration. To face the crisis, we needed a society that gave far greater priority to care. Loud calls issued from unlikely places for a "new social contract" that would properly value essential workers and take account of the risks generated by the globalised lifestyles enjoyed by the most fortunate.



It fell to governments mainly of the centre and the right to meet the crisis. Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil and Donald Trump in the US experimented with denial. In Mexico, the notionally leftwing government of Andrés Manuel López Obrador also pursued a maverick path, refusing to take drastic action. Nationalist strongmen such as Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines, Narendra Modi in India, Vladimir Putin in Russia, and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Turkey did not deny the virus, but relied on their patriotic appeal and bullying tactics to see them through.

It was the managerial centrist types who were under most pressure. Figures like Nancy Pelosi and Chuck Schumer in the US, or Sebastián Piñera in Chile, Cyril Ramaphosa in South Africa, Emmanuel Macron, Angela Merkel, Ursula von der Leyen and their ilk in Europe. They accepted the science. Denial was not an option. They were

desperate to demonstrate that they were better than the "populists".

To meet the crisis, very middle-of-the-road politicians ended up doing very radical things. Most of it was improvisation and compromise, but insofar as they managed to put a programmatic gloss on their responses – whether in the form of the EU's Next Generation programme or Biden's Build Back Better programme in 2020 – it came from the repertoire of green modernisation, sustainable development and the Green New Deal.

The result was a bitter historic irony. Even as the advocates of the Green New Deal, such as Bernie Sanders and Jeremy Corbyn, had gone down to political defeat, 2020 resoundingly confirmed the realism of their diagnosis. It was the Green New Deal that had squarely addressed the urgency of environmental challenges and linked it to questions of extreme social inequality. It



was the Green New Deal that had insisted that in meeting these challenges, democracies could not allow themselves to be hamstrung by conservative economic doctrines inherited from the bygone battles of the 70s and discredited by the financial crisis of 2008. It was the Green New Deal that had mobilised engaged young citizens on whom democracy, if it was to have a hopeful future, clearly depended. The year 2020 was all about survival

## Spectacular

The immediate economic policy response to the coronavirus shock drew directly on the lessons of 2008. Government spending and tax cuts to support the economy were even more prompt. Central bank interventions were even more spectacular.

Experiments in economic policy in 2020 were not confined to the rich

countries. Enabled by the abundance of dollars unleashed by the Fed, but drawing on decades of experience with fluctuating global capital flows, many emerging market governments, in Indonesia and Brazil for instance, displayed remarkable initiative in response to the crisis. They put to work a toolkit of policies that enabled them to hedge the risks of global financial integration. Ironically, unlike in 2008, China's greater success in virus control left its economic policy looking relatively conservative. Countries such as Mexico and India, where the pandemic spread rapidly but governments failed to respond with large-scale economic policy, looked increasingly out of step with the times. The year would witness the head-turning spectacle of the IMF scolding a notionally leftwing Mexican government for failing to run a large enough budget deficit.

It was hard to avoid the sense that



Spreading the word . . . COVID-19 warnings on the street by tricycle, Philippines style



# WID and neoliberalism



a turning point had been reached. Was this, finally, the death of the orthodoxy that had prevailed in economic policy since the 80s? Was this the death knell of neoliberalism? As a coherent ideology of government, perhaps. The idea that the natural envelope of economic activity – whether the disease environment or climate conditions – could be ignored or left to markets to regulate was clearly out of touch with reality. So, too, was the idea that markets could self-regulate in relation to all conceivable social and economic shocks.

Even more urgently than in 2008, survival dictated interventions on a scale last seen in the second world war. The scale of stabilising interventions in 2020 was impressive. It confirmed the basic insistence of the Green New Deal that if the will was there, democratic states did have the tools they needed to exercise control over the economy. This

was, however, a double-edged realisation, because if these interventions were an assertion of sovereign power, they were driven by crisis. As in 2008, they served the interests of those who had the most to lose. This time, not just individual banks but entire markets were declared too big to fail. To break that cycle of crisis and stabilising, and to make economic policy into a true exercise in democratic sovereignty, would require root-and-branch reform. That would require a real power shift, and the odds were stacked against that.

## Suffering

The massive economic policy interventions of 2020, like those of 2008, were Janus-faced. On the one hand, their scale exploded the bounds of neoliberal restraint and their economic logic confirmed the basic diagnosis of interventionist

macroeconomics back to Keynes. When an economy was spiralling into recession, one did not have to accept the disaster as a natural cure, an invigorating purge. Instead, prompt and decisive government economic policy could prevent the collapse and forestall unnecessary unemployment, waste and social suffering.

These interventions could not but appear as harbingers of a new regime beyond neoliberalism. On the other hand, they were made from the top down. They were politically thinkable only because there was no challenge from the left and their urgency was impelled by the need to stabilise the financial system. And they delivered. Over the course of 2020, household net worth in the US increased by more than \$15tn. Yet that overwhelmingly benefited the top 1%, who owned almost 40% of all stocks. The top 10%, between them, owned 84%. If this was in-

deed a “new social contract”, it was an alarmingly one-sided affair.

Nevertheless, 2020 was a moment not just of plunder, but of reformist experimentation. In response to the threat of social crisis, new modes of welfare provision were tried out in Europe, the US and many emerging market economies. And in search of a positive agenda, centrists embraced environmental policy and the issue of the climate crisis as never before. Contrary to the fear that Covid-19 would distract from other priorities, the political economy of the Green New Deal went mainstream. “Green Growth”, “Build Back Better”, “Green Deal” – the slogans varied, but they all expressed green modernisation as the common centrist response to the crisis.

The year 2020 exposed how dependent economic activity was on the stability of the natural environment. A tiny virus mutation in a

microbe could threaten the entire world’s economy. It also exposed how, in extremis, the entire monetary and financial system could be directed toward supporting markets and livelihoods. This forced the question of who was supported and how – which workers, which businesses would receive what benefits or which tax break? These developments tore down partitions that had been fundamental to the political economy of the last half-century – lines that divided the economy from nature, economics from social policy and from politics per se. On top of that, there was another major shift, which in 2020 finally dissolved the underlying assumptions of the era of neoliberalism: the rise of China.

Russia was the first to expose the fact that global economic growth might shift the balance of power. Fuelled by exports of oil and gas, Moscow re-emerged as a challenge to US hegemony. Putin’s threat, however, was limited. China’s was not. In December 2017, the US issued its new National Security Strategy, which for the first time designated the Indo-Pacific as the decisive arena of great power competition. In March 2019, the EU issued a strategy document to the same effect. The UK, meanwhile, performed an extraordinary about-face, from celebrating a new “golden era” of Sino-UK relations in 2015 to deploying an aircraft carrier to the South China Sea.

The military logic was familiar. All great powers are rivals, or at least so goes the logic of “realist” thinking. In the case of China, there was the added factor of ideology. In 2021, the CCP did something its Soviet counterpart never got to do: it celebrated its centenary. While since the 80s it had permitted market-driven growth and private capital accumulation, Beijing made no secret of its adherence to an ideological heritage that ran by way of Marx and Engels to Lenin, Stalin and Mao. Xi Jinping could hardly have been more emphatic about the need to cleave to this tradition, and no clearer in his condemnation of Mikhail Gorbachev for losing hold of the Soviet Union’s ideological compass. So the “new” cold war was really the “old” cold war revived, the cold war in Asia, the one that the west had in fact never won.

## Quandary

There were, however, two major differences dividing the past from the present. The first was the economy. China posed a threat as a result of the greatest economic boom in history. That had hurt some workers in the west in manufacturing, but businesses and consumers across the western world and beyond had profited immensely from China’s development, and stood to profit even more in future. That created a quandary. A revived cold war with China made sense from every vantage point except “the economy, stupid”.

The second fundamental novelty was the global environmental problem, and the role of economic growth in accelerating it. When global climate politics first emerged in its modern form in the 90s, the US was the largest and most recalcitrant polluter. China was poor and its emissions barely figured in the global balance. By 2020, China emitted more carbon dioxide than

the US and Europe put together, and the gap was poised to widen at least for another decade.

It was to a degree accidental that this escalation took place when it did. China’s rise was a long-term world historic shift. But Beijing’s success in handling the coronavirus and the assertiveness that it unleashed were a red flag to the Trump administration. Meanwhile, it was growing increasingly clear that the US’s continued global strength in finance, tech and military power rested on domestic feet of clay. If Xi’s “China dream” came through 2020 intact, the same cannot be said for its American counterpart.

The general crisis of neoliberalism in 2020 thus had a specific and traumatic significance for the US – and for one part of the American political spectrum in particular. The Republican party and its nationalist and conservative constituencies suffered in 2020 what can best be described as an existential crisis, with profoundly damaging consequences for the American government, for the American constitution and for America’s relations with the wider world. This culminated in the extraordinary period between 3 November 2020 and 6 January 2021, in which Trump refused to concede electoral defeat, a large part of the Republican party actively supported an effort to overturn the election, the social crisis and the pandemic were left unattended to, and finally, on 6 January, the president and other leading figures in his party encouraged a mob invasion of the Capitol.

The election of Joe Biden and the fact that his inauguration took place at the appointed time on 21 January 2021 restored a sense of calm. But when Biden boldly declares that “America is back”, it has become increasingly clear that the next question we need to ask is: which America? And back to what? The comprehensive crisis of neoliberalism may have unleashed creative intellectual energy even at the once-dead centre of politics. But an intellectual crisis does not a new era make.

As Britain, the US and Brazil demonstrate, democratic politics is taking on strange and unfamiliar new forms. Social inequalities are more, not less extreme. At least in the rich countries, there is no collective countervailing force.

Capitalist accumulation continues in channels that continuously multiply risks. The principal use to which our newfound financial freedom has been put are more and more grotesque efforts at financial stabilisation. The antagonism between the west and China divides huge chunks of the world. And now, in the form of COVID, the monster has arrived. The Anthropocene has shown its fangs – on an as yet modest scale. Covid is far from being the worst of what we should expect – 2020 was not the full alert.

If we are dusting ourselves off and enjoying the recovery, we should reflect. Around the world the dead are unnumbered, but our best guess puts the figure at 10 million. Thousands are dying every day. And 2020 was a wake-up call.

● Adapted from Shutdown: How Covid Shook the World’s Economy by Adam Tooze, published by Allen Lane.

*The Guardian (edited)*



Brazil runs out of space in its cemeteries as COVID deaths top 500,000



# ‘Common prosperity’ bid to regulate ‘obscene’ income

## China’s richest one percent own 31 percent of its wealth

Peter Symonds

IN A speech to the Central Committee for Financial and Economic Affairs recently, Chinese President Xi Jinping called for greater emphasis on “common prosperity” and the need to “regulate excessively high incomes” and “encourage high-income people and enterprises to return more to society.”

The remarks came in the wake of moves by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to rein in huge privately-owned corporations, including the tech giants Tencent and Alibaba, food delivery company Meituan, internet ride-hailing company Didi and online education companies TAL Education, New Oriental and Gaotu Techedu.

Individuals such as Tencent’s Tony Ma and Alibaba’s Jack Ma have amassed huge personal fortunes – US\$53.1 billion and \$45.3 billion respectively – as their business empires have expanded. Their obscene levels of wealth stand in stark contrast to the 600 million Chinese earning just 1,000 yuan or \$154 a month, and who, according to Chinese Premier Li Keqiang, could not afford the rent, let alone other necessities, in a mid-sized Chinese city.

In response to Xi’s speech, Tencent Holdings has pledged \$15 billion for various initiatives related to the environment, education and rural reform, saying the announcement was a response to “China’s wealth redistribution campaign”. It said half would be used for “sustainable social value innovation” and the rest for social charity programmes to contribute to “common prosperity”.

Alibaba in turn promised to provide a similar amount by 2025 to “common prosperity” in China. Its statement said the money would be used to support micro, small- and medium-sized enterprises, help “the digitalisation of underdeveloped areas” and expand healthcare capability in less developed areas.

Bloomberg has reported that 73 of China’s listed firms, both private and state-run, have told their shareholders they will be making contributions to “common prosperity”.

The corporate announcements are clearly motivated by concerns



A poor migrant family eats dinner in their makeshift shelter next to a construction site in China’s Zhejiang province, where authorities launched a pilot programme designed to achieve common prosperity by 2025

of further state intervention in their businesses as well as being directed to areas that assist in their further expansion, rather than seriously addressing social inequality. The processes of capitalist restoration presided over by the CCP have opened up a huge and widening gulf between rich and poor in China.

According to the Credit Suisse Research Institute, China’s richest one percent own nearly 31 percent of the country’s wealth, up from 21 percent in 2000. An HSBC report put the size of China’s middle classes, earning between \$15,000 and \$75,000, at 340 million people. While \$15,000 is relatively modest income by Western standards, it is at least eight times the amount earned by the 600 million people referred to last year by Premier Li.

President Xi’s call for “common prosperity” – a term he has increasingly used over the past year – reflects the deep fear in the CCP apparatus of the enormous social tensions being generated by the entrenched inequality. He told officials in January that “common prosperity” was not just an economic issue but, “A major political matter bearing on the party’s foundation for rule,” adding: “We cannot let an unbridgeable gulf appear between the rich and the poor.”

As the figures show, however, the gulf is already unbridgeable. The hundreds of millions of people struggling to survive on less than 1,000 yuan a month live in a world far apart from the multi-billionaires. The very fact that Xi is compelled to call on the country’s super-wealthy oligarchs to sacrifice makes a mockery of the CCP’s threadbare but continuing claims to be socialist or communist.

Yao Yang, an economics professor at Peking University, indicated in an email to the New York Times that he supported Xi’s new orientation, saying China had to be “fair and just”. He admitted, “China is one of the worst countries in terms of redistribution, despite being a socialist country. Public spending is overly concentrated in cities, elite schools and so on.”

The pressures bearing down on working people have been heightened with China’s economic slowdown. The years of 10 percent GDP growth are no longer. Previously, the CCP regarded 8 percent annual growth as necessary to provide sufficient employment to ward off social tensions. Now, however, the growth rate has fallen to 6 percent and shows no sign of recovering.

Xi has no intention of reversing the processes of capitalist restoration initiated in 1978 with Deng

Xiaoping’s pro-market agenda. Deng, who notoriously declared “to get rich is glorious”, argued that China had to let some get rich first to lift the economy.

According to the state-run Xinhua newsagency, last month’s meeting of Central Committee for Financial and Economic Affairs discussed, “creating conditions that are more inclusive and fair for people to get better education and improve their development capabilities”, and providing “chances for more people to become wealthy”.

Han Wenxiu, deputy director of the Central Financial and Economic Affairs Commission Office, reassured the wealthy that the government would not “rob the rich to help the poor”. He said the idea was not “egalitarianism” but “reducing the wealth distribution gap between the urban and rural areas and firmly preventing polarisation”.

Han’s comments were clearly aimed at heading off any panic among the corporate elite and foreign investors by signalling that the shift is largely cosmetic and no significant inroads will be made into their profits.

Pro-market political commentators have nevertheless hit back. The Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post, which is owned by Alibaba, recently featured Peking

University economics professor Zhang Weiying who argued: “If we lose faith in market forces and rely on frequent government intervention, it will lead to common poverty.”

Xi has nominated the eastern coastal province of Zhejiang as a demonstration zone for his “common prosperity” programme. Its recently released plan sets 2025 as the target for average disposable income per person to reach \$11,500 – up 40 percent from current levels. Economics professor Li Shi, who advised provincial officials on the plan, suggested in a newspaper article that the province could promote collective bargaining to give employees a stronger voice in wage negotiations.

Li’s suggestion highlights the contradiction that the CCP regime confronts. Entrenched social inequality is generating class tensions that threaten to explode. But allowing a stronger voice to workers to lift incomes also threatens to trigger working-class struggles under conditions of a slowing economy.

As is the case around the world, workers in China are moving into confrontation with capitalist class and the CCP bureaucracy that defends its interests.

wsws.org

## CHINA WATCH

INTEREST in China is growing, yet most news and analysis outside the country is produced by mainstream media from the global north. To provide access to Chinese perspectives, the *Dongsheng Collective* – researchers from various countries – offers a China digest of news. This is an edited selection.

### Low carbon pledge

SPEAKING at the UN General Assembly, President Xi Jinping pledged that China will stop building coal plants abroad and support developing countries in low-carbon energy projects. China is the world’s largest coal producer and public financier but funds only 13 percent of total coal power capacity (2013-19) overseas; 44 international coal plants (US\$50 billion) could be impacted.

South China Morning Post

### Iran full SCO member

IRAN has become a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) at the 20th anniversary summit in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. After 16 years of observer status, Iran joins China, Russia, Pakistan, India and other Central Asian members. Stabilising Afghanistan – an observer state – is reported to be SCO’s priority.

Xinhua

### DR Congo firms out

BEIJING has ordered Chinese mining companies that broke laws in DR Congo to leave, as Kinshasa reviews infrastructure-for-minerals deals. Wu Peng, senior diplomat for the region, said companies will be punished by the Chinese government, while IMF puts pressure on DRC to “clean up” foreign deals to get access to US\$1.5 billion credit.

South China Morning Post

### TikTok time limited

THE Chinese version of TikTok has limited its app use for children under 14 years old to 40 minutes’ use per day. The announcement comes amid government measures to discourage minors from spending too much time online, and recommends providers “implement time management tools, feature restrictions, and purchase restrictions for underage users”.

Sixth Tone

### Pledge on vaccines

PRESIDENT Xi Jinping has announced an additional donation of more than 100 million vaccine doses for developing countries this year. China provided one billion doses to over 100 countries, and pledges to reach two billion by year-end, adding to US\$100 million donation to COVAX.

CGTN

### Teachers’ pay to rise

CHINA has committed to raising teachers’ salaries, compensating for longer working hours, and equalising pay among civil servants of similar categories. Public school teachers’ salaries vary by region, but the average annual income was about US\$16,500 in 2020.

Sixth Tone

### New energy boost

THE government has invested US\$5.09 billion in subsidies for new energy vehicle (NEV) production in five years, but plans to reorganise the sector. Aiming to make the industry more competitive globally, China will remove subsidies by the end of 2023 and encourage mergers of national companies. Since January, NEV sales jumped 190 percent year-on-year.

Caixin Global

# Cuba first to vaccinate children from the age of two

CUBA has become the first country in the world to vaccinate children from the age of two against Covid-19, using home-grown jabs not recognised by the World Health Organisation.

The island of 11.2 million people aims to inoculate all its children before reopening schools that have been closed for the most part since March 2020.

The new school year started recently, but from home via television programmes, as most Cuban homes do not have internet access.

Having completed clinical trials on minors with its Abdala and Soberana vaccines, Cuba kicked off its inoculation

campaign for children, starting with those 12 and older. It started distributing jabs in the two to 11 age group in the central province of Cienfuegos.

Several other countries in the world are vaccinating children from the age of 12, and some are conducting trials in younger children.

Countries such as China, the United Arab Emirates and Venezuela have announced they plan to vaccinate younger children, but Cuba is the first to do so.

Chile has approved the Chinese Sinovac vaccines for children between six and 12.

In Latin America, a few countries have approved only the Pfizer vaccine for

children 12 and older. China has authorised Sinovac and Sinopharm vaccines for youngsters aged three to 17.

The Cuban vaccines, the first developed in Latin America, have not undergone international, scientific peer review. They are based on recombinant protein technology – the same used by the United States’ Novavax and France’s Sanofi jabs – which are also awaiting WHO approval.

Unlike many other shots in use, recombinant vaccines do not require extreme refrigeration.

Most schools in Cuba have been closed since March 2020, reopening for a few weeks at the end of last year before closing again in January.

The government has announced schools will reopen gradually in October and November but only after all children have been vaccinated.

UN agency Unicef has called for schools worldwide to reopen as soon as possible, as “the long-term costs of closures are too high and hard to justify”.

Cuba has seen an explosion in coronavirus infections in recent months, putting pressure on its health system.

Of the 5,700 coronavirus deaths recorded since the outbreak started, nearly half were in the last month or so alone, as were almost a third of all reported cases in the country.

Agence France-Presse



## The global market estimated at US\$384b last year

Vijay Prashad

RECENTLY, I spoke to a senior official at the World Health Organisation (WHO) and asked her if she knew how many people lived their lives on our planet without shoes.

The reason I asked her this question is because I was wondering about Tungiasis, an ailment caused by the infection that results from the entry of a female sand flea (*Tunga penetrans*) into the skin. This problem has a variety of names in many different languages – from jigger or chigoe to niguá (Spanish) or bi-chô do pé (Portuguese) to funza (Kiswahili) or tukutuku (Zande). It is a terrible problem that disfigures the feet and makes mobility difficult. Shoes prevent these fleas from burrowing into the skin.

She was not sure about the number but estimated that at least a billion people must live without shoes. Tungiasis is only one malady among many caused by a lack of access to shoes, with others, such as Podoconiosis that afflicts people who walk on red volcanic clay soil that inflames their feet in Central America, the African highlands, and India.

So there are a billion people without shoes in the 21st century, hundreds of millions of them children, many unable to get to school for lack of protection for their feet. Yet the global footwear industry produces 24.3 billion pairs of shoes a year, namely three pairs of shoes for every person on the planet. There is big money involved in the footwear industry. Despite the COVID-19 crisis, the global market for shoes was estimated at US\$384.2 billion in 2020 and is expected to grow to \$440 billion (2026).

The major consumers of shoes live in the United States, Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, and Italy, while the major producers of shoes live in China, India, Brazil, Italy, Vietnam, Indonesia, Mexico, Thailand, Turkey, and Spain.

Many of those who produce shoes in a country like India cannot afford to buy either the shoes they produce or even the cheapest flipflops available in the market. There are more than enough shoes in the market, but there is not enough money in the hands of hundreds of millions of people to buy them. They work and produce, but they cannot afford to consume enough for a decent life.

In June 2021, the World Bank released its Global Economic Prospects, which reported an increase in poverty “for the first time in a generation”. The bank’s analysts said “COVID-19 is set to cause lasting damage to the living conditions of the most vulnerable population”.

In low-income countries, 112 million people already face food insecurity. “The pandemic is also bound to worsen income and gender inequality given its outsized negative effect on women, chil-



# Too many can't foot the bill for shoes

dren, and unskilled and informal workers, as well as its adverse effects on education, health, and living standards”, the report said.

Before the pandemic, 1.3 billion people lived in multidimensional and persistent poverty; their deprivations have been aggravated because of the way the pandemic has been handled by governments and by businesses. Of the world’s extreme poor, 85 per cent live in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa; half of the world’s extreme poor live in just five countries: India, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, and Bangladesh.

## Vulnerable

The World Bank estimates that two billion people live below the societal poverty line (meaning that the prosperity of economies is taken into account when measuring the poverty line).

Last year, the World Bank’s landmark report, *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2020: Reversals of Fortune* pointed out that “people who are already poor and vulnerable are bearing the brunt of the crisis”. It emphasised the role of the COVID-19 pandemic in rising poverty levels but added to this the negative impact of climate change

and conflict. The poor, according to World Bank data, “remain predominantly rural, young, and undereducated”, with four out of every five people who live below the international poverty line residing in rural areas.

Women and girls are overrepresented among the poor and the hungry. Based on this analysis, the World Bank urges governments to enhance welfare measures to provide relief to the unemployed and the working poor. But the bank has nothing to say to the agricultural workers and small farmers or to the informal workers, whose productive labour receives so little recompense. This is why hundreds of millions of them – in places such as India – are in the midst of a grand revolt.

None of the World Bank reports indicate any clear path that would enable us all to exit this catastrophe.

The language in the conclusions to the reports is tepid and muted. “We must commit to working together and to working better”, one says. No doubt that cooperation is essential, but cooperation on what, for whom, and how? Looking at some of the packages offered in countries such as Indonesia, the bank offers a range of policy options including: increasing social

protection programmes to low-income households in the form of cash transfers, electricity subsidies, and food aid, as well as expanding unemployment benefits to workers in the informal sector.

These are attractive measures, basic demands of social movements around the world. Such demands form a part of the Chinese poverty alleviation programme of the “three guarantees and two assurances” – guarantees of safe housing, healthcare, and education, and assurances of food and clothing.

## Incoherent

These are documented at length in our study on the eradication of absolute poverty in China, which looks at how the country lifted 850 million people out of poverty since the Chinese Revolution of 1949, accounting for 70 percent of the world’s total poverty reduction. The World Bank, unlike the Chinese government, moves into incoherent territory when it calls for reduction in corporate taxation as part of the framework for poverty alleviation.

What times we live in when we are called upon to be reasonable in a world where disorder is the norm, the disorder of war and

floods, pestilence of one kind or another. Even the World Bank registers the fact that, even before the pandemic, the tendency was towards disorder, towards dehumanisation. Unleashed on the world are the four horsemen of the modern apocalypse: poverty, war, social despair, and climate change. This system has no answers to the problems it creates.

One of the great downsides of our current inflation of atrocities is the sense that nothing other than this nightmare is possible. Alternatives cannot be imagined. Mockery pushes aside thinking about a different future.

When attempts to create these different futures are made – as they always are by resilient human beings – those in power strive to snuff them out.

The system drifts inexorably to fascism from above (to enslave “disposable” people in prisons and ghettos) and to fascism from below (to increase dangerous racist, misogynist, and xenophobic social forces).

The powerful and propertied see to it that no model of an alternative is allowed to flourish. It would call into question the claim that what governs the world now is eternal, that history has ended.

*Tricontinental*

## The hazards of walking barefoot in sand, soil and water

THERE ARE many hazards associated with going barefoot in contaminated sand, soil, and dirty water.

In many developing countries where stagnant water is a problem, these diseases are almost a condition of life.

Children sometimes swim in parasite-infested waters, and in the absence of suitable drinking water, people may be forced to drink it and use it for cooking purposes.

Among the poorest of the poor, parasitic infection is a vicious cycle.

Once parasites enter the body, they often perforate the intestines, circulatory system, lungs, liver and other organs, and cause physical trauma.

Up to 10 percent of barefoot populations suffer from podocooniosis, one of the world’s most neglected tropical diseases.

It is a type of endemic non-filarial elephantiasis prevalent in Ethiopia, Rwanda, Burundi, Cameroon, Tanzania, and Guinea, particularly among barefoot agricultural workers. It is the result of walking in silica-heavy volcanic soil.

Hookworm is an intestinal parasite that is caused by direct contact with soil contaminated with larvae, or by ingestion of larvae.

An estimated 576 to 740 million people in the world are infected with it. Hookworm causes anaemia, abdominal pain, diarrhea, ascites, and children may experience slow growth and mental development.

Schistosomiasis is a disease caused by parasitic worms.

In 2011, at least 243 million people worldwide required treatment for it. Infection occurs when skin comes into contact with contaminated water in which certain types of snails that carry schistosomes are living.

The body reacts to the eggs with fever, chills, cough and muscle aches. Repeated infections can damage the liver, intestines, lungs and bladder.

Tungiasis is a disease caused by a parasitic fleas. It is found in tropical Africa and is highly prevalent in impoverished areas. One study found about 42 percent of Nigerian children were infected with tungiasis.

This disease affects the feet because fleas burrow into the skin of the host on the bare foot or toes.

Painful swellings and the development of fibrous cysts follow and may progress to bacteraemia, gangrene, tetanus and death.

The same study showed that the regular use of footwear was a protective factor.

*World Health Organisation, Global Health*



SO WHAT exactly is One Day Without Shoes Day?

It was created by the Californian company called Toms’ Shoes to encourage people to pay more attention to global poverty and to the numerous problems a lack of shoes can cause to the lives of impoverished children.

It all started when company owner Blake Mycoskie visited Argentina in 2006 and noticed that so many of the children were running through the streets with barefeet.

Soon, he became aware that a lack of shoes was a wider problem in Argentina as well as other developing countries and decided he wanted to use his shoe company

to help them, especially because it had a serious impact on their lives by discouraging them from attending school and making it much easier for them to contract a range of serious infections.

Mycoskie came up with the “one for one” business model, meaning that for every pair of shoes his company sold, it would provide a new pair free of charge to the shoeless youngsters of Argentina and other developing countries. The first 10,000 pairs were distributed to Argentinian children in October 2006.

One Day Without Shoes Day was created to help people who have never had to go with-

out footwear or have never lived in poverty to put themselves in the shoes of those who are forced to go without every day.

While this may be hard to do in developed countries, it can be more than just symbolic for people to be seen walking around without shoes on in developed urban contexts with the right explanation and publicity.

It can also remind the privileged many of the things others don’t have, prompting questions about the basic changes that need to be made to move away from the neoliberal, capitalist economic model that results in so many injustices.

*daysoftheyear.com, Socialist Monthly*



# Murder is amid risks of climate activism

## Deaths on increase says report by Global Witness

Tina Landis

AS THE climate crisis intensifies globally so does the class war under the capitalist world order.

Since 2012, Global Witness has been documenting the murders of environmental and land defenders who were attempting to halt corporate plunder of the planet and displacement of indigenous communities. (global-witness.org)

The report says: “We tend to associate the climate crisis with its environmental impacts; unbearable heat, air pollution, rising seas, burning forests, or super-storms. Yet the data on attacks against land and environmental defenders, which Global Witness has been recording since 2012, shows that the unaccountable exploitation and greed driving the climate crisis is also having an increasingly violent impact on people. This is a crisis against humanity.

“We all depend on the natural world, and when we set about its systematic destruction, people get killed. It may sound simplistic, but it’s a fact worth considering – the process of climate breakdown is violent, and it manifests not just in violence against the natural world, but against people as well,” the report says.

The recently released report for 2020 shows that these murders have once again increased from the year before, with 227 killings of activists around the globe – an average of more than four deaths per week. The report says that this figure is an underestimate since countless more are likely to go unreported. In addition, a wide range of other oppressive tactics are employed to silence communities, such as surveillance, intimidation, sexual violence and criminalisation.

As the climate crisis worsens the numbers of these frontline activists killed is increasing. These are “David and Goliath” struggles where remote communities that bear the brunt of environmental destruction from extractive industries face off against corporations controlled by the global capitalist elite, who are directly or indirectly responsible for the killings.

All but one of the 227 murders this past year occurred in the Global South with more than half the attacks occurring in Colombia, Mexico, and the Philippines. Weak or complicit governments are unable or unwilling to protect their people and land against these transnational corporations. The legacy of

colonialism and neocolonialism ushered in by the formation of the World Trade Organisation in 1995 has left much of the Global South open to increasing plunder by the elites of the Global North, with little standing in their way beyond the heroic efforts of frontline communities.

Not only do these destructive practices by corporations impact the lives of local communities, but also the global climate. As primary forests and ecosystems are destroyed for the profit of extractive industries, carbon stored underground is released into the atmosphere and biodiversity – a key stabilizer of the climate – is lost, creating hotter, drier conditions in these regions and adding to the rapid destabilization of the Earth’s systems.

Many of the activists murdered were fighting logging, mining or big agribusiness corporations and the ecological devastation that they bring. Most of the deforestation globally has been linked to just 13 major corporations, including Cargill, BlackRock, Wilmer International and Walmart. (earth.org)

The 2020 Bankrolling Extinction report produced by Portfolio Earth showed that 50 top investment banks, led by Bank of America, Citigroup and JP Morgan Chase, funded ecosystem destruction globally through US\$2.6 tril-



Top: Honduran indigenous environmental activist Berta Cáceres, murdered in 2016. David Castillo, former head of Desarrollos Energeticos, which ran the US\$50m Agua Zarca hydroelectric dam project, was found guilty of involvement in her killing. Above: Jessica Reznicek, jailed for eight years for damaging a Dakota pipeline

lion in investments in 2019 alone. (The Guardian)

In the United States, within the belly of the beast, extractive industries tend to employ nonlethal tactics to suppress opposition, such as lawfare – using law as a weapon. Since 2016, 13 states have passed laws that protect fossil fuel industries by increasing penalties for anyone who trespasses, damages, or interferes with infrastructure, such as oil refineries or pipelines, attempting to intimidate people into silence.

A recent example of this tactic is the sentencing of Dakota Access Pipeline protester Jessica Reznicek, who was sentenced to eight years in federal prison and

\$3 million in restitution for damaging a non-operational piece of the pipeline.

Reznicek’s co-defendant, Ruby Montoya, faces at least five years in prison and is currently awaiting sentencing. Despite a 2020 federal court ruling that deemed the pipeline construction illegal due to lack of environmental review, construction continues, demonstrating how enforcement of laws is based on what is beneficial to corporate profits.

The need to overthrow the destructive capitalist system and start anew could not be more clear. Humanity’s survival – and the survival of most other species – literally depends on it. We need a people/

planet-centered system, a socialist system, and we need it now.

We must expose the injustices committed against environmental defenders in the Global South and our own communities as part and parcel of the global class war that is playing out through the climate crisis and continue to organise. Despite the seemingly impossible odds, we must remember that we, the people, are the majority and they are few. And when we come together as a united force, we can win.

● Tina Landis is the author of the book *Climate Solutions Beyond Capitalism*.

*Liberation*

## Guatemala protesters call for the president’s resignation

EIGHT months after last year’s nationwide anti-government protests, Guatemalans have once again taken to the streets demanding the resignation of far-right president Alejandro Giammattei, his cabinet members and attorney general Maria Consuelo Porras.

They are demanding an end to the widespread corruption in the country as well as comprehensive policies to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.

As of September 30, the country had registered more than 560,000 confirmed cases of coronavirus and around 13,564 deaths due to the disease.

Since the massive national strike on July 29, thousands of citizens, members of numerous social, Indigenous, peasant, student organisations and trade unions have been mobilising in different parts of the country in rejection of the involvement of the government officials in corruption scandals and the mismanagement of the pandemic.

Guatemalans are also demonstrating in rejection of Porra’s decision to dismiss Juan Francisco Sandoval from the position of the head of the Special Prosecutor Against Impunity (FECI).

Sandoval was leading the investigations and inquiries regarding corruption processes in the acquisition of COVID-19 vaccines and medical supplies. He has left the country due to physical threats and legal actions against him.

According to the mobilising sectors and opposition, the issue of corruption and impunity will aggravate in public institutions after Sandoval’s removal.

In the capital Guatemala City on July 29, citizens marched from San Carlos University to the Congress, the presidential house, the public ministry and the constitution plaza.

Outside the capital, other protest measures, such as roadblocks – including a sit-in on the Inter-American Highway – and rallies among other protest activities were organized in all the 22 departments of the country. Everyday since that day, demonstrations have been held throughout the national territory.

On August 3, transport workers blocked the Inter-American Highway in the regions of Las Pozas, Sayaxché and Petén demanding that the Constitutional Court annul the government agreement 17-2020, on the purchase of Civil Liability insurance against Third Parties for Collective Transport of Passengers and Cargo.

They also expressed their support for the call from diverse sectors for the resignation of the president and the attorney general.

The call for the recent mobilisations was given by indigenous organisations, particularly of the Mayan, Garifuna, and Xinca communities, on social media networks. Later, various civil society organisations and unions joined their call.

Indigenous organisations have once again stressed their long-standing demand for the establishment of a plurinational state.

In the midst of protests against Sandoval’s dismissal on August 3, Porras appointed Rafael Curruchiche as the head of the FECI. Previously, Curruchiche was head of the Prosecutor’s Office for Electoral Crimes.

*peoplesdispatch.org*

## Indigenous land defenders stop or delay 25 percent of US and Canadian gas emissions

INDIGENOUS Environmental Network and Oil Change International have released a new report, *Indigenous Resistance Against Carbon*, that analyses the impact of Indigenous resistance on fossil fuel projects in the United States and Canada has had on greenhouse gas emissions over the past 10 years.

From the struggle against the Cherry Point coal export terminal in Lummi territory to fights against pipelines crossing critical waterways, indigenous land defenders have exercised their rights and responsibilities to not only stop fossil fuel projects in their tracks, but establish precedents to build successful social justice movements.

The new report shows that indigenous communities resisting the more than 20 fossil fuel projects analysed have stopped or delayed greenhouse gas pollution equivalent to at least 25 percent of annual US and Canadian emissions.

Given the current climate crisis, indigenous peoples are demonstrating that the assertion of indigenous rights not only upholds a higher moral standard, but provides a crucial path to confronting climate change head-on and reducing emissions.

As Dallas Goldtooth of the Indigenous Environmental Network says, “The numbers don’t lie. Indigenous peoples have long led the fight to protect Mother Earth and the only



Célia Xakriabá joins Brazilian indigenous leaders to protest peacefully in front of the venue of the Consumer Goods Forum sustainability committee meeting in Berlin

way forward is to centre indigenous knowledge and keep fossil fuels in the ground.”

Kyle Gracey of Oil Change International adds: “Indigenous communities resisting oil, gas, and coal projects across their territory are demonstrating true climate leadership. Brave resistance efforts by indigenous land and water defenders have kept billions of

tons of carbon in the ground, showing that respecting and honouring the wisdom and sovereignty of Indigenous Peoples is a key solution to the climate crisis.”

The recently released United Nations climate change report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) says that in order to properly mitigate the worst of the climate crisis, rapid and large-scale action must be taken, with a focus on immediate reduction of fossil fuel emissions.

As the United Nations prepares for its upcoming COP 26 climate change conference in Glasgow, Scotland, (October 31-November 12), countries are being asked to update their pledges to cut emissions, but as the IPCC report states, current pledges fall short of the changes needed to mitigate the climate chaos already millions of people around the world.

While United Nations member countries continue to ignore the IPCC’s scientists and push false solutions and dangerous distractions like the carbon markets in Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, indigenous peoples continue to put their bodies on the line.

False solutions do not address the climate emergency at its root, and instead have damaging impacts such as continued land grabs from indigenous peoples in the Global South.

*climateandcapitalism.com*



# People starve as energy giants mobilise to secure their assets

## Humiliations of poverty and food scarcity are the real security problems

Vijay Prashad

ON AUGUST 26, two deadly attacks on the perimeter of Kabul's international airport killed more than a hundred people, including a dozen US soldiers. The bombings struck people desperate to enter the airport and flee Afghanistan.

Not long afterwards, the Islamic State of Khorasan (IS-K) took credit for the attack. Ten days before it, Taliban fighters had entered Kabul's Pul-i-Charkhi prison and executed IS-K leader Abu Umar Khorasani, also known as Zia ul Haq. Two days before his execution, as the Taliban advanced into Kabul, Abu Umar told the Wall Street Journal, "They will let me free if they are good Muslims." Instead, the Taliban killed him and eight other IS-K leaders.

Since its formation in October 2014, IS-K, which operates in Afghanistan and Pakistan, has conducted more than 350 attacks against Afghan, Pakistani, and US targets in these countries.

The initial leadership of the group, Hafiz Saeed Khan and Sheikh Maqbool, came from Pakistan's Tehrik-e Taliban (TTP). They joined with a former Taliban commander, Abdul Rauf Khadim, to create IS-K in Afghanistan's eastern province of Nangarhar. In 2018, a United Nations report pointed out that ISIS leadership in Iraq and Syria facilitated "the relocation of some of its key operatives to Afghanistan", including Abu Qutaiba from Iraq and other fighters from Algeria, France, Russia, Tunisia, and the five Central Asian states.

In 2016, the US government designated IS-K a terrorist organisation. Three years later, the US dropped a bomb on IS-K positions in Nangarhar. On August 27, the US bombed targets in Nangarhar in retaliation for the Kabul bombing. "We know of no civilian casualties," US Central Command credulously announced. A few days later, a US drone strike allegedly against IS-K targets killed 10 Afghan civilians, including young children.

### Zealotry

Since 2014, the Taliban has captured more and more territory in Afghanistan. In this period, IS-K forces clashed with the Taliban repeatedly, with IS-K contesting the Taliban's claim to political Islam and deepening the sectarian attacks on Afghanistan's minorities.

The execution of Abu Umar Khorasani and the victory of the Taliban certainly provoked IS-K into the deadly attacks at Kabul airport. There is little danger of a return to the civil war of the 1990s, since IS-K simply does not have the capacity with its hundreds of fighters to contest the Taliban for power; nonetheless, it has the zealotry to cause damage to a country already badly broken by war and corruption.

Far to the southwest of Nangarhar, across the Arabian Sea, are



Mozambique contrasts . . . a Total and Exxon-Mobil oil platform; a fighter with al-Shabab, also known as ISIS Mozambique; food aid for villagers



the northern provinces of Mozambique. Here, armed fighters swept through the province of Cabo Delgado in 2017, attacking the city of Mocimboa da Praia. The fighters called themselves al-Shabab ("The Youth"), with no connection to the terrorist organisation of the same name from Somalia. Rapidly, the fighters took their war to six of Mozambique's main northern districts, taking five of their capitals. The one capital that was not captured in the early burst, Palma, is the centre of a massive project developed by the French energy company Total and the US energy company Exxon-Mobil. They have a stake in one of Africa's largest natural gas reserves, which is worth more than US\$120 billion. Both companies suspended their operations as the fighters advanced on Palma, which they took in March 2021.

Researchers at Observatório do Meio Rural (OMR) and Cabo Ligado have shown that these fighters are from the region and are not affiliated with any international Islamist project.

OMR's João Feijó found that the leaders of al-Shabab are mainly from Mozambique, but a few are from Tanzania. The main leader of al-Shabab is Bonomade Machude Omar, who was born in Palma, raised in the government and Islamic schools of Mocimboa da

Praia, and trained in Mozambique's military forces before he began gathering several youths under his wing to fight against the extreme poverty of Mozambique's northern provinces. They formed al-Shabab.

After al-Shabab's rapid advances, Bonomade Machude Omar is known to have talked about his connection to the Islamic State, although there is no evidence of any organisational connection between the groups in West Asia and southern Africa.

### Fearful

Nonetheless, on August 6, the US State Department designated al-Shabab – or ISIS-Mozambique, as the United States calls it – as a terrorist organisation and defined Bonomade Machude Omar as a "specially designated global terrorist". Once al-Shabab was described as ISIS-Mozambique, full military force could be deployed into northern Mozambique.

A senior advisor at the Southern African Development Community (SADC) told me that African capitals buzzed with fearful anticipation that the United States and France would launch an assault on northern Mozambique to protect the assets of Total and ExxonMobil. "That is perhaps why they called the fighters ISIS-Mo-

zambique," he told me on the day that the Taliban entered Kabul. On April 28, Mozambique's President Filipe Nyusi met with Rwanda's President Paul Kagame in Kigali to discuss al-Shabab. Ten days later, Rwandan officers arrived in Cabo Delgado on a reconnaissance mission, followed shortly afterwards by 1,000 Rwandan troops. The senior advisor says that the United States and Israel – which is close to Kagame – authorised the mission. Shortly afterwards, SADC sent a Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) with troops from SADC countries (Botswana, Lesotho, and South Africa) along with troops from Angola and Tanzania. They have weakened al-Shabab's hold on the cities of northern Mozambique.

Both SADC's Stergomena Tax (whose tenure as executive secretary came to an end on August 31) and South Africa's Defence Minister Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula complained of Rwanda's unilateral decision to intervene. While both Rwanda and SAMIM are interventions of African states, the main institution of the continent – the African Union (AU) – has not deliberated on this at its Peace and Security Council (the AU's chair, Moussa Faki Mahamat, did, however, welcome Rwanda's intervention).

Neither Mozambique, SADC,

nor the AU have crafted a comprehensive plan regarding northern Mozambique; the country's problems are rooted in its inequality, poverty, and corruption, intensified by the influence of French and US transnational energy firms.

The Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research dossier on US-French military intervention on the African continent offers a framework to understand the role of US-French commercial interests.

### Withdrawal

In June, France's Emmanuel Macron said that he would withdraw half the French troops from Operation Barkhane in Mali; this kind of "withdrawal" is part of Macron's presidential campaign for the 2022 elections and not a real withdrawal. In fact, France's real intervention is in the creation of platforms such as G-5 Sahel (a French-led military project that consists of Mali, Niger, Mauritania, Chad, and Burkina Faso), whose existence undermines the advancement of the African Union and of African sovereignty.

Groups such as G-5 Sahel justify their existence by saying that they are fighting groups such as the Islamic State. They do not honestly

state their objectives: to maintain control over key regions and countries of the continent and, in so doing, retain exclusive access to their mineral and natural resources.

The UN is correct in its July report that the expansion of the Islamic State in Africa is "a striking development". But even more striking are the underlying problems: the control and theft of resources and the attendant social problems produced by this theft, namely the great distress experienced by the people of Africa. For example, half of the population of the Central African Republic (CAR) struggle with hunger; the entry of Rwandan troops into the country in 2019 is hardly the solution to the crisis.

In Afghanistan, just like CAR, half the population lives in poverty and a third are food insecure, while two thirds lack access to electricity.

In Mozambique, meanwhile, it is estimated that 80 per cent of the population cannot afford an adequate diet, while 2.9 million people face high levels of acute food insecurity.

The real security problems are food insecurity and the humiliations of poverty, which produce all kinds of unrest – including al-Shabab.

Tricontinental





**An individual does best in a strong and decent community of people with principles, standards, common aims and values. Leadership, as such, should be about social and economic progress, about helping our people give themselves a better and peaceful life**

*Fred M'membe, Socialist Party president*



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