

TRIPHER Ngandu, also known as Uncle T, is covered in celebratory baby powder after filing his nomination to stand as the Socialist Party's candidate in this month's Kabwata parliamentary by-election.

The election, on January 22, was caused by the death of UPND MP Levy Mkandawire in a road accident at the gate of his house in Lusaka's Woodlands Extension in November.

Returning Officer Helen Mubita said seven candidates would be contesting the Kabwata seat.

Speaking shortly after filing his nomination, Tripher Ngandu pledged to protect the welfare of the vulnerable in Kabwata, especially children.

Ngandu, who was until recently PF Kabwata constituency chairman, says he joined the Socialist Party, "after realising it had never been involved in any form of corrupt practices", unlike PF.



T'ing up a victory



The seeds of a revolution

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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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New Year love, courage and determination

There is a need for deep reflection as we enter 2022

Fred M'membe
Socialist Party President

AS ZAMBIANS across the width and breadth of our country gather with family and friends, I want to wish everyone a happy and healthy New Year.

This is always a hopeful time, as we celebrate the end of one year and the beginning of another. And while 2021 was difficult for many Zambians, we must also look back on the year with the knowledge that a better Zambia – which is more just, fair and humane – is possible. But we have to struggle for it without respite.

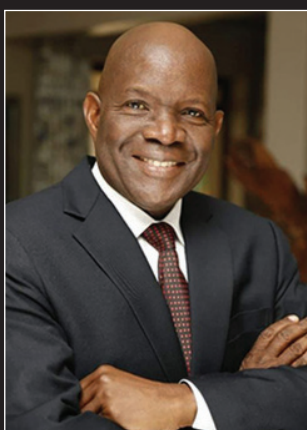
Although our challenges are great, if each one of us marshals the necessary courage and determination to rise up and meet them we will be able to give ourselves a better life.

It is that spirit that has sustained our struggles, and it is that spirit that will propel us into a better Zambia.

The importance of Zambian unity to resolve issues faced by our society and our country cannot be over emphasised. We live in a turbulent, dynamic, contradictory time, but we can and must do everything possible for our poor country to develop successfully, so that everything in our lives changes for the better.

I urge everyone to speak words of love and care to each other, forgive mistakes and offences, hug, and to warm with care and attention. Let changes for the better happen to every person, everyone's family. Let everyone be healthy, let new children be born and make us happy.

And as we enter 2022 there's a need for deep reflection on the leadership and election candidates of our party.



Fred M'membe: the spirit that sustained our struggles will lead to a better Zambia

I feel there's an urgent need to broaden the social and class base of the leadership of our party. Without this we will have difficulties strengthening the party and winning elections. There's a need for absorption

and optimisation of the leadership of the party, especially in the selection and adoption of candidates for parliamentary and local government elections.

The principles of "broadness", including social and class backgrounds, and "excellence" in terms of their performance, should guide us in the "absorption" of election candidates and leaders of our party structures.

These principles will certainly play a key role in strengthening the party leadership and making our candidates more appealing to the voters.

But, of course, this cannot be done without urgently intensifying political and ideological education.

Without this accompanying the broadening of the social and class base of the leadership, the party will be totally destroyed – it will lose its socialist character and become something else.

We really need to intensify

the recruitment of other social classes in addition to the workers and peasants into the party leadership, especially in the selection and adoption of election candidates.

These should include different sectors and occupations, such as rural entrepreneurs and urban self-employed people, and this should be expanded to private business entrepreneurs, managers, and technicians, as well as lawyers and non-profit organisation leaders.

We went into the last elections with no, or very little, participation from these groups. And the result showed us the consequences of this approach.

We should also continue to pay attention to the optimisation of age, gender and educational levels. This will help improve the overall performance, as well as the political and social capabilities, of our leaders and candidates.

Tax policy on mines benefits the firms

Govt surrendering our sovereignty to capital

Socialist staff reporter

THE MINING corporations have been working Zambia's tax system to their own benefit and to the loss of the people, Socialist Party President Fred M'membe says.

"In the last 25 years, out of the eight major mining corporations that have operated in Zambia, only two have been paying Company Income Tax (CIT), he said.

"Meaning the rest have been declaring losses, as our tax authorities have no capacity to find loopholes in their tax declarations.

"Base erosion and profit shifting (BEPS) seems to be very easy for these corporations. To maximise value from this sector, the Zambia Revenue Authority proposed the introduction of a Mineral Royalty Tax (MRT) to bring certain "loss making" companies in the tax base.

"Mineral Royalty Tax is not a fee, it's a tax. Currently it's paid as a final tax by both loss-making and profit-declaring mining corporations as a final tax. So it is net tax income to the Zambian people."

Dr M'membe asked why mining corporations loved income tax and hated MRT so much.

"Simple transfer pricing and exaggeration of costs to declare lower taxable income. Why do they hate MRT? It's based on extracted minerals and easy to administer by ZRA and difficult to cheat," he said.

Dividends

"Remember this, countries with deductible MRT and lower taxes in this industry have higher stakes or even controlling shares in private mining corporations, so they collect lower taxes and get dividends. In Zambia, some mining companies are 100 per cent privately owned. Why such concessions? If Parliament has any spine, this is the time to show it.

"At the time when copper prices are reasonably high, the UPND government has proposed in the 2022 Budget that MRT becomes a deductible tax. This means whatever losses they make off CIT can be netted off MRT. This may result in a significant resource mobilisation loss.

"In the end, the only benefits we may get from the mining sector are business and job opportunities and PAYE. This is a clear demonstration of surrendering our sovereignty to capital and not the people.

"Zambia is known as the second largest producer of copper in Africa, yet this sector has only been contributing an average 13 per cent to our GDP before Covid-19 hit and around 25 per cent after the pandemic hit us due to disruptions in trade and global supply chain."

Speaking in the run-up to

August's general election, Dr M'membe said one of the aims of the Socialist Party in power was to ensure the mining corporations paid taxes to help fund development in the country.

"What the Socialist Party in government will do is to ensure that it collects fair taxes from the mines to pump into education, health and peasant agriculture," he said.

Dr M'membe said that while public ownership of the key means of production was an objective of the Socialist Party, achieving that in a world economy dominated by capitalism was not an easy undertaking.

"The last 60 years of observing nationalisation in the world has taught us something, has made us a bit wiser about what works and what doesn't. It has taught us to be cautious and patient.

"It is said that there are many ways to skin a cat. Similarly, there are many ways to achieve public ownership of the key means of production without engaging in very complex and unnecessary business and political deals."

Dr M'membe said that with this in mind, the Socialist Party would not nationalise troubled copper mines with limited economic lifespans ranging from eight to 40 years.

"What is under exploitation now is just about a third of our mining potential, we still have two-thirds of our mining potential to exploit," he said.

"Without belittling anyone, we simply don't have the capacity to run these financially troubled and technologically complicated mines. We don't have enough mineral scientists, mining engineers, mining economists, lawyers with adequate mining knowledge, the financial expertise to mobilise capital for our mines and market the minerals we have mined."

Dr M'membe said that a policy of "fair taxation" was a way of ensuring mining corporations helped pay for the country's development, including paying for the training of people in various mining skills.



Organic revolution

THE Socialist Party Fred M'membe Literacy and Agroecology campaign has embarked on a nationwide training programme of peasant farmers on organic farming practices, focusing on organic fertiliser production, water conservation, soil fertility management and environmental protection.

The agroecology campaign seeks to raise awareness about the dangers of using chemicals and the manner in which they destroy the land.

Local coordinator for Malambo in Eastern Province Emmanuel N'mbanda said agroecology was important for the local popula-

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

● Photo shows one of the agroecology projects in Kasenengwa, Eastern Province.

Allowing factions to disable a party sets a very dangerous precedent

NOT allowing the Democratic Party to field candidates in the January 20 by-election sets a very dangerous precedent, Socialist Party President Fred M'membe says.

He said it seemed that backing a faction within a party was now an effective way of disabling it.

"If each of the factions presents a candidate for nomination then that political party will not field a candidate. And it is not difficult to create such a leadership dispute in a political party that is in opposition. This seems to be the case with the DP," he said.

Dr M'membe said allowing "this precedent" could destroy opposition political parties and the multiparty political system itself.

"I say this because political parties are the main gatekeepers for

candidates to participate in elections. Parties, therefore, have great influence over the degree of our people's political participation at local and national levels. Political parties determine which candidates are nominated and elected and which issues achieve national prominence. They decide who will be adopted as their candidates in elections.

"As intermediary institutions, they link the state and civil society, translating the policy preferences of citizens into political action. Individuals with political ambition are likely to seek out leadership positions within political parties."

Dr M'membe said parties offered choices in governance and could hold governments accountable.

"The Socialist Party supports

the development of a vibrant, accountable and inclusive multiparty system that offers citizens meaningful choices and opportunities for political participation. It is said that if you take a dim view of our political parties, you're in sterling company. It's with some trepidation that I want to speak up in defence of political parties."

Dr M'membe said that for more than 57 years political parties had played a key role in representative governments.

"We shouldn't forget that it was political parties that fought for our independence and created the Zambia we are very proud of. They are the best stage I know for broad economic, political, and social change. It's hard for me to imagine a Zambia without them."

Don't lose hope in these dark days

I KNOW times are hard but never give in to cynicism, pessimism, despair, or commit suicide, Socialist Party President Fred M'membe says.

He said the recent fuel price increases and other escalating costs meant that many more people would be facing financial struggles.

Dr M'membe's comments were in response to the death of 27-year-old Mwila Chibwe Phiri, a male nurse from Mufulira, who took his life because of financial difficulties. He leaves behind a wife and a four-month-old baby.

"Even under this heavy weight of problems, dream of the day you will be up on your feet again. We must never surrender. Don't forget that today's dreams will be tomorrow's reality, yesterday's dreams are today's reality," Dr M'membe said. "I know it's tough sometimes but don't give up, don't surrender."

He said no-one should commit suicide because of financial problems. "Whatever your circumstances,

please, please don't take your life. There are ways to get through these tough economic times, ease stress and anxiety, and regain control of your finances. If you're worried about money, you're not alone. Many of us, from all walks of life, are having to deal with financial stress and uncertainty at this very difficult time. Financial worry is one of the most common stress factors in today's capitalist world we live in."

Dr M'membe said financial problems could take a huge toll on mental and physical wellbeing, relationships and quality of life.

He warned people against unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as alcohol, drugs or gambling. "It gets dark sometimes, but the morning comes. Hold your head high. We can triumph over these challenges," he said. "We must not lose you to suicide, cynicism, pessimism and despair. Whatever your situation, I challenge you to hope, dream, and work very hard for a more just, fair and humane Zambia."

COVID jabs must be voluntary. It is a matter of rights

TALK by the government of making COVID-19 vaccinations mandatory is frightening, Socialist Party President Fred M'membe says.

"Let's persuade, plead with our people to take COVID-19 vaccinations, but let's avoid blackmailing them into doing so. It is a very serious human rights violation."

Dr M'membe said human rights conventions demanded a person must not be subjected to medical treatment without his or her full, free, and informed consent. "And because vaccination is a medical procedure, forcing a person to be vaccinated against his or her will is a clear violation of this right. Every person has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion, and belief, and a person must not be coerced or restrained in a way that limits his or her freedom to have or adopt a religion or belief in observance or practice.

"Under international human rights law certain rights are non-derogable, even in a time of public emergency which threatens the life of the nation – that is, the rights cannot be limited under any circumstances. Non-derogable rights include the right not to be subjected to medical experimentation. In other words, there are no countervailing rights or considerations which would make it legitimate to force someone to undergo medical experimentation or treatment without their consent.

"This is an indication that the right not to be subjected to medical treatment is a fundamental right and cannot be set aside in the interests of other policy goals. Therefore, although an international treaty cannot override the interpretation of domestic legislation, international law provides a strong indication that the right not to be subjected to medical treatment is an absolute right that cannot be limited."

Dr Mmembe said compulsory vaccination would set a precedent of government control which was unlikely to stop with vaccination.

Street vendors need support to develop skills

AUTHORITIES should support and encourage street vendors "who add life to our cities", Socialist Party President Fred M'membe says.

His comments follows news that vendors along Lusaka's Cha Cha Cha and Cairo roads have appealed to the government to reconsider its decision to remove them.

Lusaka's mayor says there is need for "a clean and healthy city", hence the need to move the vendors. But Dr M'membe asks why it is not possible to have a clean and healthy environment with vendors on the streets. "Are the two really mutually exclusive?"

"Our politicians love to say how they love small businesses but there's not so much respect for street vendors. It's important to see vendors as a part of the small business

community. And historically, they have been. Some of our successful retailers started out as street vendors. Vending should be considered a valid starting point for businesses, and more should be done to encourage it," he said.

"On removing vendors from our city streets, our politicians are usually only looking at things cross-sectionally, not longitudinally. They're not considering that, over the long run, small investments that people make in themselves and their families can sometimes turn into large paybacks in entrepreneurial activities. Not always – small businesses fail all the time – but sometimes they pay great dividends."

Dr M'membe said vendors added life to our cities. "And our cities can find ways to comprehend them and their purposes and

integrate them more completely into the city's larger purposes. There are a variety of ways that commerce can occur on the street, and I think that cities should clearly be interested in encouraging across that spectrum. That means getting the city more involved in working with vendors.

"Cities like Lusaka need to use their business development arms to do more to help vendors understand the rules and to develop their vending operations into sustainable and even expandable businesses. A city that has the money and has the resources to do it should be doing it.

"Instead of driving vendors from the street it is better to help them understand how to work within the city's regulations and to improve their business standards," Dr M'membe said.

IMF loan deal is nothing for the government to be celebrating

There are too many 'perilous' conditions attached to these agreements

Socialist staff reporter

SOCIALIST Party President Fred M'membe says it is difficult to understand why government leaders are celebrating getting on to an IMF loan programme.

"It reminds me of PF government's celebrations over getting the Euro bonds," he said. "Can one really celebrate getting kaloba? Is that something to really celebrate?"

"In life it is very important to be clear about things or else you'll be trying to decorate your tomorrows with other people's yesterdays. Those in the dark are in no position to light the way for others."

Dr M'membe said IMF loans came with many strings attached. "The truth is that when a country borrows from the IMF, its government agrees to adjust its economic policies to overcome the problems that the IMF believes led it to seek financial aid.

"These policy adjustments are conditions for IMF loans and serve to ensure that the country will be able to repay the IMF. Conditionality covers the design of IMF-supported programmes – that is, macroeconomic and structural policies – and the specific tools used to monitor progress toward goals outlined for cooperation with the IMF.

"The IMF believes that conditionality helps to stabilise balance-of-payments problems without resorting to measures that are harmful to national or international prosperity. At the same time, the measures are meant to safeguard IMF resources by ensuring that the country's balance of payments will be strong enough to permit it to repay the loan."

Dr M'membe said most IMF financing was paid out in installments and linked to demonstrable policy actions.

mentable by design. They simply entail too many policy conditions. Even neoliberal reform-minded governments struggle to implement them."

Dr M'membe said programme failure had serious repercussions for economic development.

"Failure sends a negative signal to markets, causing them to lose confidence in the ability of governments to stabilise the economy and undertake reforms. The result very often is a rise in inflation and increases in capital flight that deprive countries of much-needed capital for investment in public goods and services.

"Some have blamed the failure rate on a lack of motivation by borrowing governments. Facing pressures from special interest groups, such as labour unions and business groups, governments often back-

Dr M'membe writes:

GIVEN the UPND's promises on debt contraction, one would have expected the government to match its words with action by reducing both domestic and foreign debt. This will be the first time in the history of our country that a government has borrowed US\$4.2 billion in one fiscal year to fund its budget.

● We've been here before – analysis, pages 6-7

pedal from previous commitments. In addition, it has been found that countries that are friends with powerful donors, like the US, also experience more implementation failure. They receive favourable treatment, such as regaining access to IMF loans much faster than other

countries, creating a moral hazard problem. In other words, encouraging bad behaviour.

"Conditions to privatise state-owned enterprises, liberalise prices and overhaul the public sector were especially prone to cause implementation failure. This is because these conditions mobilise domestic opposition that can thwart programme implementation. In trying to kill this opposition some governments have turned tyrannical, denying citizens their fundamental rights and freedoms of protest, assembly and expression.

"Researchers have also ruled out that implementation failure is driven by the occurrence of a financial crisis, macroeconomic instability, domestic opposition to policy reform, or geopolitical factors."

Dr M'membe said investors rated a country lower when it suffered

the permanent interruption of an IMF programme.

"Programme interruptions lead to adverse financial market reactions. When investors lose confidence in a country's ability to undertake market-liberalising reform, they require higher interest rates on their loans. Borrowing countries that failed to implement IMF programmes therefore faced the risk of more volatile capital flows and higher refinancing costs. Ultimately, higher financing costs made them even more dependent on the Fund, entrapping them in a cycle of dependency.

"Given the detrimental effects of IMF programme interruptions for developing countries, it is puzzling that the reform of IMF conditionality is lagging.

"The IMF has often blamed weak capacity and lack of 'political will' for poor implementation. This

predominant view was challenged by Horst Köhler, a former IMF managing director, who launched a 'streamlining initiative'. Its goal was to reduce the number of conditions. But the number of conditions remained high. This is partly because of the rigid process by which new IMF programmes come about.

"There is a need for greater leadership to ensure policy coherence in IMF programmes. This is even more important right now with a record number of 80 new IMF lending arrangements due to the COVID-19 crisis in developing countries.

"Under the dual COVID-19 health and economic crises, these programmes run the risk of having too many conditions. This may drive countries into financial disaster and back to the IMF again. This is the perilous path our new government is celebrating, embarking on."



Open-minded ways of looking at the world

RECENTLY I had the privilege of attending a Zambia Open University Fourth Year Undergraduate Fine Arts Expo 2021, writes Socialist Party President Fred M'membe.

"It was really a wonderful evening. Out of the eleven students, nine were teachers. Going through their work, it became very clear to me that the visual arts can

create a positive learning environment where students have the opportunity to express their own ideas, imagination, and creativity. We need to invest more as a nation in the arts education.

"Students who incorporate visual arts education are able to develop different ways of thinking, and look at the world

from a different perspective. Teachers and educators play a fundamental role in creating this positive learning environment. Educators can integrate the arts in order to explain difficult world and society events to their students.

"When art, music and poetry are integrated, children can confront difficult

themes in works of art, and process the information in highly personal ways.

"Integrating the visual arts into difficult world events allows students to learn about important news events and interpret and develop their own opinions. Keep up the good work William Miko Bwalya, head of fine arts, Zambia Open University!"

People are victims of an oppressive system, we don't hate them for that, says M'membe

SOCIALIST Party President Fred M'membe says that although he was insulted and treated unfairly under the previous government, he doesn't hate anyone as a result of it.

Responding to former Nkana PF MP Luxon Kazabu, who claimed he was either naïve or subjective, Dr M'membe said it was easy for people to treat those they loved well, but the real test of humanity involved how they treated their enemies.

"My good friend Luxon Kazabu says I should not forget what happened to me under the PF when I had not committed any crime. He says I am being naïve or subjective. Indeed, what happened under the PF was very bad, and we should be on guard and very alert to ensure it doesn't happen to anyone in country again," he said.

"It's very easy for everyone one of us to treat well, fairly, those we love, our friends. But the real test of our humanity

comes when our enemies are involved," Dr M'membe said.

"In Biblical history, we were told that there were struggles even in heaven, among the angels, and if there were struggles in Heaven, how can we fail to understand that there may be struggles on Earth? What's more, Jesus tells us we must love our enemies – he doesn't say we mustn't have enemies – and there's no greater love for an oppressor than to prevent him from oppressing others."

He said he was taught that there was a constant struggle between good and evil, and that evil had to be punished.

"We must expose crime and hunt down the criminal, but we should always remember that even in the case of crime, if it is attacked in a sensational, lurid, and unfair fashion, the attack may do more damage to the public than the crime itself. And it is because I feel that there should

be no rest in the endless war against the forces of evil that I ask war be conducted with sanity as well as with resolution. Neither arrests, detentions, destruction of my property nor the voice of insult has taught me to hate," he said.

Dr M'membe said revolutionaries and socialists did not preach hatred as a philosophy. He said his view, shared by many socialists, was that it was not a matter of hating individuals, but hating the iniquitous system of abuse, humiliation and exploitation that made human beings "behave like wolves, jackals or hyenas". It was not hatred of people.

"We are not preaching hatred among human beings, because in the final analysis, human beings are victims of the system. If we have to fight the system, we will fight the system. If we have to fight the men who represent the system we hate, we will do so," he said.

Dangers of debt

WHEN you fund education by borrowing money you are on a very dangerous path, says Socialist Party President Fred M'membe.

"For many reasons, education should be funded from your own generated resources, no matter the difficulties or challenges.

"Like PF, the UPND is continuing on the path of funding its budgets through debt," he said. "It seems to have no idea how to reduce the budget deficit, yet it has unnecessary think tanks on its payroll, such as ZIPAR, PMRC and the National Economic Advisory Council, who get paid for doing nothing and don't even apply for competitive consultancy works for sustainability."

Dr M'membe said there were many ways of freeing up funds. "You have 14 grant-aided institutions under the Ministry of Health that are embroidered in the duplication of efforts. You have unnecessary courts, service commissions and other grant-aided institutions that can be merged, as well as leverage on the use of IT, the internet of things and blockchain for less cost and less time, while having more impact on productivity."

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GBV



Clockwise from top left: Socialist Party Women's League Team Matero; Socialist Party Secretary General and First Vice-President Cosmas Musumali with President Fred M'membe and Second Vice-President and General Treasurer Chris Mwikisa; speakers Fred M'membe, Barbra Chekuda Maramwidze, Moddy Chisha Nonde, Grace Natasha Namunyola, Nancy Busiku Mpongo and Simon Mwila

Orange the World campaign to end violence against women

THE RECENT 16 days of activism against gender-based violence – from November 25 until December 10 – marked the 30th anniversary of the global campaign.

The theme, “Orange the World: end violence against women now!” reminds us of the abuse women suffer daily, both in private and public spaces.

Here are edited extracts from some of the speakers attending the Socialist Party solidarity event held at the Secretariat in Lusaka on Saturday, December 4.

Fred M'membe, Socialist Party President:

TRADITIONALLY we convene at this time of the year to amplify the voices of survivors of violence who are claiming their rights and fighting for justice. Yet, this year is like no other.

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, emerging data and reports have shown that all types of violence against women and girls, particularly domestic violence, have intensified.

Violence against girls and women is one of the most widespread, persistent human rights violations in our country today. Whether it is intimate-partner violence, sexual violence, harassment, or child marriage, GBV prevents victims from reaching their full potential. It is our collective duty to combat those who perpetrate this criminality and provide support to the victims.

The physical and psychological effects of GBV are devastating.

I have heard some say, “Who loves you, beats you.” I recall hearing some say, “That’s just the way it is.” Today there’s growing awareness that violence against women is neither inevitable nor acceptable. By standing up against violence against women, we will come closer to justice, equity and peace.

“We also know that different groups of women and girls have been impacted

differently by the pandemic. Socio-economic pressures have exacerbated the situation of the most vulnerable women in Zambia, including those living with disabilities. As we relied more on virtual means of communication, we also witnessed new threats posed by online harassment and cyber bullying.

The risk of reversing decades of progress in the fight against gender-based violence and inequalities is high.

Comrades, if we aim to be successful in building back a better, stronger, resilient and equal society, it is a time for bold prioritisation, and accelerate joint efforts in response to gender-based violence in the context of COVID-19.

Clearly, violence against women and girls takes many forms and is widespread throughout our country. It includes rape, domestic violence, harassment at work and abuse in school. It is predominantly inflicted by men.

I urge all of you here and all our leaders – political, religious, traditional and otherwise – to harness the energy, ideas and leadership of young people to help us to end this pandemic of violence.

Allow me to conclude by highlighting the key role played by journalists and media professionals in Zambia in both raising awareness on COVID-19 as well as in narrating our “new normal”. We continue to count on your support to raise awareness of domestic violence during this critical time. Ending gender-based violence is our shared responsibility and we all have a role to play.

Socialist Party Women's League leader Barbra Chekuda Maramwidze:

ACTION for us means continuity from 16 to 365 days of activism against gender-based violence. We believe one way to tackle gender-based violence is empowering women through education.

As the Socialist Party Women's League, we are honoured to have a leader and com-

rade such as Dr Fred M'membe in our corner. He has sponsored many of our female comrades both at college and university level and many of them are thriving.

Comrade M'membe's support for the women's movement, our cause and struggles, are appreciated. The Socialist Party in partnership with MST-Brazil is spearheading the Fred M'membe Literacy and Agroecology campaign. Two weeks ago, of the 700 comrades who graduated in Kasenengwa, Eastern Province, the majority were women.

Comrade M'membe has consistently fought for women's inclusion and participation in our politics, and in our party structures. We need more comrades like him in the struggle for equity and against GBV. We call upon leaders in Zambia and beyond to walk the talk, and join the women folk to end violence against women and the girl child.

Socialist Party Youth League leader Simon Mulenga Mwila:

AS WE wrap up the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence, let us commit to action all year round against this scourge. Gender-based violence should not be a daily bread.

There have been voices that complain we have turned the issues of gender all about women, that men are being marginalised in the conversations. When GBV issues are raised strongly as in the past 10 days, to end violence against our women and the girl child, there have been responses about the defence of men.

I know I am among the men, but what I want to point out comrades is that those complaining point out that there is an anomaly in the fight against GBV. That gender is being interpreted or taken as synonymous with women.

There are, however, very justifiable reasons why women and girls have taken centre stage of the debate. Take for example, the 2021 third quarter GBV crime report that shows of the 685 sexual offences recorded, 512 victims were girls, 153 were

women, 14 were boys, and six were men. These statistics are sad when one looks at the number of girls and women being violated sexually. It is also notable that our boys and a few of our men have equally suffered GBV.

I submit that instead of complaining that gender has been turned into a women's agenda, the condition of our women and girls and the statistics should help inform our action and our struggle against GBV.

Let us build a society anchored on values of justice, fairness and equity.

Socialist Party Women's League member based in Eastern Province, Doris Mweene:

ACTION now from 16 days to 365 days of activism. Gender-based violence is real! We have seen and experienced it.

The hardest part of this is breaking free from it. You are told in marriage that it's a shipikisha club. You get accustomed to all the abuse both physically and emotionally. You have no one to talk to about it because you fear people will laugh at you hence you just take it on.

GBV does not just affect the two parties fighting, but the kids in that home as well. Such an environment is toxic to our children. They grow up thinking that's just how it's supposed to be. Please, let's speak against GBV. It's not a normal thing being someone's punching bag. Any form of violence is unacceptable. Stop it!

Socialist Party student supporter Jennifer Chalwe:

GBV AFFECTS women in ways that makes them shun politics, and in ways that makes them feel less human. We need to change this. Most of our women give up participating in key governance issues because of the emotional and physical violation. Most women opt to go silent about these violations they experience due to the shame that comes with it.

The violence women experience in many homes is unacceptable and dehu-

manising. If someone really loves and cares for you they cannot hurt you. We need to spread love and compassion.

The Rev Moddy Chisha Nonde, Socialist Party Women's League member:

WHAT we want to promote is to take action against GBV. We have been talking about it, but I believe we are tired of just speaking. We need to take action. We can only act when we put our hands together.

GBV is painful and it is real and even women present here are victims of it. It may not just be physical abuse, the most painful form is emotional abuse. We can't come out and speak about in public simply because we have been taught that marital issues must be kept confidential – and yet we are dying in silence.

The cake we have here and its shape represents the 365 days that we have in a year to take action and fight GBV. We are tired of waiting for November and December to have 16 days of activism against GBV. We are suffering throughout the year in our homes and communities. We need to work together to fight GBV because both men and women are victims of it.

Grace Natasha Namunyola, Socialist Party Women's League member:

OUR homes have become spaces where most of the violence against women, girls and boys, is perpetrated. Let us pay particular attention to the home space. What value system do we have? What are the structural issues that are contributing to GBV?

Nancy Busiku Mpongo, Socialist Party Youth League member:

MANY women, young women, are burying their stories, are not speaking out against GBV, and as such many are dying in silence. We call for action. Action that we speak out against GBV. Action that we struggle for gender equity and structures that will end the oppression of women. Laws that ensure gender equity.



Socialist Party President Fred M'membe: Without hope there is nothing and without love we are nothing

We shouldn't give up, we shouldn't lose hope

IN ROMANS 15:4 we are told, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." It gets dark sometimes, but the morning comes. We shouldn't give up. We shouldn't lose hope.

And hope is not pretending that troubles don't exist. It is the hope that they won't last forever. That hurt will be healed, difficulties will be overcome and confusion will bring clarity. Learning exemplifies hope; hope for new knowledge, hope for new skills, and hope for an exciting future.

Without faith we have nothing, without hope there is nothing, and without love we are nothing.

As revolutionaries we are optimistic and we everyday work to create the conditions where faith, hope and love can thrive. The Bible promotes optimism, but it is a certain kind of optimism. It is not the secular optimism of positive thinking or the natural optimism of a laid-back personality, but the godly optimism of Christian hope. True hope endures in the darkness.

No matter what happens, the sun rises each new day, and our souls rise with it. That knowledge gives us optimism that never ends.

Optimism is directly connected to hope. Hope allows us to know that in the next day, or hour, or even a minute, the world around us can change in a positive way. And because we are optimists, we are in control of how we see the world.

We are optimists not because we blindly hope – all evidence to the contrary – but that somehow everything will work out all right. Nor are we optimists because we believe in our unlimited abilities to solve our problems. But no matter how enormous the difficulties, no matter how complex the task, there can be no room for pessimism. This would be to renounce all hope and resign ourselves to final defeat.

We have no alternative but to struggle if we wish to harbour any hope for survival. Only with tremendous effort can we face a future that objectively appears desperate and sombre. And if we struggle we are confident we will win.

The control of power must be caged by the system

IT IS a well-known fact that, throughout history, those who administer or control the criminal justice system hold the power with the potential for abuse and tyranny.

The statutory powers to arrest and prosecute those who commit crimes should be reasonably exercised and in good faith. By allowing people to be unjustifiably arrested, detained and prosecuted, those in power are sending a dangerous signal that the criminal justice system can be used to persecute and fix opponents of the regime. I think we are quickly drifting back to the dark days of the PF Friday afternoon arrests and detentions to fix political opponents.

The way Davies Chama was arrested and detained for days raised serious concerns and we expressed them. He was arrested and detained for attempted murder but ended up with a charge of assault. We witnessed a similar handling of Stephen Kampyongo. And now there's the case of Raphael Nakacinda.

Can't these arrests be done in a better and more humane way?

Power must be caged by the system. There's a need to administer justice impartially. Impartial law enforcement should be guaranteed by institutions. We should apply institutions to every aspect of law enforcement as a wall wired with a high-tension electricity line.

The only antidote to the culture of venality is the readiness of our criminal justice system to apply the laws fairly and equally.

In *Freedom under the Law*, Lord Denning wisely remarked, "All power corrupts. Total power corrupts absolutely. And the trouble about it is that an official who is the possessor of power often does not realise when he is abusing it. Its influence is so insidious that he may believe that he is acting for the public good when, in truth, all he is doing is to assert his own brief authority.

The Jack-in-office never realises that he is being a little tyrant."

We should at all times uphold the rule of law, integrity of the criminal justice system, and the right to a fair trial.

Corruption disgraced PF

RECENTLY I enjoyed listening to Brian Mundubile, the leader of opposition PF in Parliament, on Prime TV's Oxygen Democracy programme. I don't know the man. We have never met. I liked his clarity and calmness. He is certainly politically astute. But he shouldn't play down the scale of their defeat and their problems.

First, their party became associated increasingly with the most disagreeable practices, messages and thoughts. Indeed, as Mr Mundubile put it, some of that linkage might have been unjustified, but since it is what some people thought – what some people still think – it must be appreciated as a deeply felt distaste, rather than momentary irritation. It cannot be simply dismissed as a mere false perception.

PF was linked to harshness. It was thought to be cruel and uncaring. PF was thought to favour greed. PF was thought to be arrogant and out of touch. Some of it may have been no more than mannerisms that grated on the public. Some of it was insensitivity.

Corruption disgraced the PF in the eyes of the public. Their perception was of corruption and unfitness for public service. Such distasteful perceptions can endure and do them damage for a long time. The last years of the PF government profoundly disappointed their supporters, and disgusted many others.

People need a rest from PF, and they need time to reflect and listen. They certainly need to do a lot about themselves – take a fresh look in the new circumstances.

The errors of our ways

TO BEGIN with, I would like to refer to a saying of Lenin, that the attitude – that is to say, the seriousness of purpose – of a revolutionary party is measured, basically, by the attitude it takes toward its own errors.

And in the same way, the seriousness of purpose of members of a government will be measured by the attitude they take toward their own errors.

Of course, our enemies are always alert to know what those errors are. When those errors are made and are not subjected to self-criticism, our enemies take advantage of them. When those errors are made and are subjected to self-criticism, they may be used by the enemy, but in a very different way. This is because in the former case our errors would not be corrected and in the latter they would be.

That is why it is important to take a forthright and serious attitude toward our own errors.

Ababufi balaya infingi

WHEN someone doesn't follow through with what they promised, it can be devastating. Whether in politics, business or personal relationships, dealing with someone who doesn't follow through can cause turmoil.

There is an old Gaelic proverb, which says, "There is no greater fraud than a promise not kept."

Richard Paul Evans says, "Broken vows are like broken mirrors. They leave those who held to them bleeding and staring at fractured images of themselves." Jussi Adler-Olsen warns, "But promises based on ignorance always prove disappointing."

Amit Kalantri cautions, "Sometimes your pledges become your problems." Pierce Brown says, "Liars make the best promises." And I say, "Ababufi balaya infingi."

Remake the world

TOO MANY people are suffering
Too many people are sad
Too likable people got everything
While too many people got nothing
Remake the world
Put your conscience in the test
Jimmy Cliff

Civil service pay hike sugar-coats broken promises

Fuel, electricity, fertiliser price lies

Socialist staff reporter

THE UPND in opposition lied to Zambians about the need for lower fuel prices, electricity tariffs and fertiliser prices, Cosmas Musumali, Secretary General and First Vice-President of the Socialist Party says.

He said the UPND's actions in power demonstrated it was reneging on its election promises.

"The announcement of a 12 per cent pay rise for civil servants was timed to sugar-coat the bitter pill of fuel price hikes that the Zambian masses had to swallow a day later," he said.

"Of course our Zambia civil servants urgently needed serious consideration. Over the past five years, they have had only a nominal 12 per cent pay rise and well over 50 per cent loss of value in earnings due to inflation.

"It was therefore a desperate situation for the average government employee. The news of a 12 per cent pay increase and a 15 per cent increase in the rate of transport allowance was therefore highly welcomed by all the 16 trade unions in the civil service.

"However, the celebrations of the pay rise were cut short by the bombshell of fuel price increases of 20 to 29 per cent for petrol and diesel respectively," Dr Musumali said.

"And this is not the end of the story. Soon, increased electricity



Musumali: it is pure betrayal of the voters who invested hope

tariffs will be announced whose net impact will be devastating for the average household and small-scale entrepreneur with or without access to electricity.

"The cost of living will escalate and poverty eradication can only be a pipedream.

The explanation for all these seemingly contradictory policy interventions is simple: the UPND in opposition lied to Zambians about the need for lower fuel prices, lower electricity tariffs and lower fertiliser prices.

Corrupt

"The UPND in power is quickly reneging on these electoral promises. It is said that lies have short legs – and indeed those short legs get even shorter when confronted with the real politik of policy implementation.

"The petroleum subsector in Zambia is murky, inherently cor-

rupt and cartel-like in behaviour. Without cleaning the mess that has been there for decades, it is impossible to come up with the true cost of service. At the end of the day it is a farce that is being displayed under the pretext of attaining cost-reflective pricing.

"Similarly, ZESCO – our main power utility – has been the cash cow for successive governments for decades. A truly, independent cost of service study has delayed for years.

"Behind all this delay is a purposeful strategy to continue allowing the ruling political elite exploit the masses who are already bleeding under heavy residential tariffs."

Dr Musumali said it was fortunate that the majority Zambians were quick to see through the lies and deceitfulness.

"The UPND government can no longer be trusted on the basis of its empty electoral promises and new promises. It has been sugar-coating on almost all topics critical to the livelihoods of the masses of our people, such as free education, peasant agriculture and now the cost of fuel and electricity.

"It is pure betrayal of the voters who invested that much hope in the UPND.

"The Socialist Party, through its president, Fred M'membe, had said it before that the PF and UPND are "Siamese twins" and that there would only be cosmetic but not transformational change with the UPND replacing the PF. We still stand to be proved wrong."

M'membe congratulates Gabriel Boric, Chile's socialist president

SOCIALIST Party President Fred M'membe has congratulated Gabriel Boric and the membership of Social Convergence on their election victory in Chile.

Boric won the country's presidential election to become the country's youngest ever leader.

"We send you our warm greetings and congratulations on your electoral victory.

"This year is ending on a truly very pleasant note for the Latin American left. It is indeed the year of the reversal of fortunes," he said.

"We are greatly inspired by your electoral victory and campaign messages.

"You made it very clear throughout your campaign that you are a generation that emerged in public life demanding that your rights be respected as rights and not treated like consumer goods or a business. And that you, 'no longer will permit that the poor keep paying the price of Chile's inequality'.

"You have been very truthful with the Chilean people that, 'the times ahead will not be easy. Only with social cohesion, re-finding ourselves and sharing common ground will we be able to advance towards truly sustainable development – which reaches every Chilean'.



Gabriel Boric

"On the campaign trail you promised to 'bury' the neoliberal economic model left by General Augusto Pinochet's 1973-1990 dictatorship and raise taxes on the 'super rich' to expand social services, fight inequality and boost protection of the environment.

Solidarity

"You have our solidarity in your struggles to give the Chilean poor a better life. We wish you all the best dear comrades."

In what was expected to be a tight race, the 35-year-old former student protest leader defeated his far-right rival José Antonio Kast by 10 points.

Boric will lead a country that has been rocked in recent years by mass protests against inequality and corruption.

His victory prompted celebrations on the streets of the capital Santiago, with his supporters waving flags and honking car horns.

In his speech, Boric said he was taking on the job with humility and "a tremendous sense of responsibility", vowing to "firmly fight against the privileges of a few".

Official results gave Boric 56 percent of the votes against Kast's 44 percent. Kast conceded defeat barely an hour-and-a-half after polls closed, and with around half of ballots counted.

Both candidates offered starkly different visions for the country, and both are outsiders, representing political parties that have never been in government.

Once the most stable economy in Latin America, Chile has one of the world's largest income gaps, with 1 percent of the population owning 25 percent of the country's wealth, according to the UN.

Boric has promised to address this inequality by expanding social rights and reforming Chile's pension and healthcare systems.

IMF deal: we have

As the Zambian government commits itself to record borrowing, Socialist Party President **Fred M'membe** looks at the history of IMF policies and the need for the Fund to be modernised and its governance made more democratic

LET'S NOT cheat ourselves or allow ourselves to be deceived. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme guarantees us nothing. We have been on this path before. Yes, the language has changed, or is changing slightly, but the fundamentals of these programmes have remained the same. The IMF management would like recipient countries to "own" the policy conditionalities much more than they have done.

But genuine ownership can only be derived if the countries themselves participate in the making of the policies, and this is generally not the case, as the policies are usually imposed by the IMF, often against the wishes of the governments or people involved.

Still, the policies would be more acceptable if they worked. But generally they have not worked. Instead of recovery, growth and getting out of debt, many recipient countries have experienced stagnation or worse, and many are still trapped in debt. Thus, more "country ownership" of IMF programmes does not simply mean improving the methods of getting countries to really accept and internalise IMF policies which, it is assumed, are good, though tough. It is not a communications or public relations task.

Ownership can or should be increased only if there is genuine participation by the government and people of recipient countries, and only if the content of conditionality (i.e. the policies) are appropriate and bring about good outcomes. Thus, the key issues are the democratic (or rather non-democratic and non-participatory) process of IMF policy-making, and the appropriateness (or rather inappropriateness) of the IMF policies. Unless these issues are resolved, no amount of persuasion or arm-twisting (ultimatums such as "convince us beforehand that you are a believer or we won't agree to giving you a loan") will bring about genuine ownership.

The issues of non-participation and inappropriate policies are not academic but of life and death dimensions. From the mid-1980s we have lived through IMF programmes. We closely followed policy debates and policies in the different affected countries, saw the effects of the market practices and IMF-led policies, the social and political upheavals, the traumatic economic downturn, the devastating effect on the lives of millions of people and on the viability of thousands of local firms, big and small. Due to the evidence of recent events, there is a crisis also



in development thinking and the development paradigm. In the past, there was a bias or blind faith in predominantly relying on the state for development. Then, there was a swing to the other extreme of having total reliance and blind faith in the private sector and on globalisation (rapid opening up to international finance and trade). Now the pendulum is swinging back.

The emerging view is that openness can have good or bad effects, depending on the specific condition and stage of development a country is in. For example, whether the local firms and banks are prepared for external competition, whether there are regulations or knowledge on managing and utilising foreign loans so that they can be repaid, whether there are reciprocal benefits from opening up, whether there are opportunities for increasing exports or if the capacity to produce and market for export has been built up, and what the balance of payments effects of opening up are, given the conditions the country finds itself in. Although, if conditions are right, there can be many benefits from opening up, but there are also great risks and costs to be borne if the conditions are not right. For many countries, the conditions are not or may not be right, at least not yet. If they nevertheless open up, they may suffer the risks and the costs.

Rhetoric

Thus, the balance, degree, timing, sequence of liberalisation must be tailored to each country. Though it may become the new wisdom in rhetoric, this principle has not yet been translated into policy by international agencies like the IMF, nor into national policy of most developing countries. Many countries are unable to do so, even if they want to, due to conditionality or binding rules. Many, if not most, developing countries are neither growing nor developing. The situation is bleak for many. Business as usual cannot be the response, as it has generally failed. The issue of conditionality and ownership should be viewed in a broad perspective, and this includes looking critically, not only at the roads taken by the IMF, but also at the roads not taken.

The raison d'être of the IMF at

its creation and in the era of the Bretton Woods system is to ensure global financial stability. This arose from the recognition that left to itself, the financial institutions, markets and players, can become a too-powerful force with the potential of destabilising the financial system itself as well as undermining the real economy. The IMF's implicit mission included taming and regulating global and national finance so that finance would serve the real sector objectives of growth of output, income and employment.

The original post-WW2 framework supported this function. It included a system predominated by fixed exchange rates (which could be adjusted with IMF assistance when needed by objective conditions), BOP adjustment through country-IMF discussion when needed, limited crossborder financial flows, and the normality of national capital controls.

Policy was influenced by an understanding of the need for caution on the potential for instability, volatility, and harm to the real economy that can be caused by unregulated finance and by speculative activity.

This regulatory system and the period of relative financial stability ended with the 1972 Smithsonian Agreement. Floating replaced fixed exchange rates, financial deregulation and liberalisation took off in the OECD countries, new financial instruments developed, and there has been a massive explosion in crossborder short-term capital flows and in speculative financial activity.

There has also been the spread of capital liberalisation to developing countries, to which advice from developed countries and from the IMF contributed. These developments underlie the frequent occurrence of financial crises.

The failure of the IMF and other international financial agencies to prevent such crises should be recognised as one of its major flaws, and this should be rectified. Indeed, the failure of the IMF in preventing the global financial system from going down the road of such rapid deregulation and liberalisation (with the consequences of currency instability, volatility of capital flows and financial speculation), and instead presiding over this road

that was taken, is a major mistake. It also goes against the original role of the IMF to establish and maintain a stable financial order.

There needs to be a backtracking to the crossroads and take a new turning which is more true to the IMF's original mission of establishing financial stability. That is the road of crisis prevention through establishment of greater stability through better understanding and regulation of capital flows and capital markets; and a more stable system of exchange rates (including among the major reserve currencies, and in the currencies of developing countries). There is need to understand capital markets and the role and methods of players like highly leveraged institutions (for example hedge funds) which are now non-transparent and unaccountable but have major impact on global and national finance and real economy. There is need especially to curb manipulative financial activity. There is need to understand the behaviour and potential and real effects of various kinds of capital flows to developing countries – including credit (to the public and private sectors), portfolio investment, foreign direct investment (and its varieties, such as mergers and acquisitions, Greenfield investment, and FDI that produces for the domestic or the foreign market).

There is need to look at inflows and outflows arising from each, including the potential for volatility of each and the effects, especially on reserves and the balance-of-payments.

Guideline

What are the implications for policy and what guidelines should be given? For example, when should (or should not) a government or company borrow in foreign currency? Regulations and guidelines are needed because the market lacks a mechanism that can ensure appropriate outcomes. One guideline that is most relevant could be that local companies should be allowed to borrow in foreign currency only if (and to the extent) the loan is utilised for projects that earn foreign exchange to repay the debt.

The potential for devastating effects of short-term capital flows

should be recognised and acted on to prevent developing countries from the dangers of falling into debt traps. The IMF must recognise this and have an action plan (or at least be part of a coordinated action plan) that:

- Regulates global capital flows, through international regulations or through currency transaction taxes;
- Establishes surveillance mechanisms and disciplines on countries that are major sources of credit so that the authorities in these countries monitor and regulate the behaviour and flows emanating from their capital markets and institutional sources of funds;
- Provides warnings for developing countries of the potential hazards of accepting different types of capital inflows and provides guidelines on the judicious and careful use of the various kinds of funds;
- Educates members and the public on how capital markets work and establishes surveillance and accountability mechanisms to guide and regulate the workings of the markets;
- Appreciates and advises countries on the functions and selective uses of capital controls at national level, and helps them establish the capacity to introduce or maintain such controls;
- Identifies and curbs the use and abuse of financial instruments and methods that manipulate prices, currencies and markets, and prevents the development of new manipulative or destabilising instruments and methods;
- Stabilises exchange rates at international and national levels, which could include mechanisms to stabilise the three major currencies, and measures that can provide more stability and more accurate pricing of currencies of developing countries;
- Provides sufficient liquidity and credit to developing countries to finance development.

The prevention of crises through a more stable global financial order is more beneficial and cost-effective than allowing the continuation of a fundamentally unstable and crisis-prone system, which would then throw up the need for frequent bail-outs with accompanying conditionality.

IMF conditionality policies have

The contractionary monetary and fiscal policies induce recessionary pressures, corporate closures, lower or negative growth rates, retrenchments and higher unemployment. Cutbacks in government expenditure lead to reduced spending on education, health and other services. The switch in financing and provision of services from a grant basis to user-pay basis impacts negatively on the poorer sections of society. The removal or reduction of government subsidies jacks up the cost of living, including the cost of transport, food, and fuel

come under severe criticism for at least three reasons:

- That there has been "over-reach" in that the conditions widened in range through time to include "structural policies" not needed for managing the crisis;
- That the policies in the core economic and financial areas of IMF competence have also been inappropriate as they were contractionary and did not generate growth; and,
- That the policies were designed in ways insensitive to social impacts, and the burden of adjustment fell heavily on the poor and at the expense of social and public services.

The scope of IMF policy conditions has been increasing through the years and has become far too broad. Many of the conditions were not relevant or critical to the causes

been here before



'IMF riots': protesters in action against the Fund in (left to right) Argentina, Jordan and Ecuador

Protesters take to the streets in Argentina

THOUSANDS of people rallied in Argentina's capital, Buenos Aires, recently urging their government not to sign any kind of debt restructuring deal with the IMF.

The protesters thronged Buenos Aires's Plaza de Mayo carrying placards that read "No to a deal with the IMF" as banners of the country's largest social and left-wing organisations rippled and anti-IMF slogans roared on the loudspeakers.

"People might not be aware of a lot of things, but they are aware of the fact that the words 'International Monetary Fund' in this country have always brought us more misery and more dependency," said Carlos Aznarez of Organizaciones Libres del Pueblo, one of the groups that organised the rally. "People understand that we are headed for disaster if we sign this agreement," he said.

Argentina's government is in the midst of negotiations with the IMF to restructure US\$44bn that it owes to the global fund.

The loan dates back to 2018, when then-president Mauricio Macri signed on to a US\$57bn agreement, making it the largest loan in IMF history. Some \$44bn was dispersed, but President Alberto Fernandez, who took office in 2020, has refused the rest, and set out to renegotiate repayment terms of the loan.

The current agreement calls for repayments of \$19bn each in 2022 and 2023 – amounts that many say the government cannot afford to pay back amid a groaning recession that has seen inflation skyrocket and poverty continue to climb.

Protesters say that paying off the debt will inevitably lead to austerity measures that will hurt ordinary Argentines. They fear an increase in the cost of utilities and interest rates, a reduction in public works, and cutbacks to state employees, pensions and social spending. These are measures that Argentines have seen before, some as recently as in 2018, when the government imposed an IMF-backed plan to slash public spending in order to pay off debt.

But it's the role the IMF played leading up to and during the financial meltdown of 2001 that continues to enrage many Argentines. At the time, the government devalued its currency and banned bank withdrawals after defaulting on its \$93bn debt, triggering widespread social unrest as unemployment and poverty skyrocketed.

President Fernandez, who lost political support in November's mid-term legislative elections, has been talking tough, vowing that Argentina "will not go down on its knees" before the IMF, while at the same time promising to pay back what it owes.

Prices have increased 52 percent over the last 12 months, according to government statistics, and more than 40 percent of the population is living below the poverty line.

Al Jazeera

or the management of the crisis the countries found themselves in. Some of these conditions were put into the conditionality package under the influence or pressure of major IMF shareholders for their own interest or agenda, rather than in the interests of the debtor country.

On many areas where conditions are set, neither the IMF nor the World Bank has the expertise to give proper advice, and thus the potential to commit a blunder is high and the negative effects can also be high. This includes the area of political conditionality and issues relating to "governance".

In many countries, import liberalisation has led to domestic firms and industries having to close down as they were unable to compete with cheaper imports, and de-industrialisation has been the result.

There is now strong emerging evidence that trade liberalisation can successfully work only under certain conditions. Factors for success or otherwise include the ability of the country's enterprises and farms to withstand import competition, its production and distribution capacity to export, as well as the state of commodity prices and the degree of market access for its products. In the absence of positive factors, import liberalisation may cause the country into deeper problems.

The implications for conditionality are significant. Evidence is emerging that wrongly sequenced and improperly implemented trade liberalisation is adding to developing countries' trade deficits. The IMF should thus review its trade liberalisation conditionality to take account of the need to enable countries to tailor their trade policy to their particular conditions and their development needs. In areas of its core competence, there are also serious problems with IMF policies. The problems with conditionality do not lie only in "new areas" outside the traditional areas of the IMF's concern. The criticism is now widespread that even in the areas of the IMF's core competence (macroeconomic, financial, monetary and fiscal policies), there are major problems of appropriateness of policy and conditionality.

Policy objectives and assumptions and policy instruments on how

to obtain them are under question, given the poor record of outcome. This questioning of the appropriateness and outcomes of policy had already been going on for several years (especially in relation to policies and results in Africa), but the doubts and criticisms grew much more intense as a result of the IMF handling of the Asian crisis.

The IMF policies tend to be biased towards restrictive monetary policies (including high interest rates) and fiscal contraction, both of which tend to induce or increase recessionary pressures in the overall economy. The contraction in money supply and high interest rates decrease the inducement for investment as well as consumption (thus reducing effective demand). The high interest rates also increase the debt-servicing burden of local enterprises and cause a deterioration in the banking system in relation to non-performing loans.

The Fund has also maintained the strong condition for financial liberalisation and openness in the capital account. Thus, the country is subjected to free inflows and outflows of funds, involving foreigners and locals. The country's exchange rate is in most cases open to the influence of these capital flows, to the level of interest rate, and to speculative activity. Often, there are large fluctuations in the exchange rate.

Perspective

Given the fixed assumption that the capital account must remain open, there is thus the need to maintain the confidence of the short-term foreign investor and potential speculators. A policy of high interest rate and lower government expenditure is advised (imposed) in an effort to maintain foreign investor confidence. But since this policy causes financial difficulties to local firms and banks, and increase recessionary pressures, the level of confidence in the currency may also not be maintained.

The narrow perspective on which the restrictive policies are based neglects the need to build the domestic basis and conditions for recovery and for future development, including the survival and recovery of local firms and financial institutions, the encouragement of

sufficient aggregate effective demand, and the retention of the confidence of local savers, consumers and investors.

Most IMF policies imposed on countries that face financial problems and economic slowdown are opposite to the policies adopted by (and encouraged for) developed countries, such as the US, which normally reduce interest rates to as low a level as needed and which boost government expenditures so as to increase effective demand, counter recessionary pressures, and spark a recovery.

Thus there have been criticisms by mainstream and renowned Western economists (including Paul Krugman and Joseph Stiglitz) that criticise the IMF for imposing policies on developing countries that are opposite to what the US does when facing a similar situation.

Since the type of policies that are linked to IMF conditionality have been increasingly criticised for not working, including because they are contractionary and recessionary in nature and effect, it is no wonder that there is a lack of credibility and confidence in the substance of IMF conditionality, even in its core areas of competence. There is thus a need for IMF to review its macroeconomic package, re-look the policy objectives and assumptions, compare the trade-offs in policy objectives with the number and effects of policy instruments, and widen the range of policy options and instruments. This review should be made in respect of government budget and expenditure, money supply, interest rate, exchange rate, and the degree of capital account openness and regulation.

The IMF has also been heavily criticised, especially by civil society, for the inappropriate design of its policies from the viewpoint of social impact, including reducing access of the public to basic services, and increasing the incidence of poverty. The adverse social impacts are caused by several policies and mechanisms. The contractionary monetary and fiscal policies induce recessionary pressures, corporate closures, lower or negative growth rates, retrenchments and higher unemployment. Cutbacks in government expenditure lead to reduced spending on education, health and

other services. The switch in financing and provision of services from a grant basis to user-pay basis impacts negatively on the poorer sections of society. The removal or reduction of government subsidies jacks up the cost of living including the cost of transport, food, and fuel.

These and other policies have contributed to higher poverty, unemployment, income loss and reduced access to essential goods and services. It is not a coincidence that countries undergoing IMF conditionality have been affected by demonstrations and riots (popularly called "IMF riots"). The social impact of IMF policies is another major cause of the crisis of credibility in IMF conditionality. It must be recognised by the IMF that the major problem with its conditionality is that the policies associated with it are seen to be inappropriate and harmful. This view is not confined to critical academics or NGOs, but is now adopted by renowned mainstream scholars, by parliamentarians of many countries, and also by policymakers of the countries taking IMF loans and undergoing IMF conditionality.

Criticism

The growth of the criticism is caused mainly by the poor record of the policies adopted, and not so much by the lack of implementation of the policies. Therefore, the most urgent task is not so much to "sell" the old conditionality better to the client governments or to the public, but to review the content of conditionality itself and to come up with a better and more appropriate framework and approach. For years, the IMF had been advocating that developing countries open their capital account, which would open them more directly to the forces of international capital markets. Also, there were strong moves to add capital account liberalisation to the mandate of the IMF through an amendment to the articles of association.

This advocacy that developing countries open themselves to the full force of global capital markets, when the Fund itself had inadequate knowledge of the capital markets, was surely remarkable, and in hindsight a great mistake with so many adverse consequences. With the

recent admission of lack of knowledge, let us hope the Fund is starting a learning process that will lead to recognition of previous errors and a more appropriate, cautious approach with a change in policy advice to developing countries.

It should go without saying that appropriateness of conditionality policies in terms of being in the interests of the debtor countries is the key issue to be resolved. "Acceptance" of externally imposed conditionality by the debtor countries is secondary and dependent on it. Moreover, the right to participate in policymaking, and thus genuine ownership, is a critical element in ensuring appropriate conditionality and its implementation.

The role of the major shareholder countries is even more important. The public perception is that they would like to make use of the Fund for their interests, often at the expense of recipient countries and their people. The perception is that the major shareholders make use of their position to skew the policy conditions in a manner that is biased in favour of creditors and investors. Is there a conflict of interest in their making use of the vulnerable state that debtor countries find themselves in, as leverage for imposing policies that are in their own narrow interests, even if these are against the interests of the debtor countries?

Finally, it is difficult or even impossible to ensure that the interests of debtor countries will be adequately reflected in conditionality and Fund decisions when the voting rights in the Fund are so skewed towards the creditor countries. Thus, the issue of the relationship between ownership and conditionality has to face up to the issue of the ownership of the IMF itself.

When decision-making rights are as imbalanced as they now are, it is no wonder that the developed countries are perceived to be controlling the Fund's policies.

There is a dire need for the modernisation and democratisation of the governance system, including a revision of the quota and voting system. This can be accompanied by genuine reform of IMF policies and priorities. The issue of "ownership and conditionality" can then be better resolved in that context.

Cuba top of the vaccination league, global figures show

Homegrown COVID jabs give more than 90% protection

CUBA has vaccinated more of its citizens against COVID-19 than most of the world's largest and richest nations, a milestone that will make the poor, communist-run country a test case as the highly contagious Omicron variant begins to circle the globe.

The country has vaccinated more than 90 percent of its population with at least one dose, and 83 percent of the population is now fully inoculated, placing it second globally behind only the United Arab Emirates among countries of at least 1 million people, according to official statistics compiled by "Our World in Data".

What is Cuba's secret? While many of its neighbours in Latin America, as well as emerging economies globally, have competed for vaccines produced by wealthier nations, health officials say Cuba vaulted ahead by developing its own.

Infections and deaths from COVID-19 have plunged on the island recently, falling to less than 1 percent of their peak on August 22, when fewer than half its citizens were vaccinated.

Nearly all of Cuba's children and teenagers aged two to 18 have now been vaccinated with homegrown vaccines. Schools have reopened and foreign tourists are once again welcome. Hospitals and morgues, overflowing in August, appear to be operating at pre-pandemic levels, according to witnesses.

"It is a truly remarkable accomplishment, given the size of Cuba, and also the US embargo, that restricts their ability to import," said William Moss, director of the Johns Hopkins International Vaccine Access Center, a US-based university group that works to ensure equitable access for low-income countries.

Cuba has said its homegrown, protein-based Abdala, Soberana 02 and Soberana Plus shots give upwards of 90 percent protection against symptomatic COVID-19 when offered in three-dose schemes.

However, Cuba has not yet published results of its large-scale clinical trials in peer-reviewed journals. As a result, some public health experts in other countries remain wary of recommending them until the results are vetted.

The vaccines, which can be produced affordably and do not require deep-freezing, are seen by international health officials as a potential source for much-needed doses in low-income countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia.

"They have been slow to publish results," said Moss. "If (the vaccines) got WHO qualification, that



Technicians at work in one of Cuba's labs (top); vaccines are now being offered to young children (above); poster for Soberana 02 (inset)

could be really important globally."

Cuba's progress is being tracked by COVAX, the global scheme designed to ensure fair access to COVID-19 vaccines.

Cuba is also studying whether the Omicron variant, which was first reported on the island on December 8, will impact protection.

Michael Head, a senior research fellow in medicine at the UK's University of Southampton, said it should come as no surprise that two of the country's vaccines – Abdala and Soberana 02 – had performed very well in trials. Cuba had a long history of producing its own vaccines and medicines.

Proteins

"Abdala is a protein subunit vaccine, which is a well-established design. The hepatitis B vaccine and Novavax COVID vaccine use this approach. These vaccines work by delivering just a portion of the virus that they're targeted against – in the case of Abdala, bits of the coronavirus's spike proteins, which cover its exterior," he said.

"The proteins used in the vaccine aren't taken from the coronavirus directly. Instead, they're grown

Given the difficult relationship between Cuba and the US, the market for Cuba's vaccines will probably be its political allies. Vietnam and Venezuela are reported to have received Abdala, Nicaragua has given emergency authorisation, and doses have been sent to Iran for use in clinical trials

in cells of a yeast (*pichia pastoris*) that have been specially engineered.

"The other Cuban COVID vaccine, Soberana 02, uses a 'conjugate' design, along the lines of meningitis or typhoid vaccines. It contains a different part of the spike protein to Abdala and generates an immune response by attaching (conjugating) this to a harmless extract from the tetanus toxin. When the body encounters these linked together, it launches a stronger immune response than it would to either alone.

"Soberana 02 is produced in hamster ovary cells, a process that can be slow, and this may restrict large-scale manufacturing.

"Originally, it was given as two doses, but researchers later identified that a third dose would be beneficial. This booster dose contains

just the spike protein parts, without the tetanus toxin, and is known as 'Soberana Plus'."

Dr Head said both vaccines had been approved by the Cuban regulator, although they started being rolled out in May – before authorisation had been granted – in response to a rise in cases, and there had been concerns about a lack of information on their safety and efficacy.

Review

"On November 1, 2021, a preprint (research still awaiting review) was finally published of a Soberana phase 3 trial that included 44,031 participants. The results suggest that two doses of Soberana 02 with a booster of Soberana Plus are together 92 percent protective against symptomatic COVID. The

preprint notes that during the trial, the vaccine was most likely being tested against Beta or Delta – two variants of the coronavirus that other vaccines have found harder to control," he said.

Dr Head said that given the difficult relationship between Cuba and the US, the market for Cuba's vaccines would probably be its political allies. Vietnam and Venezuela were reported to have received Abdala doses, Nicaragua had given emergency authorisation for both vaccines, and doses had previously been sent to Iran for use in clinical trials. Mexico and Argentina were also interested in using them.

"Cuba has submitted both to the World Health Organisation (WHO) for approval, which would improve the likelihood of them being used abroad. If there are any plans to include them in the Covax vaccine-sharing initiative, then WHO approval is a must," he said.

"Given most richer countries aren't in the queue for Abdala or Soberana 02, it's entirely possible that in future, parts of South America, Asia and Africa – where vaccine coverage is particularly low – may see Cuban vaccines in many arms."

Reuters/theconversation.com

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.

Nicaragua returns

NICARAGUA has restored diplomatic relations with China after severing ties with Taiwan and recognising the "One China" principle. Beijing has donated one million Covid-19 vaccines to the Central American country, with more partnerships currently under discussion.

Global Times

Uganda claims false

BEIJING repudiated unsubstantiated media claims about confiscating an Ugandan airport due to non-repayment on loans days before the Forum on Africa-China Cooperation summit. Uganda's Finance Minister, Matia Kasaija, admitted his country "should not have accepted some of the clauses", but said agreements fell within bounds of normal trade practices.

Asia Times

Stability is a priority

CHINA has announced stability as a key policy priority for 2022 and will expand social policies in housing and youth employment. At the annual Central Economic Work Conference, the government promoted "proactive fiscal policies" with high expenditure budgets and more tax incentives, as well as "prudent monetary measures" to ensure liquidity.

China Daily

Online lessons move

BEIJING has created an online platform to offer free tutoring to 330,000 elementary school students in the city this year. With content available from 6 to 9pm on weekdays (except holidays), the move increases access and aims to meet the demands of parents after private tutoring sector reforms.

Caixin Global

Reserve ratio change

THE Central Bank is to increase the foreign currency reserve requirement ratio for banks from 7 to 9 percent to curb yuan appreciation and speculation. The Chinese exchange rate increased to 6.37 to the dollar – the highest since 2018 – due to the country's trade surplus and rising foreign reserves.

South China Morning Post

Biggest CO2 plant

TAIZHOU is to host the world's largest CO2 processing plant next year, designed to capture 500,000 tons of CO2 per year. With 14 carbon capture, utilisation, and storage projects – giving a combined annual capacity of 2.1 million tons – China could reduce CO2 emissions by 60 percent by 2050 at a cost of US\$450 billion.

South China Morning Post

Youth survey results

CHINESE youths question marriage and sexuality norms, but are not seeking electoral democracy, a new survey has revealed. The Yicai survey (2,268 people) also found that the young trust the government's ability to deliver on economic growth, illustrated by a tenfold GDP rise in 20 years.

Nikkei Asia

Latin America, Caribbean leftist project gains against the right

2022 gets under way with 14 progressive governments in power

Michele de Mello

THE YEAR 2021 ended with a new configuration of political forces in Latin America and the Caribbean. The third decade of the millennium now begins with a majority of progressive governments in the region – reminiscent of the early 2000s, considered by some as the “won decade”.

If in January 2021 the balance was tilted towards conservatism – with governments that defended a liberal agenda in the economy and a policy contrary to people’s demands – there are now at least 14 governments with affinity to the Latin American and Caribbean leftist project. Some decisive events were:

- In Chile, the constitutional convention, based on gender parity and presided by Mapuche leader Elisa Loncon, as well as the election of Gabriel Boric, defeating the extreme right,
- In Peru, the election of Pedro Castillo, and,
- In Honduras, the victory of Xiomara Castro, defeating the right-wing parties after 12 years of coup d’état.

Also worth noting is the continuation of Daniel Ortega in power in Nicaragua and the victory of Chavismo in the Venezuelan regional elections.

Retrograde

“I believe that the idea of a new década ganha (won decade) is more an expression of desire than a reality. But 2022 should be a watershed year. We had a 2021 that offered some unforeseen results and others that were not so unforeseen. This shows that there is no right-wing hegemony in the region, on the contrary, there is a popular memory even against retrograde projects,” said Yair Cybel, an Argentinian journalist and researcher at the Latin American Strategic Center for Geopolitics (CELAG).

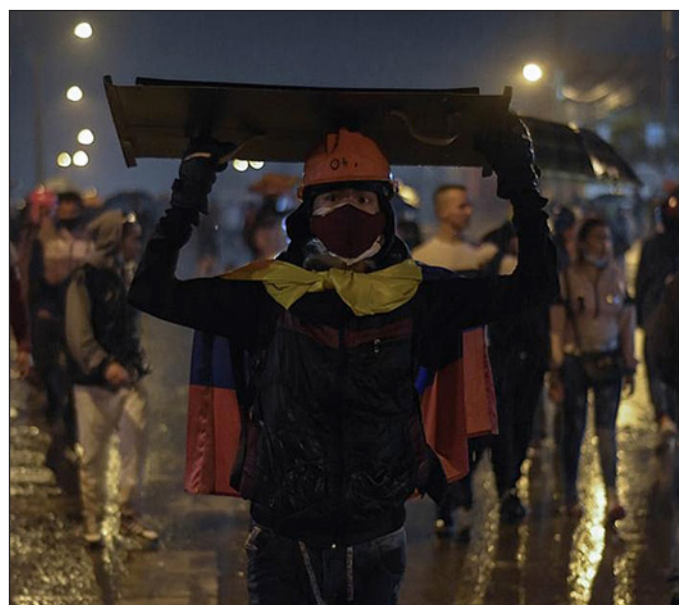
For the leader of Brazil’s Landless Workers’ Movement (MST) between 2000 and 2014, João Pedro Stedile, there was a permanent dispute of three projects: a neoliberal project, with support and coordination from the United States; the neo-developmental project, which is anti-neoliberal but which did not confront the US and represented an alliance of popular governments with the local bourgeoisie; and, finally, the ALBA-TCP project, which is anti-imperialist and represents the unity of governments and people’s movements.

“The crisis of the capitalist mode of production provoked a crisis in these three projects and, for this reason, none of them can be hegemonic in the continent, and the space for dispute continues to be in the elections,” Stedile said.

The Mexican economist and member of the Network of Intellectuals in Defence of Humanity, Ana Esther Ceceña, also estab-



The movement that led to the reform of the constitution in Chile also led to election of the youngest president in the country’s history



Left: Young Colombians use improvised shields in the front line of general strike action. Above: Peru’s Pedro Castillo was elected with a proposal to start a constitutional reform process to recognise the country as a plurinational state



lishes other differences between the two periods of Latin American progressivism.

“Without taking away importance from the current processes, they don’t have the same tone, as clear a purpose, or as explicit a possibility of articulation. What was interesting at that moment [in the 2000s] is that there was a leadership and a project shared by all those who were incorporated into this Latin American progressive wave.

“The presence of Chávez made a difference. He was a man who didn’t pretend, he really gambled; he didn’t just try, he built. And this allowed the so-called progressivism to have a meaning,” she said.

Ceceña argues that this confluence of progressive governments and people’s movements had its moment of maximum expression with the defeat of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) – a 2005 proposal by the United States for the region – which paved the way for the creation of ALBA-TCP and ALBA Movements.

Socialism or barbarism?

In Chile, Peru and Bolivia, the electoral processes were defined between totally opposite poles. For

analysts, this polarisation of left and extreme right is a reflection of the crisis situation of the capitalist system.

The expectation of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL) is a growth of 5.9 percent in the region, but still in a scenario of concentrated wealth. The Latin American subcontinent is the third most unequal region on the planet; in Brazil alone, the richest 10 percent earn 29 times more than the poorest 50 percent.

“The concentration of capital offers no alternative. That idea of internal markets that allowed us to absorb crises no longer exists. We have to think again about the human relationship with the Earth. And this is not something romantic or something from the past. It is the only way to see a possible future, since the other option is ruin. We are in a destructive spiral: pandemics, weapons, human trafficking, all the current businesses of capitalism are absolutely corrosive to society,” Ana Esther Ceceña said.

João Pedro Stedile argues that the answers to the contradictions generated by the class struggle on the continent will come from the

“Today, there is a continental strategy of the project of power of the United States, which needs the region to dispute the hegemony of power with China, for example. It is a very clear and very aggressive strategy against Latin America

articulation of a popular, autonomous project that aims to overcome capitalism.

“We have to build up forces around programmes of structural change. Capitalism has already proven that it is not the solution to the problems of the masses. The programme is not just a theoretical issue, it is necessarily an exercise in mass pedagogy, in which the masses must learn what proposals are necessary to change the country,” the MST member said.

The conquests of the right

On the other hand, we can still see manifestations of the presence of centres of power connected to a conservative and neoliberal project.

In Ecuador, the election of banker Guillermo Lasso as president; in Argentina, the tie in the legislative elections, which meant the loss of the Senate majority from Peronism to Macrism, and the growth of far-right figures.

Otherwise, international platforms have been growing, such as the Madrid Forum, promoted by the ultra-rightist Spanish party Vox; Project Veritas, conceived by Donald Trump’s former campaign strategist Steve Bannon; or events such as the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), which had its Brazilian edition held in September, organised by congressman Eduardo Bolsonaro (PSL).

This shows that the extreme right continues to organise among itself and is still a relevant political opponent in several countries.

“Today there is a continental strategy of the project of power of the United States, which needs the region to dispute the hegemony of power with China, for example. It is a very clear and very aggressive

strategy against Latin America,” said the professor from the Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM).

Given this scenario, the next general elections in Colombia, in May 2022, and in Brazil, in October, are considered key to determine the ability of the governments and peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean to once again act as a bloc in multilateral organisations and in the development of integrated socioeconomic policies.

In both countries, the candidates of the progressive camp have a wide advantage over their opponents. Senator Gustavo Petro, of the Colombia Humana movement, has about 42 percent of the voter intention, according to polls released in December by the company Invaer.

The two months of general strike in Colombia, in the first half of the year, have increased Colombian society’s rejection of the traditional right-wing parties and of the Uribeismo – the political current that has governed the country for the last 20 years.

In Brazil, Lula da Silva leads all polls, with a 15 to 20 point lead over current president Jair Bolsonaro.

The proposal to strengthen the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), as an alternative to the Organisation of American States (OAS), and the strengthening of Mercosur could be two institutional reflections of the foreign policy of these possible new governments.

Battlefield

“The year 2022 may bring about a change of cycle with the alignment of the four largest economies in the region: Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, and Argentina, and, at the same time, it may show that not all proposals from street mobilisation result in advances in rights in the party-institutional aspect,” journalist Yair Cybel said.

For MST’s João Pedro Stedile, the popular forces have permanent challenges regarding political education, political militancy, and engagement in the ideological battlefield. “The left needs to have more clarity on how it should carry out the political dispute in our society, which is not just winning governments, but also disputing the expanded state, as Gramsci said – which is the organisation of production, and structures like the media, the judiciary. It is only this that will guarantee that beyond electoral victories we will accumulate forces,” he said.

If the popular movements manage to articulate themselves in continental platforms, there is a greater possibility of expanding rights, according to Yair Cybel.

“What will be interesting to watch in 2022 will be to see what happens with the processes of popular uprising that do not end in an institutionalisation of the opposition,” the Argentine journalist said.

● Michele de Mello is a journalist with *Brasil de Fato*. This article originally appeared in Portuguese in *Brasil de Fato*.

People’s Dispatch

Education is a victim of poverty and COVID

But socialist projects a success as cuts hit hard

Vijay Prashad

ALMOST every single child on the planet (more than 80 percent of them) has had their education disrupted by the pandemic, according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural (UNESCO) agency.

Although this finding is startling, it was certainly necessary to close schools as the infectious COVID-19 virus tore through society. What has been the impact of that decision on education?

In 2017 – before the pandemic – at least 840 million people had no access to electricity, which meant that, for many children, online education was impossible. A third of the global population (2.6 billion people) has no access to the internet, which – even if they had electricity – makes online education impossible. If we go deeper, we find that the rates of those who do not have access to the gadgets necessary for online learning – such as computers and smartphones – are even more dire, with two billion people lacking both. To have physical schools closed, therefore, has resulted in hundreds of millions of children around the world missing school for nearly two years.

Macro-data like this is illustrative but misleading. The bulk of those without electricity and internet live in parts of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. For example, before the pandemic, one in five children in sub-Saharan Africa, Western Asia, and Southern Asia had never entered a primary school classroom. One-in-three girls didn't have access to education in Northern Africa and Western Asia, compared to one-in-25 boys. Projections show that one-in-four children in Southern Asia (population est. 2 billion) and one-in-five children in Africa (population est. 1.2 billion) and in Western Asia (population est. 300 million) will likely not go to school at all.

Studies of the reading levels of children under the age of ten deepen our sense of these inequities: in low and middle-income countries, 53 percent of children cannot read and understand a simple story by the end of primary school, while in poor countries this number rises to 80 percent (it is only 9 percent in high-income countries).

The geographical distribution of low and high-income countries reveals the same old divides. These regional and gender inequalities

predated the pandemic but have been exacerbated because of the lockdowns.

Signs of improvement are not yet visible. Earlier this year, the World Bank and UNESCO noted that since the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic two-thirds of developing countries have cut their education budgets. This is catastrophic for large parts of the world where students rely upon public and not private education. Before the pandemic, these gaps were already enormous: in high-income countries, governments spent US\$8,501 per school-age child, while in poorer countries the amount was only US\$48 per school-age child. The negative economic effects of the pandemic on developing countries mean that the gaps will widen, with little hope of recovery. As a result, there will be fewer resources to bridge the electricity, digital, and gadget divides, with almost no funds to build lending libraries for smartphones, for example, and much fewer resources to train teachers on how to handle the return of students to the classroom after a two-year hiatus. Since vaccination rates have remained poor in low-income countries, closures will continue indefinitely or risk spreading infections in schools.

Recently, the Indian government released its Annual Status of Education Report 2021, which showed that large numbers of children had no school last year and less than a quarter were able to access online education. As the economic situation for middle-class families worsened during the pandemic, enrolment declined in private schools and increased in public schools. This shift in the wake of dwindling government spending on public education will lead to intensified pressure on students and public school staff, especially teachers.

Pressures

A study by the Students' Federation of India (SFI) found that these inequities continue into higher education, with the sharp discovery of a 50 percent gender gap among those who use the internet through their mobile phones in India (21 percent of women versus 42 percent of men). In tribal special focus districts, a mere 3.47 percent of schools have access to information communication technologies (ICT), according to government data. To make matters worse, the closure of university hostels has hit young women especially hard since living outside



Top: a Cuban literacy campaign, 1961. Above: Likbez (USSR), Tatar Literacy Club, 1935

the family home served as a refuge from the suffocation of patriarchy in myriad forms, including early marriage and the pressures of reproductive labour.

Meanwhile, a bright light shines in Kerala, a state in southern India governed by the Left Democratic Front (LDF) where education rates are 90 percent. The LDF government has increased education funding in the state and has allowed local self-governments to decide how to spend that money.

Before the pandemic, Kerala's LDF government built high-tech classrooms; once the pandemic set in, it created the necessary infrastructure to allow for online learning. During the pandemic, more than 4.5 million students attended school, not through smartphones and computers, but through First Bell, a telecast from 8.30am to 5.30pm on the government-owned Versatile ICT Enabled Resource for Students (VICTERS) television channel. It is much easier for families to access a television than to access more expensive digital technology. The Kerala example shows the power of centering education around a community's existing capabilities.

Education is not only about devices and classrooms. It is about how teaching happens and what is taught. So many of the successes in Kerala are a consequence of a socialist culture that believes in each child and believes in the importance of elevating rather than denigrating the cultures of the working class and the peasantry.

News comes from Brazil that the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) has enabled more than 100,000 people to become literate in the last 37 years.

The MST uses Freirean techniques and the Cuban Yo Si Puedo (Yes I Can) model of education developed by the Latin American and Caribbean Pedagogical Institute (IPLAC). This model emerged after Fidel Castro's pledge in September 1960 to raise literacy rates to 100 percent. In eight months, the country realised near total literacy through the Cuban Literacy Campaign.

A quarter of a million people, half of them under 18, volunteered to go to rural areas and spend nights and weekends improving the skills of the peasantry with chalk and blackboards. They used what Cubans already had in the way of knowledge, and enhanced it by teaching them how to read and write, rather than treating them as illiterates needing to be told what to do.

Motivated

Leonela Relys Diaz, one of the original youth volunteers of the literacy campaign, developed the Yo Si Puedo curriculum in 2000. Now, the programme uses pre-recorded, culturally specific videos alongside highly motivated and trained local facilitators to lift the confidence and skills of people. This programme has also been used in Venezuela since 2003, where it helped teach 1.48 million adults to

read and write, thereby eradicating illiteracy in two years.

During the pandemic, socialist projects – such as those of LDF government in Kerala, the Cuban educational programmes, and the MST literacy campaign – are flourishing, while other governments cut their educational funding. "It's always time to learn," says the MST literacy programme, but this adage is not in use everywhere.

During the pandemic, the University of Nairobi in Kenya decided to shut down its Department of Literature. This department pioneered post-colonial studies when its faculty transformed the colonial English Department, allowing scholars and learners to look deeply into Kenyan arts and culture by absorbing the potential of the African imagination. One of the architects of the new department was the writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, who took art to the working-class neighbourhood of Kibera and brought the aesthetic of Kibera to the university. For that, wa Thiong'o was fired and imprisoned in 1978. As word came of the department's closure, he wrote the poem "IMF: International Mitumba Foundation". Two words of annotation: Mitumba is the Swahili word for "second hand", used here to poke fun at the International Monetary Fund; the word MaTumbo means "stomach".

IMF: International Mitumba Foundation

First, they gave us their tongues. We said, it is okay, we can make them ours.

Then they said we must destroy ours first.
And we said it is okay because with theirs we become first.
First to buy their aircrafts and war machines.
First to buy their cars and clothes.
First buyers of the best they make from our best.
But when we said we could best them
By making the best from our best
Our own from our own
They said no, you must buy from us
Even though you made the best out of your best.
Now they make us buy the best they have already used
And when we said we could fight back and make our own
They reminded us they know all the secrets of our weapons.
Yes, they make us buy the best they have already used
Second hand, they call it.
In Swahili they are called mitumba.
Mitumba weapons.
Mitumba cars.
Mitumba clothes.
And now IMF dictates mitumba universities
To produce mitumba intellectuals.
They demand we shut down all departments
That say we have to stand on our ground,
The best ground from which to reach the stars.
But mitumba politicians kneel before IMF,
International Mitumba Foundation,
And cry out
Yes sirs
We the neo-colonial mimics milk the best bakshish.
Mitumba culture creates MaTumbo kubwa
For a few with mitumba minds.

Tricontinental

US institutions that undermine democracy get \$424m funding

‘Human rights’ summit announcement will continue attacks on the left

Vijay Prashad

AT THE US State Department’s Summit for Democracy (December 9-10), US President Joe Biden announced a range of initiatives to “bolster democracy and defend human rights globally”. These measures are to be funded by US\$424.4 million from the United States.

The money will go towards the same institutions that have – for the past 60 years – intervened to undermine the sovereignty of democratic processes, from Iran (1953) and Guatemala (1954) to Honduras (2009) and Bolivia (2019).

The US focuses on falsely portraying governments that are unwilling to accept US leadership as corrupt – as was with the case of Brazil’s “soft coup” against former Presidents Dilma Rousseff and Lula da Silva – all while shielding allies who have documented evidence of corruption, such as the outgoing Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández, whose political bloc was defeated by the left in the recent presidential election.

Washington’s measures amount to a “plan to destabilise the planet”, a stark contrast to the recently launched Plan to Save the Planet by 26 research institutes.

Biden’s attention is on countries such as Cuba and Venezuela, China and Russia, Iran, and Zimbabwe. Despite all the howls of despair during Donald Trump’s presidency, there seems to be less urgency among liberals regarding the global consolidation of far-right forces. If anyone went to the Summit for Democracy thinking that concerns would be raised about the consolidation of right-wing forces in Latin America or about the tight grip established by right-wing forces in Europe, they would have been disappointed. US liberalism fears attempts to build independent, sovereign political projects far more than it fears the terrible nightmare of fascist governments.

Republican US Senator Marco Rubio effectively operates as Washington’s ambassador for the destabilisation of the left and the establishment of far-right governments around the world. Between meddling in the fortunes of the Cuban people and the people of the Solomon Islands, Rubio recently met with Chile’s far-right José Antonio Kast to discuss their common antipathy to the growth of the socialist forces in Latin America. Meanwhile, Santiago Abascal, the leader of the Spanish far-right party, Vox, went to the United States to meet with the Republican Party and the Heritage Foundation as part of their tour to create the right-wing think tank Dissent Foundation (Fundación Disenso) and the right-wing political network Madrid Forum (Foro Madrid). The Vox-inspired Charter of Madrid: In Defence of Freedom and Democracy in the IberoSphere warns about the rise of the left in both Spain and Latin America, using exaggerated lan-



Top: an unknown woman who stood in front of a camera and raised her fist in a revolutionary salute knowing she was about to join the 30,000 people who were killed in Argentina between 1976 and 1983. Above: the tarot-like cards mocking the monsters of the far right

guage about the “totalitarian yoke” of left-led governments and warning how the “advance of communism poses a serious threat to the prosperity and development”. This framing projects its own authoritarian agenda onto the left, stoking fear amongst the public. The Madrid Forum has brought together the Brazilian far right (rallied by President Jair Bolsonaro) and the Portuguese far right (CHEGA), a development blessed by the right-wing political forces in Washington and in European capitals

Victories

As an impetus for the creation of the Madrid Forum, Vox points to the role of the Communist Party in the Spanish government, to the growth of two formations in Latin America (the São Paulo Forum, established in 1990, and the Puebla Group, established in 2019), and to the electoral victories of the left from Bolivia to Nicaragua. For far-right forces like Vox, such electoral results and the defence of the revo-

lutionary processes in Cuba and Venezuela must be fought by any means. The histories and legacies of destructive coups run through these men, whose commitment to democratic principles and institutions is limited. The Dissent Foundation and other similar endeavours are designed to delegitimise the governments and movements of the left, painting them in the worst light and then offering regional support for the US-driven hybrid war. No comparable gathering of the left (the São Paulo Forum or the Puebla Group) has ever asserted such politics. Instead, their goals centre around finding ways to strengthen co-operation and learn from each other about policy initiatives that undermine both imperialism and neoliberalism and further the interests of humankind. There are two sides to the developments in the IberoSphere: while the left is trying to drive a project of collaboration, the right is building armies of confrontation.

Similar moves by the right are afoot in Europe, although with

limited results. Over the past few years, several meetings have taken place between Brussels and Warsaw, but, apart from the release of vague statements about unity, little actual political coordination has taken place. Russia and the European Union stand in for Venezuela and Cuba, with hyperbolic language intended to mask the real dangers of the ruling parties of Hungary’s Viktor Orbán and Poland’s Jarosław Kaczyński. In the European Parliament, these right-wing groups compete in two formations: the European Conservatives and Reformists, dominated by France and Italy’s far right.

Tricontinental’s latest dossier, *New Clothes, Old Threads: The Dangerous Right-Wing Offensive in Latin America* (December 2021), offers a thoughtful journey through the emergence of the right wing across Latin America. The dossier explores different right-wing forces, assessing them in terms of their relationship to major

capitalist interests and testing three hypotheses, each of which have much to offer to our assessment of the right wing.

The major capitalist forces recognise that the bourgeois system is in crisis and that the left wing has begun to make gains.

Eager to prevent the ascendancy of the left, the ruling class quite comfortably aligns itself with far-right forces and with a new authoritarian form of government (such as the elites’ alignment with Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, although that is now fracturing).

Projects

The right wing does not have a proper economic programme but is willing to adopt whatever economic policy measures the local oligarchs and Washington wish to impose. This includes taking direction on the types of major projects to be developed and who should develop them (such as El Salvador’s rejection of the Chinese deal for the La Unión port).

The ruling classes acknowledge the instability generated by extreme financialisation and by the power of global capital. This leads to new discourses, new reactionary utopias, and new forms of mobilisation produced by the new right as part of their urgency to “modernise” capitalism.

These hypotheses allow us to take the reader on a journey through the current realities in Peru, El Salvador, Uruguay, Argentina, and Brazil.

The new discourses of the right continue to trouble our ability to generate a new commitment to a dignified, socialist future. No modernisation of capitalism is possible, neither by the harsh policies of the far right nor by the centre right. Such a modernisation programme puts at its centre the defence of capital accumulation and profit above the pressing needs of humanity and nature.

This dubious programme has been able to provide trillions of dollars to prevent the collapse of the capitalist system during the COVID-19 pandemic but has failed to provide the resources needed to prevent the erosion of basic human needs around the planet. Amidst the million crises that have befallen humanity, the crisis of imagination is one of the foulest. We struggle to imagine a better world while allowing ourselves to pickle in the hatred of social hierarchies and xenophobia.

The art (pictured left) is from the dossier, mocking the monsters that emerge in the “interregnum”, in Antonio Gramsci’s words, in these clever tarot-like cards: The Libertarian, The Anarcho-Capitalist, The Anti-Scientist, The Techno-Feudal Lord, The Anti-Communist Saviour, The Pacifier, and The Interventionist. Hovering above these figures is a caricature of the right wing’s greatest fear – The Spectre – which for the rest of us is a symbol of hope and resistance.

The history of the far right around the world is ugly; its monuments are the ruins of factories and torture chambers, ugliness that strips dignity from the vast mass of humanity. Five thousand student and trade union activists were tortured and killed between 1976 and 1983 in Argentina’s Navy School of Mechanics (ESMA) in Buenos Aires. More than 30,000 people were killed and disappeared by state terrorism during that time.

Before the torture began, Victor Bastera, a prisoner at ESMA, was forced to photograph each of the other prisoners. Among these photographs is the image of a defiant woman. She could hear the screams of unknown militants in the basement where she was detained. She guessed she would not survive this experience.

This brave, unknown woman stood in front of the camera and raised her fist in a revolutionary salute. Her bravery is a signal across time to all of us. If you are resisting, you are not defeated.

● The dossier, *New Clothes, Old Threads: The Dangerous Right-Wing Offensive in Latin America* (December 2021), can be found at: <https://thetricontinental.org/dossier-47-right-wing-offensive-latin-america>

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At the Socialist Party, our struggles are driven by the selfless love we have for this country, to fight for the betterment of our people's lives. This is what socialism is about. It is about struggling for equity in access to education, universal healthcare, dignified housing, safe drinking water, proper sanitation, and adequate food for all

Fred M'membe, Socialist Party President



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