



The commemoration ceremony at the Socialist Party Secretariat in Lusaka to honour Commander Nsingu, Mpezeni, and 10,000 Ngonis who fought against Cecil Rhodes's army

# Honouring the bravery of our heroes

Fred M'membe  
Socialist Party President

THIS MONTH marks 124 years since Commander Nsingu was murdered, assassinated by the British forces of Cecil Rhodes and his British South African company, today represented by the Anglo American Corporation.

February 4 is both a sorrowful and joyous day. Sorrowful in the sense of the pain suffered by Commander Nsingu, his father, the old man Mpezeni, at that time the Ngoni indunas, and 10,000 young Ngonis who Commander Nsingu had organised in an army to resist the occupation of the Chipeta area, which was Ngoni land.

The Ngoni capital fell to Cecil Rhodes's army on February 4 and it was 124 years ago that Commander Nsingu was captured and court-martialed, with a decision made to execute him the following morning. On February 5 at dawn Commander Nsingu was executed in front of his lieutenants. Why did this happen? It happened because of minerals and land.

In 1891, six years after the Berlin conference that divided Africa among European powers, this territory today called Zambia was colonised by Cecil John Rhodes, a businessman – what today you would call a foreign investor – and his company, the BSA.

Why did they colonise this territory? What was Cecil Rhodes looking for here? He was looking for minerals, and for those minerals Cecil Rhodes was ready to kill whosoever stood in his way. He would send his agents, his representatives, to negotiate concessions with our chiefs, with our leaders. If they refused to give him concessions to prospect and mine minerals in their chiefdoms, he attacked

## Commander Nsingu, who fought Cecil Rhodes's colonial army, lives on in us



them. He had an army, a very big army that he had set up in Kotakota in northern Malawi. That army was well resourced, it was equipped with maxim guns and seven-pounder artillery. Cecil Rhodes believed

there was gold in the Chipeta area occupied by the Ngonis, because Rhodes had found it south of the Chipeta, in what is now Zimbabwe, under Lobengula. He believed there was also gold up north in the Chipeta in the area occupied

by the Ngonis and he sent his people to prospect for it in the Chipeta area.

One morning these Ngonis woke up to see white people with all sorts of gadgets moving around the Chipeta. It was scary but these were the

descendants of the Zulu who had defeated the British army at the battle of Insandlwana in South Africa a few years before. These were very brave people, they confronted the white people and asked them what they were looking for, who they were.

"We are from Cecil Rhodes, we want gold," they replied.

"Who gave you permission to look for gold here?" the Ngonis asked.

"This is Cecil Rhodes's land, we don't need permission," the white men replied.

"How can this be Cecil Rhodes's land when it's Mpezeni's," the Ngonis continued.

"No, this is not Mpezeni's land, it's Cecil's," came the reply.

The Ngoni leadership realised

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# Zambia is virtually under IMF control

## Bailout packages lead to new crises in the future

Socialist staff reporter

SOCIALIST Party President Fred M'membe says Zambia is virtually under the IMF control because of the bailout programme that is about to be finalised.

Dr M'membe said the UPND government and the Bank of Zambia appeared overconfident about the bailout package.

He said bailout packages and loans were short-term and usually created a new crisis in the long run.

"Recently, we agreed a bailout programme with the IMF which is about to be finalised. Without a doubt, our country is virtually under IMF control. The government and the Bank of Zambia appear overconfident," Dr M'membe said.

"In recent years, we have borrowed in all sorts of ways and from all sorts of sources to bail out our economy. These bailout packages and loans are short-term in nature and seem lucrative at first glance. However, usually they create a new crisis in the long run as the debt matures and the government gets into a monetary crisis again due to inadequate reserves."

He said the US dollar had continued to strengthen against the kwacha and "will continue to do so unless substantial efforts are made to halt this critical exchange rate movement".

Dr M'membe said exchange rates were vital for economies under the influence of the International Monetary Fund, and the country's strong-kwacha policy forced it to use its foreign currency reserves to defend the local currency.

"So, what are our alternatives now? Our strong-kwacha policy forced the country to burn up its

foreign currency reserves to defend the kwacha. Should we continue with it? As of now, our economy is exhibiting no signs of resurgence," Dr M'membe said.

"Should we worry about the slight depreciation of the kwacha? The truth is exchange rates are extremely vital for economies under the influence of the International Monetary Fund. However, the pertinent question is: why and in what manner? Numerous factors contribute to this, including exchange rates, which are a cost to businesses because they are incurred when a commission is paid on converting one currency into another."

He said businesses that hold assets in currencies other than the Zambian kwacha are particularly exposed to the risk of exchange rate fluctuations.

"Besides, exchange rate volatility influences export and import prices, affecting the country's balance of payments. Hence, when the exchange rate fluctuates, it causes a spike in domestic inflation, first in terms of producer prices and subsequently in consumer prices. The impact of shocks on price variables at different stages of the supply chain is different," Dr M'membe said.

He said there was a need to recognise the importance of exchange rates in the specific circumstances and work to keep it stable to manage the consumer price index.

Dr M'membe said this would help keep the price range of everything within reach of an average Zambian household.

"If we are serious about putting Zambia's economy on the right track, we must remember that it never changes unless the government makes it a top priority."

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## Dilemma over fuel prices

THE UPND government faces a dilemma over how to honour the election pledge to cut fuel prices in light of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) conditionality, with the net effect of increasing fuel prices, Socialist Party President Fred M'membe says.

"On Tuesday, January 25, 2022, the Energy Regulatory Board (ERB) issued a press statement advising fuel consumers and stakeholders that following the pronouncement made at the last fuel price review on December 16, 2021, the ERB has migrated to the 30-day pricing cycle for petrol, diesel and low sulphur gas oil. And in that regard, fuel prices would now be reviewed every month starting with January this year. It's highly unlikely that fuel prices will be reduced at these reviews – they will instead be increased. And this may further stoke public outrage over the high living expenses," Dr M'membe said.

"In the light of their IMF commitments, we can't see any sen-

sible measures that they can take to help reduce fuel prices in an effort to honour their campaign promise of affordable fuel and defuse public anger.

"The price of fuel has a significant weighting in the basket of goods and services that are used to measure inflation in the country. Producers of services and goods are also expected to factor in the higher cost of fuel. This makes fuel prices a key determinant of the rate of inflation.

"Higher fuel prices have an effect on the broader economy. When fuel prices rise, they impact everything from consumer spending to bus fares to hiring practices. Fuel is an important input for transportation, which directly impacts households as they drive, but also businesses that rely on logistics and transportation chains.

"If discretionary spending is hampered by higher fuel costs, it can have knock-on effects throughout the broader economy," Dr M'membe said.



### A WORLD OF WORDS

THE FRED M'membe Literacy and Agroecology Campaign has resumed monitoring activities in Lusaka to finish the 2021 school year.

The initiative to visit the classes taking place in the constituencies of Mandevu and Matero in the Zambian capital seeks to

observe the application of the method "to talk, to read, to write the words and world" in the local reality, and the challenges to be worked on in the 2022 edition.

Around 200 learners, mostly women, were expected to attend the graduation ceremony scheduled for February 12.



## We have a businessmen's government that values profits over workers' welfare

THE UPND government is run by businessmen for businessmen and their treatment of Zambia's truck drivers shows they prioritise profits over workers' welfare, Socialist Party President Fred M'membe says.

"On December 31, 2021, the Minister of Labour, Brenda Tumbumba, signed into law SI 93 of 2021, which repealed SI 106 of 2020. The repeal meant that truck drivers undertaking international trips will now receive K100 per night as subsistence allowance from K390 per night, which was enshrined in the repealed SI if the truck has a sleeping cabin," he said.

"The new SI has also reduced allowances paid to drivers who undertake international trips with trucks without sleeping cabins, from 50 dollars to 25 dollars per night.

"This is really a government of

businessmen, by businessmen, for businessmen, to increase their profits, to exploit the workers and the poor more thoroughly."

Dr M'membe said only a workers' party and government could truly protect the workers, the poor, and all who toil. "Under this government of businessmen, by businessmen, for businessmen, benefits to the poor are by the way, to calm them down so that they don't rebel and stop voting for them – ba misubafye tu batter pakuti mwibemina.

"In truth, this is what the trickle-down economics being pursued by this government entails. And Pope Francis was right when he said that the "magic theories" of market capitalism have failed and the world needs a new type of politics that promotes solidarity.

"The marketplace, by itself, cannot resolve every problem, however

much we are asked to believe this dogma of neoliberal faith. Whatever the challenge, this impoverished and repetitive school of thought always offers the same recipes," Dr M'membe said.

"This dogma 'simply reproduces itself by resorting to the magic theories of spillover or trickle as the only solution to societal problems', the Pope added.

"He went on to say there is 'little appreciation of the fact that the alleged spillover does not resolve the inequality that gives rise to new forms of violence threatening the fabric of society'.

"The highest leader of the Catholic Church added that 'trust' in the market system has 'ceased to exist' as a result of these policies.

"He said the fragility of world systems in the face of the pandemic has demonstrated that not everything can be resolved by market

freedom. Trickle-down economic policies traditionally refer to tax breaks and financial assistance for the wealthy and for large corporations."

Dr M'membe said the idea was that any savings would spill over to everyone else in society through investments, spending and more.

"The Pope called for more proactive economic policies that promote productive diversity and creativity and make it possible for 'jobs to be created and not cut'.

"Ultimately, he said that 'human dignity' must be put back at the centre of these policies, rather than financial speculation aimed at creating quick profits.

"Workers of Zambia, unite under the banner of your own political party – the Socialist Party – and liberate yourselves from yoke capital. What you can't do for yourselves, nobody will do for you."

## Leaked recording 'is not a small thing'

SOCIALIST Party President Fred M'membe says a "leaked" recording said to have been a conversation between President Hakainde Hichilema's political aide Levy Ngoma and home affairs permanent secretary Josephs Akafumba should not be ignored.

Dr M'membe said the recording, which implicates President Hakainde Hichilema and Vice-President Mutale Nalumango in trying to stir up confusion in the opposition Democratic Party, was "not a small thing".

He accused the government of trying to dismiss it as "fake" because they knew it wasn't a small thing. "Many commentators on the recording of the conspiracy against Harry Kalaba and the Democratic Party have compared our current administration to that of its predecessors," Dr M'membe said.

"The similarities are striking: a willingness to tap into the darker currents of our political climate, a disregard for the rule of law, and an over-

riding concern with settling political scores and damaging perceived enemies."

Dr M'membe said it was "already apparent" that the UPND administration would be marred by scandal. He stressed the need for reforms of the governance system to restore faith in the country's political system by combating the corrupting influence of power and money in politics.

Dr M'membe said the system ought to promote ethics and transparency in government, protect people against abuses of government power, and limit certain extraordinary exercises of presidential authority.

"In less than five months, our current administration has created and exacerbated a broad range of problems. Clearly, their corrupt use of power presents a threat to the rule of law and the multiparty democratic norms that we have been pursuing as a nation over the last 30 years.

"Political practices like these undermine our multiparty political dispensation. And they have

been complicit in brazen acts of corporate corruption – the Jangulo fertilisers corruption scheme. Their blatant abuse of power is also focusing attention on longstanding practices that have undermined our political process and skewed it toward the politically connected at the expense of everyone else. By bringing these pernicious problems under the spotlight, their misconduct is creating an opportunity for significant reform, if there is sufficient political will."

Dr M'membe said citizens should seize the opportunity to call for bold responses that did not just restore the prior status quo, but made fundamental, positive changes.

"In the absence of changes, the country risks recurrences of the kind of administration where a demagogue president full of sweet promises and nothings rigs the system for himself and his friends while seeking to misuse the levers of government to maintain power by weakening or destroying political opponents and their parties."



# Submission on electronic voting ‘is timely and will be considered’

## ECZ reacts to Fred M’membe’s letter calling for changes before 2026

THE ELECTORAL Commission of Zambia says Socialist Party President Fred M’membe’s submission on electronic voting “is timely and will be considered”.

The ECZ was reacting to a January 5 letter from Dr M’membe calling for the commission to “seriously and urgently” consider introducing electronic voting systems before the 2026 elections.

“I write to request the Electoral Commission of Zambia to seriously and urgently consider introducing electronic voting systems before the 2026 elections,” the let-

ter to ECZ Chief Executive Officer Patrick Nshindano said.

“Electronic voting technology tends to speed the counting of ballots, reduce the cost of paying staff to count votes manually and can provide improved accessibility for disabled voters.

“Also in the long term, expenses are expected to decrease. Results can be reported and published faster. And it is important to keep in mind that electronic voting isn’t online voting; it’s simply a faster way of tabulating votes,” Dr M’membe said in the letter which was copied to ECZ chairperson justice Esau Chulu and vice-chairperson Emily Sikazwe.

He said that some countries with large populations and complex political systems had adopted electronic ballot technology many years ago.

“I know we have been led to distrust anything electronic in voting, but spending some time learning about international experience might be helpful to change this perception,” Dr M’membe said.

“In India and Brazil, results have been very positive so far. Brazil has about 150 million voters. In the 2018 presidential election, they announced the winner only two hours and 16 minutes after the polls were closed. By that time, they had already counted 96.7 per

cent of all votes cast all over the country. Brazilians adopted electronic ballots for the first time in 1996 and no fraud has been confirmed so far. They run public tests every electoral year.”

Dr M’membe said that in India, electronic voting machines had been part of the electoral process since 2001 and were used in all general and state assembly elections.

“According to the Brookings Institution India Centre, the introduction of electronic voting machines reduced electoral fraud, made the electoral process more competitive in regions where the winning margins were short and led to a decline

in crimes related to the election process,” Dr M’membe said.

“And last year, South Africa’s Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) introduced electronic voting in its local government elections. The IEC described these local government elections as the most ‘technologically-advanced’.”

Dr M’membe said electronic voting systems were also being used in Pakistan, Australia, Belgium, Estonia, France, Germany, Italy, Namibia, the Netherlands, Norway, Peru, Switzerland, Panama, Venezuela, and the Philippines, among other countries.

Dr M’membe said it was prob-

ably time seriously to consider how effective electronic balloting was in other countries, and consider adopting it in Zambia.

“We have enough time to master it before the 2026 elections if we start now.”

In the commission’s response, Nshindano said electronic voting was being considered.

“I acknowledge receipt with thanks your letter dated January 5, 2022 on the above subject matter. We wish to inform you that electronic voting is one of the initiatives lined up for implementation and that the submission is timely and will be duly considered by the commission.”

## Comrades can feel proud of Kabwata election campaign

WHILE the Kabwata by-election result was disappointing, Socialist Party President Fred M’membe says comrades can feel proud of the campaign as they look to the future.

The party’s candidate, Tripher Ng’andu, came in third behind the PF and winner UPND but ahead of six other parties.

Dr M’membe said the campaign was never about one parliamentary by-election alone, but about organising and strengthening the party.

His full statement reads: “On behalf of the Central Committee of the Socialist Party, I would like to thank our candidate, Comrade Tripher Ng’andu (Uncle T), and all the comrades who worked tirelessly in the Kabwata parliamentary by-election campaigns.

“This is not the outcome you wanted or you worked so hard for. But I feel pride and gratitude for the wonderful election campaign structures that you built together in Kabwata in a very short time. You represent the best of our party.

“I know how disappointed you all feel because I feel it, too. And so do many Zambians who wanted you to win. But I want you to, as always, remember this: our work in Kabwata was never about one parliamentary by-election. It was about

organising and strengthening our party.

“We must put this result aside and look to the future. Revolutionaries don’t gloat over such things. So now our responsibility as party members is to keep doing our part to organise and strengthen our party. And I am confident we will.

“I will always be grateful to the creative, talented, dedicated comrades of our national campaign team. You poured your hearts into this parliamentary by-election campaign. I want each of you to know that you are highly appreciated and valued.

“To everyone who sent in contributions and kept the Kabwata parliamentary by-election campaigns going, thank you from all of us. And great thanks also to all those who voted for our party’s candidate.

“Finally, I still believe, as deeply as I ever have, that if we stand together and struggle together, with strength in our socialist ideological convictions, and love for this nation, our best days are still ahead of us.

“You know, scripture tells us, ‘Let us not grow weary in doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart’. So, dear comrades, let us not grow weary, let us not lose heart. For there are more seasons to come and there is more work to do.”



Socialist Party First Vice-President and General Secretary Cosmas Musumali and party President Fred M’membe on the election trail with Kabwata parliamentary candidate Tripher Ng’andu

## Cadres charged but violence is a major issue

SOCIALIST Party President Fred M’membe says that although the swift charging of six PF cadres who were arrested in Kabwata constituency may seem like the police are clamping down on violence, the situation in the country is far from under control.

“Violence in any form shouldn’t be tolerated. This should be from all quarters,” he said.

“But this not the case in our country today. As it was under the PF’s reign, ruling party leaders, cadres and supporters today are

getting away with violence and other crimes. UPND cadres are today getting away with violence. We have witnessed this in the Kumbwe parliamentary by-election, the Lufubu ward by-election in Mwansabombwe, Sokontwe ward in Milenge, and in the recent Kabwata parliamentary by-election.

“UPND cadres attacked our campaign camps and members, injuring them, destroying motor vehicles and stealing food supplies. These crimes were reported to the police but no arrests have been made to

date. One can say the PF are being made to taste their own medicine, but that is not the way society should be organised and led.”

Dr M’membe said it was abuse of power and, like other crimes, abuse of power should not be tolerated from any quarter.

“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,” he said.

“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.

“There is a need to administer justice impartiality. The only antidote to the culture of venality is the readiness of our criminal justice system to apply the laws fairly and equally.”

## Agencies not independent, fair

SOCIALIST Party President Fred M’membe says “it’s very difficult to accept the claim that our law enforcement agencies have been acting independently and fairly”.

Dr M’membe said it seemed as though the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), the Drug Enforcement Commission (DEC) and Zambia Police only acted when political authorities wanted them to do so.

He said that if the agencies were truly capable of taking independent decisions and actions, most of the cases they were pursuing today would have been dealt with when those involved were still in power.

“From their own pronouncements and actions and those of the key political leadership of this country (past and present), it is very clear that in many important cases they only swung into action when the key political authorities wanted them to do so,” he said.

Dr M’membe said there were also corruption cas-

es under the current regime which they were aware of but could not pursue.

“For example, they are aware of the corruption case involving Maurice Jangulo’s company being single sourced to supply 37,000 tonnes of fertiliser to the government at \$1,407 per tonne when the going market price is \$1,000 per tonne. He didn’t even have enough stocks of his own and had to source at least nine different varieties of fertilisers from his competitors at about \$700 per tonne. And some of it has been found to be of low quality,” Dr M’membe said.

“But nothing can be done about this clear case of corruption because it was approved at a very high political leadership level.

“Until these agencies are truly independent, the dream of a resolute, fair and just fight against corruption will from regime to regime remain a fleeting illusion to be pursued, but never attained,” Dr M’membe said.

## Corruption fight ‘down the drain’

THE GOVERNMENT’S fight against corruption “has gone down the drain”, Socialist Party President Fred M’membe says.

“For example, this government has failed to explain why it single-sourced Maurice Jangulo’s Alpha Commodities to supply 37,000 tonnes of fertilisers at US\$1,407 per tonne, while the general market price is \$1,000 per tonne – stealing an additional US\$15.059 million from the Zambian people in super profits,” he said.

“Nitrogen Chemicals of Zambia (NCZ) was given to supply 13,000 tonnes of fertilisers at US\$1,000 per tonne. This is an anomaly that requires an explanation.

“On top of this, Jangulo had no stocks of fertilisers and started going around trying to source the commodity from his competitors whom he had discredited in an audit he had initiated and influenced.

“We challenge this government to explain why Jangulo was allowed to control, direct, manipulate and falsify a fertiliser audit under its supervision and control. “This is pure corruption that this government and the

state agencies – ACC, DEC and the police – under its control have failed to deal with. Why?

“Our simple and only explanation is that Jangulo is too close to the key leadership of this government to be touched. He is their partner, he works and eats with them. Clearly, this government’s fight against corruption has gone down the drain.”

Dr M’membe said there were issues with authorities’ discretionary powers.

“The wide discretionary powers of those charged with the responsibility of fighting corruption and other crimes in our country can undermine their impartiality, and result in decisions being made that are tainted by bias or have violated due process,” he said.

“Such opportunities for illegal, improper, or unfair behaviour may amount to corruption. By strengthening the legal requirement for procedural fairness and ensuring that disaffected individuals can challenge such decisions through the courts, there is potential to improve transparency and accountability and curb corruption.”



# NSINGU DAY COMMEMORATION



Nsingu Day commemoration ceremony at the Socialist Party Secretariat in Lusaka, clockwise from top left: Betsy Nkhoma, Ncwala National Organising Chairman; the SP choir; speakers the Rev Moddy Chisha Nonde, party First Vice-Chairman and General Secretary Cosmas Musumali, Barbra Chekuda Maramwidze, and party President Fred M'membe

## Without your roots you're nobody

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there was a problem that might end in a war and this troubled Mpezeni, who was already an old man at that time. He pondered over it. He was even more worried because he knew Cecil Rhodes had an army in Kotakota that was well resourced and well equipped. Although at that time the some Ngonis had guns because they were trading, they were no match for the seven-pounders, and moreover, to use their guns they had to get ammunition and gun powder from the same place that they were fighting. Mpezeni realised that it was going to be a difficult war.

But while Mpezeni and the Ngoni elders were pondering over what to do, his young son Nsingu made it very clear that it was "over our dead bodies" that Cecil Rhodes and his company would take their land and minerals.

He organised 10,000 young Ngonis to resist the imperialist occupation of the Chipeta area they occupied, but could not use guns so they had no alternative but to fall back on their Asegai spears, developed by Shaka some years back. It was the only weapon the Ngonis had to defend themselves against maxim guns, seven-pounders. True to the Ngonis' fears, the Cecil Rhodes army attacked the Chipeta area in December 1897. The Ngonis did not attack the Cecil Rhodes army there, they were attacked and had no alternative but to defend themselves with their Asegai. It was a difficult war for the Ngonis. Cecil

Rhodes's army killed Ngonis indiscriminately, burning their crops, and overran the Ngoni capital on February 4, when Commander Nsingu was captured. His father, the old man Mpezeni, fled into the hills. Nsingu was court-martialed and sentenced to death, and was executed at dawn the following morning, murdered by Cecil Rhodes's lieutenants. They did not want us to know where his grave was so they buried him secretly. His father was also eventually captured and imprisoned, and that was very painful for an Ngoni king, to be paraded in handcuffs in front of his people. When he was eventually released, our grandfather Mpezeni died from depression.

### Eclipse

We can say Cecil Rhodes and his company killed Mpezeni, Nsingu and the 10,000 young Ngonis over minerals and their land. By the time the war ended in February 1898, the Ngonis had lost 12,000 head of cattle, worth a great deal. With that wealth the Ngonis could have built themselves schools, hospitals and other infrastructure needed for development. Their economy, built over 62 years, was destroyed in two months of war, from December 1897 to February 1898.

The Ngonis landed in this territory from South Africa in 1835. They were soldiers from Shaka Zulu's army, not ordinary people. They were about to be court-martialed for some offence they had committed and decided to flee,

leaving behind their wives and children, and crossed into what is now Zambia around Feira or Luangwa in 1835. Actually, on the day they were crossing the Zambezi River there was an eclipse of the sun and the Zulu soldiers thought it was their god protecting them from their enemies as they were crossing, pursued by Shaka's army. They were helped to cross the Zambezi River by the Chikudas who had canoes, and some of them travelled all the way up to Tanzania, while others moved all the way into Western Malawi and settled there. The rest settled in what is now called Eastern Province, in the Chipeta area, and it was those who eventually became known as the Ngonis.

These Zulu soldiers started marrying Nsenga, Chewa and Tumbuka women and the children they produced with Nsenga women started speaking Chichewa, and those with Tumbuka women spoke Chitumbuka. The Zulu language, the Ngoni language the soldiers spoke, eventually died. Today, his majesty Mpezeni speaks Chinsenga. We have an ethnicity called Ngoni but there is no Ngoni language because it died out. You can hear some Zulu words in songs, but that's where it ends.

As if this were not enough for Cecil Rhodes, in 1904 he took over the village of induna Kapatamoyo and turned it into Fort Jameson, which became the headquarters for the colonisation of north-eastern Rhodesia. He headquartered troops from Kotakota at induna Kapat-

amoyo village (Fort Jameson). This bandit Cecil Rhodes and his company, the BSA, were later taken over by the Oppenheimer family and became the Anglo-American Corporation. They continued with Cecil Rhodes's policy of colonisation, humiliation, exploitation and killings. Cecil Rhodes and his BSA company ruled us for 33 years, from 1891 until 1924 when he handed over power to the British foreign office because it was too much for him to run the government, army, police, judiciary and so on. He wanted to concentrate on his business. For some time we were governed from South Africa and later on from Livingstone and then Lusaka.

Anglo American and the Oppenheimer family continued with the same policies of Cecil Rhodes in an indirect way. Although indirect, the principles were the same and they continue today to try to expand their influence so they can control the minerals. They now sponsor political parties on the continent and in this land, where they have representatives of Cecil Rhodes today ruling us funded by a foundation. These bandits now sponsor political parties in Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Mozambique, Uganda, and Kenya. They have found good Africans to use. The chairman of their project (chair of the African Union) is no other than General Obasanjo, the former Nigerian President. He no longer represents the Nigerian government, he represents Anglo American. Why is Anglo American interested in the governance of Africa? Minerals.

Comrades and friends, this humble ceremony honours our Ngoni ancestors, honours the sacrifices of Commander Nsingu, honours the life of the 10,000 young Ngonis and Mpezeni, who perished defending our land, defending our minerals. The issue is not a small one.

This history I am telling you, they don't want us to know, it's not taught in our schools, it's not taught to our children, it's not taught to us. It's not written in our books. They don't want this history to be known by you. Why don't they teach us? They teach us about David Livingstone, Vasco da Gama, Marco Polo, but they don't teach us about commander Nsingu.

### Patriots

They don't teach us about the old man Mpezeni, and the 10,000 young Ngonis who perished in the war. Why? Because they don't want Nsingu to live in us. They have tried to destroy this history, but you have heard it. Our young people were singing this history. They were repeating the words of Commander Nsingu. We are here today to draw inspiration from this history, from the sacrifices, the bravery, the selflessness. Our people respect the brave, selfless patriots, and that is why this history of struggle, of resistance to colonialism, exploitation, humiliation, cannot be stopped, cannot be destroyed. We will continue to honour this history. Commander Nsingu is the highest hero of our homeland.

As Comrade Cosmas Musumali says, "It doesn't now matter wheth-

er you are Lozi, Luvale, Bemba, Mbunda or whatever, this is our national hero number one."

There is no other army in the history of this territory today called Zambia that has fought a foreign army, only the Nsingu army. There is no military commander in the history of this territory called Zambia who has commanded an army in a war against a foreign army other than Commander Nsingu. This is heroic history.

We in the Socialist Party look up to the Ngoni history, look up to the Ngoni sacrifices and bravery. Every Ngoni in this territory is a descendant of a fighter. There are no other Ngonis who came another way. The Zulus who came here were troops, they were fighters, warriors, Impis, and they have shown that time and time again.

This history needs to be known, this history needs to be taught to our children. Today, we cannot even find a picture of Nsingu. We have hunted in the archives in South Africa and Europe for the past five years but have failed to find a picture of Nsingu.

We hope that one day we will find one so that our young people can see who Commander Nsingu was and what he looked like so we can erect a proper statue that reflects the image of our commander, our national hero, the apostle of the independence of this country. Comrades, without your history, without your roots you are nobody.

● *Transcription of Fred M'membe's speech by Mable Tubaaka. Edited*



Socialist Party President Fred M'membe: We will provide the necessary critical checks and balances



## Flattery, deceit and the sweet river of contempt

THERE seems to be no shortage of praise or flattery singers. It seems that when one is in power there is no shortage of praise or flattery. Out of power, it all dries up. Praise has a therapeutic effect on the receiver. It helps to restore a person's self-esteem.

There is a popular Aesop's tale about the foolish crow and the wily fox. A hungry crow finds a piece of cheese and sits on a branch of a tree to enjoy his meal. A fox that was equally hungry sees the crow with the piece of cheese.

Since he badly wants the food, he decides to trick the crow with flattering words. He lavishes praise on the crow by calling him a beautiful bird. He says that he would like to hear the crow's sweet voice, and asks the crow to sing.

The foolish crow believes that the praise is genuine, and opens his mouth to sing. Only to realise that he had been fooled when the cheese was hungrily devoured by the fox.

There's clearly a difference between praise and flattery. The difference lies in the intent of the words. You can praise someone for his or her actions, or the lack of them, while flattery can be vague, undefined, and even false.

Praise is actionable, flattery is adulation. Praise is an actionable device to encourage a positive outcome. Praise encourages, flattery deceives. Flattery is buttering up. Flattery is based on an ulterior motive that only benefits the flatterer. On the other hand, praise benefits the receiver by encouraging the receiver to see the positive side of life. Praise helps others to recognise their talents, raise their self-esteem, restore hope, and give direction. Praise helps both the giver and the receiver.

Praise shows confidence, flattery shows not. Since flattery is manipulative, flatterers are usually spineless, weak, and of poor character. They feed on others' egos and hope to get scraps of goodies from egocentric megalomaniacs. Those who flatter don't have leadership qualities. They lack the personality to inspire and instil confidence. On the other hand, praise givers are usually self-confident. Praise and appreciation go hand in hand. And so does flattery and adulation.

It is tough to spot flattery if the flatterer is cunning enough to veil his words to sound like appreciation. A devious person could make flattery sound like genuine praise. It is hard to know them from friends, they are so obsequious and full of protestations; for a wolf resembles a dog, so doth a flatterer a friend. You have to be careful when you receive compliments that amount to nothing.

Flattery, according to the Bible, "is a form of hatred". Flattery can be used to manipulate, cheat, deceive, and hurt others. Words that are sweetened with honeyed words can fool the gullible.

Accept praise with scepticism. Let praise or flattery not go into your head. While it is good to hear praise, accept it with a pinch of salt. Know who your real friends are. Sometimes, those who criticise you more often than they praise you have the best interests in their heart. They may be stingy when it comes to praise, but their words of appreciation are more genuine than compliments you gather from flattery.

There's an old Italian proverb that says, "He who flatters you more than you desire either has deceived you or wishes to deceive." It is said that between flattery and admiration there often flows a river of contempt. None are more taken in by flattery than the proud, who wish to be the first and are not. Sweet words are like honey, a little may refresh, but too much glut the stomach. You can't let praise or criticism get to you. It's a weakness to get caught up in either one.

The trouble with most of us is that we would rather be ruined by praise than saved by criticism.

## We can hold fast to hope, the anchor of the soul

IN EVERY season of life, whether we are celebrating or mourning, wrestling or rejoicing, questioning or trusting, we can hold fast to hope.

The Bible says, "In [God's] great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." (1 Peter 1:3)

The best we can hope for in this life is a knothole peek at the shining realities ahead. Yet a glimpse is enough. It's enough to convince our

hearts that whatever sufferings and sorrows currently assail us aren't worthy of comparison to that which waits over the horizon.

Hope begins in the dark, the stubborn hope that if you just show up and try to do the right thing, darkness will go away and the morning will come. You wait and watch and work. You don't give up.

Hope is called the anchor of the soul (Hebrews 6:19) because it gives stability to life. But hope is not simply a "wish" (I wish that such-and-such would take place); rather, it is that which latches on to the certainty of the promises of the future.

Faith has to do with things that are not seen and hope with things that are not at hand.

A better life is possible but we have to struggle, work for it.

They say, "God helps those who help themselves". This phrase originated in ancient Greece as "the gods help those who help themselves" and may originally have been proverbial. It is illustrated by two of Aesop's Fables and a similar sentiment is found in ancient Greek drama.

Remember: It gets dark sometimes, but the morning comes. Don't give up hope!

## Strength in weakness

BOASTING about one's achievements, abilities, or possessions is something that the Bible discourages Christians from doing. A product of pride, boasting lifts the self up, and is contrary to the nature and character of the humble Lord Jesus Christ.

While boasting about one's self is discouraged, there are some things that Christians can absolutely boast about, and boast about with much gusto. We are absolutely allowed, and encouraged, to boast in the Lord.

This is what the Lord says. "Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches, but let the one who boasts, boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight." (Jeremiah 9:23-24).

While others take pride in their strengths, Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 12:8-10 that we should rather boast in our weaknesses and difficulties, because God can show Himself mighty and powerful through them.

"Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take [the thorn in my flesh] away from me. But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

## Agreeing to disagree

WE SEEM to be living in times of sharp disagreements about many things; politics, economics, ideology, religion, tribalism, regionalism or provincialism, racism, and so on and so forth.

Navigating these disagreements and the hard conversations and sensitivities surrounding them can cause strain on any relationship, whether it be with friends or acquaintances, co-workers, family, or even a spouse.

Knowing or discovering that you have different outlooks or beliefs than those you care about can be uncomfortable, especially if you are in conversation about those topics.

It's therefore very important to find areas of agreement, areas where you agree. You may disagree with someone but instead of strongly reacting, actively listen to the other person about what is important to them.

## Our voice is loud and clear

COMPATRIOTS, for us to see wrongs being committed and not to speak will be a great betrayal of the Zambian people.

As we have mentioned before, we promise to be a loyal opposition party. We will provide the necessary critical checks and balances. It won't be a one-party state. We do, however, recognise that the journey to recovery will not be easy, but our voice will be heard loud and clear on all important national issues.



Modest contribution: Fred M'membe says the Socialist Party is currently sponsoring 17 Zambians to study medicine abroad with another 30 set to follow them this year

# 700 doctors out of work when we need their skills

## Govt is prioritising political personnel

### Socialist staff reporter

IT IS difficult to understand how there can be nearly 700 medical doctors and dental surgeons out of work when Zambia desperately needs their services, Socialist Party President Fred M'membe says.

"Zambia currently has close to 700 medical doctors and dental surgeons who have been awaiting employment for almost two years," he said. "For a country with so few, and desperately in need of, doctors, this is difficult to understand and accept."

Today, Zambia's "physician density" stands at 1.19 physicians per 1,000 population (2018) – the source is the CIA World Factbook, with the page last updated on September 18 last year.

"The physician density gives the number of medical doctors (physicians), including generalist and specialist medical practitioners per 1,000 of population.

"Medical doctors are defined as doctors who study, diagnose, treat, and prevent illness, disease, injury, and other physical and mental impairments in humans through the application of modern medicine. They also plan, supervise, and evaluate care and treatment plans by other health care providers.

"The World Health Organisation estimates that fewer than 2.3 health workers (physicians, nurses, and midwives only) per 1,000 would be insufficient to achieve coverage of primary healthcare needs.

"Physician density in Zambia was 0.091 as of 2016, was 0.163 in 2012, and 0.052 in 2006 (Source: World Health Organisation's Global Health Workforce Statistics, OECD, supplemented by country data)."

Dr M'membe said the WHO estimated that at least 2.5 medical staff (physicians, nurses and midwives) per 1,000 people were needed to provide adequate coverage with

primary care interventions (WHO, World Health Report 2006).

"It is scandalous that a country with such a low physician density cannot prioritise the employment of 700 doctors but has money to urgently employ district commissioners and other political personnel.

"The country needs far more doctors than the 700 we are failing to employ. We actually urgently need to hire more expatriate doctors to meet the minimum number required to give our people the minimum acceptable standard of healthcare.

## Mortality

"With a physician density of 1.19 per 1,000 population it means that the great majority of our people are born and die without ever seeing or being touched by a doctor.

"When such people talk of a doctor they are actually talking about a clinical officer or male nurse, since a female nurse is referred to as a "sister". And because of this very low physician density we are everyday unnecessarily losing our women in childbirth."

Dr M'membe said that Zambia today, with a maternal mortality of 591 deaths per 100,000 live births, was among countries with the high-

est maternal mortality rate in the world partly due to lack of doctors.

"Five per cent of our expecting mothers need Caesarean operations, especially with a very high number of teenage pregnancies," he said. "But a Caesarean operation can only be conducted by a qualified physician, and not a clinical officer or nurse. Many of our health centres, clinics and hospitals don't have doctors to carry out these desperately needed operations."

Dr M'membe said it was clear that Zambia urgently needed to employ more than the 700 unemployed doctors.

"Life is sacred. One cannot claim to uphold the principle of the sanctity of life if provision has not been made for even minimal healthcare for every person," he said. "This is a priority we cannot ignore if we wish to be a caring and compassionate nation. It must be recognised that, if this problem is to be tackled, it will demand the allocation of more state resources to health.

"The Socialist Party is making its modest contribution by training a few medical doctors. Right now it has 17 young Zambians from poor backgrounds studying medicine abroad, and this year it is sponsoring another 30," he said.

## Assange ruling is shameful

THE RULING made by the UK High Court to have Julian Assange extradited to the United States on International Human Rights Day in December – the day the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 – is alarming and disgraceful, Socialist Party President Fred M'membe says.

"As a lawyer and an IPI World Press Freedom hero award recipient, I find this ruling a travesty of justice. It is very difficult to understand how the UK High Court has chosen to accept the deeply flawed diplomatic assurances given by the US that Julian would not be held

in solitary confinement in a maximum-security prison.

"If extradited to the US, Julian could not only face trial on charges under the Espionage Act, but also a real risk of serious human rights violations due to detention conditions that could amount to torture or other ill-treatment."

Dr M'membe said the US government's indictment posed a grave threat to press freedom.

"This is an utterly shameful development that has alarming implications, not only for Julian's mental health, but also for journalism and press freedom around the world," he said.



# A climate of socialism

In December, Chile voted for socialist Gabriel Boric as president, making him the country's youngest leader when he takes office in March. But the work to revolutionise Chile is already under way, with climate top of the agenda. **Somini Sengupta** reports

RARELY does a country get a chance to lay out its ideals as a nation and write a new constitution for itself, and almost never does the climate and ecological crisis play a central role. Until now, that is, in Chile, where a national reinvention is underway.

After months of protests over social and environmental grievances, 155 Chileans have been elected to write a new constitution amid what they have declared a “climate and ecological emergency”.

Their work will not only shape how the country of 19 million is governed. It will also determine the future of a soft, lustrous metal, lithium, lurking in the salt waters beneath a vast ethereal desert beside the Andes Mountains.

Lithium is an essential component of batteries. And as the global economy seeks alternatives to fossil fuels to slow down climate change, lithium demand – and prices – are soaring.

Mining companies in Chile, the world's second-largest lithium producer after Australia, are keen to increase production, as are politicians who see mining as crucial to national prosperity. They face mounting opposition, though, from Chileans who argue that the country's very economic model, based on extraction of natural resources, has exacted too high an environmental cost and failed to spread the benefits to all citizens, including its indigenous people.

And so it falls to the Constitutional Convention to decide what kind of country Chile wants to be. Convention members will decide many things, including: How should mining be regulated, and what voice should local communities have over mining? Should Chile retain a presidential system? Should nature have rights? How about future generations?

Around the world, nations face similar dilemmas – in the forests of central Africa, in Native American territories in the United States – as they try to tackle the climate crisis without repeating past mistakes.

For Chile, the issue now stands to shape the national charter. “We have to assume that human activity causes damage, so how much damage do we want to cause?” said Cristina Dorador Ortiz, a microbiologist who studies the salt flats and is in the Constitutional Convention. “What is enough damage to live well?”

Then there's water. Amid a crippling drought supercharged by climate change, the Convention will decide who owns Chile's water. It



Left to right: President-elect Gabriel Boric with members of Chile's Constitutional Convention; evaporation ponds at a lithium plant in the Atacama Desert; Cristina Dorador Ortiz, microbiologist and member of the convention, pictured at the Antofagasta mining giant's market

will also weigh something more basic: What exactly is water?

Chile's current constitution was written in 1980 by people hand-picked by its then military ruler, Augusto Pinochet. It opened the country to mining investments and allowed water rights to be bought and sold.

Chile prospered by exploiting its natural riches: copper and coal, salmon and avocados. But even as it became one of Latin America's richest nations, frustrations mounted over inequality. Mineral-rich areas became known as “sacrifice zones” of environmental degradation. Rivers began drying up.

Anger boiled over into huge protests starting in 2019. A national referendum followed, electing a diverse panel to rewrite the constitution.

On December 19 came another turning point. Voters elected Gabriel Boric, a 35-year-old former student activist, as president. A socialist, he had campaigned to expand the social safety net, increase mining royalties and taxes, and create a national lithium company.

The morning after his victory, the stock price of the country's biggest lithium producer, Sociedad Química y Minera de Chile, or SQM, fell 15 percent.

## Volcanoes

One fifth of the world's lithium is produced by SQM, most of it in the Atacama Desert in northern Chile in the shadow of ancient volcanoes, including the oldest and still-active one, Lascar. The Lickanantay, the area's indigenous people, call Lascar the father of all volcanoes.

From above, the mine looks as though someone has spread a glistening blue and green quilt in the middle of this pale desert.

The riches lie in the brine underground. Day and night, SQM pumps out the brine, along with freshwater from five wells. Pipes carry brine to a series of ponds. Then, the sun goes to work.

The Atacama has the highest solar radiation levels on Earth. Water evaporates astonishingly fast, leaving mineral deposits behind. Magnesium comes out of

the ponds. Also potassium. Lithium remains in a viscous yellow green pool, which SQM converts into powdery white lithium carbonate for battery makers abroad.

SQM was a state-owned maker of fertiliser chemicals until Pinochet turned it over to his then son-in-law, Julio Ponce Lerou, in 1983. More recently, it has been fined by Chile's stock market regulator and by the US Securities and Exchange Commission over violations of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. Ponce, no longer chairman, retains 30 percent ownership.

SQM aims to increase manufacturing capacity as lithium prices soar.

Today, SQM is riding a lithium bull market. Carlos Díaz, its vice president for lithium, said the company is seeking to increase capacity from 140,000 tons of lithium carbonate to 180,000 tons by 2022. Díaz says the firm wants to “produce lithium as green as possible”, including by reducing saltwater ex-

traction by half by 2030 and by becoming “carbon neutral” by 2040.

There is good reason. Nearby, a copper mine, called Escondida, was fined US\$93 million for extracting water and causing what a Chilean court called “irreparable damage”.

The mining industry is bracing for change. A law to increase royalties is working through the legislature, and the Constitutional Convention is weighing provisions that could require more local decision-making.

## Diminish

Joaquín Villarino, president of the Mining Council, the industry lobby, said both could diminish Chile's appeal to investors. He voiced particular worry that some of the Convention members appeared to be against mining altogether, although he didn't name any. “I hope this is not what we will have in our Constitution,” he said,

**Should nature have rights? How about future generations? Around the world, nations face similar dilemmas – in the forests of Central Africa, in Native American territories in the United States – as they try to tackle the climate crisis without repeating past mistakes**

nically water? Mining companies assert it is not, because it is fit for neither human nor animal consumption.

“There is a clear separation between what is coming from the mountain, that is the continental water, and what you have in the brine in the Salar de Atacama,” Díaz said. Brine extraction is currently governed by the mining code. The new constitution could change that. It could call it brine water.

In the shadow of Lascar, not far from the SQM mine, shimmers a lagoon encrusted in bright, white salt. Jordán Jofré Lique, a geologist who works with the Atacama Indigenous Council, walks along its edge. A solitary flamingo crosses the salt crust.

The bird is looking for food, mainly brine shrimp, and this afternoon the lake is unusually dry. Lique, 28, isn't sure why. But it worries him. The health of the salar (salt flat in Spanish) constantly

# Africa: a tale of two classes,

IT WAS the best of times, it was the worst of times – so opens Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*.

Set in London and Paris during the late 1700s and the lead-up to the French Revolution, the novel was a warning about what happens when wealth funnels upwards while the masses stagnate. Nowhere do the best and worst of times collide with more geopolitical force than in Africa.

African writers have swept the board for literature awards, from the Nobel to the Booker, while seven out of eight children in the continent's sub-Saharan region are unable to read by the age of 10.

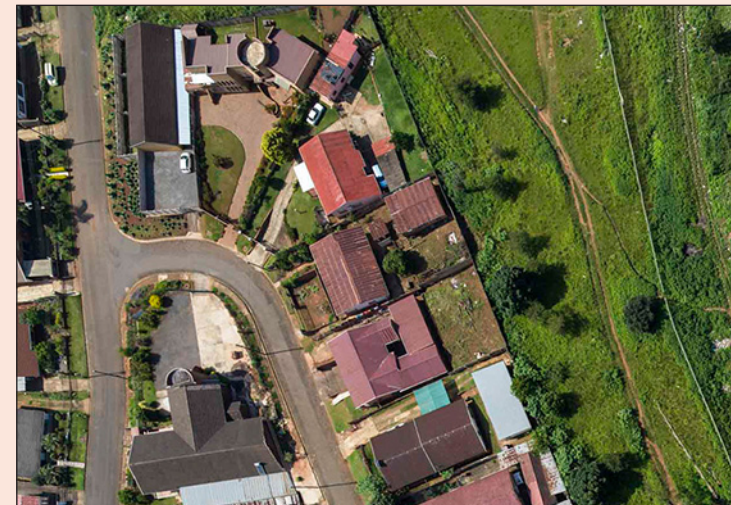
This year the continent was home to the slowest internet speeds on the planet, as African judges granted the world's first patent given to a robot inventor.

About 50 million Africans are expected to have fallen into extreme poverty in 2021, when the continent's richest billionaires saw their wealth increase by a fifth.

Globalisation has polarised societies, an effect that has been supercharged during the pandemic. This pattern is not unusual in other nations, but to apply it to Africa suggests that it possesses a unity beyond the mere geographic.

African nations have huddled together in the face of climate and COVID storms – with good reason. Instead of rewarding African scientists for identifying the threat of Omicron, the west imposed travel bans on the continent. The suspicion is that had the Sars-CoV-2 virus been found in Africa, it would have been cut off.

The pandemic has made visible a world being shaped to Africa's disadvantage. Low vaccination rates are a reason for the emergence of dangerous coronavirus variants, so why let just 8 percent of 1.3 billion Africans be fully vaccinated? The industrialised world won't issue Africa a vaccine patent waiver, and foreign aid is just 2



percent of the continent's GDP. So African nations can't manufacture their own cheap medicines, and lack the foreign exchange to cushion distribution costs.

Despite having played a negligible role in creating the climate crisis, African countries already find themselves paying a heavy price for it. The EU plans to introduce greenhouse gas taxes on imports that will pull a carbon curtain across the Mediterranean. Carlos Lopes of the University of Cape Town says African train projects built by Chinese companies are not using the low-carbon technology



# ist change in Chile



worries him, considering two major forces beyond his control: the warming of the planet and the mining industry's extraction of water here in one of the world's driest regions. The flamingo gives up its search, unfurls its pale pink wings and flies.

Lique, a Lickanantay man, knows the tracks of the salt flat. His grandfather herded sheep and goats here.

He was once set to work for a mining company. It was a path to a good salary. Instead, he found himself studying the effects of mining on his people's land. "Maybe it was an act of God or life's circumstances," he said.

Some indigenous people say mining companies have divided their communities with offers of money and jobs. Lique's organisation is shunned by some people because it accepts research funds from Albemarle, an American company that also mines lithium locally. His group has installed more than

**Of course the world should stop burning oil and gas but not by ignoring yet unknown ecological costs. Someone buys an electric car and feels very good because they are saving the planet . . . at the same time an entire ecosystem is damaged. It is a big paradox**

a dozen sensors to measure water levels, salinity and temperature. He is particularly worried about "the mixing zone", a sensitive ecosystem, where freshwater coexists with saltwater underground. The

bright evaporation ponds act like mirrors, which Lique suspects heats the air.

Independent research has found declining soil moisture and ground cover in the salt flat, along with rising daytime temperatures, evidence of a strong correlation between the expansion of lithium mining and the drying of the area.

## Surprises

A government census has recorded a slight decline in the Andean flamingo population in the Atacama since 1997, whereas their numbers remain unchanged elsewhere in Chile. Alejandra Castro, a park ranger in charge of flamingo reserves, suspects climate change.

SQM says its monitors show brine levels decreasing marginally in the mixing zone, and that the flora and fauna remain healthy.

The Atacama is full of surprises. Parts of it are so dry the ground is sharp and craggy, with no vegeta-

tion. Then the landscape changes suddenly, giving way to ankle-high shrubs, or a forest of towering tamarugo trees. A dirt road twists through the bare ochre hills, depositing you abruptly in a ravine carrying mountain spring water.

Lique sees the compounding effects of climate change. Water on his family's farm, near the mine, evaporates more quickly. Rains are more extreme. One alfalfa patch didn't grow this year. The corn is short. But Lique is most worried about how the extraction of so much brine could change the delicate equilibrium of sun, earth and water, especially amid climate change.

"The best scenario is that it doesn't get worse than this," he said. "The worst scenario is that everything dries up."

Cristina Dorador Ortiz, a Constitutional Convention member, walks through a busy market in her hometown, Antofagasta. "The Constitution is the most important law in

the country," she tells a man selling mangoes.

He listens politely. Dr Dorador, 41, describes what the assembly is discussing; water, housing, health-care. She explains the timeline, a draft constitution by July, followed by a national vote.

Behind her, a man yells out the price of corn. Another is selling rabbits. One woman vents about shoulder pain. A few tell her they have no time.

Dr Dorador became drawn to the microorganisms that have survived for millions of years in the salt flats. "We can learn a lot of things about climate change by studying the salares, because they are already extreme," she says, "You can find clues of the past and also clues of the future."

Dr Dorador is vying to be the convention's president. She wants the constitution to recognise that "humans are part of nature". She bristles when asked if lithium extraction is necessary to pivot away

from fossil fuel extraction. Of course the world should stop burning oil and gas, she says, but not by ignoring yet unknown ecological costs. "Someone buys an electric car and feels very good because they're saving the planet," she says, "At the same time an entire ecosystem is damaged. It's a big paradox."

Indeed, the questions facing this Convention aren't Chile's alone. The world faces the same reckoning as it confronts climate change and biodiversity loss, amid widening social inequities. Does the search for climate fixes require re-examining humanity's relationship with nature itself?

"We have to face some very complex 21st century problems," said Maisa Rojas, a climate scientist at the University of Chile. "Our institutions are, in many respects, not ready."

● John Bartlett contributed reporting to this article

New York Times

# those who have and those who go without



rolled out at home. The performance of Africa has been described as the worst economic tragedy of the 20th century. Commonplace explanations don't bear much scrutiny. Statistics can show that the closer a country is to the equator, the poorer it is. Yet no one would argue that slow growth caused a country to get closer to the equator.

Africa has been destabilised by conflict, but that has, says Prof Lopes, not stopped Thailand developing an export base. One controversial argument is that too few, not too many, colonisers

were the problem. The theory goes that higher levels of European settlement led to more productive institutions. However, the historian Morten Jerven, in his book *The Wealth and Poverty of African States*, says that real wages stagnated in the settler economies of South Africa, Zimbabwe and Kenya, whereas in the peasant economies of Uganda and Ghana, real wages rose.

Africa was not colonised because it was poor. European powers occupied and divided up the continent in the 19th century because it was rich. Africa was once a breadbasket; how did it earn a reputation for being a basket case? One reason is an extractive economic model that promotes African development via foreign direct investment, export-led growth and financial liberalisation. This web, according to Tunisian economist Fadhel Kaboub, drains nearly US\$2tn annually from the developing world.

Today, African economies export low-value-added goods relative to their imports. Instead of growing their own food to feed their people, countries import foodstuffs. While some nations export crude hydrocarbons, many more import refined petrochemicals, such as gasoline.

The right to bring in these essentials is handed over to a politically connected business "rentier" class that has a vested interest in the status quo. There is a demand for jobs, a hunger for education and a desperate need for health in Africa. Yet leaders are caught in a dilemma: if they create money to spend on social cohesion, they risk increasing food, energy and capital goods imports, and increasing their trade deficit. That puts downward pressure on the national currency. A weak exchange rate means that imports of basic necessities will be more expensive. History is littered with examples of violent revolutions preceded by price spikes.

Economic orthodoxy has no answer. Its textbooks would have African governments instructing central banks to borrow US dollars

to prop up the local currency and prioritising foreign creditors with austerity. Africa's stunted development demonstrates that poor states continue to be impoverished by being integrated into the world system through a relationship of unequal economic exchange with wealthy states. An alternative African strategy would see governments spending on public services and on increasing food and renewable energy sovereignty, while cracking down on corruption.

This provides a way out of the current development trap. In their book *Africa's Last Colonial Currency*, Fanny Pigeaud and Ndongo Samba Sylla suggest that, instead of importing food and burning through foreign reserves, African states should produce food at home, as land, work and knowhow are abundant. "If they financed the development of their agriculture, they wouldn't reduce their foreign exchange reserves; on the contrary, they would save money."

State-owned enterprises and a competitive domestic private sector would help Africa evade activities demanded by the global north. As African countries become increasingly digital, data will be power in economic governance – and local entities must be its custodian, not transnational corporations.

Trade agreements between countries of similar income levels are more beneficial for them compared with the World Trade Organisation's framework. The African Continental Free Trade Area, created by 54 of the 55 AU nations, is a good start. African economies would benefit by producing green industrial goods that rich countries take for granted, but whose mass production has not reached the continent. It would be in Europe's interest to help – as more Africans would be able to find jobs at home, pressure to migrate would ease. Africa is caught between history and geography. Understanding how and why it got to where it is today will help the continent move forward in the future.

The UK Guardian



# Sri Lanka chooses China aid over IMF

## Agencies warn of default on country's US\$35b debt

SRI LANKA has ruled out a bailout from the International Monetary Fund saying it plans to seek another loan from China instead to address an economic crisis that has led to food and fuel shortages.

The island's tourism-dependent economy has been battered by the pandemic, with supermarkets rationing goods and rolling blackouts imposed by power utilities unable to fund oil imports.

International rating agencies have warned of a looming sovereign default on Sri Lanka's US\$35 billion foreign debt as the treasury battles a crunch on foreign exchange reserves and a gaping budget deficit.

But central bank governor Ajith Nivard Cabraal rejected mounting calls from local and international economists to seek an International Monetary Fund bailout and debt restructure.

"The IMF is not a magic wand," he told a news conference in Colombo. "At this point, the other alternatives are better than going to the IMF."

Cabraal added that talks with China over a new loan were at an "advanced stage", and a fresh agreement would service existing debt to Beijing.

"They would assist us in making the repayments . . . the new loan coming from China is in order to cushion our debt repayments to China itself," he said.

Beijing is already the island's biggest bilateral lender, accounting for at least 10 percent of Sri Lanka's external debt.

Cabraal's remarks came days after a visit from Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi who discussed the debt payment restructure with President Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

Sri Lanka has borrowed heavily from China for infrastructure in the past, some of which ended up as white elephants. Unable to repay a

US\$1.4 billion loan for port construction in the south, the country was forced to lease out the facility to a Chinese company for 99 years in 2017.

Sri Lanka is a key part of China's Belt and Road Initiative, a long-term plan to fund and build infrastructure linking China to the rest of the world.

However, some countries, including the US, have labelled the project a "debt trap" for smaller and poorer nations.

Beijing has always rejected those accusations, and in response has accused some in the West of promoting this narrative to tarnish its image.

Cabraal did not give an indication of the size of the loan sought from China but said talks were also underway with India for a US\$1 billion credit line to fund a broad range of imports.

He said Colombo would repay a US\$500 million sovereign bond that matured recently despite local business leaders publicly asking him to withhold the repayment and seek IMF help.

Sri Lanka plans to send US\$5m worth of tea to Iran each month to clear a \$251m debt. In September, the country Lanka declared an economic emergency, after a steep fall in the value of its currency, the rupee, caused a spike in food prices.

### Bipolar

Sri Lanka's preference for China is tied to the country's complex history with the multilateral lender in Washington DC. Colombo has needed IMF bailouts 16 times over the past 55 years. That places it second only to Pakistan, which has gone to the IMF 20 times, making it the most IMF-dependent of the world's debt-strapped nations.

Only nine of the 16 IMF programmes in Sri Lanka were completed. The country last went to the IMF in 2016 during the right-

tax gains made by the super-rich during the pandemic and use the money to fund healthcare systems, pay for vaccines, fight discrimination and address the climate crisis.

As millions fell into poverty during the pandemic, billionaires' wealth soared.

"Billionaires have had a terrific pandemic," Gabriela Bucher, Oxfam's executive director, said in a press release. "Central banks pumped trillions of dollars into financial markets to save the economy, yet much of that has ended up lining the pockets of billionaires riding a stock market boom."

The combined wealth of the top 10 billionaires – including Tesla CEO Elon Musk and Amazon founder Jeff Bezos – doubled during the pandemic and is now six times greater than that of the world's

poorest 3.1 billion people, according to the report.

"Inequality at such pace and scale is happening by choice, not chance," Bucher said. "Not only have our economic structures made all of us less safe against this pandemic, they are actively enabling those who are already extremely rich and powerful to exploit this crisis for their own profit."

The pandemic has not been the "great equaliser" some predicted. The World Bank estimates that 97 million people worldwide fell into extreme poverty in 2020 and are now living on less than US\$2 a day. The number of the world's poorest also rose for the first time in over 20 years.

Vaccine inequality has become a major issue as many of the world's richest

countries hoard shots, buying up enough doses to vaccinate their populations several times over and failing to deliver on their promises to share them with the developing world.

Billionaires are being asked to use their wealth to help the less fortunate. David Beasley, director of the United Nations' World Food Programme, called on billionaires including Bezos and Musk to "step up now, on a one-time basis" to help solve world hunger in November.

The call-out got a direct response from Musk, who later said on Twitter that if the organisation could lay out "exactly how" the funding would solve the issue, he would "sell Tesla stock right now and do it". The CEO did not publicly respond after the UN released a plan.

CNN



Sri Lanka's Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa was behind a series of China-funded infrastructure when he was president from 2005 to 2015 and cultivated a close relationship with President Xi Jinping

of-centre coalition that preceded the incumbent Rajapaksa government. It sought a US\$1.5 billion extended fund facility, which came to an abrupt end with the new administration produced by elections in November.

"Sri Lanka has a bipolar relationship with the IMF," Nishan De Mel, executive director of Verite Research, a Colombo think tank, said. Like the World Bank, its Bretton Woods twin, the IMF is widely seen as having "imperial and colonial" trappings. "Part of Sri Lanka's political tradition views the IMF with suspicion, and going to it is presented as having a negative outcome," he said.

Sri Lanka's US\$88 billion economy makes for grim reading. Public debt rose to 83 percent of gross domestic product at the end of 2019, and its trade deficit has been averaging US\$10 billion annually, which was only reduced last year by heavy import restrictions imposed after exports were severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sri Lanka had US\$50.8 billion of foreign debt on its books as of June last year, mostly from borrowings in international markets. The debt to China is about 10 percent of this,

mostly used for an infrastructure spree over the past decade. There is also debt to Japan worth US\$4.4 billion, once the country's largest lender for development projects.

Sri Lanka's efforts to borrow more have been thwarted by downgraded ratings. Bonds were reduced to junk status after Moody's Investors Service recently downgraded the country two notches from B2 to Caa1. It was another blow to the anaemic economy, which is facing growth of just 0.5 percent in the wake of COVID-19. Last April, Fitch Ratings downgraded the country to B1 with a negative outlook.

### Credibility

Despite the government's preference to do business with China, some local analysts believe an agreement with the IMF would help with financial markets, and enable Sri Lanka to borrow again.

"An IMF programme puts Sri Lanka on a debt-sustainable path, and that creates credibility when you go to the markets," said Murtaza Jafferjee, managing director of JB Securities, a financial consultancy in Colombo. "After the Moody's downgrade, and without

an IMF programme, Sri Lanka will not be able to access the markets."

And some foreign analysts consider that the government is being cavalier with regard to the dire economic assessments. "Sri Lanka cannot ignore the views of the ratings agencies," said Prasanna Athukorala, a former senior portfolio manager at the Sydney-based AMP Capital Investors. "They are accepted for their independent, objective and composite view of creditworthiness of a sovereign issuer."

He argued that if the government ditches the IMF course, ratings upgrades will only emerge with self-imposed discipline. "A credible and secure medium-term financing strategy should ensure the cost of debt is maintained at manageable levels and there is a sustainable build-up of foreign exchange inflows," he said.

But geopolitics may come into play if Sri Lanka is unable to raise dollars normally and does turn to China to settle debts with Western lenders.

"China doesn't want its money to be used to repay Western creditors," said de Mel of Verite Research. "After six months Sri Lanka will be on thin ice."

Daily Star/inquirerdotnet/Nikkei

## 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.

### Russia links boost

CHINA-RUSSIA trade grew by 35.8 percent in 2021, hitting a record high of US\$146.88 billion. As the US and EU stoke tensions in Ukraine and threaten new sanctions against Russia, Moscow and Beijing are strengthening relations, with three major US\$93 billion projects under way.

South China Morning Post

### Action over floods

THE CENTRAL government has released a report on the devastating floods in Henan province last year, finding local officials responsible for high death toll – 87 civil servants were demoted or dismissed for ignoring weather warnings, underreporting deaths, and misusing flood prevention funds.

Sixth Tone

### Startups delivering

CHINESE state-linked investors backed almost 30 percent of the 100 biggest startups in 2021, particularly in tech and carbon neutrality sectors. New funds from companies and municipalities include steel giants Baowu Steel (US\$7.9 billion) China National Building Material (US\$3.14 billion) and Xiamen, Chengdu, and Qingdao cities.

Nikkei Asia

### Tax revenue grows

CHINA'S tax revenue grew 10.7 percent in 2021 (US\$3.2 trillion), nearly doubling 2012 figure and recovering from a 3.9 percent drop in 2020. Government budget spending in 2021 totalled US\$3.87 trillion (+0.3 percent) – maintaining fiscal balance – while US\$173.9 billion in tax cuts and fees helped stimulate the economy.

Global Times

### Red tourism rallies

AROUND 3.25 billion domestic tourist trips were made in 2021 (+12.8 percent year-on-year) but only reaching 54 percent of pre-pandemic levels (2019). In the CPC's centennial year, although Covid-related measures hampered travel, "red tourism" continued to grow with 40 percent of tourists visiting sites linked to revolutionary history.

China Daily

### mRNA vaccine trials

CHINA'S first mRNA Covid-19 vaccine has completed Phase I clinical trials with 80-95 percent immune response. ARCoV vaccine is the first homegrown mRNA to enter Phase III trials and can be stored at standard refrigerated conditions (2-8°C) compared with Pfizer/BioNTech's and Moderna's (-80 to -60°C).

Caixin Global

### Women's rights law

A DRAFT of the Women's Rights and Interests Protection Law has received overwhelming public feedback, amid polarising debate on gender issues. Proposed amendments by the National People's Congress to the 1995 law (revised 2005) addresses sexual harassment, workplace equality, property rights, and protection mechanisms.

Sixth Tone

# Billionaires thrive in pandemic as millions fall into poverty

BILLIONAIRES added around US\$5 trillion to their fortunes during the pandemic, according to Oxfam, exacerbating economic inequality as COVID-19 pushed millions of people around the world into poverty.

Using data compiled by Forbes, Oxfam says in a new report that the total wealth of billionaires jumped from US\$8.6 trillion in March 2020 to US\$13.8 trillion in November 2021, a bigger increase than in the previous 14 years combined. The world's richest ten men saw their collective wealth more than double, shooting up by US\$1.3 billion a day.

The report was released ahead of the World Economic Forum's online Davos Agenda, which took place at the end of January after the group's annual in-person meeting was delayed due to Omicron.

Oxfam argues that governments should



# China's Zero COVID strategy has shown deaths can be prevented

## Neoliberal countries prioritise economies and profits over healthcare

Joseph Kishore

BY IMPLEMENTING its Zero COVID policy, China, with 1.4 billion people, has kept total cases below 100,000 and total deaths below 5,000 (including just over 10,000 cases and only three deaths since April 2020).

By comparison, the United States, with less than a quarter of the population of China, has had more than 50 million cases and 800,000 deaths.

To put it another way, if the US had succeeded in containing the virus with the same efficiency as China has, the death toll would be less than 1,000.

China's rigorous controls on international travel – made necessary by the massive spread of the virus globally – have been combined with aggressive public health measures within the country to contain outbreaks, including targeted lockdowns, the isolation of infected individuals, mass testing and contact tracing.

The strategy has not only saved millions of lives, but has, remarkably, allowed the population to move about and interact freely for most of the past two years. In an essay published recently on the World Socialist Web Site, a scientist, who asked for his identity not to be disclosed publicly, explains that life inside China, including its major urban centres, “has been relatively normal since the end of the first wave in the spring of 2020. Businesses, such as restaurants, bars and movie theatres, have been open throughout China.” For the most part, the population has not lived under the constant fear of being infected or infecting others.

One section of the essay, “controlling an outbreak in 15 days,” deserves particularly careful study. Citing the case of an outbreak in the major metropolis of Chongqing (population 20 million), it explains how a policy of elimination (“Zero COVID”) was implemented in practice.

After experiencing no new infections for more than a year following the initial outbreak in the early months of 2020, the city responded rapidly when a 32-year-old man tested positive on November 1 this year. The submission explains:

Within a day of first detection, the city of Chongqing closed off the headquarters of the energy company and other buildings that had been visited by the infected people. The districts of the city in which the infected individuals lived announced mass testing campaigns and gathered samples from 125,000 people within 24 hours.

The patients' apartment complexes were strictly locked down, with food and other vital supplies delivered regularly by city health workers. Various areas of the city were labelled “high risk zones”, with entry and exit strictly controlled. Throughout the city, mahjong parlours, movie theatres, libraries, museums and other public places where large numbers of



A worker administers a COVID-19 test while standing inside a mobile coronavirus testing facility at an office complex in Beijing

people come together were temporarily closed.

Authorities initiated a campaign of contact tracing (identifying who infected individuals might have interacted with, including through the use of smartphone-based apps). Those at risk of having been infected went into isolation, with safe housing provided by the state and food delivered on a regular basis. The total number of people in quarantine peaked at 1,300 one week after the initial cluster of infections was identified.

Because of the magnitude of the response, only a handful of people ever tested positive, all of whom had been quarantined on the first day. On November 17, with no new infections having been detected outside of quarantine for more than two weeks, the city announced that the outbreak had been controlled. Chongqing was officially declared a “low-risk zone”. Restrictions were relaxed, and life went back to normal.

It took 15 days to go from the first detected case until the official end of the outbreak. This 15-day period was the only time that the 20 million residents of Chongqing had significant restrictions on their lives after the initial outbreak in early 2020.

### Dynamic

The success of this strategy has depended on and received broad popular support and participation, along with a significant investment in social infrastructure and public health systems at the local and national levels. The author notes, for example, that cities with populations under five million are required to have the capacity to test the entire population in just two days, while cities with populations above five million must be able to test everyone in five days.

The “dynamic zero” policy of China is a confirmation in practice of the viability of a policy aimed at eliminating SARS-CoV-2. As the article explains, in the summer of 2020, the China Centres for

Disease Control and Prevention (China CDC) published an article in *The Lancet* medical journal, that laid out two basic strategies: “containment and suppression” (“dynamic zero”, or a policy of elimination) and “mitigation”, which in different forms is the policy pursued by all the major capitalist governments.

“Mitigation might allow development of herd immunity over a long time,” the China CDC wrote, “but at a great cost in terms of number of cases, morbidity, and mortality.”

As scientists have explained, a “mitigation” strategy, which has over the past year focused on vaccination, is not by itself able to stop the pandemic. Indeed, the case of China demonstrates that public health measures – lockdowns, isolation, contact tracing and mass testing – are even more critical than vaccination, as China was able to eliminate the virus, outside of isolated outbreaks, before any vaccine was available.

There is no question that the vast social experience of collective revolutionary struggle in China has left a profound imprint on the consciousness of masses of people, which has persisted despite the restoration of capitalism. There is enormous popular support for the Zero COVID policy, which expresses a level of social solidarity and consciousness that does not yet exist in the United States and Europe.

The Beijing regime simply could not ignore the expectation that appropriate measures would be taken to stop the pandemic. These measures are of a highly progressive character, but they are not specifically socialist. The measures that China has implemented are, in fact, based on long-established principles and procedures of public health developed in the course of the late 19th and 20th centuries, albeit aided by the far more advanced technology made possible by the communication revolution.

Moreover, an elimination strat-

**In the United States alone, the real death toll from the pandemic is in excess of 1 million. If these deaths were preventable – and China demonstrates that they were – then one is speaking about a social crime of monumental proportions, indeed one of the greatest social crimes in modern history**

egy, on a smaller scale, had been implemented in a handful of other countries in the Asia-Pacific region, including New Zealand, Singapore, Taiwan and Vietnam. Under intense pressure, above all, from Washington, these countries have largely reversed course, and China remains the “last Zero COVID holdout”. In the US, in an earlier period, aggressive public health measures contained infectious disease, as in the case of the 1947 outbreak of smallpox in New York City, which was stopped through mass contact tracing and vaccination.

The question that needs to be answered is not why such policies, clearly effective, were implemented in China, but why, despite the staggering toll in human lives, they have been rejected in the United States and Europe.

The explanation must come from the analysis of class interests. Measures to stop the pandemic and save lives have been rejected not because they were and are ineffective but because they conflict with the interests of the ruling elite. From the beginning, a conscious decision was made to prioritise the performance of the financial markets and corporate profits over saving lives.

The passage in the US of the

CARES Act in late March 2020, on a nearly unanimous bipartisan basis, sanctioned the hand out of trillions of dollars to Wall Street, a policy emulated in the other major capitalist countries. Once this was done, the ruling class turned to re-opening everything, allowing the virus to spread without restraint.

What is more, one cannot ignore the fact that in the years leading up to the pandemic, the “problem” of high life expectancy and healthcare costs for the elderly was a topic of intense discussion within the ruling class.

The New York Times reported recently that one out of every 100 elderly Americans over the age of 65 has died from COVID-19. This is a staggering figure – one in 100, or 600,000 Americans over the age of 65. This means that millions of people have lost a parent, grandparent or spouse to the pandemic.

And this colossal social crime continues. The Omicron variant of COVID-19 is spreading rapidly throughout the world, yet the ruling class has made clear that no serious measures will be taken to stop it. UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson acknowledged that “a tidal wave of Omicron is coming”, but proposed that nothing be done other than “get boosted now”. All businesses and schools are to remain open.

### Intervention

In the United States, which is currently in the midst of a surge of the Delta variant, President Biden has insisted that there will be “no lockdowns” in response to Omicron. More than 1,100 people are dying every day in the United States, and more people are killed each week than throughout the entire course of the pandemic in China.

More than 5.3 million people have died from COVID-19, according to official figures, while the real toll is around 15 million. In the United States alone, the real death toll from the pandemic is in excess of 1 million. If these deaths

were preventable – and China demonstrates that they were – then one is speaking about a social crime of monumental proportions, indeed one of the greatest social crimes in modern history.

The experience of the past two years shows that there is no limit to the number of deaths that governments in the US, Europe and other major capitalist countries are willing to accept. The limit will be set not by the governments of the ruling class, but by the independent organisation and intervention of the working class.

The dilemma that China itself confronts is that the effort to maintain a Zero COVID policy in one country is, in the long term, unsustainable. Enormous pressure is being brought to bear by the major imperialist powers for China to abandon this policy. There are two motives behind this drive. First, China's restrictions are seen as disruptive to US and European profit interests, in as much as China is a major centre of production for the global capitalist market.

Even more important, however, are domestic political considerations. A common reaction that the WSWS has received from the submission by the scientist is surprise at both the success of China's Zero COVID policy and its broad popular support. The ruling class is fearful that China's ability to eliminate the virus within its borders will encourage the growth of resistance in the international working class to the homicidal course upon which the financial oligarchy has embarked.

It is this that accounts for the increasingly hysterical tone of anti-Chinese propaganda in which accusations of “genocide” are being levelled against China, which has demonstrated a far greater concern for the health and lives of its citizens, including the Uighurs, than the US or European powers. This has supplemented the “Wuhan Lab” lie that China is itself responsible for the pandemic.

The whole point is to poison public opinion with lies and to discredit and block a real public discussion on the alternatives to the policy pursued in the major capitalist countries. This campaign will in turn intensify the pressure from business elites within China for a shift toward opening up the country to the virus, while any retreat from the Zero COVID policy will encounter enormous resistance in the Chinese working class.

The example of China demonstrates that the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic is first and foremost a political question. The implementation of a strategy of global elimination requires a mass social movement of the working class, based on a repudiation of the economic interests that have been prioritised throughout the pandemic. This means, inescapably, a revolutionary struggle against the entire capitalist system.

Developing within the working class an understanding of what has happened, who is responsible and what must be done is critical. This is the aim of the Global Workers' inquest into the COVID-19 pandemic, initiated by the World Socialist Web Site.

wsws.org





# Human rights: if this world has a future, it is as a socialist society

**Fred M'membe**  
Socialist Party President

THE UNIVERSAL Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948 is a milestone document, proclaiming the inalienable rights that everyone is entitled to as a human being regardless of race, colour, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

On December 8 last year – two days before Human Rights Day – I made a presentation to the South-South Human Rights Forum held in Beijing, and I would like to share it with you:

From the outset, I told the forum, I would like to say that I am a socialist, and I think that if this world has a future it is as a socialist society. My deep belief is that the world of social justice for all has to come about. The growth of socialist movements and political parties opened the gates to previously marginalised individuals who challenged the classical liberal economic conception of social justice. Yet, despite the important socialist contribution to the human rights discourse, the human rights legacy of the socialist – and especially the Marxist – tradition is today widely overlooked or some times dismissed.

Bearing in mind the violations committed by some socialist regimes in the name of human rights, there's a need to correct the historical record, by showing that the struggle for universal suffrage, social justice and workers' rights – principles endorsed in the major United Nations documents of human rights – were shaped by socialist ideals.

Looking at the issue of human rights objectively I am thoroughly convinced that no economic, social

and political order has done or can do more than socialism to protect human rights.

Under a socialist order, seldom do children have to beg or are homeless, or do children have to scrounge for a living on the streets. In the other order – including the developed capitalist countries, but mainly in our poor countries – millions of homeless children who have no parents or support of any kind are begging on the streets and doing all sorts of spectacular things to make a living. In view of this, I ask: is there any economic, social and economic order that has done or is doing more than socialism to protect human rights?

Look at the number of sick children who don't receive any medical attention and the numbers of children who are illiterate, even in some developed capitalist countries. Seldom did one or does one come across a child who can't read or write under the socialist order.

In the other order, millions of children don't have access to medical treatment, but under the socialist order – no matter what the challenges or limitations – every child had or has a school to go to and had or has access to medical care. In this regard, which economic, social and political order has done more than socialism for human rights?

Many countries have infant

mortality rates of more than 100 for every 1,000 live births. This means that hundreds of thousands of children die each year. However, in most countries – and even states of countries like India – pursuing socialist policies and are often victims of imperialist economic sanctions, infant mortality rates are much lower. As regards this aspect, has any economic and social order done more than socialism to protect human rights?

Under socialism, every human being has a truly equal opportunity to develop physically and intellectually, without any discrimination based on sex, race or ethnicity. This holds true for everyone, without any differences between rich and poor. Has any economic and social order done more for human rights in this regard than socialism?

The world in general, but especially our poor world, is full of people who are unemployed, young people who are out of work and old people who don't have any social protection. In the countries pursuing socialist policies, most people – men and women alike – have been given the possibility of working, and most, if not all, citizens have social protection through retirement, pensions and social security. No one has been left to his or her fate. Has any economic and social order done more than social-

**Under socialism, every human being has a truly equal opportunity to develop physically and intellectually, without any discrimination based on sex, race or ethnicity. This holds true for everyone, without any differences between rich and poor**

ism in this regard to protect human rights?

All over the world, in capitalist order, including our capitalist poor countries, some citizens have been alienated and considered worthless. They are taken to vote for someone every four or five years without even knowing who they are voting for or why, because often their low political cultural level and low cultural level in general don't give them a chance to decide freely. They are influenced by all the mechanisms for exerting mental and psychological influence in decision-making – and then nobody cares about them any more.

There isn't any sense of identification between such people and the state, the government and the society in which they live. They are condemned to a desperate struggle for survival without any social worth, respect or consideration.

In countries with a socialist order, the situation is entirely different, with total identification and full participation by citizens in all activities – political activities, activities in defence of their country, cultural activities and activities for developing the country. Has any economic and social order done more for human rights than socialism?

With socialism, a sense of solidarity and fraternity is created. In this regard, has any economic and social order done more for human rights than socialism?

I am referring to things that, in my opinion, constitute true humanitarianism, the policy of promoting the dignity of human beings and their wellbeing. Inequality causes terrible suffering.

But even so, it is being said that many human rights abuses are being committed in the countries pursuing socialist policies: China, Cuba, Vietnam, Venezuela, among others. Everyday, in the mass media, we hear or read and see references to supposed human rights violations in China, Cuba, Venezuela and Vietnam. These countries

have been grossly slandered. Their enemies even spoken of physical violence against people, torture and such things. They have written and multiplied all that calumny against them.

What is behind this determination to stain the countries pursuing socialism if not the imperialists' aim of slandering them, undermining their moral authority and destroying them? The people who make these attacks know it's all lies because they know what socialist norms are.

These lies are repeated all over to confuse many people, deceive lots of people, because there's an art, a science, for engaging in this kind of propaganda. How can they survive if not with propaganda? How would they survive without lies? How can they explain all the crimes they commit against the world, if not with lies and calumny, trying to discredit those who oppose them?

I am sure that the masses and the peoples will obey their instincts and not be swayed by the volume and intensity of that campaign the imperialists are waging against China, Cuba and Venezuela. Clearly, socialism is the true representative of human rights.

Victory over capitalism will mean the end of class conflict and the abolition of the exploitation of man by man. The creation of a socialist society will overcome the horrific abuses of the capitalist system, including war, imperialism and racism. Karl Marx rightly denounced their human rights rhetoric as a tool of the bourgeoisie to disguise their own class interests in the cloak of universal justice.

Human rights are indeed a sham under capitalism, socialism created a higher kind of human rights that allowed for real participation in all forms of political and economic life and achieved true equality across the class, race and gender lines.

As the East German legal philosopher Karl Polak declared, "There can be no human rights without socialism!"

## The Universal Declaration at a glance . . .

**Article 1: Right to equality**  
**Article 2: Freedom from discrimination**  
**Article 3: Right to life, liberty, personal security**  
**Article 4: Freedom from slavery**  
**Article 5: Freedom from torture and degrading treatment**  
**Article 6: Right to recognition as a person before the law**  
**Article 7: Right to equality before the law**  
**Article 8: Right to remedy by competent tribunal**  
**Article 9: Freedom from arbitrary arrest and exile**  
**Article 10: Right to fair public hearing**  
**Article 11: Right to be considered innocent**

**Article 12: Freedom from interference with privacy, family, home and correspondence**  
**Article 13: Right to free movement in and out of the country**  
**Article 14: Right to asylum in other countries from persecution**  
**Article 15: Right to a nationality and the freedom to change it**  
**Article 16: Right to marriage and family**  
**Article 17: Right to own property**  
**Article 18: Freedom of belief and religion**  
**Article 19: Freedom of opinion and information**  
**Article 20: Right of peaceful assembly and association**

**Article 21: Right to participate in government and in free elections**  
**Article 22: Right to social security**  
**Article 23: Right to desirable work and to join trade unions**  
**Article 24: Right to rest and leisure**  
**Article 25: Right to adequate living standard**  
**Article 26: Right to education**  
**Article 27: Right to participate in the cultural life of community**  
**Article 28: Right to a social order that articulates this document**  
**Article 29: Community duties essential to free and full development**  
**Article 30: Freedom from state or personal interference in the above rights**



# Multidimensional poverty shows just how bad living conditions are

Tricontinental's **Viyay Prashad** explains how the 26 research institutes' document 'A Plan to Save the Planet' is designed to start an international discussion responding to the broad crises of our times

IN OCTOBER last year, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) released a report that received barely any attention: the Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2021, notably subtitled, Unmasking disparities by ethnicity, caste, and gender.

"Multidimensional poverty" is a much more precise measurement of poverty than the international poverty line of US\$1.90 per day. It looks at ten indicators divided along three axes: health (nutrition, child mortality), education (years of schooling, school attendance), and standard of living (cooking fuel, sanitation, drinking water, electricity, housing, assets).

The team studied multidimensional poverty across 109 countries, looking at the living conditions of 5.9 billion people. They found that 1.3 billion – one in five people – live in multidimensional poverty.

The details of their lives are stark:

- Roughly 644 million – or half of these people – are children under the age of 18.
- Almost 85 per cent of them reside in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.
- One billion of them are exposed to solid cooking fuels (which creates respiratory ailments), inadequate sanitation, and substandard housing.
- 568 million people lack access to proper drinking water within a 30-minute round trip walk.
- Our people have at least one undernourished person in their home.
- Nearly 66 per cent of them live in households where no one has completed at least six years of schooling.
- 678 million people have no access to electricity.
- 550 million people lack seven of eight assets identified in the study (a radio, television, telephone, computer, animal cart, bicycle, motorcycle, or refrigerator). They also do not own a car.

The absolute numbers in the UNDP report are consistently lower than figures calculated by other researchers. Take their number of those with no access to electricity (678 million), for example. World Bank data shows that in 2019, 90 per cent of the world's population had access to electricity, which means that 1.2 billion people had none. An important study from 2020 demonstrates that 3.5 billion people lack "reasonably reliable access" to electricity. This is far more than the absolute numbers in the UNDP report, but, regardless of the specific figures, the trend lines are nonetheless horrific.



Study is a key instrument for the growth of working-class struggle: Tina Modotti, farmers reading *El Machete*, 1926 (top), Chittaprosad, Indian workers read the Turkish communist poet Nâzım Hikmet during the great Bengal famine of 1943 (above)

We live on a planet with greatly increasing disparities.

For the first time, the UNDP has focused attention on the more granular aspects of these disparities, shining a light on ethnic, race, and caste hierarchies. Nothing is as wretched as social hierarchies, inheritances of the past that continue to sharply assault human dignity.

## Struggle

Looking at the data from 41 countries, the UNDP found that multidimensional poverty disproportionately impacts those who face social discrimination. In India, for instance, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes ("scheduled" because the government regards them as officially designated groups) face the brunt of terrible poverty and discrimination, which in turn exacerbates their impoverishment. Five out of six people who struggle with multidimen-

sional poverty are from Scheduled Castes and Tribes.

A study from 2010 showed that each year, at least 63 million people in India fall below the poverty line because of out-of-pocket healthcare costs (that's two people per second). During the COVID-19 pandemic, these numbers increased, though exact figures have not been easy to collect. Regardless, the five out of six people who are in multidimensional poverty – many of them from Scheduled Castes and Tribes – do not have any access to healthcare and are therefore not even included in that data. They exist largely outside formal healthcare systems, which has been catastrophic for these communities during the pandemic.

Last year, the secretary general of ALBA-TCP (Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America – Peoples' Trade Treaty), Sacha Llorenti, asked Tricontinen-

tal: Institute for Social Research and the Instituto Simón Bolívar in Caracas, Venezuela, to start an international discussion responding to the broad crises of our times.

We brought together 26 research institutes from around the world whose work has now culminated in a report called A Plan to Save the Planet. We looked carefully at two kinds of texts: first, a range of plans produced by conservative and liberal think tanks around the world, from the World Economic Forum to the Council for Inclusive Capitalism; second, a set of demands from trade unions, left-wing political parties, and social movements.

We drew from the latter to better understand the limitations of the former. For instance, we found that the liberal and conservative texts ignored the fact that during the pandemic, central banks – mostly in the Global North – raised US\$16 trillion to sustain a

faltering capitalist system. Though money is available that could have gone towards the social good, it largely went to shore up the financial sector and industry instead. If money can be made available for those purposes, it can certainly be used to fully fund a robust public health system in every country and a fair transition from non-renewable fossil fuels to renewable energy sources, for example.

## Education

The plan covers 12 areas, from "democracy and the world order" to "the digital world".

To give you a sense of the kinds of claims made in the plan, here are the recommendations in the section on education:

- De-commodify education, which includes strengthening public education and preventing the privatisation of education.
- Promote the role of teachers in

the management of educational institutions.

- Ensure that underprivileged sectors of society are trained to become teachers.

- Bridge the electricity and digital divides.

- Build publicly financed and publicly controlled high-speed broadband internet systems.

- Ensure that all school children have access to all the elements of the educational process, including extra-curricular activities.

- Develop channels through which students participate in decision-making processes in all forms of higher education.

- Make education a lifelong experience, allowing people at every stage of life to enjoy the practice of learning in various kinds of institutions. This will foster the value that education is not only about building a career, but about building a society that supports the continuing growth and development of the mind and of the community.

- Subsidise higher education and vocational courses for workers of all ages in areas related to their occupation.

- Make education, including higher education, available to all in their spoken languages; ensure that governments take responsibility for providing educational materials in the spoken languages in their country through translations and other means.

- Establish management educational institutes that cater to the needs of cooperatives in industrial, agricultural, and service sectors.

A Plan to Save the Planet is rooted in the principles of the United Nations Charter (1945), the document with the highest level of consensus in the world (193 member states of the UN have signed this binding treaty). We hope you will read the plan and the dossier carefully. They have been produced for discussion and debate and are to be argued with and elaborated on. If you have any suggestions or ideas or would like to let us know how you were able to use the plan, please write to us at [plan@thetribunecontinental.org](mailto:plan@thetribunecontinental.org)

Study has been a key instrument for the growth of working-class struggle, as shown by the impact of working-class newspapers, journals, and literature on the expansion of popular imaginations.

In 1928, Tina Modotti photographed Mexican revolutionary farmers reading *El Machete*, the newspaper of their communist party. Modotti, one of the most luminous revolutionary photographers, reflected the sincere commitment of Mexican revolutionaries, of the Weimar Left, and of fighters in the Spanish Civil War.

The farmers reading *El Machete*, and the peasant organiser in India reading the Turkish communist poet Nâzım Hikmet in a hut during the great Bengal famine of 1943 depicted in the woodcut by Chittaprosad suggest places where we hope the plan will be discussed.

We hope this plan will be used not merely as a critique of the present, but as a programme for a future society that we will build in the present.

● A Plan to save the Planet is at <https://thetribunecontinental.org/text-a-plan-to-save-the-planet>

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The masses of our people are engaging themselves in these struggles to gain material benefits, to live better lives and in peace, to have free education, quality healthcare, clean water, decent sanitation, a solid roof over their heads, and all the services required in an organised society

*Fred M'membe, Socialist Party President*

**JUSTICE  
EQUITY  
PEACE**

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