

# AFRICOM is a tool of imperialism

M'membe writes a letter warning the govt over US 'creep' through continent

SOCIALIST Party President Fred M'membe has written to President Hakainde Hichilema strongly urging him to cancel the agreement with the United States to set up an AFRICOM office in Lusaka.

Dr M'membe told Hichilema that the organisation served as a tool to extend US strategic access to African resources and influence over its countries.

He said "security cooperation" was designed to do nothing other than further the US imperialist agenda, with AFRICOM set up as a tool for its execution. Here is the full text of Dr M'membe's letter:

IT IS now public knowledge that the United States Department of Defence (DoD) is about to set up an Office for Security Cooperation at the Mission in Lusaka and that you have been party to its facilitation.

1. According to the United States doctrine document of 2017 that provides the policy context under which AFRICOM operates, "Security Cooperation encompasses all DoD interests, programs, and activities with foreign security forces (FSF) and their institutions to build relationships that help promote US interests, enable partner nations to provide the US access to territory, infrastructure, information and

**We are being  
recolonised  
– Page 12**

resources; and/or to build and apply their capacities consistent with US defence objectives".

2. Subsequently, the tasks of AFRICOM as outlined by General Steven Townsend are:

- (i) Maintaining America's strategic access and influence,
- (ii) To counter threats to the United States that emanate from Africa,
- (iii) To counter narratives from China and Russia – United States' strategic competitors,
- (iv) To respond to crises – humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, threats to US embassies.

Given this understanding of the doctrine behind "Security Cooperation" and the tasks of AFRICOM, it is a serious mistake to go ahead with the setting up of the planned office. "Security Cooperation" is a United States imperialist agenda and AFRICOM is a tool for its execution.

Since its creation, AFRICOM has slowly increased

● Turn to Page 4

**MAKE THE SIGN!**



● THIS is the sign that symbolises the Socialist Party's fight for justice, equity and peace for all Zambians . . . Faka SP Symbol Boi (axe and shovel "X") – the workers' tools, demonstrated, right, by party President Fred M'membe and, below, by Simon Mulenga Mwila, Socialist Party Youth League chairperson



**We have been  
brainwashed**

Page 2



**Training top  
of SP agenda**

Page 3



**Unite against  
these wars**

Pages 6/7



**Petro pledges  
politics of love**

Page 8

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Page 12



# Tantrums are a sign of falling popularity

## Mudslinging shows the UPND is under pressure

TEMPER-TANTRUM mudslinging is being used to try to mask the fact that the government is becoming very unpopular, very quickly, Socialist Party general secretary and first vice-president Cosmas Musheke Musumali, says.

He was responding to a UPND press briefing addressed by its spokesperson Cornelius Mweetwa.

“We have followed the press briefing of Mweetwa and it is clear that the UPND’s leaders are frustrated with our criticism that they are imperialist puppets,” Dr Musumali said. “Also, it appears they cannot manage the pressure from the masses about the high cost of living.

“People are asking genuine questions about the low maize producer prices compared with the rising cost of fertilisers and other inputs. In addition, Zambians want to know the rationale behind the record-breaking number of international presidential visits. They are demanding answers and accountability from their elected leaders.”

Dr Musumali said Mweetwa was unable to give convincing answers, so “in his now common temper tantrum and arrogant style, he is resorting to mudslinging. Shame”.

“The Socialist Party is currently the fastest-growing political party in our country. As its membership grows, so does its capacity to organise. Zambians are paying attention to what the Socialist Party leadership is articulating. Its pro-poor stance is firm. Its anti-imperialist message is loud and clear.

“What is putting pressure on Mweetwa and his team is the fact that we are explaining to the Zambian masses that the UPND is a corrupt and pro-imperialist outfit.”

### Impulsive

He said Zambians had been swindled. “They thought they were voting for genuine political change, but a year later it is apparent that the UPND will mostly deliver to big international capital. The poor Zambian masses will get mainly cosmetic changes – and empty promises.

“As the UPND fails to deliver, and the public criticism becomes harsher, the likes of Mweetwa are increasingly becoming crude and impulsive.”

Dr Musumali said raising the issue of homosexuality was ironic. “Just a few weeks ago, the UPND was at pains to try to exculpate itself from the same issue. Today it is using similar allegations against us.

“Apparently the ‘smear’ accusations on the Zambian political landscape revolve around tribalism, satanism and homosexuality. Which one of these has the UPND not been accused of abetting?” he asked.

● **SOCIALIST Party Copperbelt spokesperson Joseph Kangwa says UPND’s Cornelius Mweetwa is way off the mark with his “cheap shot” comments criticising party President Fred M’membe.**

He was responding to comments made by Mweetwa in *The Mast* newspaper on June 21.

“The overzealous Southern Province minister’s statement that President Hichilema will easily win the 2026 general election is building a castle in the air. Mweetwa’s attack on Dr M’membe is just a cheap shot.

“All it proves is that Dr M’membe and the Socialist Party are gaining in strength and becoming more and more popular to the Zambian people, to the point where the UPND government cannot afford to ignore them any longer,” he said.

● **SOCIALIST Party Lusaka Province chairman Ashwell Kampengele says UPND spokesperson Cornelius Mweetwa is either “out of touch with reality” or “mocking citizens” when he says goods have become cheaper over the past ten months.**

He was reacting to claims made by Mweetwa that the value of K160 was higher than ten months ago because you could buy more with it now than you could then.

“How on Earth can Mweetwa mislead himself and the nation that goods have become cheaper under UPND rule compared with prices ten months ago?” he asked. “Is he being honest? Leaders, especially those in government, should stop taking the people for granted.”

## We must act ‘as our treasure is in foreign hands’

SOCIALIST Party national mobilisation committee member Chrispin Chiinda is encouraging Zambians to join SP because it is the only party that will give them the chance to create their own system of governance by establishing locally owned production facilities and industries.

Speaking on the *Millennium* TV breakfast programme, Chiinda said Zambia was known globally as a copper producer but did not own a single mine. “Our treasure is in foreign hands and we depend on jobs because taxes are on holiday,” he said.

Chiinda said it was time to rise to the occasion and support socialism to develop the country using local solutions and resource mobilisation.

“Money realised from economically viable production will be channelled to improve healthcare and sustain our free education system,” he said.

### Life becoming unbearable

SOCIALIST Party Lusaka Province chairman Ashwell Kampengele says life is becoming unbearable in the capital because of the increasing price of essential commodities such as mealie meal, cooking oil, sugar, relish, and charcoal.

Speaking at a joint consultative meeting with Lusaka Province and district committees, he said, “Our people are failing to eat three meals a day as promised by the new dawn

government because things have just become too expensive.” He said it wasn’t possible to solve the country’s economic problems with a defective system of governance.

### Eastern Province agenda

THE SOCIALIST Party has held its first-ever Eastern Provincial meeting, during which interim provincial committee members were appointed.

Provincial chairperson Forrie Tembo and other interim members, including provincial treasurer Mung’omba Ngoma, and provincial youth chairperson Luka Ndlovu, oversaw the meeting, held in Chipata.

Provincial youth chairperson Luka Ndlovu said the creation of district, constituency, and ward structures was top of the agenda during the inaugural meeting, with a target date set for August.

### Goodbye gutter politics

SOCIALIST Party national women’s league mobilisation coordinator Olivia Phiri says the days of “gutter politics” are over and warned against focusing on non-issues.

Phiri said the likes of the Economic Front Party (EF) and its failed leader Wynter Kabimba should “read the mood on the ground”.

“Socialist Party women would like to advise the EF that our country is faced with many challenges affecting our people. We seek to offer solutions. Gone are the days of

gutter politics. You cannot seek political relevance by trying to lure the Socialist Party into non-issues,” she said.

### Fastest growing party

DESCRIBED by political commentators as the fastest growing political party in the region, the Socialist Party continues to attract new members at an unprecedented rate.

Patriotic Front’s Luanshya district security chairman Martin Kasongo, and Chifubu constituency vice-chairperson Sandie Kangote have become the latest politicians to publicly announce their decision to join the party.

“We are receiving many defectors to the Socialist Party daily but, as you may be aware, it would be too early for the majority of them to publicly announce their decision for obvious reasons,” Socialist Party Copperbelt provincial secretary Henry Chilombo said.

### Northern Province growth

SOCIALIST Party Northern Province interim leadership has held its first provincial meeting in Kasama.

Matilda Lungu Makungo, who is interim provincial chairperson, oversaw the meeting. Attendees included provincial secretary Maggie Lombe Bwalya, youth chairperson Aaron Zimba, mobilisation chairperson Gift Lwembe, Zebron Kashiba and Mathew Mwamba.

The new appointees have pledged to work hard and grow the party in the province, and

saka, we are looking forward to train more than 20,000 women across the country as part of empowerment,” Dr Musumali said.

Women’s League internal communication coordinator Mable Tabaaka said the Socialist Party was grateful to MST for its help with the programme.

“The party will continue to support women with similar income generating activities as a way of helping to eradicate the poverty that has always been a hindrance to them taking up key leadership positions, and forcing them to shun politics because of financial challenges.”



Socialist Party general secretary Cosmas Musumali visits the SP Women’s League and MST herbal training workshop in Lusaka

## We’ve been brainwashed, Musumali says

CAPITALISM has brainwashed us and turned us against the herbs our ancestors often used to cure many illnesses, Socialist Party general secretary and first vice-president Cosmas Musheke Musumali told a meeting in Lusaka.

Dr Musumali was offering words of encouragement to the Socialist Party Women’s League and Brazil’s Landless Workers’ Movement (MST), who are aiming to train women across all ten provinces to make soaps and other products from natural herbs as part of an income-generating programme.

“Capitalists are using the same herbs that are in our own backyards to make medicine that we buy in the pharmacies,” he said.

“They are making huge profits out of our herbs that they discourage us from using. This is the reason why they will never teach you how to process these herbs into medicine.

“I encourage each and every one of you present here today to pay particular attention to these lessons because they can help generate income to lower poverty levels. This being the first group training in Lu-







Mable Tabaaka

# Tabaaka condemns adviser's sexist comments

SOCIALIST Party Women's League internal communication coordinator Mable Tabaaka has condemned the sexist comments about Chishala Kateka made recently by William Banda, UPND special adviser to President Hakainde Hichilema.

"The Socialist Party's Women's League extends its solidarity to Comrade Chishala Kateka, the New Heritage Party leader, to condemn the sexist comments made about her by Banda," she said.

"We note with great concern and sadness the growing stereotyping of women that our society finds acceptable and has normalised, which in turn continues to violate the rights of women in both the public and private domains. The comments about Comrade Kateka were made over her lone protest in a video that has since gone viral on various social media platforms about the high cost of living.

"As a people and country, we need to realise that our real development socially, politically, economically, and culturally, will be determined by how seriously we deal with the question of our women and their condition. What Comrade Kateka was advancing is in line with the issues that the Socialist Party and many progressive movements are struggling against, the growing poverty and desperation in our country that affects women the most.

"Equally, as a people, we need to realise that the stereotypes we have internalised that seek to humiliate, marginalise, and isolate our women infringes on their rights. The reactionary and sexist comments by Banda point to these stereotypes that reduce the status of women to non-humans. Comrade Kateka is a leader, a mother, a human being, and a Zambian progressive. Women are human beings and their rights must be respected at all times.

"We call on Banda and all those who remain in the dark to know that women have the right to participate in the political space. They should wake up to the fact that stereotyping women infringes on their rights that are guaranteed in our Constitution as well as in the regional and global instruments on gender that Zambia is a signatory to.

"Given this growing trend, there is a serious need for political education within our parties and broader society about the oppressive patriarchal system that perpetuates the stereotyping of women, and the violence against them, both verbally and physically.

"It is important that all women and men begin to recognise these stereotypes in the words they use, the looks they give women, the songs that demean women, as well as embedded idioms that reduce their dignity.

"We further call on women to grow their levels of consciousness about these stereotypes and to champion the fight against oppression, domination, humiliation, and marginalisation of all forms, in favour of a system that guarantees women's rights. Without this concerted effort, there will be no true liberation of our women and no meaningful development of women's and human rights," Tabaaka said.

# US\$1.4bn IMF loan will not provide a 'magic solution'

## Peasant agriculture and taxes from mining can boost economy

Socialist staff reporter

SO MUCH hope is being placed on the US\$1.4 billion loan being negotiated with the International Monetary Fund as if it will provide a magic solution to our economic and social problems, Socialist Party President Fred M'membe says.

"Even if this US\$1.4 billion loan is granted, it will only be used to provide 'balance of payments support'. It won't do much to aid or generate a recovery for the rest of the economy," he said.

Dr M'membe said that since 1991, Zambians had been subjected to a neoliberal global programme that aimed at redistribution of wealth from workers to capital, wages to profits and poor to the rich.

"The strategies have included the rolling back of workers' rights through neoliberal labour reforms, taking away people's sovereignty, privatisation of public assets, and restrictions on freedom of expression," he said. "This has led to the widening of inequality, increased poverty, conflicts, expropriation, and the increasing barbarisation of human relationships.

## Fragmented

"In 15 years from now, we will have a population of not less 35 million. Around 30 years from now, we will have 30 million more people to take care of. The greatest majority (more than 60 per cent) of this fast-growing population will be under 25 years old.

"A growing and youthful population will, therefore, continue to come of age in a time with no, or minimal, job and housing prospects; an absence of social services like health, recreation, and limited opportunities to better educate itself and gain new skills. Zambia will be socially fragmented, politically disenfranchised, with an extremely poor populace dispossessed from



its land, resources and heritage – and people at war with each other."

Dr M'membe warned that Zambia stood on the brink of a major catastrophe. "The greed, corruption, and cruelty of the capitalist ruling class have taken away any hope that neoliberal capitalism can deliver to the masses of our people. The only logical option is for the Zambian masses to unite under their own Socialist Party, win political power and secure justice, equity and peace for themselves and for generations to come.

"We share the bitter feeling of impotence that many have in the face of such problems, and the instability in their lives to which these problems give rise. So gloomy are the realities and prospects for the future viewed as a whole, that they could generate pessimism and discouragement if we were not sure of our aims. They are bitter pills to swallow, but if we are to face up to the realities, we have to first become aware of them."

Dr M'membe said the value systems that Zambians had at one time hoped to create for their country; those of equity, non-violence, a sense of justice, and national unity, were becoming a distant vision.

"Instead, today, Zambia has become a shameful example of how capitalism is creating and reproducing itself under conditions of extreme injustice and inequity. If nothing is done to address this decay, a total collapse of the social, political, cultural, and economic life of Zambia as we know it, or might have hoped it to be, is imminent," he said.

"We do not have, nor do we think anyone has, magic remedies for such difficult, complex, and apparently insoluble problems. History shows, however, that no problem has ever been solved until it has become a tangible reality of which everyone is aware. Today, our people are faced with the most serious and anguishing situations ever known to them. But no matter how enormous the difficulties, no matter how complex the task, there can be no room for pessimism. This would be to renounce all hope and resign ourselves to final defeat.

"We have no alternative but to struggle if we wish to harbour any hope for survival. Only with tremendous effort can we face a

future that objectively appears desperate and sombre."

Dr M'membe said the hope for a brighter future depended upon collecting fair taxes from the mines and paying more attention to peasant agriculture.

"Agriculture offers us the highest growth potential. But our agricultural programmes don't seem to be focused and well prioritised," he said. "There's too much rhetoric and posturing with not much substance or clarity. With the right approach and programmes we can grow up to as much as 50 per cent of the current GDP from agriculture.

"Today, although 54.8 percent of our workforce is deployed in agriculture, the sector only accounts for 7.5 per cent of the GDP. Industry, in which we have deployed 9.9 percent of our workforce, is making a contribution of 35.3 percent to our GDP. And 35.3 percent of our workforce, deployed in services, is producing 57.2 percent of our GDP.

"The contribution to agriculture – in which we have deployed the majority of our workforce – to GDP is dismally too low to make a meaningful contribution to poverty reduction or its eradication," he said.

● POLITICAL and ideological training constitutes an important part of the Socialist Party's work.

● Socialist Party President Fred M'membe says, "We believe that revolutionaries and all progressives have a duty to understand the world and the country they so desperately seek to change."

● Photo shows Dr M'membe taking part in a political and ideological training session for new party members.

## M'membe: this is what Heroes' and Unity days mean to us

JULY 4 and 5 were Heroes and Unity holidays in Zambia, writes Socialist Party President Fred M'membe.

"On these days we should pay homage to the heroes of our liberation struggles by remembering the words they left us with in their quest to see the liberation, unification and development of Africa.

"We should always bear in mind that the masses of our people are not fighting for ideas, for the things in anyone's head. They are fighting to win material benefits, to live better lives and in peace, to see their lives go forward, and to guarantee the future of their children.

"For us, African revolution means the transformation of our present life in the direction of progress. The prerequisite for this is the elimination of foreign economic domination, on which every other type of domination is dependant.

"We are for African unity, on a regional or continental scale, in as far as it is necessary for the progress of the African peoples, and in order to guarantee their security and the continuity of this progress, and not to serve the profit maximisation interests of transnational corporations and other imperialist interests.

"And let's not forget that the enemies of the African peoples are powerful and cunning and can always count on a few faithful puppets, lackeys in our country, since quislings are not a European privilege."

# Capitalist democracy serves as a tool to further its aims – it's a trick, a tale

THOSE who want to smear socialism often try to equate it with dictatorship, Socialist Party President Fred M'membe says.

"In a world in which peace truly reigns, democracy can take many forms of expression in a fair society. In a world in which the world hegemony of the mightiest imperialist power reigns and the peoples' sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence are threatened, democracy won't have many forms of expression," Dr M'membe said.

"For instance, China, Cuba and Vietnam – in their exceptional circumstances – have each found their own form of expression of democracy, and we believe it suits their own conditions ideally. Given what they have gone through, they couldn't have withstood the imperialist hatred, onslaught, blockade, threats, acts of aggression, if their people weren't politically aware and united.

"For us, democracy means that governments are closely linked to the people, have the support of the people and devote themselves entirely to working and struggling for the people and the people's interests.

"Democracy implies the defence of all the rights of citizens, including the right to inde-

pendence, freedom, national dignity, and honour. For us, democracy means fraternity and true equality among men and women and equal opportunities for all men and women, for every human being."

Dr M'membe said capitalist, or bourgeois, democracy didn't contain any of these elements.

"How can they talk of democracy in a country where a minority has immense fortunes and others have nothing? What kind of equality or fraternity can exist between a beggar and a millionaire or billionaire? What rights do the poor, the dispossessed and the exploited have?

"In capitalism, it's an old trick, an old tale, an old story. What they have done is establish a system of domination with all the resources of wealth, publicity, and everything else, in the hands of a class that maintains discrimination and excludes the rest of society from any real participation, and from any real possibility of exercising their rights."

Dr M'membe said that what they usually called democracy was a mechanism that served as a tool.

"It's a system that includes not only the political, but also the economic and social ideas of imperialism. For us, democracy is something

else. We think that the exploitation of one human being by another must disappear before you can have real democracy. We are absolutely convinced of that. As long as there is enormous inequality among human beings, there isn't – there can't be – any democracy. And where there's subordination to another country, that must disappear, too, before democracy can exist.

"If lack of democracy in the world were the preamble to social change, capitalism would have disappeared already, because capitalism was developed on the basis of force, repression and slavery, especially of Africans. True democracy can exist only in fair, just, and humane social system, a socialist system.

"In the conditions of our country – Zambia – we believe we can achieve our goals through a multiparty political dispensation. And it shouldn't be forgotten, or if it is not known it should be known, that the July 1990 return to a multiparty political dispensation project was a socialist project initiated by socialists Akashambatwa Mbikusita-Lewanika and Mbita Chitala. And both are still alive to testify to this. And I can speak about this with absolute confidence because I was a participant in that project," Dr Membe said.





Socialist Party President Fred M'membe says the experience of Ghana, which saw many protests over AFRICOM (above), tells us that the “office” will slowly but surely grow into a full-scale base

# ‘Over our dead bodies will the US have a military base in Zambia’

Vijay Prashad

ON APRIL 26 this year, the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) announced it was to set up an office in the US Embassy in Lusaka.

According to AFRICOM Brigadier General Peter Bailey, Deputy Director for Strategy, Engagement and Programs, the Office of Security Cooperation would be based in the US Embassy building. Social media in Zambia buzzed with rumours about the creation of a US military base in the country.

Defence Minister Ambrose Lufuma released a statement saying, “Zambia has no intention whatsoever of establishing or hosting any military bases on Zambian soil.” President of the Socialist Party of Zambia, Fred M'membe, said, “Over our dead bodies will the United States have a military base in Zambia.”

Brigadier General Bailey of AFRICOM had met with Zambia's President Hakainde Hichilema during his visit to Lusaka. Hichilema's government faces serious economic challenges despite the fact that Zambia has one of the richest resources of raw materials in the world. When Zambia's total public debt grew to nearly US\$27 billion (with an external debt of approximately US\$14.5 billion),

it returned to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in December 2021 for financial assistance, resulting in an IMF-induced spiral of debt.

Two months after Hichilema met with the AFRICOM team, he hosted IMF Deputy Managing Director Antoinette M. Sayeh in June, who thanked President Hichilema for his commitment to the IMF “reform plans”. These plans include a general austerity package that will not only cause the Zambian population to be in the grip of poverty, but will also prevent the Zambian government from exercising its sovereignty.

Dr M'membe has emerged as a major voice against the United States military presence in his country. Defence Minister Lufuma's claim that the United States is not building a base in Zambia elicits a chuckle from M'membe. “I think there is an element of ignorance on his part,” he told me. “This is sheer naivety. He [Lufuma] does not understand that practically there is no difference between a US military base and an AFRICOM office. It's just a matter of semantics to conceal their real intentions.” The real intentions, M'membe said, are for the United States to use Zambia's location, “to monitor, to control, and to quickly reach the other countries in the region”.

Zambia and its neighbour, the Demo-

cratic Republic of the Congo, he said, “Possess not less than 70 percent of the world's cobalt reserves. There are huge copper reserves and other minerals needed for modern technologies [in both these countries].” Partly, M'membe said, “This is what has heightened interest in Zambia.”

Zambia is operating as a “puppet regime”, M'membe said, a government that is de jure independent but de facto “completely dependant upon an outside power and subject to its orders,” he added, referring to the US interference in the functioning of the Zambian government.

## Pressure

Despite his campaign promises in 2021, President Hichilema has followed the same IMF-dependant policies as his unpopular predecessor Edgar Lungu. However, in terms of a US base, even Lungu had resisted the US pressure to allow this kind of office to come up on Zambian soil.

After news broke about the establishment of the office, former Zambian Permanent Representative to the African Union, Emmanuel Mwamba, rushed to see Hichilema to caution him not to make the deal. Ambassador Mwamba said that other former presidents of Zambia – Lun-

gu (2015-2021), Michael Sata (2011-2014), Rupiah Banda (2008-2011) and Levy Mwanawasa (2002-2008) – had also refused to allow AFRICOM to enter the country since the organisation's creation in 2007.

Zambia's Defence Minister Lufuma argues that the “office” set up in Lusaka is to assist the Zambian forces in the United Nations Multidimensional Stabilisation Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). Since 2014, the United States has provided around 136 million kwacha (US\$8 million) to assist the Zambian military. Lufuma said that this office would merely continue that work. In fact, Zambia is not even one of the top five troop-contributing countries to MINUSCA (these include Bangladesh, Cameroon, Egypt, Pakistan and Rwanda). Lufuma's reason, therefore, seems like a fig leaf.

Neither Zambia nor the United States military has made public the agreement signed in April. The failure to release the text has led to a great deal of speculation, which is natural. Meanwhile, in Ghana, where a defence cooperation agreement was signed between the two countries in May 2018, the United States had initially said it was merely creating a warehouse and an office for its military, which then turned out to mean that the United States military was taking charge of one of the three airport terminals at Accra airport and has since used it as its base of operations in West Africa.

“From the experience of Ghana, we know what it is,” M'membe told me, while speaking about the American plan to make an office in the US Embassy in Zambia. “It is not [very] different from a base. It will slowly but surely grow into a full-scale base.”

From the first whiff that the United States might create an AFRICOM base on the continent, opposition grew swiftly. It was led by former South African President Thabo Mbeki and his Defence Minister at that time, Mosiuoa Lekota, both of whom lobbied the African Union and the Southern African Development Community to reject any US base on the continent. Over the past five years, however, the appetite for full-scale rejection of bases has withered despite an African Union resolution in 2016 against allowing the establishment of such bases.

The US military has 29 known military bases in 15 of the African countries. Not only have 15 African countries ignored their own regional body's advice when it comes to allowing foreign countries to establish military bases, but the African Union (AU) has itself allowed the United States to create a military attaché's office inside the AU building in Addis Ababa. “The AU that resisted AFRICOM in 2007,” M'membe told me, “is not the AU of today.”

People's Dispatch

# We must act with caution in this geopolitical landscape

● From Page 1

its creep throughout the continent, establishing agreements with countries like Niger, Ghana, Mali, Equatorial Guinea, Nigeria, Kenya, Senegal and a host of others to use airfields and bases to refuel aircraft, deploy troops and conduct surveillance operations.

These sorts of technical agreements and outposts are what anthropologist David Vine and others refer to as “lily-pad” bases. According to Joeva Rock (2018), recent intelligence suggests that there are about two-dozen “lily-pads” across 20 African countries.

Even though in collaboration with national, international and regional partners, AFRICOM conducts Military Information Support Operations (MISO) to support the US Department of Defence's communication efforts specifically designed to improve regional stability and security cooperation. Critical information provided by these partners, which goes a long way to be beneficial to counterterrorism op-

erations or contributes to the force protection of the US, is not reciprocated, aside from limited non-lethal assistance. So far, AFRICOM's operations, exercises and security cooperation assistance programmes with African governments have supported US Government foreign policy in areas of trade, economy and defence, and do so primarily through military-to-military activities and assistance programmes rather than yielding dividends to the cooperative countries.

In the follow-up discussions that arose after the official announcement of the setting up of the Office for Security Cooperation, both the US Mission and your Minister of Defence unsuccessfully belaboured to make a distinction between the setting-up of a “military base” and an “office”.

Ironically, this is the same argument that has been used in all other countries where US military presence became a reality. Since the setting up of bases is politically problematic, as evidenced by the

resistance of the African masses since 2008, the setting up of offices and other “soft approaches” (joint military exercises, training support, scholarships, disinformation campaigns, etc) have become the preferred hybrid approaches for AFRICOM. These approaches are the “Trojan horses” that allow and enable a scope creep that is politically easier to manage. With such approaches, public resentment is moderated and AFRICOM can achieve its objectives with minimum public resistance.

The example of Ghana helps to elucidate this fact. When Ghanaians protested against AFRICOM presence, the US Mission in that country categorically stated, “We are NOT setting up a base in the country.” The arrangement was described as a mere “Status of Forces Agreement”. Through this agreement the US military (and its civilian and contractor force) are allowed “unimpeded” access to already existing facilities, notably Kotoka International Airport in

Accra and/or Takoradi Airport, as well as others appointed either for exclusive or joint use. The agreement further allows for (i) training; (ii) transit; (iii) support and related activities; (iv) refuelling of aircraft; (v) landing and recovery of aircraft, accommodation of personnel; (vi) communications; (vii) staging and deploying of forces and material; and (viii) humanitarian and disaster relief exercises within these designated facilities. Today, there is a base at Takoradi (Ghana's oil city and home to Halliburton and Kosmos Energy; US companies), where AFRICOM has access to deploy “rapid reaction forces across the continent”. Additionally, AFRICOM hosts courses at the Kofi Annan International Peace Keeping Training Centre in Accra. It also holds joint training with Ghanaian armed forces and conducts missions referred to as “humanitarian”.

The example of Ghana and many others points to a stark reality: We MUST NOT trust any military arrangements made with the US on

our continent. The imperialist interests of the US cannot be similar to those of the African masses. If anything, it is a new form of enslaving our continent – and you, Mr President, should not go down in history as having been a party to this.

Since gaining independence in 1964, Zambia has followed a non-aligned approach in its military doctrine and foreign policy. This is about our existence, dignity and sovereignty. Non-alignment has allowed Zambia to avoid the trappings of big-power global politics. The relative peace our country has enjoyed is to a large extent because we chose to be non-aligned in a world that was dangerously divided.

As the geopolitical landscape moves towards a multipolar world, it becomes even more important that Zambia acts with great caution in how it navigates this landscape. The step you have taken on AFRICOM is therefore retrogressive and has the potential to diplomatically isolate Zambia in the region as well as endanger the security of our people in

the medium and long term. Zambia and our defence forces MUST NOT be used to:

- Maintain United States' imperialist economic and political access and influence,
- Serve as battleground to counter threats to the United States that emanate from Africa,
- Counter narratives from China and Russia. These two countries are not our enemies. If anything, they have been on our side when our continental liberation required support and also when Zambian security was at stake.
- Play a role in AFRICOM's double-edged sword of humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, and other responses.

We therefore sincerely request you to:

1. Rethink and cancel the agreement that has been signed. It cannot be in the interest of the Zambian and African masses.
2. Make the signed agreement available to the Zambian public so people can make an informed judgement about what it entails.





Socialist Party President  
Fred M'membe with his  
granddaughter

## There is no future for our people under capitalism

THERE IS no future for our people under the capitalist order. How much longer do we have to put up with these conditions? Since 1891, when Cecil John Rhodes and his company, the British South Africa Company, colonised this territory, we have been on the capitalist path.

We have never really veered away from capitalism. Even under the honest and relatively progressive rule of Dr Kenneth Kaunda and UNIP, we were still under capitalism – with some elements of “state capitalism”. We have never experienced anything else other than capitalism.

Continuing on this path will not bring a better life to our people. As a people, we need to chart a different path and establish a new economic, social, and political order. And those who fail to see this will have to answer to history for it. I hope they will accept their responsibility.

We must choose a clear, intelligent, effective solution, not head towards Calvary.

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

Our situation is worse than Calvary because Calvary was climbed quickly; we have been climbing our hill for a long time, and we keep on having to start over. Calvary is preferable to Sisyphus' torment, and we had our Calvary, we should also have a resurrection.

This country needs real change, not just any change; what we want is to find a real solution to the problems, but what will happen is that reactionary forces, those benefiting from the current order will try to deceive our people and prevent real change. They will try to mislead people, but Zambians are waking up and want to find real solutions.

I prefer an orderly solution; internal and external unity; and a real, definitive solution for our people's problems.

Our people are becoming truly desperate and hopeless. It's only a matter of time, because this neoliberal capitalist path we are pursuing is creating an enormous time bomb in our country. Are we going to wait for it to explode before we start thinking about real change, real solutions to these problems?

There's no future for our people under this order, and I think the politicians and all progressives and democrats in this country have a basic duty to pay it all the attention it requires, or we will all become slaves.

## Money: dung of the Devil

IN 2013, Pope Francis wrote a massive statement, called an apostolic exhortation, in which he decried what he called the “idolatry of money”.

“The worship of the ancient golden calf has returned in a new and ruthless guise in the idolatry of money, and the dictatorship of an impersonal economy lacking a truly human purpose,” he wrote.

“The worldwide crisis affecting finance and the economy lays bare their imbalances and, above all, their lack of real concern for human beings; man is reduced to one of his needs alone: consumption.”

From the same 2013 writing, on the theory of trickle-down economics, he wrote: “Some people continue to defend trickle-down theories which assume that economic growth, encouraged by a free market, will inevitably succeed in bringing about greater justice and inclusiveness in the world. This opinion, which has never been confirmed by the facts, expresses a crude and naive trust in the goodness of those wielding economic power, and in the sacralised workings of the prevailing economic system.”

In a speech in Bolivia, the pope sounded off on a single-minded obsession with money. (His quoting of Saint Basil the Great resulted in a backlash, but Pope Francis defended his comments as following the tenets of the Catholic Church):

“Behind all this pain, death and destruction there is the stench of what Basil of Caesarea called ‘the dung of the devil’. An unfettered pur-

suit of money rules. The service of the common good is left behind. Once capital becomes an idol and guides people's decisions, once greed for money presides over the entire socio-economic system, it ruins society, it condemns and enslaves men and women, it destroys human fraternity, it sets people against one another and, as we clearly see, it even puts at risk our common home.”

## We are brothers and sisters

CAN the age-old scriptural instruction, “Love thy neighbour as thyself” still effectively address the complexity of contemporary disputes such as the ones we are experiencing?

More than 2,000 years ago, that biblical command was spelled out in response to a questioner, asking which is the greatest commandment. The Gospel of Matthew records Jesus's answer: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (22:37-39).

It is interesting that to love one's neighbour is not the first but the second commandment. Yet, as Jesus said, it's like the first. Many have found that trying to love one's neighbour is not always the easiest thing to do. Keeping the two commandments in their proper order, however, can assure the fulfilment of both, for a heart filled with love for God naturally overflows.

Maintaining and increasing our love for God demands an ever-enlarging understanding of our divine creator. Knowing God to be the true parent of each one of us, we are no longer just neighbours but, equally, loved brothers and sisters.

## Is there no end to all this?

WE HAVE been used, abused, exploited and humiliated by our European brothers and sisters for centuries. And they don't seem to want to see an end to this.

No matter what charitable things they say about us or to try do to for us, at the bottom of it is the perpetuation of this abusive, exploitative, humiliating relationship. They want us to be permanently their burden bearers – to always carry them.

They have made us fight their wars and die there. We have been used to build their economies and give them a very high standard of living. But what have they done for us?

It seems they have serious problems growing out of this mindset. They always want to make their problems our problems, but they never look at our problems as theirs. Our problems are our problems; their problems are ours or should be ours. If they have problems with Russia we should also have problems with Russia. If they don't like China we should also not like China. For how long are they going to use, abuse, humiliate, and exploit us in this way?

## Worship God, not Mammon

THE GROWTH of our national wealth, instead of bringing comfort to the masses of our people is imposing additional burdens on them. At the bottom of the scale there's mass poverty and misery. The true test of progress is not the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few – the President and his associates – but the elevation of a people as a whole.

Zambians know to their cost the danger that comes from allowing a few people to grow rich and permitting them to use their wealth to degrade our national life and bring reproach and shame upon all of us, in order that a few unscrupulous scoundrels might be able to add to their ill-gotten gains. We are called upon as a nation to decide the question propounded in the Sermon on the Mount as to whether we will worship God or Mammon. Our programme proposes to dethrone the brute-god Mammon.

### TALKING POINTS:

- Whose interest is Africa's regional integration serving?
- Let us remain ever vigilant in our relations with the outside world.
- The West's battle with China is not our battle.
- Nobody should abuse us the way we have been abused for centuries.

# We don't need to give incentives to mining firms

## Copper demand, profits set to boom

Socialist staff reporter

THERE is no need to be in a rush to give away our minerals to foreign transnational mining corporations for next to nothing, Socialist Party President Fred M'membe says.

Writing in a Facebook post, Dr M'membe said there was also no need to offer incentives to mining companies because a future boom in demand and profits would be incentive enough.

“Anglo American, Anglovaal, Glencore, Vendata and other mining corporations are interested in our minerals because there are gigantic profits to be made now and in the future,” he said.

“The relationship between corporations and the government is not based on any special connections necessarily – although of course they would be happy if the government was under the control of puppet politicians who were in their pockets – their interest is in profits. The prices of copper and cobalt are set to rise dramatically, and so are their profits. Here's why:

“It takes 180 pounds of copper to make a Tesla or other electric vehicle. This is five times the amount of copper needed to make a combustion engine motor vehicle. It takes 450 pounds of copper to build a normal house, once you include electric appliances, wiring and fixtures. If you put solar panels on it that will take another 100 to 150 pounds of copper wiring. A solar farm used to generate en-

ergy requires five times the copper it takes for an equivalent natural, coal, or nuclear power plant.

● If we are going to turn our cars into electric vehicles, we are going to need a lot more copper over the next ten years.

● If we are going to build houses for all the millennials – the largest generation on the planet – we are going to need a lot more copper.

● If renewables, such as wind and solar power, are used to build those things and supply energy then we are going to need a lot more copper.”

Dr M'membe said our precious mineral is sometimes called Dr Copper because of its uncanny ability to predict recessions and economic booms.

“The reason for this is that we are unlikely to go into recession when we are in a building boom, whereas we are more likely to when we are not,” he said.

## Reserves

“Industry, factories, homes, appliances and cars all require copper, and that is never going to change because, if you look at the periodic table, you will see that there is no alternative to copper, except for silver. Silver conducts electricity better than copper but because it is so expensive it will never serve as a viable replacement. Plus, global copper reserves are estimated to be around 870,000,000 tonnes, whereas silver reserves are put at 530,000 tonnes.

“Let us take this conversation further. Statistics show that 20 percent of the world's population

uses 50 percent of its copper; 13 percent of the population has no electricity; three out of four people on the planet – 75 percent – don't have access to a car; so, if the 80 percent of the world that doesn't currently use that much copper starts to do so as a result of increased energy needs – by buying appliances, electric cars, building houses and so on – then we will see a significant increase in the demand for copper. The price of copper, even though it has risen, will be so much higher when that demand increases.”

Dr M'membe said there was another factor. “The EU has reacted to Russia's war with the Ukraine by feverishly moving towards renewable energy, which, as we said above, requires five times the amount of copper as other energy sources. This will also spur the demand for electric vehicles. While recycling can meet up to 35 percent of current global copper consumption, we don't have enough copper to recycle to satisfy increased renewable energy demands, plus, it takes a long time to bring copper mines online – around five to 10 years to market.

“The upshot is that the demand for copper is going to increase significantly, and so is its price. Under these circumstances, it doesn't make sense to give tax breaks and other unnecessary incentives to transnational mining corporations.

“Why would we do that? We certainly would not be acting wisely. I can think of no reason why a government would do it, unless it was out of acting out of ignorance or corruption,” he said.

# Indonesia is a great example of how to market minerals

NO MATTER how many new mines we allow transnational corporations to open and how much they increase mineral production, we will not get much out of it and move our people out of poverty, Socialist Party President Fred M'membe says.

“We need to learn something from what Indonesia has done with its minerals,” he said. “They used to earn just over a one billion dollars a year exporting iron as an unprocessed commodity, but they stopped and started producing stainless steel. And today Indonesia is earning billions from these value additions. But those who were benefiting from commodity exports and exploitation are not happy with them and are relentlessly fighting them.”

Dr M'membe said Zambia had been mining and exporting unprocessed minerals since the early 1900s with Cecil John Rhodes and his British South Africa Company and later Oppenheimer and his Anglo American Corporation, but the country had gained very little, if anything, from it.

“We can do the same thing Indonesia has done with our 2,400 metric tonnes of Cobalt, albeit a poor second to the Democratic Republic of Congo's 24,000 metric tonnes production per year. We can do the same with our emeralds, nickel, uranium, etc.

“And most of our North-Western Province gold should be mined for government stock of gold reserves. There should be very little, or no, exports of gold. With increased earnings from these value additions to our minerals we can be in a better position to tackle our youth unemployment of around 7.5 million by pumping some of the increased earnings into agriculture.

“Today, we have no less than 12 farming blocks, each of around 100,000 hectares of arable land laughing at us. We need only to determine the investment requirements for what we need locally and what the regions around us require over 10

years. And we shouldn't bother about exporting to Europe, we should instead focus on our neighbours within Africa. And there's a need for us to reduce or stop the importation of foodstuffs we are consuming but not producing. We should as far as possible eat only what we grow and prioritise the growing of what we need to eat.

“If we consistently, tenaciously, and resolutely do this, Zambians should be able to see a huge reversal of fortunes in less than 15 years. We have no sensible alternative to this,” Dr M'membe said.

● WITHOUT decisive action to remove obstacles to the collection of fair taxes from the mines and reduce the government's need to borrow, without decisive action to explore Zambia's great potential in the agricultural sector by paying particular attention to peasant agriculture and agro processing, and without linking it to the health and education sector, the UPND government will be unable to create lasting, tangible economic growth or employment.

● As we have repeatedly said, the IMF deal that this government has pressed its entire hope on will not help us much to address the country's rocketing prices, growing poverty, desperation and joblessness.

● NO MATTER how many foreign investors we bring in, we will never have those big armies of mine workers we used to have.

● The big numbers of workers we used to have on commercial farms are gone, more efficient machines, such as combine harvesters and digitalised tractors navigated by satellite, have replaced them. The many jobs we used to have in the banks are gone forever.

● And with industry, banks, and other sectors of our economy no longer creating sufficient and quality jobs, our survival will depend on increasing agricultural production and agro-processing.



# We must unite again

**David North**, national chairman of the Socialist Equality Party in the US, and chairman of the international editorial board of the World Socialist Web Site, spells out how the United States long planned confrontation with Russia over Ukraine for geopolitical reasons, and says the message is that the working class must unite against capitalism, nationalism, and war

THE WAR that erupted on February 24, 2022 is an event of world historic significance.

As in all major conflicts, the question of “who fired the first shot” is of entirely secondary significance. The reckless, incompetent and desperate character of the Russian invasion of Ukraine exposes the politically bankrupt and reactionary character of the Putin regime, but it does not explain the deeper causes of the war.

The outbreak of war in Ukraine had long been foreseen. The relentless expansion of NATO in the aftermath of the dissolution of the Soviet Union has always been directed toward war with Russia. The overthrow in February 2014 of the government led by Viktor Yanukovich, in a coup organised and financed by the United States, was an undisguised attempt to bring Ukraine into the orbit of NATO and convert it into a launching pad for a future war against Russia. As the International Committee of the Fourth International explained at its May Day rally in 2014:

“The purpose of this coup was to bring to power a regime that would place Ukraine under the direct control of US and German imperialism. The plotters in Washington and Berlin understood that this coup would lead to a confrontation with Russia. Indeed, far from seeking to avoid a confrontation, both Germany and the United States believe that a clash with Russia is required for the realisation of their far-reaching geopolitical interests.”

This war, instigated by US-NATO forces, has now begun. The overwhelming majority of those who have been rendered homeless, suffered injuries, or been killed, bear no responsibility for the policies and decisions that led to war. But the suffering of the innocent victims is being cynically exploited, not only to block the exposure of the political and economic interests that led to war, but also to foment the required level of anti-Russia hatred that is necessary for the escalation of the conflict.

According to the propaganda organs of American and European imperialism, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has shocked the conscience of the world, which – so the story goes – had been living blissfully in peace until the Kremlin launched its entirely unprovoked attack against its blameless neighbour.

What a colossal and hypocritical



Left to right: the 2014 coup in Ukraine, claimed to have been financed and organised by the United States;



a march by the Azov regiment, a neo-Nazi unit of the National Guard of Ukraine

cal lie! For the past 30 years, the United States has been continuously at war, instigating conflicts all over the world. The United States – often with the direct support of its NATO underlings – has bombed and/or invaded countries in Central Asia, the Middle East, Africa, the Balkans and, of course, the Caribbean.

Even if one were to accept as true all the claims made by the Biden administration and a corrupt American media that regurgitates the daily talking points with which it is fed by the Central Intelligence Agency, the Ukrainian loss of life, both civilian and military, is several orders of magnitude below the number of deaths attributable to the wars waged by the United States. According to The United States of War, by David Vine, a professor of anthropology at American University:

“An estimated 755,000 to 786,000 civilians and combatants, on all sides, have died in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Pakistan, and Yemen since US forces began fighting in those countries. That figure is around 50 times larger than the number of US dead.”

## Shattered

But that’s only the number of combatants and civilians who have died in combat. Many more have died as a result of disease, hunger, and malnutrition caused by the wars and the destruction of healthcare systems, employment, sanitation, and other local infrastructure. While these deaths are still being calculated and debated by researchers, the total could reach a minimum of 3 million – around 200 times than the number of US dead. An estimate of 4 million deaths may be a more accurate, although still conservative, figure.

Meanwhile, entire neighbourhoods, cities, and societies have been shattered by the US-led wars. The total number of injured and traumatised extends into the tens of millions. In Afghanistan, surveys have indicated that two-thirds of the population may have mental health problems, with half suffering from anxiety and one in five from PTSD. By 2007 in Iraq, 28 percent

of young people were malnourished, half living in Baghdad had witnessed a major traumatic event, and nearly one-third had PTSD diagnoses. As of 2019, more than 10 million have likely been displaced from their homes in Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, and Libya alone, becoming refugees abroad or internally displaced people within their countries. Alongside the human damage, the financial cost of the post-2001 US-led wars is so large it’s nearly incomprehensible.

There is no end in sight. Biden’s announcement in April 2021 that he was ending the “forever war” in Afghanistan was a cynical cover for the strategic redeployment of American military forces for direct conflict with Russia and China.

All the wars of the last three decades have been justified with blatant lies – of which the claim that Iraq possessed “weapons of mass destruction” is only the most notorious – and in direct violation of international law.

At the Nuremberg War Crimes Trial of 1946, the Nazi leaders were tried and convicted on the charge of “crimes against peace” which consisted of waging war as an instrument of state policy, rather than in response to an immediate or imminent threat of military attack. The wars of American imperialism fall within the criminal category of crimes against peace—that is, wars launched and waged in pursuit of political objectives.

The historical and global political context of the global rampage of American imperialism is profoundly relevant to an understanding of the present war.

The dissolution of the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe and, finally, the USSR between 1989 and 1991 removed even the limited restraints that had been placed on the exercise of American military power in the aftermath of World War II. As President George HW Bush proclaimed as he launched the first war against Iraq in 1991—with the support of Mikhail Gorbachev as the Soviet Union entered the final stage of dissolution and capitalist restoration – the United States was determined to create a “new world order”.

**‘The question of ‘who fired the first shot’ is of entirely secondary significance . . . the outbreak of war in Ukraine had long been foreseen. The relentless expansion of NATO in the aftermath of the dissolution of the Soviet Union has always been directed toward war with Russia**

This project was driven by powerful objective economic and geo-strategic imperatives. Contrary to the post-1991 narratives, which portray the United States as the inevitable and triumphant victor in the Cold War, the decades that preceded the dissolution of the USSR had been a period of accelerating American decline.

The global economic supremacy exercised by the United States in 1945 had substantially deteriorated during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. The foundation of American world economic dominance – the convertibility of the dollar into gold at the rate of US\$35 to an ounce that had been established at the Bretton Woods Conference of 1944 – became unsustainable as US trade balances deteriorated. It was repudiated unilaterally by the United States in August 1971.

The deterioration of the global economic position was exacerbated by militant eruptions of domestic class struggle, of which the mass movement of the black working class for civil rights was a powerful expression. At the same time, the bloody effort of American imperialism to suppress the anti-colonial movement of the masses throughout the world – most brutally in Vietnam – led to the radicalisation of broad sections of student youth and the emergence of an immense anti-war movement.

The years between 1960 and 1990 in the United States were characterised by political instability and so-

cial polarisation. Urban riots, mass protest movements, political assassinations and violent and protracted strikes were the major features of the American reality between 1960 and 1990.

Developing parallel to the crisis of American imperialism was that of the Stalinist regime within the USSR. There is no question but that the Soviet Union, having emerged victorious – albeit at a staggering human cost – over Nazi Germany, made substantial advances in the aftermath of World War II. But the fundamental and inescapable paradox of the Soviet Union was that the growth and increasing complexity of its economy intensified the crisis of the entire Stalinist system, which was based on the nationalist programme of “socialism in one country”.

Notwithstanding the impressive growth rates realised by the Soviet Union in the two decades following the war, the conception of a national path to socialism was contradicted by the objective reality of the world market and the international division of labour. The imbalances and low level of productivity that plagued the Soviet economy exemplified in the most extreme form the contradiction, affecting all countries, between the world economy and the nation-state system.

## Conquest

The development of the Soviet economy required access to the resources of the global economy. But access could be achieved only in one of two ways:

- Through the abandonment of the planning principle, the reintroduction of capitalism, and the dissolution of the USSR and integration of its component parts into the world capitalist system; or,
- the conquest of power by the working class, above all, in the advanced capitalist countries, and, on this basis, the tearing down of national borders and the development of scientifically guided democratic economic planning on a global scale.

The latter alternative was impossible within the framework of the

Stalinist regime. The nationalist policy of the Soviet Union was inextricably rooted in the material interests of the Kremlin bureaucracy. Its systematic abuse of power was the means by which it maintained its privileged access to the resources of the Soviet Union. The Kremlin viewed with horror the emergence, within the USSR and internationally, of a revolutionary working class movement that threatened its hold on power.

Stalin’s death in 1953 generated illusions that the Kremlin regime would institute wide-ranging reforms that would realise the renewal of socialism in the USSR and its triumph internationally. This repudiation of Trotsky’s insistence on the counterrevolutionary character of Stalinism and the necessity of a political revolution was the theoretical and political hallmark of Pabloite revisionism.

But the brutal Soviet response to the uprising in East Germany in 1953 and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, the massacre of workers in Novocherkassk in 1962, and the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, demonstrated in blood that the Kremlin bureaucracy would not tolerate a revolutionary socialist challenge to its rule.

When it became clear – especially in the course of the Polish solidarity movement in 1980-81 (which initially had genuine revolutionary potential) – that the movement against the bureaucracy could not be suppressed, the Kremlin began to actively pursue the counterrevolutionary solution to the systemic crisis of the Soviet economy: that is, the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the restoration of capitalism.

The selection of Gorbachev as party leader in 1985 and the introduction of perestroika marked the beginning of the final climactic stage of the Stalinist counterrevolution against the October Revolution.

An essential element of Gorbachev’s policy was the explicit repudiation of even formal identification of the Soviet Union with the class struggle and opposition to imperialism. In 1989, in a book titled *Perestroika versus Socialism*, the International Committee ex-



# st imperialists' wars



Ukraine based in Mariupol; a photo taken on the occasion of the Afghanistan war claiming its 2,000th US soldier. More than 750,000 civilians and combatants have died in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Pakistan and Yemen

plained: “The distinctive features of the new Soviet foreign policy are the unconditional repudiation of international socialism as a long-term goal of Soviet policy, the renunciation of any political solidarity between the Soviet Union and anti-imperialist struggles throughout the world, and the explicit rejection of the class struggle as a relevant factor in the formulation of foreign policy.”

The fundamental counterrevolutionary Stalinist revision of Marxism – the claim that socialism could be constructed within a national framework – was replaced by the Gorbachev regime with the no less fraudulent and ignorant argument that Russia, once it had abandoned its socialist pretensions, would be showered with riches and peacefully integrated into the structures of the world capitalist system. Russia had nothing to fear from imperialism, which was dismissed as an ideological concoction of Marxism. Among those who argued most vociferously along these lines was a young apparatchik in the Soviet bureaucracy, Andrei Kozyrev. He wrote in 1989: “If one takes a look at the United States’ monopolist bourgeoisie as a whole, very few of its groups, and none of the main ones, are connected with militarism. There is no longer any need to talk, for instance, about a military struggle for markets or raw materials, or for the division and redivision of the world.”

Rereading these words today, amidst the catastrophe of the US-NATO war against Russia, one cannot help but be astonished by the level of deceit and self-delusion that reigned within the Soviet bureaucracy and nomenklatura as they recklessly smashed up the USSR. But the deceit and self-delusion arose from the material interests of the bureaucracy as it sought to transform itself from a privileged caste into a ruling class. As for Kozyrev, he went on to become Minister of Foreign Affairs under Yeltsin, functioning as an agent ex officio of American imperialism.

The United States viewed the dissolution of the Soviet Union as an historic opportunity to exploit its undoubted military supremacy to off-

set its protracted economic decline. It would utilise the “unipolar moment” – the absence of any credible military competitor – to establish the unchallengeable global hegemony of the United States.

But this project has proven more difficult than the White House and Pentagon strategists expected. The wars instigated by the United States have met with humiliating failure. None of the strategic objectives of the United States were achieved by the bloody conflicts in the Middle East and Central Asia. Moreover, while the US was bogged down in its “forever wars”, China emerged as a major economic and potentially military competitor of the United States.

The striving for hegemony has been further undermined by a series of devastating economic crises. The Wall Street crash of 2008 brought the entire world capitalist system to the brink of collapse, prevented only by a desperate bailout requiring the injection of trillions of dollars into the financial system. But without solving the underlying problems that led to the 2008 crash, an even greater bailout was required in 2020 to stop yet another market crash that had been triggered by the outbreak of COVID-19.

## Progressive

The pandemic, which has resulted in a million deaths in the United States and approximately 20 million worldwide, has exposed the dysfunctionality of the capitalist system, which is incapable of responding in any progressive way to a major social crisis. In this respect, there is no fundamental difference between the regimes in Washington and Moscow. The gangrenous ulcers in American society – the most unequal in the world – have brought the entire political system to the point of breakdown. On January 6, 2021, the existing constitutional structure of the United States was nearly overthrown in a fascistic putsch organised by the president of the United States.

Far from retreating, in the face of past failures, from its campaign for global hegemony, the United States

**Discussion of raw materials and control over the wealth of Russia does not make its way into the mass broadcast, online and print media, which prefer to have the public believe that American and European imperialism are waging a . . . struggle on behalf of Ukrainian democracy**

is being driven to ever more extreme and dangerous actions. In fact, the severity of its internal maladies has become a major factor impelling the United States toward measures that were previously ruled out as unthinkable, including the use of nuclear weapons.

Why has the United States, using Ukraine as a proxy, instigated this war against Russia? Lenin analysed the First World War as an attempt of the imperialist powers to redivide the world. This definition is a basic starting point for understanding why the United States, leading an alliance of NATO imperialist powers, is waging war against Russia. In the present context, the redivision of the world means placing the vast expanse of Russia, the largest country, under direct imperialist control.

To the extent that the Soviet Union retained even formal identification with socialism and opposition to imperialism, its dissolution removed what was viewed as a challenge to the ideological and economic legitimacy of the world capitalist system dominated by the United States. The post-1991 regime opened the Russian economy to foreign capitalist investment. But the Russian state still sprawled over the globally strategic expanse of Eurasia. Moreover, the Russian oligarchs who acquired control over the national economy were able to limit the access of US and European imperialism to the resources of Russia.

For the project of US hegemony to be achieved, unlimited access to

the strategic resources of Russia and control of its territory are critical aims in two respects.

First, the actual wealth of Russia’s resources is estimated in the tens of trillions of dollars. In addition to the monetary value of these metals and minerals, many of these resources are classified as strategic materials, essential to advanced twenty-first century industrial economies.

Russia is a virtual treasure trove of valuable natural resources, with vast – and in some cases among the largest – reserves of oil, natural gas, timber, copper, diamonds, gold, silver, mercury, manganese, chromium, tungsten, titanium, and phosphates. Approximately one-sixth of the world’s iron ore deposits are located in the Kursk Magnetic Anomaly, close to the border of Ukraine. Other rare metals that exist in substantial quantities in Russia are cobalt, molybdenum, palladium, rhodium, ruthenium, iridium and osmium. Russia is also a major source of uranium and rare earths. The latter have become a major source of global geopolitical competition.

The fact that there is an intense conflict over access to these critical resources is well known to experts in global geostrategy. But discussion of raw materials and control over the wealth of Russia does not make its way into the mass broadcast, online and print media, which prefer to have the public believe that American and European imperialism are waging a noble and disinterested struggle on behalf of Ukrainian democracy, even if that requires, however regrettably, arming the fascists of the Azov Battalion.

Second, physical control of Russian territory is vital for what Washington views as the inevitable showdown with China. When the time for open warfare comes, the defence of the Uighurs against China’s “genocidal” persecution will be invoked as the allegation of Russia’s “genocide” of Ukrainians is invoked today.

No doubt, emphasis on the significance of raw materials as a major factor in the instigation of war against Russia will be derided as an example of “vulgar Marxism”. Be

that as it may, in his study of imperialism, Lenin placed immense emphasis on the struggle of imperialist powers to secure control of sources of raw material. He connected the drive to obtain access to and control of raw materials to the seizure of territory and stressed, as an essential element of imperialism, the significance of annexations.

Of course, there are many forms in which territorial control can be secured, short of open annexation, which may allow the imperialists to sustain the mirage of independence of the subjected country. But the mirage will not be the reality. US imperialism and its NATO allies expect that the ultimate outcome of the conflict – however protracted – will be the destruction of Russia in its present form.

Nearly two months into Vladimir Putin’s brutal assault on Ukraine, the Biden administration and its European allies began planning for a far different world, in which they would no longer try to coexist and cooperate with Russia, but actively seek to isolate and weaken it as a matter of long-term strategy.

At NATO and the European Union, and at the State Department, the Pentagon, and allied ministries, blueprints are being drawn up to enshrine new policies across virtually every aspect of the West’s posture toward Moscow, from defence and finance to trade and international diplomacy.

## Eruption

What are the strategic implications of abandoning efforts “to co-exist and cooperate with Russia”? If the United States and its NATO allies believe that it is not possible to “coexist” with Russia, the conclusion that follows is that they are determined to destroy it. The “different world” that the imperialist powers envision – and for which they are prepared to risk nuclear war and the lives of hundreds of millions in the process – is one in which Russia does not exist in its present form.

The war in Ukraine is not an episode that will soon be resolved and followed by a return to “normalcy”. It is the beginning of a violent erup-

tion of a global crisis that can be resolved in only one of two ways. The capitalist solution leads to nuclear war, though the word “solution” can hardly be rationally applied to what would amount to planetary suicide. Thus, the only viable response, from the standpoint of securing the future of mankind, is the world socialist revolution.

Inevitably, the question arises: Is the latter alternative possible?

The answer is provided by an understanding of the contradictions of modern world capitalism. Lenin’s great insight, which he developed between 1914 and 1916, was that the socioeconomic contradictions that gave rise to the world war also provided the impulse for world socialist revolution. This insight was substantiated in the outbreak of the Russian Revolution in 1917.

In the present crisis, Lenin’s conception – further developed by Trotsky and the Fourth International – is being substantiated in the rapid escalation of the class struggle throughout the world. The reckless measures taken by the United States and its NATO allies to isolate Russia have immensely exacerbated the already far advanced economic and social crises that afflict every capitalist regime. Mass demonstrations and strikes are sweeping across the globe. The working class and oppressed masses will not accept impoverishment and starvation in the interests of the imperialist ruling elites’ criminally insane pursuit of world domination.

As Trotsky explained, the strategy of the Fourth International is based not on the war map but on the map of the global class struggle.

We must be dedicated to the unification of the international working class in a global struggle against imperialist war and its root cause, the capitalist system.

● This article has been adapted from a feature headlined “The Challenge of May Day 2022: For the International Unity of the Working Class against Capitalism, National Chauvinism and War!” on the *wsws.org* website. It has been edited for length.



# Colombia's president Petro promises a 'politics of love'

## Country's first left-wing leader says real change is on the way

GUSTAVO Petro, a former rebel fighter who has promised profound social and economic change, has won Colombia's presidency.

His victory in the presidential run-off election will make Petro Colombia's first left-wing president.

He won 50.4 percent of the vote, while his rival, Rodolfo Hernandez, a construction magnate, took 47.3 percent.

"As of today, Colombia is changing, a real change that guides us to one of our aims: the politics of love . . . of understanding and dialogue," a jubilant Petro told his supporters in the Colombian capital, Bogota.

The win for Petro, a senator and a former mayor of Bogota, underlined a drastic change in presidential politics for a country that has long marginalised the left for its perceived association with the armed conflict. Petro himself was once a rebel with the now-defunct M-19 movement and was granted amnesty after being jailed for his involvement with the group.

In his victory speech, Petro, 62, issued a call for unity and extended an olive branch to some of his harshest critics, saying all members of the opposition will be welcomed at the presidential palace, "to discuss the problems of Colombia".

"From this government that is beginning there will never be political persecution or legal persecution, there will only be respect and dialogue," he said, adding that he will listen to not only those who have raised arms but also to, "that silent majority of peasants, indigenous people, women, youth".

Outgoing conservative President Ivan Duque congratulated Petro shortly after the results were announced, and Hernandez quickly conceded his defeat.

### Progressives

"I accept the result, as it should be, if we want our institutions to be firm," Hernandez said in a video on social media. "I sincerely hope that this decision is beneficial for everyone."

As results rolled in at the Petro campaign celebration in Bogota, supporter Alejandro Forero, 40, said, "Finally, thank God. I know he will be a good president and he will help those of us who are least privileged. This is going to change for the better."

This campaign was Petro's third presidential bid, and his victory adds the Andean nation to a list of Latin American countries that have elected progressives in recent years.

Petro has pledged to fight inequality with free university education, pension reforms and high taxes on unproductive land. He has also pledged to fully implement a 2016 peace deal with FARC rebels and seek talks with the still-active National Liberation Army (ELN).

In another historic achievement, Petro's running mate Francia Marquez, a single mother and former housekeeper, will be the country's first Afro-Colombian female vice-president.

"The great challenge that all of us Colombians have is reconcilia-



Former rebel fighter turned president Gustavo Petro and Francia Marquez, the country's first Afro-Colombian female vice-president

tion," said Marquez, who was the target of threats during a fractious campaign. "The time has come to build peace, a peace that implies social justice."

Thousands of people took to the streets in Bogota to celebrate Petro and Marquez's win, with some dancing near the city's largest polling place under intermittent rain. "I'm celebrating because finally we're going to have change . . . this shows there is hope," academic Luisimar Asprilla, 25, said.

Al Jazeera's Teresa Bo, reporting from Bogota, said the election outcome was "historic".

"Petro's supporters say this is the time for real change in Colombia – profound reforms that will improve people's lives in this country that has been at war for many years. Even though a peace agreement was signed with the left-wing rebel movement, the FARC, conflict continues to affect many parts of the country," she said.

"And in his speech, Petro said this is going to be a government of peace, and that in this country peace means social justice, envi-

ronmental justice. He has been talking about rethinking oil and gas exploitation, putting an end to fracking, and he has pledged not to use his powers to 'destroy opponents'. We will have to see how he is able to implement these reforms," she added.

Daniela Cuellar, of FTI Consulting, said Petro's victory showed people in Colombia – where nearly half the population lives in some form of poverty – were eager to fight inequality.

"What the Colombian population demonstrated today is that they are seeking a government focused on key social issues," she said. "Colombia's longstanding ailments of inequality, which were exacerbated by COVID-19, have contributed to the electorate seeking a shift."

But a fragmented legislature, where a dozen parties have seats, will act as a check on Petro's proposals.

"Colombia's institutional strength and rule of law appear sufficiently robust for the country to maintain economic stability," Cuellar said.

"Moreover, campaigning is not governing, Petro's policies will be more moderate. Even if he tries to pass radical reforms, he does not have the congressional support to implement them," she added.

Other analysts raised concern over the possibility of a political deadlock.

"This result does not give the new president a clear mandate to execute his policy without at least trying to address concerns from his counterparts," Sergio Guzman, president of the Colombia Risk Analysis consultancy, said. "Unless Petro learns how to govern with the other half of the country, we can expect four years of stalemate and brinkmanship," he added.

"Gustavo Petro's victory is historic. Colombia's conservatives have always been tenacious and tough," Mexico President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador wrote on Twitter.

And Chile President Gabriel Boric tweeted, "Joy for Latin America! We will work together for the unity of our continent in the challenges of a world changing rapidly."

Aljazeera

## 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. This is an edited selection.

### BRICS currency talks

CHINA hosted the BRICS online summit, which heard increased calls for building financial alternatives to the dollar. Russia's President Vladimir Putin said an international mechanism based on a currency basket was being discussed. Countries also declared support for Russian-Ukrainian dialogue for a peaceful solution to the conflict, while Argentina and Iran officially applied for bloc membership, expected to happen soon.

Global Times

### Xi visits Hong Kong

JULY 1 marked 25 years since the return of Hong Kong to China after 156 years of British colonial rule. President Xi Jinping attended the celebrations in his first trip outside the mainland since the pandemic. He said priorities included integrating the city with the Greater Bay Area, focusing on national security, and increasing participation in national governance.

South China Morning Post

### Reserve fund created

THE People's Bank of China has created a yuan reserve fund with the Bank for International Settlements in Switzerland, creating another alternative to the US dollar. The initiative seeks to provide liquidity to Indonesia, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Chile, each country contributing a minimum of 15 billion yuan to access the fund in case of market volatility.

New Delhi Television

### Jet fuel plan takes off

SINOPEC has produced its first aviation fuel from used cooking oil at a plant capable of processing 100,000 tons of oil per year. The country is also making a green, low-carbon transition in shipping and has built the first methanol-propelled tanker, which can reduce CO2 emissions by 75 percent.

Reuters

### Climate change deal

CHINA has made 43 agreements with 38 countries to cooperate with states vulnerable to climate change. In addition to allocating 1.2 billion yuan (US\$178 million) for the move, the country has offered training programmes in climate-related issues for around 2,000 officials and technicians.

China Daily

### Russia oil imports up

CHINESE oil imports from Russia (8.42 million tons) soared 55 percent year-on-year in May, while liquefied natural gas imports (400,000 ton) jumped 56 percent. Overtaking Saudi Arabia after 19 months, Russia is the largest supplier of oil to China, which is taking advantage of discounts due to NATO sanctions.

Reuters

### Strict rules on cadres

CHINA has implemented stricter rules for the families of party cadres to prevent abuses of power. Officials at the level of department head, or higher, will be required to report annually on their families' business dealings. If conflicts of interest are proven, businesses will be terminated, and the higher the positions, the stricter the rules.

Asia Times

## Bolivian ex-president jailed over coup

A BOLIVIAN court has found former President Jeanine Añez guilty of orchestrating a coup that brought her to power during a 2019 political crisis, and has sentenced her to ten years in prison.

Añez, 54, was convicted of making "decisions contrary to the constitution" and of "dereliction of duty".

The prosecution said Añez, then a right-wing senator, violated norms that guarantee the constitutional and democratic order after Bolivia's 2019 presidential elections.

Añez maintained she was innocent. Her defence said it would appeal to international bodies to seek justice, and several sectors of the opposition planned marches to protest against the ruling.

The court also sentenced former Armed Forces commander Williams Kaliman and ex-police commander Vladimir Calderon to ten years in prison. Four other former military chiefs received lesser sentences.

Bolivia has been split over whether a coup occurred when then-President Evo Morales resigned in 2019, with Añez ascending to the presidency amid a leadership vacuum left in his wake.

Morales' departure followed mass protests

over a disputed election in which he claimed to win a controversial fourth consecutive term in office.

The contentious case has further exposed the fault lines in a deeply divided country while also heightening concerns about the judicial process in Bolivia.

"We are concerned about how this case has been pursued. And we call on superior courts to examine how the proceedings were conducted," Cesar Munoz, senior researcher for the Americas at Human Rights Watch, said before the verdict.

Members and supporters of Morales' Movement for Socialism (MAS) party, which returned to power in 2020, say Añez played a key role in what it says was a coup against Morales, Bolivia's first indigenous president, who oversaw a dramatic reduction in poverty as president from 2005 to 2019.

As president, Añez was accused of political score-settling when her administration prosecuted former MAS officials. Her supporters say her trial was illegitimate and political. In her trial, Añez said she was the product of circumstance and that her ascension to the top office helped calm a tense nation and lay the groundwork for elections in October 2020.

Powerful US figures have been rushing to Añez's defence following the verdict.

Right-wing political forces in Bolivia and around the world are trying to portray her conviction as an act of political persecution. Major corporate media outlets are attempting to build sympathy for Añez, with the *New York Times* for instance reporting that her conviction raised "concerns about politicians' use of the justice system to target opponents".

A group of six US senators – including sworn enemy of the Latin American left Marco Rubio – have rejected the conviction, claiming that the decision to sentence the former president was "arbitrary" and stating that it "undermines the democratic norms and puts into question Bolivia's fragile democracy."

Rubio's concerns for "democratic principles" did not apply to the 2019 coup that forced President Morales from office and into exile in Argentina then Mexico. Nor did it apply to the violent suppression of innocent people protesting the coup during Añez's time in power.

In the first week of her tenure, Añez signed a decree that guaranteed impunity for the armed forces during the "re-establishment of order".

Al Jazeera, Liberation



# A ‘hurricane of hunger’ threatens the world due to the Ukraine war

Shortage of exports and increasing fuel prices are hitting poor countries the hardest

Vijay Prashad

IN MARCH this year, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres warned of a “hurricane of hunger” due to the war in Ukraine.

Forty-five developing countries, most of them on the African continent, he said, “import at least a third of their wheat from Ukraine or Russia, with 18 of those import[ing] at least 50 percent”.

Russia and Ukraine export 33 percent of global barley stocks, 29 percent of wheat, 17 percent of corn, and nearly 80 percent of the world’s supply of sunflower oil.

Farmers outside of Russia and Ukraine, trying to make up for the lack of exports, are now struggling with higher fuel prices, also caused by the war. Fuel prices impact both the cost of chemical fertilisers and farmers’ ability to grow their own crops.

Maximo Torero Cullen, chief economist at the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organisation, said that “one of every five calories people eat have crossed at least one international border, up more than 50 percent from 40 years ago”. This turbulence in the global food trade will certainly create a problem for nutrition and food intake, particularly among the poorest people on the planet.

## Privilege

Poorer countries do not have many tools to stem the tide of hunger, largely due to World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules that privilege subsidy regimes for richer countries but punish poorer ones if they use state action on behalf of their own farmers and the hungry.

A recent report by no less than the WTO, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, provided evidence of these subsidy advantages from which wealthier countries benefit. At the 12th WTO ministerial conference in mid-June, the G-33 countries sought to expand the use of the “peace clause” (established in 2013) to allow poorer countries to protect their farmers’ livelihoods through the state procurement of food and enhanced public food distribution systems.

Those who grow our food are hungry, yet, stunningly, there is little conversation about the poverty and hunger of farmers, peasants, and agricultural workers themselves. More than 3.4 billion people – nearly half the world’s population – live in rural areas; among



Above: former labourers (left to right) Freeda Mkhabela, Lucia Foster, and Gugu Ngubane, are among activists struggling against landlessness as well as poor pay and working conditions and for better treatment of farmworkers. Below, left: Sbongile Tabhethe working in the food garden at eKhenana land occupation, Cato Manor, Durban. Right: two young girls return to their homes after drawing water from a stream the farm dwelling community shares with wild animals



them are 80 percent of the world’s poor. For most of the rural poor, agriculture is the principal source of income, providing billions of jobs. Rural poverty is reproduced not because people do not work hard, but because of the dispossession of rural workers from land ownership and the withdrawal of state support from small farmers and peasants.

Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research (South Africa) has been paying very close attention to the plight of farmworkers in the region as part of our overall project to monitor the “hurricane of hunger”.

Our most recent dossier, *This Land Is the Land of Our Ancestors*, is a fine-grained study of farmworkers from their own perspective. Researcher Yvonne Phyllis travelled from KwaZulu-Natal to the Western and Northern Cape provinces interviewing farmworkers and their organisations to learn about the failures of land reform in South Africa and its impact on their lives.

This is one of the few dossiers that begins in the first person, reflecting the intimate nature of politics surrounding the land issue in South Africa. “What does the land mean to you?” I asked Yvonne while we were together in Johannesburg recently. She answered: “I grew up on a farm in Bedford, in the Eastern Cape province. My upbringing gifted me some of the best lessons of my life. One lesson was from the community of farmworkers and farm dwellers; they taught

me the value of being in community with other people. They also taught me what it means to nurture and cultivate land and how to make my own meaning of what land is to me. Those lessons have informed my personal beliefs about the nature of land. All people deserve to live from the land. Land is not only important because we can produce from it, it forms part of people’s histories, humanity, and cultural heritage.”

The process of colonialism by Dutch (Boer) and British settlers dispossessed African farmers and converted them into either landless workers, unpaid labour tenants, or the rural unemployed. This process was hardened by the Native Land Act (no. 27 of 1913), the legacy of which continues to be felt today. Seventeen-year-old composer Reuben Caluza (1895–1969) responded to the law with his *Umteto We Land Act* (The Land Act), which became one of the first anthems of the liberation movement in the country:

*The right which our compatriots fought for  
Our cry for the nation  
Is to have our country  
We cry for the homeless  
Sons of our fathers  
Who do not have a place  
In this place of our ancestors*

The Freedom Charter (1955) of the African National Congress (ANC) and its allies promised those who struggled against apartheid, which formally ended in 1994, that “The land shall be shared among those who work it”.

Those who grow our food are hungry, yet, stunningly, there is little conversation about the poverty and hunger of farmers, peasants, and agricultural workers

This promise was alluded to again in the 1996 South African Constitution, chapter 2, section 25.5, but it excludes explicit mention of farmworkers.

In fact, right from the 1993 Interim Constitution, the new post-apartheid system defended the rights of farm owners through a “property clause” in chapter 2, section 28. Differences within the ANC led to the abandonment of the more progressive Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) in favour of the neoliberal Growth, Employment, and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy – a self-imposed structural adjustment programme. What this meant was that there were simply insufficient political will and state funds allocated for the land restitution, land tenure reform, and land redistribution programmes. As our dossier notes, to this day the promises of the Freedom Charter have yet to be fulfilled.

Rather than expropriate land

from the primarily white land-owning class to compensate for historical injustices, the state provides for compensation to land-owners and operates on the principle of “willing buyer, willing seller”. Bureaucratic red tape and a lack of funds have sabotaged any genuine land reform project.

In his 2014 Ruth First Lecture, Irvin Jim, general secretary of the largest trade union in the country, the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), noted that the centenary of the 1913 Land Act was not commemorated by the government but only by the militant strike by farmworkers in 2012 and 2013. “The strike is still fresh in our memories,” Jim said. “It continues to highlight the colonial historical fact that the land, and the produce that comes from it, are not being equitably shared among those who work the land.” Due to the neoliberal orientation of the land question, some of the programmes set up for restitution and redistribution have ended up benefiting large landholders over subsistence farmers and lifelong farmworkers.

A genuine agrarian reform project in South Africa would not only meet the cries for justice from the land, but would also provide a pathway to deal with the hunger crisis in the countryside. Our dossier ends with a six-point list of demands developed from our conversations with farmworkers and their organisations:

- The government of South Africa must consult farmworkers and farm dwellers to incorporate their

contributions into the development of a land reform programme which addresses their land needs.

- Labour tenants’ claims to land ownership should be given priority in order to avoid land reform that solely enriches black elites.

- The Department of Agriculture, Land Reform, and Rural Development should facilitate the process of white farm owners apportioning some of their farmland to lifetime employees and descendants of families who have worked on farms for several generations.

- The government must purchase farms for farmworkers and assist them with capital for start-up costs, farming equipment, and agricultural skills.

- Land reform in South Africa must take into account the social factors that contribute to food insecurity and acknowledge the opportunities to rectify it through land redistribution.

- The process of land reform must address the marginalisation of women workers in the agricultural industry and the lack of land ownership by women farmers to ensure gender parity in both spheres.

Loo ngumhlaba wookhokho bethu! This is the land of our ancestors! That’s the slogan that gives our dossier its title. It is about time that those who work the land get to own the land.

Tricontinental

- The dossier *This Land is the Land of our Ancestors* can be accessed at <https://thetricontinental.org/dossier-farmworkers-south-africa/>



# Assange is yet another case of US hypocrisy

## Global 'freedom' moves are imperialist duplicity

Oscar Grenfell

BRITISH Home Secretary Priti Patel recently announced that she has approved WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange's extradition to the United States.

Assange's family, including his wife, Stella Moris, immediately declared that they would fight the decision, including through a further British legal appeal.

If Assange is extradited, he faces 18 charges under the Espionage Act and 175 years imprisonment for publishing what the American government and the British courts acknowledge was true information exposing US foreign policy.

When it comes to Ukraine, the US and its allies continuously claim that they are defending democracy against Russian "authoritarianism". On the basis of these assertions, the Biden administration has funneled tens of billions of dollars in weaponry to the Ukrainian government, in what has become a US-NATO proxy war against Russia.

In the Asia-Pacific, Washington and its allies similarly assert that they are defending "freedom" in opposition to Chinese "autocracy".

The persecution of Assange exposes all of these statements as complete lies used to justify a programme of aggressive militarism and war.

### Spying

In the heart of Britain, Assange, a journalist, is jailed in a maximum-security prison without charge, while the US seeks his extradition for exposing its war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Assange's legal and democratic rights have been continuously attacked. There is clear evidence that the US oversaw a massive spying operation against Assange, while he was a political refugee in Ecuador London's embassy. This included illegal surveillance of his privileged communications with lawyers.

Last September, Yahoo! News reported that in 2017, the Trump administration and the CIA discussed kidnapping or assassinating Assange in London. The article was based on the statements of 30 former US officials.

Outgoing United Nations Rapporteur Nils Melzer has repeatedly branded the US and British treatment of Assange as torture. Hundreds of doctors have demanded Assange's freedom and warned of his deteriorating health.

Despite all of this, the Biden administration has continued the

prosecution, and the British courts have facilitated it. The contradiction between the supposed US-led campaign for "freedom" in Ukraine and elsewhere, and its determination to lock Assange away, is a staggering display of imperialist hypocrisy.

What is Assange accused of? The American charges against him cover WikiLeaks' 2010 and 2011 publication of the US army's Iraq and Afghan war logs, its Guantanamo Bay detainee files and 250,000 diplomatic cables.

Together, the documents are one of the most powerful exposures of imperialist war in recent history. They exposed all the lies about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan being about "democracy" and "human rights". Instead, these wars were shown to be bloody neocolonial operations involving daily killings, torture and mass oppression.

The Afghan war logs detailed atrocities that had never seen the light of day, from NATO bombings of school buses and weddings, to the existence of a US hit squad tasked with assassinating opponents of the occupation.

The Iraq war logs recorded the deaths of 109,000 Iraqis, 66,081 of them described by the US army as civilians. 15,000 of those murdered would have left no trace in history but for Assange, because their killings had been completely covered up by the US and its allies.

American soldiers gunning down civilians at military checkpoints, their contractors opening fire in crowded markets, the torture of thousands of detainees by the US puppet government were all registered in the logs as the norm, not the exception.

The Guantanamo Bay detainee files exposed the global dragnet of the "war on terror". The files showed that those being subjected to the most horrific forms of incarceration were overwhelmingly innocent civilians, an 89-year-old Afghan farmer with dementia was one, a 14-year-old boy another.

The diplomatic cables revealed that the illegality of the wars was standard operating procedure for US imperialism all over the world. In their pages was proof of US sponsorship of innumerable dictatorships, the plotting of coups, the cultivation of agents in governments, "friendly" and hostile alike, and spying on United Nations officials.

All of the revelations were summed up in the Collateral Murder video, the footage of US soldiers in an Apache helicopter gunning down a crowd of Iraqi civilians and two Reuters journalists. No other video, in recent decades, has played such a role in activating



A protest in London against the UK Home Secretary granting the extradition of Julian Assange (below) to the US on espionage charges



the mass anti-war sentiment that exists among workers and young people.

For all of these crimes, the only person in the world facing prison time is Julian Assange, who exposed them. Meanwhile, the war criminals walk free.

George W. Bush lied about weapons of mass destruction and has the blood of a million Iraqis on his hands. But he has been rehabilitated by the Democrats and the corporate media, and is presented as an elder statesman of US politics.

Tony Blair, the former Labour Prime Minister who oversaw Britain's participation in the invasion of Iraq, is a figure of mass popular hatred. But this month, Blair was provided with a knighthood.

The attempt to prosecute Assange is an exercise in retribution

## What you can do to help stop extradition and free Julian

- Mobilise. Protest outside the embassies and consulates of the United Kingdom and the United States. Demand that these governments respect international law and Julian Assange's fundamental rights.
- Send a letter. Sign the letter at this web address: <https://server.ipa-aip.org/s/bFSiP2jGmTqDMBr>, drafted by the International Peoples' Assembly and send it to your local British embassy or consulate telling them to respect their legal responsibilities.
- Participate. Follow the International Peoples' Assembly on social media to learn more about Assange's case and his contributions to the anti-imperialist struggle today. Share our materials with your communities and movements.
- Help us get the word out about why we must #FreeAssange-NOW! Register online to participate in the Belmarsh Tribunal to free Julian Assange.

Tricontinental

for his exposure of imperialist lies. It is also part of the preparation for new and even greater crimes.

The neo-colonial wars that WikiLeaks exposed have metastasized into a global conflict. The US

is waging a proxy war against Russia in Ukraine and is confronting China in the Asia-Pacific.

This programme, which threatens a world war, is incompatible with even the trappings of democ-

racy. Assange's persecution is intended as a precedent for broader frame-ups and victimisations targeting opponents of imperialism.

In other words, the stakes are immense and the fight for Assange's freedom is more urgent than ever.

In this struggle, nothing would be more fatal than illusions that moral appeals to Assange's persecutors will convince them to end their decade-long attacks on him. What is required to free Assange and to bring the war criminals he exposed to account is the mobilisation of the international working class.

All over the world, workers are entering into struggles against the very governments that have spearheaded Assange's persecution. In Britain, the US, and everywhere else, there is immense hostility to the "herd immunity" COVID policies, which have resulted in mass infection and death. And now, mass strikes and protests are developing in opposition to the massive price rises, continuous cuts to wages and cuts in social spending.

In Britain, 50,000 rail workers have been on strike. Many of them are only a few miles from where Assange is imprisoned. In the US, there are struggles brewing among auto workers, nurses, teachers and other sections, as there also are in Australia.

This emerging movement of the working class provides the constituency for a fight for Assange's freedom, the defence of democratic rights and the struggle against war. We appeal to all workers and youth to take up the defence of Assange, as part of the fight for all of your social and democratic rights.

wsws.org

# Xi pledges support for Russian security

CHINA'S President Xi Jinping has assured Vladimir Putin of his country's support on Russian "sovereignty and security", prompting Washington to warn Beijing it risked ending up "on the wrong side of history".

China has refused to condemn Moscow's invasion of Ukraine and has been accused of providing diplomatic cover for Russia by blasting western sanctions and arms sales to Kyiv.

China is, "Willing to continue to offer mutual support [to Russia] on issues concerning core interests and major concerns such as sovereignty and security," state broadcaster CCTV reported President Xi as saying during a call with Putin.

It was the second reported call between the two leaders since Putin launched his invasion of Ukraine on February 24.

According to CCTV, Xi praised the "good momentum of development" in bilateral relations since the start of the year "in the face

of global turmoil and changes". Beijing was willing to "intensify strategic coordination between the two countries", Xi reportedly said.

The Kremlin said the two leaders had agreed to ramp up economic cooperation in the face of "unlawful" western sanctions.

"It was agreed to expand cooperation in the energy, financial, industrial, transport and other areas, taking into account the situation in the global economy that has become more complicated due to the unlawful sanctions policy of the west," the Kremlin said following the phone call.

But the United States swiftly weighed in with a frosty retort to Beijing's expressed alignment with Moscow.

"China claims to be neutral, but its behaviour makes clear that it is still investing in close ties to Russia," a US state department spokesperson said.

Washington was "monitoring China's activity closely", including how, nearly four

months into Russia's war in Ukraine, the country was "still echoing Russian propaganda around the world" and suggesting Moscow's atrocities in Ukraine were "staged", the official said.

"Nations that side with Vladimir Putin will inevitably find themselves on the wrong side of history." The European Union and the US have warned that any backing from Beijing for Russia's war, or help for Moscow to dodge western sanctions, would damage ties.

Once bitter cold war enemies, Beijing and Moscow have stepped up cooperation in recent years as a counterbalance to what they see as US global dominance.

The pair have drawn closer in the political, trade and military spheres as part of what they call a "no limits" relationship.

Beijing is Moscow's largest trading partner, with trade volumes last year hitting \$147bn, according to Chinese customs data

The UK Guardian



# Language goes bananas as head US adviser slips up on ‘recession’

## But Marxist economist minces no words describing capitalism in a crisis

Vijay Prashad

IN APRIL this year, the United Nations established the Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy, and Finance. The group is tracking the three major crises of food inflation, fuel inflation, and financial distress.

Its second briefing, released on June 8, noted that, after two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, “The world economy has been left in a fragile state. Today, 60 per cent of workers have lower real incomes than before the pandemic; 60 per cent of the poorest countries are in debt distress or at high risk of it; developing countries miss US\$1.2 trillion per year to fill the social protection gap; and US\$4.3 trillion is needed per year – more money than ever before – to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).”

This is a perfectly reasonable description of the distressing global situation, and things are likely to get worse.

According to the group, most capitalist states have already rolled back the relief funds they provided during the pandemic. “If social protection systems and safety nets are not adequately extended,” the report states, “Poor families in developing countries facing hunger may reduce health-related spending; children who temporarily left school due to COVID-19 may now be permanently out of the education system; or smallholder or micro-entrepreneurs may close shop due to higher energy bills.”

### Instability

The World Bank reports that food and fuel prices will remain at very high levels until at least the end of 2024. As wheat and oilseed prices have escalated, reports are coming in from across the globe – including in wealthy countries – that working-class families have started to skip meals. This tense food situation has led United Nations (UN) Secretary-General’s Special Advocate for Inclusive Finance for Development, Queen Máxima of the Netherlands, to predict that many families will restrict themselves to one meal a day, which, she says, “will be the source of even more instability” in the world.

The World Economic Forum (WEF) adds that we are in the midst of “a perfect storm” if you take into account the impact of increasing interest rates on mortgage payments as well as inadequate salaries. The managing director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Kristalina Georgieva-Kinova, said recently the “horizon has darkened”.

These assessments come from people at the heart of powerful global institutions – the IMF, World Bank, WEF, and the UN (and even from a queen). Although they all recognise the structural nature of the crisis, they are reluctant to be honest about the underlying

economic processes, or even about how to adequately name the situation.

David M. Rubenstein, the head of global investment firm The Carlyle Group, said that when he was part of US President Jimmy Carter’s administration, their inflation advisor Alfred Kahn warned them not to use the “R” word – recession – which “scares people”. Instead, Kahn advised, use the word “banana”. Along those lines, Rubenstein said of the current situation, “I don’t want to say we’re in a banana, but I would say a banana may not be that far away from where we are today”.

Marxist economist Michael Roberts does not hide behind words such as banana. Roberts has studied the global average rate of profit on capital, which he shows has been falling, with minor reverses, since 1997. This trend was exacerbated by the global financial crash of 2007-8, which led to the Great Recession in 2008. Since then, he argues, the world economy has been in the grip of a “long depression”, with the rate of profit at a historic low in 2019 (just before the pandemic).

“Profit drives investment in capitalism,” writes Roberts, “and so falling and low profitability has led to slow growth in productive investment.” Capitalist institutions have shifted from investment in productive activity to, as Roberts puts it, “the fantasy world of stock and bond markets and cryptocurrencies”. The cryptocurrency market, by the way, has collapsed by over 60 percent this year.

Dwindling profits in the Global North have led capitalists to seek profits in the Global South and beat back any country (especially China and Russia), with military force if necessary, that threatens their financial and political hegemony. Ghastly is the way of inflation, but inflation is merely the symptom of a deeper problem and not its cause. That problem is not merely the war in Ukraine or the pandemic, but something that is confirmed by data but denied in press conferences: the capitalist system, plunged into a long-term depression, cannot heal itself.

### Minority

Later this year, notebook number 4 on the theory of crisis, from Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research, written by Marxist economists Sungur Savran and E. Ahmet Tonak, will establish these points very clearly. For now, capitalist economic theory starts with the assumption that any attempt to settle an economic crisis, such as an inflationary crisis, must not, as John Maynard Keynes wrote in 1923, “disappoint the rentier”. Wealthy bondholders and major capitalist institutions control the policy orientation of the Global North so that the value of their money – trillions of dollars held by a minority – is secure. They cannot, as Keynes wrote nearly 100 years ago, be disappointed.

The anti-inflation policies driven by the US and Eurozone are not going to ease the burdens on the working class in their countries, and certainly not in the debt-



Top: Cândido Portinari (Brazil), *Coffee Bean Mowers*, 1935. Above: Renato Guttuso (Italy), *La Vucciria*, 1974.

ridden Global South. Chairman of the US Federal Reserve Jerome Powell admitted that his monetary policy “will cause some pain”, but not across the entire population. More honestly, Amazon’s Jeff Bezos tweeted that, “inflation is a regressive tax that most hurts the least affluent”.

Rising interest rates in the North Atlantic make money far more expensive for ordinary people in that region, but they also make borrowing in dollars to pay off national debts in the Global South virtually impossible. Raising interest rates and tightening the labour market are direct attacks on the working class and developing nations.

There is nothing inevitable about the class warfare of the

governments of the Global North. Other policies are possible; a few of them are listed here:

- Tax the global wealthy – there are 2,668 billionaires in the world who are worth US\$12.7 trillion; the money they hide in illicit tax havens adds up to about US\$40 trillion. This wealth could be brought into productive social use. As Oxfam notes, the richest ten men have more wealth than 3.1 billion people (40 percent of the world’s population).
- Tax large corporations, whose profits have escalated beyond imagination. US corporate profits are up by 37 percent, far ahead of inflation and compensation increases. Ellen Zentner, the chief US economist of the leading fi-

nancial services company Morgan Stanley, argues that, during the long depression, there has been an “unprecedented” plunge in the share of Gross Domestic Product earned by the working class in the United States. She has called for a return to a more just profit-wages balance.

- Use this social wealth to enhance social expenditures, such as funds to end hunger and illiteracy and build healthcare systems as well as non-carbon forms of public transportation.
- Institute price controls for goods that specifically drive-up inflation – such as prices for food, fertilisers, fuel, and medicines.

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THE great Bajan writer George Lamming (1927–2022), pictured, left us recently.

In his 1966 essay, *The West Indian People*, Lamming said, “The architecture of our future is not only unfinished; the scaffolding has hardly gone up”. This was a powerful sentiment from a powerful visionary, who hoped that his home in the Caribbean, the West Indies, would be shaped into a sovereign region that could relieve its people of great problems. This was not to be.

Strangely, the IMF’s Georgieva-Kinova quoted this line in a recent article while making the case for the region to collaborate with the IMF. It is likely that Georgieva-Kinova and her staff did not read all of Lamming’s speech, for this paragraph is as instructive today as it was in 1966:

“There is, I believe, a formidable regiment of economists in this hall. They teach the statistics of survival. They anticipate and warn about the relative price of freedom . . . [I] would just like you to bear in mind the story of an ordinary Barbadian working man. When he was asked by another West Indian, whom he had not seen for about ten years, ‘and how are things?’, he replied: ‘The pasture green, but they got me tied on a short rope’.”

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## WE ARE BEING RECOLONISED

OUR desperation for foreign investors and development shouldn't lead us to ignore the negative historical processes associated with these people, with their mining corporations that haven't entirely disappeared as yet.

We cannot forget that we are being subjected to forms of neocolonialism that are sometimes worse than the old colonial methods, and that the plunder of our resources still continues.

In spite of all the stratagems that have been designed to limit our ability to think for ourselves, our people are again today rising to say NO to imperialist subjugation, plunder and humiliation. Our struggle is a very serious one which most of these people are belittling and are not taking seriously. Again, there's a need for reflection on the national liberation of our people, chained by backwardness and balkanisation.

The current regime of imperialist puppets is opening up our country and our people to neocolonialism. They are facilitating, abating, condoning the conquest, colonisation and the dissolution of the awareness of our identity and history.

Now, when some people once again want to "discover" and conquer us like Cecil John Rhodes and his mining corporation, BSA, did in 1891, and later handed us over to Oppenheimer and Anglo, we must have ideological weapons with which to defend ourselves against the very real dangers.

What we seek is the true liberation and development of our people. By pointing out this neocolonialism and the growing imperialism in our motherland, I am giving vent to a 131-year-old resentment, and inviting those who subjugated us, plundered us, exploited and humiliated us, to join us in seeking mutual understanding.

***Fred M'membe, Socialist Party President***

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