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Liberation

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The challenge to US hegemony

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Nagorno-Karabakh

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on the dangers of
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LEFT: The 'Eternal Flame' memorial to the Armenian Genocide unveiled in Ealing on Saturday 23 September 2023, coinciding with the evacuation of thousands of ethnic Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh in the wake of its assault by the armed forces of the Azerbaijan Republic
Photo by Andrew Davidson

editorial/Liberation

In Britain, the case for non-alignment and an independent foreign policy is underscored by the pressing requirement to meet the economic, social, and cultural needs of the majority of the population. It is time to change course. It is time to defend human rights, to embrace non-alignment and independence.

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CND picture

Over three decades since the end of the Cold War, the balance of socio-economic and political forces has been in constant flux, with new forces and contradictions emerging. Imperialism's vision of a "New World Order" and the "End of History" is itself now history and fading from collective memory.

Today, imperialism, especially the military-industrial complex of the US and NATO, continues to use force and exploitation of the people and resources of developing and underdeveloped countries. However, it is not a one-way street.

New possibilities and formations that aid the resistance to imperialist plunder are emerging. The recent BRICS conference in South Africa, while showcasing the possibilities and desire of the Global South to play a decisive part in the struggle to resist the imperialist order, at the same time exposed certain fault lines. Forty countries have declared their candidacy for BRICS in its journey going forward.

However, the choice of the six countries to join the group in January 2024 demonstrates a certain lack of clarity about the direction of the project. The inclusion of Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and the Islamic Republic of Iran, exposes a desperation to recruit certain powerful regional players to the club without considering their impact on the image and identity of BRICS. This is in stark contrast to the original declared aim of the grouping - to challenge the hegemony of the G7 - and exposes the contradictions inherent to the politico-economic variance among the BRICS+ membership.

The potential of BRICS to effect progressive change is undeniable, but the aforementioned contradictions also mean that the anti-imperialist label is a misnomer.

BRICS could represent a challenge to imperialist hegemony and US mal-designs if it clearly demonstrates its commitment to peace, self-determination, and non-alignment.

The "lightning offensive" by the Azerbaijan Republic's military forces on 19 September, which overran the ethnic Armenian populated enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh, is further demonstration of the current world order. It happened while the president of Türkiye, a NATO member, was addressing the

UN General Assembly. Erdoğan declared that Türkiye was fully supportive of the military offensive, while Armenian premier, Pashinyan, warned, "There is no longer the threat of ethnic cleansing... It is now happening before our eyes." The fact that the five permanent members of the Security Council did nothing to stop the catastrophe speaks volumes.

In Africa, the Middle East, and former republics of the Soviet Union, new contradictions are also sharpening. Though in all cases, directly or indirectly, the US and NATO continue with their illegal interference and destabilisation - with the British, French, and Turkish governments often in the vanguard. Nevertheless, if we are able to mobilise the forces of peace and progress in Britain to work with us effectively, the possibilities for Liberation to make a difference are opening up.

In Britain, the case for non-alignment and an independent foreign policy is underscored by the pressing requirement to meet the economic, social, and cultural needs of the majority of the population.

A progressive, democratic, and peaceful future is possible, but cannot be achieved through an unchecked military build-up and expenditure or the desperate US attempts, as recently outlined by Biden at the G20, to create an "India-Middle East-European Union Corridor". This is seen by the apartheid Israeli State as defending US economic and military ambitions.

And in the discussions currently taking place between the US, Saudi Arabia, Israel and EU leaders on this project, no one asks, "Where is Palestine?"

Liberation believes that peace in the Middle East can only be realised if the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the withdrawal of Israel from the territories it occupied in June 1967 is guaranteed.

It is time to change course. It is time to defend human rights, to embrace non-alignment and independence.

Jamshid Ahmadi
Editor

news/Liberation

We are asking the US government to stop its involvement, its support for this coalition of foreign countries that decided to take over Yemen, and to stop providing assistance, maintenance, spare parts, weapons and intelligence sharing

Sheikh Jarrah, in East Jerusalem where Israel is confiscating and demolishing the homes of long term Palestinian residents in order to develop Israeli residential quarters.



30th Anniversary of the Oslo Accords between Israel and PLO Israeli MK briefs Liberation

THE RECENT BRIEF visit to Britain by progressive Member of the Israeli Knesset (Parliament), Ofer Cassif, was a rare opportunity for a renewed conversation concerning the latest developments in the Middle East.

MK Ofer Cassif is a leading member of the HADASH (The Democratic Front for Peace and Equality) coalition and is well-known for his frank and objective observations on the political situation in Israel-Palestine and the wider Middle East. He has been a familiar figure at many of the major protests, whether in Occupied East Jerusalem opposing the forced evacuation of Palestinian-populated districts or the weekly major demonstrations in Tel Aviv against the Netanyahu government's attempts to interfere with the Israeli Constitution and undermine the authority of the country's Supreme Court.

At his meeting with Liberation Executive Committee member, Jamshid Ahmadi, Mr. Cassif patiently addressed a number of questions on the Oslo Agreement and its continuing relevance or not upon its 30th anniversary (of the historic official ceremony on 12 September 1993 which brought together the leader of the PLO, Yasser Arafat, and Israeli prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin); the importance of the Two-State Solution; and the growing opposition to the ultra-right government in Israel.

Regarding the Oslo Accords, Mr. Cassif explained how, following the murder of Rabin by

an ultra-right Zionist in 1995, the Israeli state had used all the levers at its disposal to render the creation of a genuinely independent Palestinian state practically impossible: "Following Oslo, Israel was only interested in translating its power into a form of legitimacy [...] and thereby authority." Meanwhile, conversely, "the Palestinian struggle was constantly delegitimised [...] leading to the entrenchment and huge damage we witness today."

Mr. Cassif warned of the presence of nazi-like elements in the current ruling administration in Israel and emphasised that the struggle for the Two-State Solution is the only possible route towards a real and lasting solution to the Palestinian issue: "Our focus must remain on the struggle for the liberation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza - not only because it is more realistic, but because through such a struggle all of the illegal settlements in the Occupied Territories will be comprehensively delegitimised."

"And since January [2023], nearly 7 million Israeli citizens have taken to the streets in anti-government demonstrations. While they are not yet calling for an end to the illegal settlements, that will logically follow should they continue."

Mr. Cassif kindly agreed to liaise with Liberation in informing our audience about the key struggles developing in Israel and neighbouring countries, and a complete write-up of this meeting will be published in due course.

Liberation

Briefings

Check out Liberation briefings on key issues in the fight against imperialism and for peace, justice and human rights in the Global South. Liberation is a people-powered movement. We rely on members and supporters for all of our work. Visit liberationorg.co.uk for information.

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The NEU-sponsored educational resource on the London Recruits now in book form plus a reprint of the ANC's guidance on clandestine work with a new introduction by Ronnies Kasrils, the ANC chief of intelligence who ran the London Recruits, young people from Britain who were sent to work underground for the ANC **£15 for the two from www.manifestopress.coop**

Workers' and Students' Guides

Manifesto Press has published the first five volumes in its Workers' and Students' Guides series. The official launch is at Marx Memorial Library & Workers' School on 27 October 2023. Tickets are free and are in high demand so we encourage you to book early to avoid disappointment.

TUC Congress/war and peace

Clearly there is an urgent need to organise and argue within the trade union movement for a new policy. If for no other reason, still greater dangers lie ahead, particularly in the Pacific region, where Britain is fully engaged in supporting the US military build-up and provocations directed at China



Where do Britain's trade unions stand?

A bellicose policy resolution at TUC Congress and the responses to it show that building a mass movement against imperialism inside unions, workplaces and communities remains a key task of peace activists and progressives,



argues
Andrew Murray

FOR THE SECOND year running, the TUC has disappointed peace activists and anti-war campaigners by passing a bellicose policy resolution at Congress.

In 2022 this took the form of narrowly agreeing a resolution calling on the trade union movement to campaign in favour of increased arms spending. This was a truly shocking development, the more so at a time of public service austerity and cuts and a cost-of-living crisis.

If ever the TUC could be accused of betraying the working class interest that was it.

This year the same union, the GMB, proposed a motion on the war in Ukraine. Some of it involved formulations which commanded general assent – supporting Ukrainian refugees for example.

However, the resolution was basically an endorsement of the Tory government position on the conflict, including a demand that Russia withdraw from the Crimea and eastern Donbass, which effectively separated from Ukraine in 2014 after the Maidan coup against the elected government.

Few serious observers believe that such a withdrawal is at all likely, nor that Ukraine has the capacity to enforce it militarily. All agree that the attempt to do so would be fraught with the risk of nuclear escalation.

But the resolution adopted was unconcerned about that. It advanced no serious proposal for peace negotiations, nor did it call for a ceasefire, even though these are the demands coming from a growing number of countries, including the very largest, across the Global South.

The policy of Johnson, Truss and Sunak – a policy of blocking peace at every turn and further fuelling the conflict – was not critiqued. Instead, like Starmer's Labour, it effectively lined up behind Tory policy.

Several significant unions did not support the final composite. They included the Fire Brigades Union, which had the courage to speak up for peace on the Congress floor and to vote against the resolution.

The University and Colleges Union (UCU), which had voted against supporting the war at its own conference earlier this year, abstained. So too did the teachers' National Education Union, the rail union RMT and the Bakers' Union.

Others may have abstained too, since the vote was only taken on a show of hands and was not recorded. So clearly there is a strong basis for further campaigning against the war in the unions.

Disappointingly, some unions with strong records of support for the anti-war movement decided to support the composite, including Unison, Unite, civil service union PCS and ASLEF train drivers. The debate should continue within these unions and doubtless will.

Moreover, the resolution put to the vote was diluted somewhat from the original motion proposed by the GMB in respect of supplying arms to Ukraine. In addition, the TUC General Council presented an explanatory statement claiming that the resolution did not intend to set pre-requisites for peace negotiation.

That flies in the face of the text of the resolution adopted, but it nevertheless indicates an awareness in the leadership of the trade union movement that it risks painting itself into a very unsavoury corner on this issue, aligned with the far right globally.

Some of those unions which voted for the composite also distanced themselves from the absurd and ahistorical comparison of the Ukraine conflict with the Spanish Civil War of the 1930s, in which Nazi Germany and Mussolini's Italy flung support behind Franco fascism to overthrow the democratic republican regime.

Plainly there were weaknesses in the opposition to the war resolution. For one thing, the modest changes from the GMB position embodied in the composite confused some campaigners into thinking that its most objectionable elements had been removed.

They hadn't – the demand for Russian withdrawal from Crimea and the complete absence of any critique of British government policy

remained. But this confusion helped demobilise.

A second, earlier, failure was in not persuading an anti-war union to submit an amendment to the resolution from the GMB. Had one done so, it too could have formed part of the composite and might have led to an eventual resolution which everyone could have lived with.

As it was, anti-war voices played no part in the discussion at that stage of the TUC's process.

These, however, are merely tactical considerations. Underlying the vote are larger political problems. First amongst these is the understandable condemnation of the Russian military invasion of February 2022, which shocked the world and has led to untold misery, in the first place for the people of Ukraine.

Such sentiments have occluded any realistic evaluation of the politics of the situation for many, and lead them instead to believe in the chimaera of a military resolution to the war, with the total defeat of the Russian forces.

The fact that such an outcome is wildly improbable is one objection. A second is that it would not in any event lead to a lasting peace but would likely only represent a pause between hostilities.

A durable settlement would require addressing both the internal divisions within Ukraine regarding its Russian or Russian-oriented minority, and a security architecture that guarantees the interests of all, and does not rest exclusively on US hegemony. The TUC has nothing whatever to say about all that.

One must also acknowledge a deep tendency of the TUC to align with imperialism when the imperialism concerned is British. It notably failed to support the great movement against the war in Iraq in 2003, although many of its affiliates did.

Some unions take a purely sectional approach, and support any policy that appears, at whatever broader cost, to support the retention of industrial jobs. Others are often swayed by the view that British governments are moved by humanitarian concerns.

That requires a wilful blindness today. Britain's policy in Ukraine is very similar to its policy over Yemen – no push for peace, a flood of arms going to one side, British military collaboration.

That policy has led to the greatest humanitarian calamity in the world today, yet the government pushes on regardless; ahead, in this case, of even Washington.

Of course every conflict is different and each has specific features, but the underlying drive by the NATO bloc to impose as near to global hegemony as it can manage is a unifying theme.

Clearly there is an urgent need to organise and argue within the trade union movement for a new policy. If for no other reason, still greater dangers lie ahead, particularly in the Pacific region, where Britain is fully engaged in supporting the US military build-up and provocations directed at China.

There is a basis for making that change, including within the unions which voted for war this year. Stop the War has built a strong trade union network campaigning against the TUC position on increasing arms spending and, now, its support for Tory policy on the Ukraine war.

The situation will doubtless get more challenging still if, as seems likely, the same policy is wrapped in a Labour flag after the next election. But the experience of 2002-03 shows that it is possible to build a mass movement against a Labour-led imperialism too. Building that movement inside the unions the workplaces and communities remains our task.

Andrew Murray is vice-president of the Stop the War Coalition

BRICS/15th summit

In some quarters there has been an exaggerated hype about BRICS+6 as a new anti-imperialist front. While, in varying degrees, some of the existing and new members have an anti-imperialist stance, this is not remotely the case with others like Egypt, Saudi Arabia or the UAE.



A challenge to US hegemony?

With 37 percent of the global economy and 46 percent of the world's population, and with a now considerably enhanced presence in the Middle East, a region historically dominated by the US, the significance of BRICS+6



cannot be ignored, writes
Jeremy Cronin

THE BRICS 15th summit meeting held in Johannesburg in late-August admitted six new members: Argentina, Egypt, Iran, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. They are now set to join Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. The six were chosen from a list of 22 that had formally applied, with as many as 40 countries reportedly expressing an interest in membership. The statement from the BRICS summit indicated further admissions will be considered in the near future. What significance should be read into these developments?

In some quarters there has been an exaggerated hype about BRICS+6 as a new anti-imperialist front. While, in varying degrees, some of the existing and new members have an anti-imperialist stance, this is not remotely the case with others like Egypt, Saudi Arabia or the UAE. BRICS+6 is clearly a disparate group both economically and politically. Moreover, some of its members are involved in relatively serious regional tensions (India and China, Ethiopia and Egypt, Iran and Saudi Arabia). But with 37 percent of the global economy and 46 percent of the world's population, and with a now considerably enhanced presence in the Middle East, a region historically dominated by the US, the significance of BRICS+6 cannot be ignored.

All of this occurs in the context of a changing global conjuncture. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who attended the BRICS summit, recently observed that "the post-Cold War period is over. A transition is under way to a new global order." BRICS+6 needs to be seen as one attempt to influence the shape of that emerging order. Less than three weeks after the BRICS summit, US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, echoed Guterres ("a new era is ending, a new one is beginning") but, as can be expected, there was a bellicose twist to Blinken's observation. He frankly expressed what has been apparent for some time. Facing challenges to post-1990 US unilateral hegemony, Washington is determined to lead the world "from a position of strength", Blinken said, effectively into a new Cold War in which Russia is cast as the "most immediate threat", with China "posing the biggest long-term challenge."

BRICS expansion is both a response to these shifting tectonic plates and a symptom of the complex and thoroughly uneven nature of the process underway. The 2008 Great Recession with its epicentre in the US, persisting secular stagnation throughout the advanced capitalist world, the failing or, at the very least, the stale-mated NATO proxy war

in the Ukraine, US attempts to reverse hyper-globalisation through re-shoring and near-shoring manufacturing capacity, and the deepening social, economic and environmental crisis not least through much of the global South: all of these are indicators of the crisis of the US-led, World Bank, IMF and NATO-enforced unipolar global dominance that has prevailed for some three decades.

What, if anything, can BRICS+6 hope to achieve?

Perhaps the most notable feature of the expansion of membership is the obvious strategic intent to consolidate energy security for both producers and consumers in the face of the US-dominated petrodollar empire. New members Saudi Arabia, Iran and the UAE are key members of OPEC, responsible for over half of its output. Harsh sanctions and the unilateral freezing (in effect imperialist pillaging) of Iranian, Venezuelan and now Russian foreign currency reserves (to the tune of \$300 billion in the case of Russia), will not have gone unnoticed by other oil and natural gas producing countries like Saudi Arabia and the UAE with large foreign exchange currency reserves held in Western banks. The Saudis are reported to be considering accepting Chinese yuan.

The sabotage of the Nord Stream 1 and 2 natural gas pipelines, forcing the US's own western European allies into reliance on more expensive US-supplied gas, underlines the importance of energy supply lines. Here the strategic location of some of the new BRICS members at key maritime chokepoints should be noted - Egypt (the Suez Canal), Saudi Arabia (the Red Sea Basin), Ethiopia (close to the Bab-el-Mandeb strait), and Iran (with its direct access to the Hormuz strait).

For countries subjected to harsh, unilateral imperialist sanctions (notably Iran, Russia and China), BRICS offers the potential of further bypassing these. But, indeed, for all participants BRICS membership in particular is seen as a means to alter global trade networks.

Bilateral trade among BRICS countries has grown significantly in recent years. Notable in this regard has been the soaring Brazil and China trade, while Russian exports to India tripled from April to December 2022 year-on-year. Trade between Russia and China jumped from \$147 billion in 2021 to \$190 billion in 2022. This growing intra-BRICS trading offers other important possibilities. Within the BRICS+6 grouping bilateral trade in local currencies is being actively promoted. Brazil and China have recently entered a local currency trade arrangement, as have India and the UAE. The relative currency

values are fixed by agreement among the partners and the dollar is no longer needed either as a unit of account, or as a medium of circulation. This is particularly important for countries with a dollar shortage.

However, as economist Prabhat Patnaik has noted, while bilateral or even multi-lateral trading through local currencies will contribute to some de-dollarisation of global trade, and increase the stock of liquidity in the global economy, it will not automatically overcome the problem of external debt arising between the countries involved. Going forward, from a developmental perspective, this will be one of the major challenges for BRICS if its stated commitment to contributing to a more just multilateral, world order is to be achieved. The balance of bilateral trade between a likely large creditor (China for instance) and a weaker debtor (South Africa, say), even if the trade is in yuan and rands, will result in a growing external debt for the deficit country with further under-development. To counter this trajectory the surplus country will need to significantly ramp up its purchase of goods and services from the deficit country. Put another way, this will require significant investment in re-industrialisation of countries like Brazil, Argentina, Egypt and South Africa, and related infrastructure development and technology transfers.

It is here that the BRICS Bank (the New Development Bank) has a role to play. Dilma Rousseff, former Brazilian president and now director of the Bank, has emphasised that, while there is no intention to provide loans for debt settlement, there is to be a strong focus on expanding trade in local currencies and in infrastructure investment, not just to BRICS members but to the Global South in general.

The ideological diversity of BRICS members is an obvious challenge. It combines old enemies, progressives and some of the world's most reactionary regimes. The ability to act with relative strategic cohesiveness will remain a major challenge. Changes to national political parties in power are also likely to impact on the relative dynamism and coherence of the group. The election of prime minister Narendra Modi (2014) and the coup against president Dilma Rousseff (2016) resulted in both India and Brazil becoming passive in their participation in BRICS. This was a setback particularly in the case of Brazil which had been a dynamic champion from the outset. The 2022 return of Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva to the Brazilian presidency is, therefore, a positive development. But other uncertainties are looming in the immediate future, with an extreme right-winger, for instance, the reported front-runner for presidency in Argentina's 23 October elections.

If the ideological diversity of BRICS is a challenge, it is also, in some respects, a potential asset. It helps to undercut the strategic agenda of the Bidens and Blinkens who hope to reverse waning US unilateral domination by building a powerful US-led bloc encircling what they hope to be an increasingly isolated Russia and especially China. In this way they seek to re-play the last Cold War. Like the broad refusal of the majority of the Global South to line up behind a NATO world-view on Ukraine, the Johannesburg BRICS summit at least demonstrated a politically diverse willingness not to be lined up in this way.

Jeremy Cronin a veteran South African Communist Party Central Committee and Politburo member, former SACP deputy general secretary, a former government deputy minister and former political prisoner. He is also a poet.

interview/Pallab Sengupta

Initiatives for mobilizing people all over the world must be taken by peace movements in every country. This will not be an easy task. Sustained efforts have to be made to bring together people and political forces that believe in the need to secure peace all over the world, so that humanity can survive and live together peacefully on this earth.



Our mission: Unite the global south to oppose World War Three

Liberation: What in your view are the most urgent tasks facing progressive peace movements across the world at this most dangerous of times for people everywhere?

Pallab Sengupta: The world has entered an epoch of wars and rumours of war. US imperialism, together with NATO, is threatening to convert the Ukraine-Russia conflict into a global war. In such a tense atmosphere, the immediate task of peace forces all over the world is to ensure that the conflict is ended as quickly as possible through a negotiated lasting peace. The US, in order to save its sinking economy and extricate itself from the deep crisis affecting all sectors, wants to sell its arms. For this, there needs to be a conflict somewhere. This fact must be understood and people all over the world must be made aware of the hidden agenda of US imperialism. The people also need to have it explained exactly how the funds, otherwise destined for health, education, and the social uplift of people, are being diverted into both arms manufacture and the purchase of weapons.

Initiatives for mobilizing people all over the world must be taken by peace movements in every country. This will not be an easy task. Sustained efforts have to be made to bring together people and political forces that believe in the need to secure peace all over the world, so that humanity can survive and live together peacefully on this earth.

Liberation: You were elected as president of the World Peace Council (WPC) in November 2022. Can you tell us something about the key

challenges faced by the WPC during your first year in office and the priorities of the organisation going forward?

Pallab Sengupta: It is true that I was elected President of the WPC in November 2022. As we all know, by then the threat of global war was looming over the people of the world, with the Ukraine-Russia conflict escalating. Hence the biggest and most urgent challenge before the WPC was to ensure that the conflict was not transformed into a global conflagration. Up until now it has not happened, but the danger and challenges for us remain.

Regarding immediate tasks, peace movements across the world have to mobilise people everywhere against the threat of war unleashed by US imperialism and its NATO allies. Mobilisation of people is the biggest task before the WPC and its member organisations.

Liberation: Following on from this, the WPC has always been known for the global peace projects it has initiated. What are its key projects today?

Pallab Sengupta: The WPC has issued a general call to the peoples of the world against institutional violence; in defence of human rights; for freedom of political prisoners; against the imposition of any imperialist aggression and oppression; and in opposition to war, nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, military bases, armed flotillas, and the present unequal global order. So, all the activities of our member organisations will be based on the above issues. Struggle for peace, democracy, social justice and for a just and equitable world order are the main projects of the WPC.

Liberation: Can you say something about the particular challenges facing young people and explain how the fight for peace is critical to their struggle against poverty and exploitation, and for education, jobs, housing, and a just and secure future?

Pallab Sengupta: The youth of the world will be facing the worst possible future if the forces of peace fail to arrest the escalation of the arms race. As we all know, joblessness is taking its toll and very badly affecting the lives of the young generation. Commercialisation and militarisation of education are also among the biggest threats for youth, together with malnutrition and poverty which are eating away at the energies of our young people and children. At the same time, money that could be used on health, education, eradication of poverty and provision of nutritious food is being snatched away by pro-war forces. It is owing to this situation that one of the primary objectives of the WPC must be to attract more youth activists to its cause and ranks, to harness the energy and vibrant dynamic they bring, and to impress upon them that the struggle for peace is not divorced or somehow abstract from those struggles they are already involved in - in fact, quite the opposite. Youth activists should not be left relegating the struggle for peace to yesteryear or times long gone by. Without peace, the very foundation for all that they hold dear is stripped away and there is no basis left on which to carry forward any other given cause.

Liberation: From your past experience of leading mass youth organisations such as the International Union of Students (IUS) and later the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY), can you tell us what we can learn from the struggles of the past about mobilising young people for the fight for peace today.

Pallab Sengupta: My past experience in the IUS differs from my experience in WFDY. When I worked in IUS (1984-1989) the world situation was very different. Our HQ was in Prague in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. There was a mighty Soviet Union and other socialist countries. Our activities were mainly on educational rights, the fight against illiteracy, solidarity with national liberation movements and securing the broad participation of the student community for the successful holding of the World Festival of Youth and Students under the slogan "Anti-Imperialist Solidarity for Peace and Friendship". The IUS was a great institution in which to learn the political language for dealing with different students' organisations with varying ideological orientations. I was very successful in bringing students' associations with Maoist backgrounds and other such students' organisations from the South Pacific region into the IUS family.

But the experience I had in WFDY was very challenging. When I took over as General Secretary of WFDY in 1994, things were very different. The representatives from South Africa, Sudan and India were there in the heart of Europe in Hungary, but without any representation from Europe. My experience in the IUS helped me a lot. I knew that I must reach all member organisations of WFDY and create a confidence that WFDY, as well as the festival movements (World Festival of Youth and Students), could survive. Thanks to all member organisations and their political conviction, WFDY and the Festival Movement, decades later, continues today. I hope that I will be able to contribute more to the WPC as its president armed with my past experiences of working with organisations and leaders across the world.

Pallab Sengupta was educated at Amarendra Vidyapith (named after freedom fighter Shri Amarendra Nath Chattopadhyay), Sengupta, during his initial days as a student, was not much interested in politics. But the turbulent incidents of the late 1960s changed the course of his life. While graduating in Arts from Raja Peary Mohan College, he was jailed during the 1967 student unrest against imposed governor rule in West Bengal.

He joined the All-India Student Federation (AISF) and the Communist Party of India and became state secretary of the AISF from 1977 to 1984. Sengupta was posted at the headquarters of the International Union of Students (IUS) in Prague, then capital of erstwhile Czechoslovakia, between 1984 and 1989 and became vice-president of the organisation. After the disintegration of the socialist bloc in East Europe and of the Soviet Union, Sengupta relocated to Budapest and worked reorganising the progressive student-youth movement under the banner of the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY).

After serving the organisation as its general secretary until 1997, he returned to India and started working in the All India Peace & Solidarity Council. In 2002 he became its secretary general. In 1989 he was awarded the Order of Julius Fuchik by Czechoslovakia for his contribution to the international democratic student movement. He also received the Leninist Komsomol Medal in 2018 for his contribution to the World Festival of Youth and Students.

His role in advancing the cause of Indo-Vietnam friendship was recognised by Vietnam, which awarded him the Friendship Medal of Vietnam in 2018.

He was elected president of the World Peace Council in 2022. At present he is the member of the national secretariat of the Communist Party of India.

Picture shows Pallab Sengupta, general secretary of the World Federation of Democratic Youth meeting with Fidel Castro in the 1990s.

analysis/Caucasus

The UN must act in pursuit of its legitimate mandate if it is to counter the bullish assertions of Erdoğan and those leaders of his ilk, the brazen aggression of countries like the Azerbaijan Republic, as well as not give impetus to the re-emerging notion that "might is right". A failure to do so would risk a return to the peril and horror of the international dynamics of the 1920s and 1930s.



The fall of Nagorno-Karabakh

The UN must act fast to rein in the brazen aggression and unilateralism of the Azerbaijan Republic and Türkiye, writes **Payam Solhtalab**

The above is an abridged version of a longer article that can be read in full on the Liberation website. www.liberationorg.co.uk

ON TUESDAY 19 SEPTEMBER 2023, the world bore witness to the latest - and almost certainly ultimate - military assault by the armed forces of the Azerbaijan Republic on the ethnic Armenian populated enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) as they looked to change the facts on the ground and unilaterally force a conclusion to the long-running standoff over the territory.

The "lightning offensive", that quickly overwhelmed the vastly outnumbered and outgunned Artsakh Defence Army, came just one week after the Azerbaijan Republic had agreed to lift its blockade of the Lachin Corridor (the road linking Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia, a lifeline for basic supplies) which had been in place since December 2022. This blockade had prompted warnings of an increasingly dire humanitarian crisis afflicting the enclave's population - with dwindling supplies of food, vital medicines, and fuel - amid legitimate concerns that it could be a precursor to ethnic cleansing.

This wholly illegal, unjustified, and inhumane blockade; last week's military offensive; and, beforehand, the constant menacing of border guards, civilians, and foreign freight drivers alike (both on the frontiers of the enclave and Armenia itself) were all in brazen violation of the agreement brokered by the Russian Federation in November 2020 to

end the preceding month-long war.

Therefore, we now behold the forced uprooting of the overwhelming majority of a 120,000-strong civilian population from their homes, livelihoods, and all they know, and their mass exodus on the roads to Armenia. At the time of writing, almost the entirety of the aforementioned ethnic Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh has arrived in Armenia with authorities there reportedly processing registrations at a rate of at least 1,000 per hour and with less than 10% of that number having been allocated a place to stay - the rest relying on the individual acts of kindness of Armenian residents, including many who had fled previous bouts of fighting in the enclave, or else having to sleep in their cars. By the weekend following the Azerbaijan Republic's onslaught, just one single 70-tonne consignment of food aid had reached the enclave.

Meanwhile, amid much vitriol and crude triumphalism, officials of the Azerbaijan Republic have variously sought to downplay the actual number of ethnic Armenians residing in the enclave; offered vague assurances of respect for their rights provided they accept full "absorption" into the Azerbaijan Republic; or have called for the "complete evacuation" of the ethnic Armenian population - all as reports emerge of settlers from the Azerbaijan Republic arriving in the enclave to pick over the spoils of their army's "victory", and armed groups and militias descend on the isolated homesteads and settlements of those too old, too infirm, or too proud to leave.

If these circumstances, when considered together, somehow do not meet the definition of ethnic cleansing, it is difficult (if not impossible) to clearly envision and determine which in fact would!

However, the struggle for Nagorno-Karabakh is now over and its various apparatuses and institutions are disbanded and will "cease to exist" from 1 January 2024 as per the terms signed by de facto president of the enclave's authorities, Samvel Shakhramanyan. This has not stopped the Azerbaijan Republic from imposing a victor's justice on those officials of Nagorno-Karabakh who have fallen into their hands as they attempted to leave the enclave, only to be transferred into the detention of the state prosecutor in Baku on spurious charges of "terrorism".

Furthermore, on Monday 25 September, there was the ominous spectacle of Turkish premier, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, being received by his Azerbaijan Republic counterpart, Ilham Aliyev, in the Nakhchivan exclave. The governments in Baku and Ankara have long desired to see Nakhchivan linked overland with the Azerbaijan Republic via the Zangezur Corridor, thereby rendering the two countries contiguous with one another. Not only would this involve the carving out of land from the sovereign territory of Armenia along its southernmost flank, but also the re-drawing of the borders between Iran and Armenia, thus constituting a flagrant violation of international law. Furthermore, it would extend the malign influence of Türkiye further into the Caucasus and Caspian Sea region in what would likely be an all-but-formally enshrined union between itself and the Azerbaijan Republic. This would constitute a massively provocative and destabilising move, plunging an already hugely volatile region into further chaos and turmoil, carrying the risk of significant bloodshed, as well as a wider conflagration potentially drawing in Iran.

Indeed, Erdoğan himself had taken to the podium of the UN General Assembly and, in a show of barely concealed contempt for the principles of the host convenors and the spirit of the occasion, while hailing what he referred to as the beginning of the "Turkish Century" (on the centenary of the founding amid bloodshed of the

Republic of Türkiye), re-declared his unwavering support for the actions of the Azerbaijan Republic under the erroneous slogan of "one nation, two states". He continued by declaring the federal solution to the Cyprus question to be "dead", 49 years after Türkiye's illegal invasion, annexation, and occupation of the northern half of that country - and seemingly over the heads of the Cypriot people themselves, Greek and Turkish alike. He went on to invite those state representatives gathered in the auditorium to formally recognise the sovereignty of the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" and establish full diplomatic relations with such an entity, and seemingly admonished the UN peacekeeping force on the island for its lack of neutrality - warning them against suffering "a new reputational loss in Cyprus".

It is imperative that the UN acts in pursuit of its legitimate mandate if it is to counter the bullish assertions of Erdoğan and those leaders of his ilk, the brazen aggression of countries like the Azerbaijan Republic, as well as not give impetus to the re-emerging notion that "might is right". It is no exaggeration to state that a failure to do so would risk a return to the international dynamics of the 1920s and 1930s, with all the peril and horror that era portended for humanity.

Urgent aid is needed on the ground in Armenia, a poor republic which itself is ill-equipped to absorb the sudden influx of tens of thousands of largely impoverished and traumatised refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh. Accommodation, schools, medical services, and other tenets of basic infrastructure - as well as psychological therapy and support for many of the new arrivals - will be needed if the dire humanitarian crisis that agencies on the ground are warning of is to be averted.

And if it is genuinely the UN's contention that the Azerbaijan Republic's growing importance as an energy provider and latter-day "Doha-on-the-Caspian" does not somehow supersede the legitimate and grave concerns regarding its abysmal track record of aggression, human rights abuses, and state-backed hate peddling, then it is incumbent upon them to urgently convene an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council to discuss and robustly respond to the alarming developments (including through sanctions) that have taken place since Tuesday 19 September.

Alas, in just a few short days, Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh), home to a blameless ethnic Armenian population and heirs to a civilisation there since time immemorial, has ceased to be... And the leaders of Armenia, the Russian Federation, as well as the international community and its responsible agencies - including the UN - must bear this tragedy on their consciences.

Payam Solhtalab is a peace activist, member of the National Executive Council of the Committee for the Defence of the Iranian People's Rights (CODIR), member of Liberation, and regular contributor to Liberation Journal.

'We Are Our Mountains' also affectionately referred to as "Tatik-Papik" ("Grandma and Grandpa" in Armenian) | Photo by IsaaK Alexandre KaRslan on Unsplash

This sculpture, completed in 1967 by Sargis Baghdasaryan, depicting an elderly highlander couple, is widely regarded as a symbol of enduring love, the roots of the Armenian people in the land, the Armenian heritage of Nagorno-Karabakh, and even Armenian identity as a whole. The monument stands on an elevation just north of Stepanakert, the capital of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Sudan/war

The epicentre of the war has been Sudan's capital. The war has spread to the peripheries mainly in Darfur resulting in crimes reminiscent of the early 2000s genocide. Four million people have been internally displaced with another million plus fled to neighbouring countries. Khartoum, the capital, is a ghost city.



Stop the war! Act now!

The SCP and the forces for radical change are striving to establish the People's Broad Front to represent the majority of our people - not only locally as a people's legislative forum, but also as an active and sole civil representative at international fora to achieve a durable peace and everlasting



ceasefire,
writes **Fathi El-Fadl**.

SUDAN IS in the midst of the worst crisis in its history. The disastrous war has already taken a staggering humanitarian toll, and the country risks becoming a failed state. In the past various wars tended to pit the state against regional insurgencies. Now the fighting is between two factions from within the state or governing forces, the generals of both the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the militia of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a paramilitary created by the Muslim Brotherhood regime. The epicentre of the war has been Sudan's capital. The war has spread to the peripheries mainly in Darfur resulting in crimes reminiscent of the early 2000s genocide. The International Organization for Migration estimates that around 4 million people have been internally displaced with another million plus fled to neighbouring countries. Khartoum, the capital, is a ghost city.

The Sudanese patriotic and democratic forces are engaged in efforts to stop this war between the two military factions, the SAF generals, supported by the Muslim Brotherhood militia and the RSF enjoying the active assistance of the Russian Wagner Group. Both sides enjoy the support of international and regional powers.

Although the December 2018 revolution succeeded in shaking the regime and removing the head of the state, it could not complete the task of overthrowing the Islamist regime and its institutions, due to weaknesses within the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC) and the combined conspiracies of the international and regional forces with the active participation of local reaction. These forces - both internal and foreign - are united to defend and protect their interests and ambitions in the country's resources.

As the economic might of the RSF grew along with the political ambitions of its leadership, it enjoyed the support of certain Gulf countries, the Wagner Group and Hafter of Libya, and began to challenge the hegemony of the army generals. And with the increasing intensity of contradictions, conflicting interests and political competition between these forces, the war exploded in the form of

this disastrous conflict between the army generals, led by the remnants of the Islamic regime supported by members of the defunct National Congress Party, and the so-called shadow battalion established by it, against the RSF which [the regime] had created and mostly recruited from known Arab tribal components living in neighbouring African countries.

With the ongoing war in different parts of the country, especially in the west, and its continuation in the capital, the suffering of the Sudanese people intensified as they struggled for the right to life amidst lack of shelter, food, water electricity and medicines. As the conflict escalates and heavy weapons continue to shell, civilians are forced to flee leading to a high level of internal displacement and refuge in Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, and southern Sudan after harrowing journeys ending in living in dire conditions.

To cover up their failures to bring about an end to the catastrophic war or abide by a long-term ceasefire, both sides - the army generals and the RSF militia leaders - are engaged in diplomatic efforts to improve their criminal image and seek support for their war efforts. It is within this context that al-Burhan, Head of the Sudan Armed Forces, undertook a number of foreign trips that saw him travel to neighbouring and regional countries including Egypt, Eritrea, South Sudan, Qatar, and Turkey. He also met the Ukrainian president. It is worth stressing that his visit to Turkey has a special importance since it came as he sought an increase in military aid from that government, with which Turkey happily obliged.

Despite all the sufferings of the Sudanese people, the world remains silent, turning a blind eye to the deteriorating human situation. International aid and relief efforts are almost non-existent. The number of dead, wounded and missing continues to rise and the loss of property, occupation of private homes, public facilities and their destruction by the militias, persist. Relief efforts and protection are anaemic and non-existent. Civilians are terrorized, robbed of their safety and security. In addition, abductions and the rape of women are part of an organised pattern by the militias of the RSF. On the other hand, the SAF

engages in indiscriminate shelling of homes and public buildings using aircraft, tanks artillery and drones.

At the same time, foreign military intervention and participation in the war is increasing. Ukrainian military experts are engaged in fighting alongside the SAF, taking the war confrontation from Europe to the heart of Africa, claiming that they are fighting Russian mercenaries in Sudan!

Suffice it to say that external mediation is proving to be a barrier to peace. Despite the fact that the Sudanese civil groups, including the Forces of Radical Change and the Sudanese Communist Party (SCP), have welcomed efforts to establish a ceasefire and humanitarian corridors, little was achieved in this respect. The Jeddah platform, the efforts of the IGAD (Intergovernmental Authority on Development), attempts by the African Union (AU) and the neighbouring countries, became places for meetings producing scant results to help stop the war.

The Forces for Radical Change (FRC) are working towards mobilizing the masses to form a broad civil front from the civil forces and groups who were active in the December revolution.

These forces include the coordinating committees of the resistance movement, the trade union front against the war, the Kandaka [specific term for female protesters in Sudan] associations, as well as civil and political organisations and parties - all of which have issued a number of documents and have expressed the need to work together. It is important to stress that for the SCP and the forces of radical change, while welcoming dialogue and coordination from the above-mentioned groups, the main work and direction will aim to build at grassroots level the basis for the People's Broad Front where discussions, agreements and consensus on the ground can be reached and from there to establish the basis for the front. This is the only way to go forward avoiding the mistakes of the past, i.e. the leading of alliances into collapse under pressure from foreign and internal reaction - of which the present [situation of] the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC) is a clear example.

The SCP and the forces for radical change are striving to establish the People's Broad Front to represent the majority of our people - not only locally as a people's legislative forum, but also as an active and sole civil representative at international fora to achieve a durable peace and everlasting ceasefire.

The main demand is to stop the war and to chart a return toward the establishment of complete civil and democratic rule. Building the broad front will help to establish a state based on law and under a democratic civilian government which will put the war culprits on trial, establish a national army under civilian rule, and protect Sudan's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Note: This article was transcribed per verbatim from audio dictations provided by Fathi Alfadl from Sudan, during which the sounds from heavy shelling could clearly be heard in the background.

Fathi El-Fadl is a progressive Sudanese politician and represents 'The Forces for Radical Change'. He is a Vice President of the International Centre for Trade Union Rights (ICTUR) - a London-based non-profit organisation that promotes international trade union rights through research and advocacy services.

This article was transcribed verbatim from audio dictations provided by Fathi El-Fadl from Sudan, during which the sounds from heavy shelling could clearly be heard in the background.

PICTURE: Fleeing Sudanese housed in a refugee camp in Chad.

Creative Common VOA picture

analysis/Sahel

The future of the Sahel will depend crucially on whether France and its allies allow the people in the former colonies to extricate themselves from neocolonial subjugation and gain democratic control of their countries' wealth, without setting a match to the region through military intervention. At any rate, one thing is clear: the uprising against the old colonial order is already irreversible.



Uprising of the wretched



Sevim Dagdelen
on the emergence of a new order in West

and Central Africa and the threat of a major war

RECENT EVENTS in West Africa and particularly in the Niger cannot be understood without consideration of the colonial past. In his book "The Wretched of the Earth", Frantz Fanon gives a compelling description of how French colonialism in West Africa, following defeat against the Vietnamese independence movement, the Viet Minh, at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, did everything to set a course for controlled decolonisation. The aim was to avoid a similar disaster and safeguard control over the countries in Africa that were subjugated by France.

Paris relied on three chief instruments in pursuit of that endeavour. First, total control of the countries' financial and monetary policy was assured through the colonial currency, the CFA franc, which prevented any monetary sovereignty and perpetuated colonial relations of exploitation and exchange that persist to this day. Second, vast depredation of mineral resources by French businesses has resulted in a third of France's nuclear power being generated using uranium from the Niger while more than 80% of people in that country have no electricity at all. Third, unequal treaties secured French troops the right to intervene in the region against wayward governments.

The rebellion currently traversing West Africa, starting in Guinea and spreading to Mali, Burkina-Faso and now the Niger, is an uprising for those countries' democratic sovereignty, effected by military forces and mass movements. The aim of the uprising is to end the continued brutal exploitation of the region by France. The rebels in the Niger have already achieved a historic victory. As a result of large-scale demonstrations in the Niger demanding the withdrawal of the 1,500 French troops, France's President Macron has now been forced to announce that France will withdraw from its former colony by the end of the year.

Regardless of this bitter defeat, the former colonial power will continue to do all it can to maintain its own influence in the region and to reestablish the old neocolonial order. Although an ECOWAS ultimatum passed without consequences in August, the Economic Community of West African States, led by Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire and at France's urging, is maintaining the threat of military invasion of the Niger.

Such a war of aggression in violation of

international law would not only meet with bitter resistance from the population, who are yearning for an end to outside rule, but would also very probably entail the involvement of Burkina Faso and Mali, which recently formed a defensive alliance with the Niger providing for mutual support in the event of an attack on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of one of those countries. That pledge of support was lately reaffirmed by the representative of Mali at the United Nations General Assembly, when he noted that any invasion of the Niger would constitute "a direct threat to the peace and security of Mali, but also to the peace and security of the region" and would "necessarily have serious consequences". Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune takes a similar position, seeing a military intervention in the Niger as "a direct threat to Algeria" and warning that, in the event of an intervention, "the whole Sahel" would "go up in flames". At the same time, the conflict would seem set to spill yet further over the international stage since, in the event of invasion, Niamey could turn to Russia – very popular among the general public as an antipode to France – for protection.

While military escalation has been avoided so far, ECOWAS is already engaged, with the support of Washington, Berlin and Paris, in a relentless economic war on the Niger which is seeking to starve the already suffering populace. After the EU put all former support payments for the Niger, one of the poorest countries in the world, on ice, it is only a matter of time until the EU countries, at France's and Germany's initiative, agree on their own sanctions regime.

The revolt in the Niger is therefore symbolic not only of the growing longing expressed by the countries of the Global South to emancipate themselves from the yoke of neocolonial exploitation and tutelage by the West but also of the Western states' attempt to maintain their dominance at all costs. When following the desperate attempts being made in Western capitals

to interpret what is happening in the Sahel, one is forced to suspect that there is just as little understanding regarding the resonance of developments in West Africa as there is regarding the tectonic shifts in global power structures. Rather than take the anti-Western uprisings as a prompt to fundamentally change their own order of exploitation and subjugation, they are trying to maintain their own geopolitical footprint in the region by violence, in the form of sanctions and military threats, while their rhetoric builds castles in the air promising a seeming transformation of Sahel policy.

The paradox is that this imperialist conduct will only accelerate their own geopolitical decline. After all, it is in large part the Western policy of sanctions and intervention that is pushing more and more countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia to turn their backs on the West and move towards countries like Russia and China. The BRICS countries are attractive to the states of the Global South because they are seen as allies against the continuation of colonialism and against neocolonialist exploitation. They represent a way out of the tragedy that Burkina Faso's head of state, Ibrahim Traoré, followed Thomas Sankara in expressing thus: "How can Africa, which has so much wealth, become the poorest continent in the world today?"

The future of the Sahel will depend crucially on whether France and its allies allow the people in the former colonies to extricate themselves from neocolonial subjugation and gain democratic control of their countries' wealth, without setting a match to the region through military intervention. At any rate, one thing is clear: the uprising against the old colonial order is already irreversible.

Sevim Dagdelen is a member of the German Bundestag for Die Linke

PICTURE Télé Sahel



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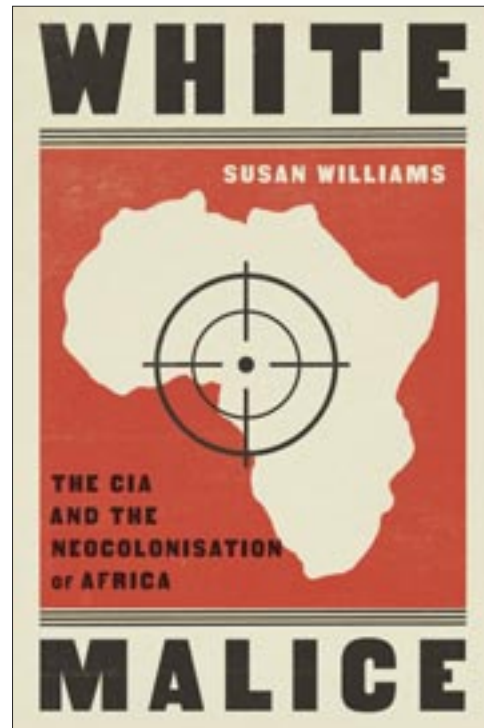
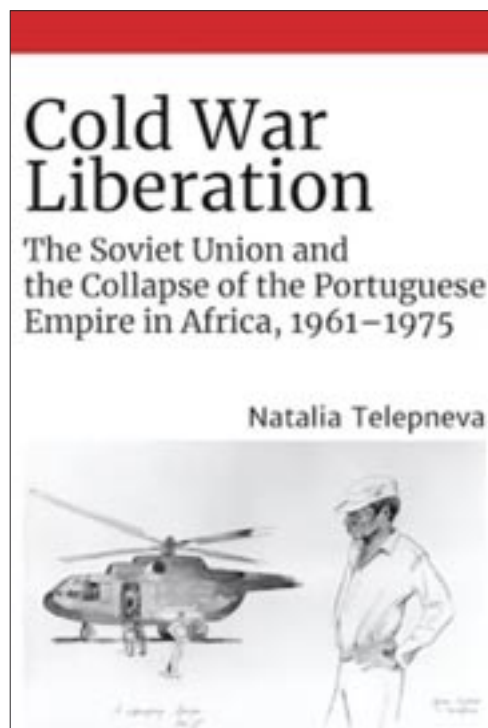
'I always enjoy reading Liberation, and ASLEF has supported the organisation since it was founded, as the Movement for Colonial Freedom, in 1954.'



Mick Whelan, general secretary, ASLEF
Dave Calfe, EC president, ASLEF
ASLEF THE TRAIN DRIVERS' UNION

book review/Cold War in Africa

This extraordinary exposure of the CIA's role in frustrating true independence in Africa and robbing it of its wealth is an important read for any student of African history and those who seek to support the future complete political and economic independence of that beautiful continent.



Two recently published books, one on the role in Africa of the US and the other on the Soviet Union on the continent provide greatly contrasting perspectives as well as significant additions to the historiology of Africa's plight under colonialism and its post-colonial years. In bringing together a vast wealth of previous research and newly available archive materials they plot in great detail the highs and lows of the

struggle for independence in Africa, writes **Bob Newland**



MANY TODAY argue that imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism are problems of the past. For me they remain very real. As recent events in Niger and her neighbours have highlighted, the distorted economic relationship between France and her former colonies continues but renewed efforts in many of them to redress the balance are frequently condemned by western observers. That of course is only a small part of the global reality.

These two recent publications: 'White Malice' and 'Cold War Liberation' provide an optic through which terrible historical events can enable us to see and understand many developments in Africa today.

Long struggles for independence followed the division of Africa between colonial powers at the Berlin Conference in 1884/5. These received an enormous boost following World War 2 when the United Nations' founding charter demanded an end to colonialism.

It was in this spirit that Ghana gained its independence in 1957 welcomed by its first President Kwame Nkruma in just sixteen words 'At long last the battle has ended and Ghana, our beloved country, is free for ever.' In 1958 Ghana hosted the All African People's Conference at which Nkrumah launched his vision of a United States of Africa.

Nkrumah was inspired by the victory of the United States (US) over British Colonialism and the unity of these former colonies which he believed were key to securing their ongoing independence. Sadly it was the US which proved the greatest enemy of African independence destroying the hopes of those heady days and leaving behind a continent striven by conflict and poverty.

Williams examines the attempts by Britain, France and Belgium to retain the valuable resources of their former colonies following independence and US efforts to supplant them. She focusses on Ghana and the Congo where CIA intervention is driven in general by anti-communism and specifically by US fears that the vast uranium reserves of the Congo might fall into the hands of the Soviet Union.

The CIA introduced many agents backed up by a vast network of CIA funded businesses, social and cultural organisations, publishing houses and journals. Williams tells a horror story of assassinations, military coups and corruption. Evidence of Eisenhower's consent to the assassination of Lumumba and direct CIA involvement in his kidnapping and murder is

shameful. Williams also suggests that it was a CIA plane which shot down the aircraft carrying UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld who the US believed to be too close to Nkrumah and other leaders of independent Africa.

Nkrumah's support for African liberation movements led the to the CIA determination to get rid of him. Having failed in several assassination attempts they organised a coup to overthrow him while he was overseas attempting to broker an end to the Vietnam War. Exiled in Egypt, Nkrumah subsequently died of leukaemia, a fate shared by other African revolutionaries. Williams identifies a programme of chemical warfare funded by the CIA which may well have been behind these premature deaths.

Many well know militants feature in the telling of this story including Franz Fanon, Paul Robeson and Malcolm X. Williams also confirms the involvement of the CIA in the arrest of Nelson Mandela in Pietermaritzburg following his return to South Africa after receiving military training overseas.

This extraordinary exposure of the CIA's role in frustrating true independence in Africa and robbing it of its wealth is an important read for any student of African history and those who seek to support the future complete political and economic independence of that beautiful continent.

What a contrasting story is told in 'Cold War Liberation'. This details the support by the Soviet Union and its allies for the armed struggles for the liberation of Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau from their Portuguese colonial masters.

Much of what it reports is well known. However, the author argues there is a different story behind the success and extent of Soviet assistance – the special relationship between Soviet representatives in Africa and the leaders of the liberation movements.

An important part of the story is the degree to which African agency is credited with the defeat of Portugal. This was no proxy war or foreign intervention. However, with the independence movements beginning in the 1950s it did take place in the context of the cold war. The author argues that the leaders of MPLA, FRELIMO and PAIGC worked together to exploit this and persuade the Soviet Union to provide them with substantial support.

African revolutionaries Cabral, Neto, Andrada and dos Santos developed a close relationship while studying in Lisbon. They were no puppets but a well-educated elite struggling for power in the countries whose independence they sought to achieve. Their involvement in Lisbon with the illegal Portuguese Communist Party and subsequent Soviet support probably influenced their political perspectives with a growing commitment to socialism much along the lines of the Soviet command model.

Khrushchev had considerable interest in African affairs and following his rise to power promoted a group of survivors of the Stalin purges, including Potekhin, Ponomarev and Shelepin, to key political and intelligence posts. They in turn developed a team who built personal relations with leaders of the liberation movements and became their sponsors.

Telepneva argues Soviet support was won and delivered by that mixed team made up of Soviet administrators, from Central Committee Departments, Diplomats, KGB officers and Military Intelligence (GRU), who acquired the title 'Mediators of Liberation'. She suggests they were able to win ever increasing support from Moscow for their African friends while the top Kremlin leadership had their eyes firmly focussed on events in the US.

While acknowledging Soviet support for national liberation movements in Africa was seen to reflect

its own interests the book argues that this was not a matter of Soviet expansionism but rather a reflection of the Soviet Communist Party's policy of proletarian internationalism. This convergence Telepneva suggests was well understood and effectively exploited by the African leaders.

Telepneva explores the wider issues of the Cold War including the impact of deteriorating Sino-Soviet relations on support and development of the struggles. She also reflects on divisions within the liberation movements and alternative figures and forces to those favoured by the Soviet Union.

Things did not always go smoothly between the African leaders and the Soviet Union. Internal divisions, regional politics and overspill from the Sino-Soviet dispute all contributed to ups and downs in support. Telepneva's access to newly released Russian archive materials provides a mass of detail including reports from KGB and GRU agents working alongside the liberation movements, diplomatic reports and political assessments from Soviet international committees and military sources.

Following the 1974 'Carnation Revolution' in Portugal most of its colonies negotiated their independence. Angolan independence was met with substantial opposition in a civil war where MPLA was confronted by US and South African sponsored armed forces. Eventually South Africa invaded and its forces threatened to overrun the Angolan defences.

Many readers will be aware of the extraordinary assistance to MPLA provided by Cuba whose army defeated the South African forces at Cuito Cuanavale in 1988. This led to the withdrawal of South African forces, consolidated the independence of Angola and prompted the start of negotiations between the Vorster Regime and the ANC leading eventually to the end of Apartheid. Telepneva uses a wide range of materials, including hitherto unavailable Soviet archives, to tell the unbelievably complex tale of the behind the scenes activities that made Cuban intervention possible.

Compared with the exposure of the appalling actions of the US against the African liberation movements in 'White Malice', 'Cold War Liberation' paints a powerful picture of internationalist support for them from the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. The detail of political, diplomatic and military engagement makes the book a valuable source of understanding a little explored aspect of the liberation struggles. Telepneva's style is easy to read making the book even more enjoyable.

It is rare that two books are published at the same time considering the same period of history from such contrasting perspectives. Together they provide a significant addition to the historiology of Africa's plight under colonialism and its post-colonial years. In bringing together a vast wealth of previous research and newly available archive materials they plot in great detail the highs and lows of the struggle for independence in Africa. I cannot recommend them too highly.

'White Malice, the CIA and the neocolonialism of Africa'. Susan Williams. Hurst Publishers London: Paperback £17.99 and 'Cold War Liberation, the Soviet Union and the Collapse of the Portuguese Empire in Africa, 1961-1975'. Natalia Telepneva. The University of North Carolina Press: Paperback \$35.95.

More book reviews are available on our website: liberationorg.co.uk/category/book-review. Do you love reading books? Are you a good writer? Interested in a reviewing a book for us? Get in touch at info@liberationorg.co.uk

Bob Newland is a former London Recruit and Liberation member

Chile coup/50th anniversary

The Popular Unity (Unidad Popular) government, led by Salvador Allende, had been elected in September 1970 on a programme of agrarian, industrial and educational reform aimed at moving the Chilean economy away from its reliance upon the international finance capital of the United States and towards a more self-sufficient socialist economic model.



Five decades on from 'the eleventh'

The experience of Chile demonstrates both the possibility of mounting a challenge to capitalism but also the extent to which imperialism will marshal its forces in order to resist such a challenge. The most important lesson is the need to combine electoral activity with extra-parliamentary action and

international solidarity, writes Steve Bishop



LONG BEFORE 9/11 became the widely accepted shorthand for the events of 11th September 2001 in the United States, "the eleventh" (el once) had for many years been the phrase used by the people of Chile, to refer to the CIA backed coup d'état on 11th September 1973, the 50th anniversary of which fell last month.

The Popular Unity (Unidad Popular) government, led by Salvador Allende, had been elected in September 1970 on a programme of agrarian, industrial and educational reform aimed at moving the Chilean economy away from its reliance upon the international finance capital of the United States and towards a more self-sufficient socialist economic model.

The electoral arithmetic was finely balanced from the first days of the new government with none of the three contesting parties having an overall majority. However, as head of the biggest coalition Allende was confirmed as President by Congress. This did not stop an immediate fall in share prices on the Santiago stock exchange, a run on the banks and an increase in the purchase of gold by those who could afford it.

The entrenched wealthy elite in Chile clearly feared the prospect of increased social spending, higher wages for the poor and new initiatives in health and nutrition, to improve the lives of those whose labour they previously exploited with impunity. Which is not to say that opposition to inequality in Chile only appeared on the day of Allende's election. On the contrary, active trade unions, supported by a strong Communist Party and socialist activists, had made gains for Chilean workers and were part of the groundswell that provided the basis for Allende's electoral success.

Copper was Chile's most valuable resource, providing more than 70% of the country's foreign exchange and was thus at the top of the new government's list for nationalisation. The ownership of copper was in the hands of two corporations, Kennecott and Anaconda, who were asked to pay nearly \$400 million between them to compensate the Chilean people for the excess profits they had made.

The two companies, having no recourse in the Chilean courts, resorted to suing the Chilean government in France, Germany, Sweden, Italy and in New York. The law suits undermined Chilean copper on the world market and the credit squeeze initiated by the US government, through discouraging international institutions and American banks from lending funds to Chile, put further pressure on the Chilean government. The fall in the world copper price by 35 cents per pound between

1970 and 1973 was a further disadvantage to the Allende government's ability to raise revenue.

Agrarian reform proved a challenge for the new government, not least due to resistance organised through the opposition Christian Democrats, resulting in a variety of different levels of agrarian infrastructure. However, the feudal hacienda of old was deconstructed remarkably quickly by the new government. Farms of 80 hectares or more accounted for 55% of the land in 1965 and this was reduced to a figure of 3% by 1972, indicating a significant redistribution of land and power in rural areas.

Alongside the nationalisation of copper, the government was also committed to bringing major companies in key economic sectors under government control. By 1973 the state controlled 80% of the country's industrial output, over 400 enterprises, and around 60% of Gross National Product. This was achieved in spite of the nationalisation programme being the most strongly resisted aspect of the government programme, particularly by the powerful financial conglomerates with entrenched interests in exploiting the Chilean economy.

Although the credit squeeze by the US was countered by bank credits from Western Europe, and loans and credits from China, the Soviet Union and Latin America, internal resistance to Allende's programme continued to undermine efforts to stabilise the economy and move it more decisively in a socialist direction.

Pressure from the right wing, the Catholic church and the military mounted in 1973, particularly in opposition to education reforms, which aimed to provide education towards development in a non-capitalist society recognising, "the proletarian struggle for sovereignty and independence which have been virtually ignored in traditional teaching, which serves the class interests of the oligarchy." For the church in particular this was seen as a departure from "Christian values", while military officers denounced the measure as an attempt to indoctrinate their children.

The political climate was further destabilised by the covert actions of the CIA, bankrolled to the tune of \$8 million by the US government, to support its operations and fund the opposition. By August 1973 this had resulted in a shift in personnel at the top of the armed forces, with General Augusto Pinochet being installed as Commander in Chief by the end of the month. By early September, with the green light they required

from the United States, the generals had agreed to overthrow the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende.

The tone of the Pinochet regime was set early on by the regime's first Interior Minister, General Oscar Bonilla, who told trade unionists "Stop using the word 'demand'; don't forget that this is a dictatorship."

The dictatorship quickly moved to round up the members of the socialist and communist parties which had formed Popular Unity. Thousands were herded into the national stadium in Santiago, many were summarily murdered by the regime, detention camps were opened, up and down the country, and many were forced to flee the terror into exile. By the end of the decade hundreds of thousands of Chileans had left the country.

By the end of 1973 Pinochet had instituted a new secret police force, the Directorate of National Intelligence (DINA), under his direct command, targeting communists in particular and setting up torture centres across the country. Although disbanded in 1977, to be replaced by the scaled down National Information Centre (CNI), the DINA had done its job in stamping terror as a key feature of the new regime. Not that the CNI let up on the work of the DINA entirely as murder, torture and disappearances continued to be a feature of life in Chile until the end of the military regime.

The physical brutality of the Pinochet regime was quickly matched by its economic brutality. Drawing upon the new monetarist orthodoxy emerging from the economics department of the University of Chicago, led by Prof Milton Friedman, Pinochet instituted a programme of neo-liberal austerity which resulted in rising prices and rampant unemployment, in an attempt to apply "shock treatment" to eliminate inflation. Public spending was reduced by more than a quarter, interest rates more than trebled and real wages crashed to 60% of their 1970 levels.

Chile returned to democratic elections free of military involvement in 1990. The heroic efforts of the Chilean people to free themselves from the control of the US financial institutions and international corporations from 1970-73 ultimately ended in defeat, due to the strength of the forces ranged against them. Their efforts should not be forgotten however.

The experience of Chile demonstrates both the possibility of mounting a challenge to capitalism as a system of economic organisation but also the extent to which imperialism will marshal its forces in order to resist such a challenge.

The Chilean experience contains many lessons but key are the need to combine electoral activity with extra-parliamentary action and international solidarity. In the final analysis however, the armed forces backing for the opposition to the government proved decisive, heralding the tragedy of the 17 year long Pinochet dictatorship.

Steve Bishop is a member of Liberation

Picture RIGHT: President Salvador Allende with poet Pablo Neruda who died in 1973, just days after the US-backed coup that deposed and murdered his friend. Although no conclusive proof has been found, this year a report by forensic scientists stated political prisoners in Chile were poisoned in the 1980s with the same toxin found in Neruda's blood.

Picture LEFT: Cathedral of Santiago de Chile. With Raúl Silva Henríquez, Cardinal: Allende's government aimed to provide education towards development in a non-capitalist society recognising, "the proletarian struggle for sovereignty and independence which have been virtually ignored in traditional teaching, which serves the class interests of the oligarchy." For the church in particular this was seen as a departure from "Christian values".

Liberation hero/Victor Jara

“Here alone are ten thousand hands which plant seeds and make the factories run. How much humanity exposed to hunger, cold, panic, pain, moral pressure, terror, and insanity? [...] What horror the face of fascism creates! [...] How hard it is to sing when I must sing of horror [...] To see myself among so much horror and so many endless moments in which silence and screams are the end of my song.”

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The Chilean people's musician and singer-songwriter

Fifty years on, as we watch again and listen to Victor Jara's performances, we can rejoice that Pinochet's fascists were unable, even through the barrel of a gun to silence him and that, through him, we have witnessed the power of the arts to win the people for justice, peace, and socialism, writes Liz Payne

IT IS HALF A CENTURY since the murder in Chile of the people's musician and singer-songwriter, Victor Jara. Arrested in Santiago the day after the 11 September 1973 coup against the socialist Popular Unity coalition government of Salvador Allende, the forty-year-old world-renowned artist was brutally tortured and executed by Pinochet's henchmen in the Estadio Nacional, the Stadium of Chile.

Victor Jara dedicated himself and his art to the cause of the struggling people of Chile and to the

programme of the first socialist government to be democratically elected to power in Latin America. From October 1970, the new government set about removing ownership and control of Chile's rich resources, including the copper mines, from its own wealthy elite and foreign international corporations, transforming public infrastructure and services to meet the needs of the masses and giving land to the destitute toilers who worked it. From the outset, the US plotted Allende's downfall, the CIA working hand in hand with the most reactionary elements of Chilean society. Their machinations culminated in the fascist coup of autumn '73 and initiated 17 years of dictatorship and the first disastrous experiment in the application of neoliberalism.

Just hours before his death, Victor composed his last poem, The Stadium of Chile. He was unable to dictate the final lines before his captors hideously silenced him in the basement of the sports complex. His words spoke of the stark contrast between what workers collectively can achieve and the horror that is fascism - as expressed in that place of incarceration and death:

“Here alone are ten thousand hands which plant seeds and make the factories run. How much humanity exposed to hunger, cold, panic, pain, moral pressure, terror, and insanity? [...] What horror the face of fascism creates! [...] How hard it is to sing when I must sing of horror [...] To see myself among so much horror and so many endless moments in which silence and screams are the end of my song.”

But it was of the people, their struggle, and their ultimate victory that Victor Jara sang until the end. After his arrest, his captors recognised their prisoner - one of the junta's most wanted. At the Stadium they broke his wrists and then his fingers so that he could never again pluck a guitar's strings. They subjected him to terrible beatings and then taunted him - “Now sing!” And in an act of defiance, Victor sang “Venceremos!” because he believed unwaveringly in the words he had written, which had become the song of the people, and the anthem of the Popular Unity government - “We shall win!”

When, in the wake of the coup, the junta's militia came to search the Isla Negra home of Pablo Neruda, whose poems Victor had set to music, the Nobel laureate famously told them, “There's only one thing here that's dangerous to all of you - Poetry.” In Victor's case, the most dangerous weapon was the power of his song.

Victor was exceptionally talented across the range of performing arts - a folk musician, singer,

songwriter, poet, and theatre director - whose deep connection with the people shone through everything he did. He possessed an extraordinary capacity for giving voice to their bitter experiences, concerns, hopes, aspirations, and struggle. As his wife Joan said, for him art and social justice were “one and the same”. In the words of the beautiful elegy, ‘Victor Jara’, penned by Adrian Mitchell and set to music by Arlo Guthrie (Amigo 1976): “He grew up to be a fighter against the people's wrongs. He listened to their grief and joy and turned them into songs.”

Joan Jara identified her husband in a morgue and testified to his horrific injuries - his beaten body, smashed and broken bones - and to the single shot to the head that killed him, as his captor played Russian roulette to torment him in his final moments. She left Chile for safety with their young daughters, Manuela and Amanda, smuggling out tapes of her husband's songs and ensuring, through both her testimony and his works, that his legacy would always live. Her moving account, *An unfinished song: The life of Victor Jara*, was first published in 1976.

Although Victor's last days have become a symbol and indictment of fascism, and how he lived those days an inspiration to people everywhere, we should never forget the gifts this exceptional human being brought to the movement through his art and politics throughout his life. He struggled for the things he loved. He once listed them - family, the earth, education, work, others who strive for the common good, justice, peace, and freedom “without yokes: neither ours nor foreign.”

He was in touch with the people and the soil from earliest childhood. The son of poor land workers, he was given the gift of music by his mother who played the guitar and sang. She it was who taught the boy the ancestral tunes and folk songs of her repertoire.

During his lifetime, Victor was not only famed in Chile but internationally. His work in theatre took him to the US and Britain, the Soviet Union and Cuba. But he increasingly devoted himself to music. Key influences were those folk artists, including Violeta Parra, who both collected and composed songs in traditional Andean form but reflective of people's contemporary everyday lives and experiences. He brought music to the people and put the people in his music. He sang across the world and, as he did so, others, including Joan Baez and Pete Seeger, brought his works to new audiences.

At home, prior to the victory of Salvador Allende, Victor used his art to promote the politics and aspirations of the Popular Unity coalition to mass audiences to whom he played free of charge. From this era comes the protest song, *Questions for Puerto Montt*, in condemnation of a “vile massacre” of people “fighting for their right to a plot of land to live” and *Prayer to a Labourer*, with humanist lyrics mirroring those of the Lord's Prayer, addressed not to god but workers - “We'll go together, united by blood. Today is the day we can make our future”. Jara performed it in 1969 at the first festival of the *Neuva Cancion Chilena* movement - in the same stadium in which he was later to die.

During the Popular Unity government's three years in office, Victor and Joan became its cultural ambassadors, key influencers in the reorientation of Chilean culture towards socialism and justice. Meanwhile Victor continued to perform in many countries, including in April 1972 in Moscow at the Young Pioneers' Palace and in Lima, Peru in July 1973 only weeks before his death.

Fifty years on, as we watch again and listen to Victor Jara's performances, we can rejoice that Pinochet's fascists were unable, even through the barrel of a gun to silence him and that, through him, we have witnessed the power of the arts to win the people for justice, peace, and socialism.

Liz Payne is a member of Liberation's Education Committee