The slogan is pithy—
Neoliberalismo nunca más
(Neoliberalism Never Again). It was
chanted in the streets of Santiago,
Chile; it was drawn on the walls in
Buenos Aires, Argentina; and in a
more sober register, it is mentioned
in a seminar in Mexico City,
Mexico.

Elections and protests rattle the
continent. The protest by Chilean
students against metro fees has now
become a general protest against the
government. In Colombia, the right
wing suffered significant defeats in
the local elections.

IMF Election
In Argentina, the electorate
tossed out the government of
Mauricio Macri, who had taken
his country to the International
Monetary Fund (IMF), produced
a harsh austerity budget, and then
disregarded the pain felt by his
compatriots. If Haiti and Ecuador
simmer with “IMF Riots,” Argentina
had an “IMF Election.” The incoming
government of Alberto Fernández
and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner
promises an exit from neoliberalism.
Argentina’s external debt is at about
$285 billion, just under $6,500 per
person. This foreign debt is almost
75 percent higher than when Macri
took office in 2015.

What Is Neoliberalism?
Forty years ago, the propertied
classes revolted against any social
democratic arrangement in their
countries. As a result of fears over
capitalist turbulence, Keynesians
argued that the state must intervene
to smooth over the instability of
the business cycle. Pressure from
the workers’ movements and the
Left forced governments to finance
social security, education, health
care, and elder care. Funds for state
intervention and for social spending
came—largely—from progressive
taxation. The rich no longer wanted
to make these payments. One of
the earliest countries to undergo a
neoliberal transformation was Chile.
As the rich withdrew from
taxation, governments—of a variety
of political persuasions—struggled
to fund their own borrowing and the
social spending won by the workers.
Multilateral organisations—such
as the IMF—and ratings agencies
punished countries that had high
deficits; this is why many countries
passed balanced budget amendments
that prevented borrowing to pay
for social spending. A combination
of the tax strike by the rich and the balanced budget amendment squeezed government spending.

To raise funds, governments did at least five things:

1. **Privatised public assets**—such as public banks, public utilities, and public lands.

2. **Commodified areas of social life.** Governments allowed private firms to charge money for the delivery of goods that had previously been seen as social and whose delivery was not for a fee—such as water and electricity.

3. **Deregulated business enterprises.** Governments eliminated regulations that protected the public from the excesses of profit-making—such as environmental pollution.

4. **Gave subsidies to big corporations.** To attract big corporations to their jurisdictions, governments began to provide massive subsidies to them—subsidies that were often larger than the funds laid out toward social services.

5. **Cut social spending.** Austerity budgets became the norm, with States cutting social security, education, health care, and elder care.

This remains the core of neoliberalism. It has wrecked the world. It is why they are saying “never again” to neoliberalism in the ballot box and on the streets of South America.

**Exit From Neoliberalism**

The new government in Argentina has pledged to abandon the road of austerity, to robustly fund the social commitments of the government, and to adopt a national development strategy. How it will do so with the massive debt overhang and the expected pressure from the creditors and the multilateral organisations is to be seen.

In Argentina, debates around the exit from neoliberalism have been ongoing. Among steps that the new government can take include suspending all subsidies to corporations, ordering an audit of each of these subsidies, and taking steps to seize money held by Argentinians in tax havens abroad. If subsidies to corporations are suspended and if taxes are collected, there should be enough money to finance not only food sovereignty schemes that tackle endemic hunger, but also cooperative production for food and goods.

We are in a period of transition.

**Bolivia: Morales Officially Wins Presidency**

On October 24, after counting 99.9% of votes, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal of Bolivia (TSE) declared Evo Morales as the official winner of the presidential elections held in the country on October 20.

Morales, of the Movement Towards Socialism (MAS), received 47.07% of votes and a lead of 10.56% over the second runner, Carlos Mesa of Citizen Community (CC), a center-right political coalition, who secured 36.51% of votes.

These results gave him the necessary winning margin over the second most voted candidate, established under Bolivian election law, to avoid a second round of voting and have an outright victory in the elections. For a candidate to be declared winner, Bolivia's electoral law requires 50% or more of the votes plus one, or more than 40% of the votes with a 10 percent advantage over the second placed candidate.

The TSE clarified that 0.01% of votes, which had been voided in the region of Beni with new voting scheduled for November, would not be enough to change the outcome of the election.

With this victory, President Morales democratically wins Bolivia’s presidency for the fourth consecutive time and becomes Latin America’s longest serving president.

In third place is the Presbyterian pastor of Korean origin Chi Hyun Chung, of the Christian Democratic Party who took away 8.78 percent of the vote.

(Upendra Prakash is an Indian historian, editor and journalist. This article has been edited by us.)

**Janata** is available at www.lohiatoday.com
Tensions have been rising in Bolivia following the general elections conducted on October 20. The right-wing opposition has refused to recognise the results which saw president Evo Morales of the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) win 47.07% of the votes cast to clinch a first-round victory over Carlos Mesa of the Citizen Community alliance who won 36.52%. Opposition sectors have claimed that as initial results indicated that a run-off election would be necessary, electoral fraud was committed in order to give Morales the 10-point margin he needed to win in the first round.

However, since then, the already divided opposition has been fumbling to arrive at a united position and demands with regards to the elections. Their lack of coherency has illustrated that the true intentions of the opposition is not to defend Bolivian democracy and democratic institutions, but to push for regime change and engender chaos.

For example, in response to growing tensions with regard to the results, the Bolivian government invited the Organisation of American States (OAS) to carry out an audit of the electoral process in order to verify the validity and legitimacy of the results. This audit began on October 31. Though the OAS had spoken out the day after the elections on October 21 and called for a second round of polls, showing a clear bias against Morales, several sectors of the opposition declared that they reject this audit.

Initially, presidential candidate Carlos Mesa accepted the OAS audit as his position has consistently been to insist on holding run-off elections. However, after meeting with Fernando Camacho, the leader of the opposition in Santa Cruz, which is the stronghold of anti-Morales forces, Mesa announced that he rejected the audit by the OAS. If they really believed that fraud was committed, why would they reject the audit, especially when the auditor is anything but pro-Morales?

In the meantime, opposition sectors across the country have been escalating pressure on the streets to support their demands for the annulment of the results. Juan Ramón Quintana, the minister of the presidency in Bolivia, told Marco Teruggi of Sputnik News that “What we are seeing is a path to a coup that is being unveiled in an intense way and at different speeds in all of the national territory.”

The night after the elections, violent opposition “shock” groups burned the offices of the electoral authority in Potosi, Sucre and Tarija. In the city of Santa Cruz, the office of the electoral authority office was burned down on October 22 and since then, the city has seen consistent violent mobilisations, other actions of sabotage, and a national strike.

Small-scale protests have also been held in other cities, and recently, the capital, La Paz, has become the epicenter of the opposition protests. However, it is not just the right-wing that has been mobilising. Several massive mobilisations have been carried out in support of Evo Morales and his victory in the latest elections, and to denounce the ongoing coup effort. On October 28, thousands of people from peasant movements, youth movements, miners’ unions, and Indigenous movements took to the streets in El Alto, a largely Indigenous, working-class city neighboring La Paz and a historic base of MAS, to defend their votes and the results.

Thousands of miners mobilised in La Paz on October 29 and one of the central chants—“Mesa, thief, we won’t forget October”—refers to the massacre which occurred in El Alto on October 11, 2003 during the “gas war,” while Mesa was vice-president, and more than 80 people were killed and hundreds injured.

On October 30, an even larger mobilisation was carried out and thousands of miners, Indigenous people, neighborhood organisations, youth activists and citizens marched from El Alto down to La Paz in support of Evo Morales. The chant “Evo you are not alone dammit!” was the central cry of the people.

The following day, on October 31, thousands arrived at La Paz from different parts of the country to join mobilisations in support of Evo Morales. In light of the growing attacks from the opposition, participants of the mobilisation decided to stay overnight in a vigil at Plaza Murillo which is the center of political life in the capital and where the presidential palace and the National Congress of Bolivia are located.
Later in the day, sectors of the opposition in La Paz gathered to hold a ‘cabildo’ or an open meeting where several resolutions regarding their position and demands were approved. These included the demand that the elections be annulled, the resignation of Evo Morales, the rejection of the audit of the OAS, a call for new elections, the creation of a new Supreme Electoral Tribunal, and to “radicalise the pressure mechanisms.”

Following the cabildo, opposition protesters decided to march towards Plaza Murillo and attempted to violently break through the line of police protecting the MAS supporters and miners who had camped there overnight. The violent clashes involving explosions of dynamite and fireworks set off by opposition protesters lasted until midnight.

Government authorities and people’s movements in Bolivia have warned that tensions are escalating every day and it is nearing a coup-like scenario. Both Evo Morales and vice-president Álvaro García Linera have denounced the intentions of the right-wing opposition to engender chaos and destabilise the country with violent protests and strikes.

Juan Ramón Quintan told Teruggi that “There is no doubt that it is a coup financed by the United States, they have learned to move their pieces well, especially to sustain a narrative against the government.” He added that “Bolivia will convert into a great battlefield, a modern Vietnam because here the social organisations have found a horizon to reaffirm their autonomy, sovereignty, identity.”

Internationally, people’s movements and political leaders have also rallied behind Evo Morales and in defense of Bolivian democracy. On October 31, a Twitter storm was held with the trending hashtag #EvoPresidenteLegítimo (Evo Legitimate President) and people from across the world joined to lend their support to Morales and the process of change in the country and to reject the ongoing coup attempts.

Zoe PC is a journalist and reports on people’s movements in Latin America. She is also associated with Congreso de los Pueblos in Colombia.)

**Argentina Says: ‘Bye Macri!’**

Center-left candidate Alberto Fernández and his vice president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner of the Frente de Todos (The Front for All) coalition defeated the neoliberal president Mauricio Macri in the general elections held in Argentina on October 27. After counting 97% of the votes, the Fernández ticket received 48.1% of the votes, while Macri received 40.4%, giving the progressive leaders the necessary margin to avoid a second round of election.

According to Argentine constitution, in order to have an outright victory, a candidate needs more than 45% of the votes or more than 40% with a 10% lead over the second-place runner.

The new president thanked the people for their support and vowed to build a better Argentina. “Thanks again to all the people who accompanied and supported us during these months. Now, it is time for us to work together to build the Argentina we dream of. An Argentina for everyone. An Argentina on its own feet,” tweeted Fernández.

The incumbent president, Mauricio Macri, recognised the election results and congratulated his political rival and the new president of the country. Fernández will assume office as the president of Argentina on December 10 for a four-year term.

Leaders from several Latin American countries, including Bolivia, Venezuela, Cuba and Mexico, and from across the globe, congratulated the newly elected president of Argentina after his victory in the general elections, and highlighted the symbolic importance of the defeat of the neoliberal, right-wing in Argentina.

Another key defeat of Macrismo was given in the Buenos Aires provincial elections where Axel Kicillof of Frente de Todos defeated incumbent Maria Eugenia Vidal of the Juntos por el Cambio coalition. Over 33.8 million Argentinians had the opportunity to vote in the general elections to elect the president and vice president, 24 senators and 130 representatives to the Chamber of Deputies.

Tens of thousands of people celebrated the defeat of Macrism and approached the campaign bunker of Fernández on Sunday night, where they were addressed by the new president, new vice president and the new governor of Buenos Aires province.

“I want to thank all the Argentine people on this historic day for democracy,” said Alberto Fernández.
“The only thing that matters is that the Argentinians stop suffering once and for all,” he added.

“I want to thank the hundreds of thousands of anonymous citizens who have resisted” and because of which “Today, Alberto is the president of all Argentinians,” said Cristina Kirchner in her speech at the bunker.

“The panorama we have after the government of Macri and Vidal is of scorched earth,” said governor Kicillof. He announced that “a stage of reconstruction of the province is coming” and promised “we will govern with everyone and for everyone.”

The triumph of Fernández represents the triumph of the progressive, pro-people, anti-neoliberal, and anti-imperialist tendency against the neoliberal, militaristic, racist, xenophobic, pro-US imperialist and anti-Venezuelan tendency represented by Macri in Argentina, Bolsonaro in Brazil, Piñera in Chile, Moreno in Ecuador, and Duque in Colombia.

Fernández comes to the government in a difficult scenario nationally and regionally. Macrism has been democratically thrown out of power, but it has left the country in a serious economic crisis. Over 40% of the Argentine population lives below the poverty line, unemployment has increased by more than 10%, the Argentine peso devalued 566% since Macri took office in December 2015, and the country is under the dark shadow of the loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The public institutions of Argentina as well as government ministries and departments have also been gutted and dismantled, as per IMF diktats to cut costs. As such, the new government faces a tough challenge of stabilising and structurally reforming a country in a deep institutional, political, social and economic crisis.

(People’s Dispatch is an international media organisation whose mission is to highlight voices from people’s movements and organisations across the globe.)

Courtesy: People’s Dispatch

A New Progressive Movement Scores Landslide Local Victories in Colombia

Will Freeman

Editorial note: In October 2019, Colombia held its first local and regional elections since the 2016 signing of the peace deal between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), which ended a gruesome half century of civil war. The right wing suffered significant defeats in the local elections. Among the important victories won by progressive forces was the election of Claudia López as the mayor of Bogota city. Claudia López is the first woman, the first gay woman, the first gay woman from the Green Party to win the post. The mayor of Bogotá is considered to be the second most important person in Colombia after the country’s president. López’s election to office marks a significant moment for the women and girls of Colombia.

Decades of conflict have subjected Colombian women and girls to gross human rights abuses, including murder, displacement, physical, emotional and sexual harassment and rape.

In the town of Turbaco, near Cartagena, a former guerrilla from the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)—Guillermo Torres or “Julian Conrado”, won the mayor’s post. This is the first time that FARC—which had been in an armed struggle for over half a century—won such a significant election.

But the most significant of these gains came in the most unlikely of all places ...

On October 27, Colombians went to the polls to elect new governors and mayors in what many see as a referendum on the administration of right-wing president Iván Duque and the powerful regional political families that support him. In major cities like Bogotá, Medellín, and Cali, voters rejected politics as usual and put alternative candidates like Claudia López and Jorge Iván Ospina in office.

However, one of the most significant progressive gains came in the least likely of places: the coastal department of Magdalena. There, a growing political movement, Fuerza Ciudadana, held onto the capital city, Santa Marta, while also winning control of the governorship for the first time—in both cases defeating their establishment rivals by almost two-to-one margins.

The triumph of Magdalena’s governor-elect and leader of Fuerza
Ciudadana, Carlos Caicedo, marks a radical break with the past in Colombia’s Caribbean coast: a region where a small handful of traditional politicians ruled hand in hand with paramilitaries through the mid-2000s, all but eliminating the organised left. Indeed, across Colombia, alternative politicians have rarely gained control of both departmental governments and their capital cities.

As surprising as Fuerza Ciudadana’s victories might seem, they didn’t materialise overnight. Instead, they come as the culmination of nearly two decades of grassroots movement-building. If Colombia’s recent election results are any indication, progressives may have a new lease on life at the local level. But to build support and eventually govern, they will need to overcome legal and extra-legal battles every bit as daunting as the ones Caicedo and his allies have faced in Magdalena.

The story of Fuerza Ciudadana shows how local oppositions can emerge against the odds, and the challenges they should be prepared to face.

**Opposition Against the Odds**

Twenty years ago, if a political expert were to guess where the Colombian Left might one day establish a local stronghold, the city of Santa Marta would fall at the bottom of the list. From Colombia’s colonial era to the passage of its 1991 constitution, a small handful of traditional families held a virtual monopoly on political power in the city and department, trading control of the governorship and various city halls while building vast fortunes. While the advent of local elections put alternative mayors in office in cities like Bogotá, Pasto, and even neighbouring Barranquilla, politics in Santa Marta barely changed at all.

To make matters worse, from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s, the local Left also faced violent suppression by paramilitary groups. The parapolítica scandal—an investigation into ties between paramilitary leaders and right-wing politicians that broke in 2008—implicated more members of Congress from Magdalena than from any other department.

Faced with elite-run political machines and paramilitary violence, by the early 2000s Magdalena’s local progressive organisations had largely disappeared. "People made themselves invisible to protect themselves," explained Fabian Bolaño, a veteran Fuerza Ciudadana campaign strategist. However, at the University of Magdalena, Carlos Caicedo began to lay the foundation for a new political movement.

Caicedo, a lawyer and left-wing activist from rural Magdalena, became rector of the department’s bankrupt public university in 1996. In just a few years, he won the praise of the Ministry of Education for turning it into one of the country's best. At the same time, he also transformed the university into an enclave of opposition. As Fuerza Ciudadana leader Carlos Payares described, the university "became like an island" where students and faculty could speak out against Magdalena’s increasingly violent and undemocratic politics.

After leading a protest vote against Magdalena’s paramilitary-sponsored governor—Trino Luna—Caicedo and a group of opposition-minded students began to meet regularly, adopting the name "Fuerza Ciudadana." “We were the only opposition,” Caicedo explained. Opposing Magdalena’s traditional political class came with its consequences. In 2007, Governor Luna pressured the local comptroller’s office to investigate Caicedo for corruption, placing him under house arrest.

It would take almost five years for a Bogotá appeals court to clear Caicedo's name, eventually ruling that he had been wrongfully convicted. But those years did not go to waste. From his home, Caicedo began to plan an ambitious agenda of reforms for Santa Marta. Shortly after his release, he entered the running for the 2011 mayoral election with the slogan, "If we did it in the University, we can do it in Santa Marta.” Then he took his campaigns to the streets, walking Santa Marta’s marginalised barrios every day to listen to voters’ grievances and explain his reform agenda.

Esteban Hernandez, another leader in the movement, recalls that on election day, few—even among Fuerza's ranks—expected Caicedo could win: "We had seven or eight taxis that drivers lent us to bring voters to the polls, and we were watching the other side with buses and vans full of people." Yet even though Caicedo's establishment rival monopolised media coverage and engaged in widespread vote buying, Caicedo came out ahead by an impressive margin.

Most credit the election victory to a protest vote against the city's traditional politicians, who let public services collapse and infrastructure crumble. As Payares explained, "We benefited from people's disenchantment. But that doesn't mean the next part was easy for us." For Caicedo and his allies, winning
office was just the beginning. To carry out their proposed reforms, they would have to overcome a daunting series of obstacles to governance one by one.

Reforming Santa Marta and the Reaction

From his first month in office, Caicedo faced an all-out attempt by existing powers to block his ability to govern. While the recently elected city council— dominated by establishment politicians— refused to approve any budget proposal he put forward, an organised crime syndicate Caicedo had pledged to combat, the Urabeños, carried out an armed strike that shut down the main avenues of the city.

On top of these problems, the city had contracted out its basic public services and tax collection years before to private companies, tying the hands of any new administration. "The department was captured by mafias," Caicedo summed up, "and we didn't have the council members or the public administration at our service."

Nonetheless, Caicedo and his team used a set of innovative strategies to achieve governability. First, although the city council continued to stonewall Caicedo's access to the municipal budget, he launched and won a legal battle to take back control of local tax collection. At the same time, his administration organised dozens of public works committees. By bringing together neighbours to help plan small projects like roads and parks, these groups both kickstarted infrastructure projects and generated bottom-up pressure on city council members: either go along with Caicedo's popular proposals, or risk getting voted out by increasingly well-organised constituents.

As the 2015 local elections approached, electoral pressure on city council members kicked in and Fuerza Ciudadana finally assembled the majority support necessary to govern. What followed was an explosion of public works and new social programs, from dozens of new parks, roads, schools, and property titles to "Equity Fairs" that brought health and education services directly to low-income residents. Campaigning on the promise to continue with the reforms, Caicedo's successor, Rafael Martínez, won a second term for Fuerza Ciudadana with the highest vote in the city's history.

As mayor, Martínez completed many of the public works and programs Caicedo had started, becoming the third-most popular mayor in Colombia. At the same time, Caicedo built Fuerza Ciudadana's presence on a regional— and then national— scale, organising support for the 2016 peace agreement referendum and later for his 2018 presidential bid. As the movement's national profile rose, however, its battles at home only intensified.

Colombia's institutions of public control are set up to investigate and punish administrative wrongdoing. Perhaps because at the local level they are appointed by department and city elected officials, however, these accountability institutions have tended to bias their investigations toward alternative local politicians, sometimes leading to their removal from office. Magdalena is no exception. In 2018, the Attorney General's office opened an investigation targeting Martínez on suspicion of irregular public contracting that placed him under house arrest in March of this year. Although Fuerza Ciudadana was entitled to submit a shortlist of interim mayors from its own ranks, President Iván Duque exploited a loophole in the law to temporarily install an appointee of his own: ironically, his National Secretary of Transparency, Andrés Rugeles.

As soon as he arrived to the city hall, Rugeles dismissed almost all members of Fuerza Ciudadana's cabinet and led the National Directorate of Intelligence on an exhaustive search of city records for evidence of wrongdoing. The takeover, falling just months before local campaigns were to begin, delivered a serious blow to Fuerza Ciudadana. While none of its leaders have been convicted of corruption, some worried that losing city hall might shake their constituents' confidence in the integrity of the movement.

In the end, the intervention from Bogotá produced the opposite effect. In July, a judge revoked Martínez's house arrest sentence and returned him to office, leading many in the city to celebrate what they saw as an end to unfair outside meddling. At the same time, Fuerza Ciudadana launched its candidates: movement leader Virna Johnson for mayor of Santa Marta and Caicedo for governor.

If retaining Santa Marta's city hall began to seem increasingly likely, winning the governorship looked like a longshot. As several movement strategists commented, campaigning in rural Magdalena came with its own set of challenges, from entrenched patterns of vote-buying to intimidation by ex-paramilitaries. Regardless, in the months leading up to the October vote, Caicedo and his caravan
appeared in a different municipality of the department almost every day. As Payares explained, "What we have learned is that you can't leave politics up to fate."

On October 27, as votes came in, the results quickly became clear. While Johnson won in Santa Marta with the city's highest ever vote count, Caicedo captured nearly sixty percent of votes in the department and came out ahead in 26 of Magdalena’s 32 municipalities. Barring the very real threat that Magdalena's traditional politicians may find a way to push forward open investigations against Caicedo, he and Johnson will become the first alternative politicians to hold both posts in any department on the Caribbean coast: positions that will allow them collaborate to carry their inclusive model of governance beyond Santa Marta's city limits.

Colombia’s latest local elections paint a mixed picture for progressive forces. Traditional politics prevailed in many departments, and by any standard Magdalena figures as an outlier. Still, if the polls serve as any indicator, elite-controlled regional machines might be starting to break down, opening up space for new progressive movements. Whether or not such movements can take advantage of these opportunities and survive is uncertain. To the extent they follow Fuerza Ciudadana’s playbook, they may stand a good chance.

(Will Freeman is a Politics PhD candidate at Princeton University, where he studies local democracy and political opposition in Latin America.)

Chile and Her History of Western Interference

Peter Koenig

Chile is experiencing the largest and most serious political crisis and public unrest throughout Santiago and the country’s major cities, since the return to ‘democracy’ in 1990. A weekend of fire, teargas and police brutality, left at least 20 people dead, thousands arrested and injured. More than 1.2 million people protested on October 25 in the Streets of Chile’s capital, Santiago, not just against the 4% hike in metro-fares. That was the drop that brought the glass to overflow. Years, decades of neoliberal policies, brought hardship and poverty—and inequality to Chileans. Chile is the country with the world’s third largest inequality in wealth, with a Gini coefficient of close to 0.50 (zero = everybody has the same, 1.0 = one person possesses everything).

Important for Chileans to understand is not to believe President Sebastian Piñera’s smooth talk and compromising words. Whatever he says and apparently does in term of backtracking from his neoliberal policies is sheer deviation propaganda. Many of these policies he already initiated during his first term (2010–14). They were kept alive by Madame Michelle Bachelet (2014–18) under pressure from the Chilean financial system which remains closely linked (and funded) by Wall Street—and, of course, by her IMF advisers. Continuing Piñera’s job, she helped further dollarise Chile to the tune of 70%, meaning that Chilean’s banks finance themselves on the US dollar markets, mostly in New York and London, rather than on the local peso market.

A healthy economy finances itself largely from nationally earned and accumulated capital. But more often than not, national oligarchs who possess this capital earned locally invest it outside their countries, as they trust more in foreign markets than in their own country. This is classic in many developing countries and particularly in Latin America, where the elite still—or again, after a brief democratic center-left respite in the 1990s and early 2000—looks for success and capital gains to the northern masters in Washington.

Madame Bachelet was effectively bought by the system. A former socialist—having seen her father suffer under the Pinochet regime—she has become a sad turncoat. She demonstrated her ‘conversion’ once again more recently by her recent report on Venezuela’s Human Rights—which was a travesty of the truth—a sham, full of lies and omissions.

Since 2018, it’s again President Piñera, who is hellbent to complete his neoliberal project. Sebastian Piñera is one of the richest people in Latin America with a net worth of close to 3 billion dollars. How could he even remotely imagine what it is, having to take the subway every day to go to work, depending on pensions which are gradually reduced under his austerity programs, having to pay school tuition for a public service which is free in most countries and being subject to privatised health services—let alone, steadily depressed salaries and rising unemployment. Mr. Piñera has no clue.
Only 24 hours before the mass-protests started about a week ago throughout Chile, Piñera prided himself in public of leading the politically and economically most stable and secure country, the world’s largest copper producer, where foreign investors were keen to place their money, a “paradise island”, he called Chile, adding the country was a model for all of Latin America.

Did he really not sense what was happening? How his austerity measures—plus privatising everything—was hurting and infuriating his compatriots to the point of no return? Or did he simply ignore it, thinking it may go away, people will continue swallowing economic tightening as they have done before?

As Piñera’s popularity has slumped to an all-time low of 14%, and protests erupted every day to a higher level, he started using people-friendly language and tone, promising increasing minimum wages, pensions and unemployment benefits. In a move to court the working class, on Monday 28 October he reshuffled his cabinet, replacing 8 of his Ministers with more “people-friendly” officials—but it was too little too late.

He addressed the people in a televised speech from the Presidential Palace, La Moneda, saying, “Chile has changed, and the government must change with it to confront these new challenges”. Nobody seemed to take these empty words seriously, as the masses assembled in front of La Moneda asking for Piñera’s resignation. The UN is sending a team to investigate Human Rights abuses by police and military. While Argentinians waited for regular general elections (27 October 2019) to oust their western-imposed neoliberal lynchpin president Macri, it is not likely that Chileans will have the patience to wait until 2022.

Ever increasing inequality and skyrocketing cost of living reached a point of anger that can hardly be appeased with Piñera’s apparent promises for change. For at least 80% of the people these conciliatory words are not enough—they don’t believe in a system led by a neoliberal multi-billionaire who has no idea on how common people have to make a living. They don’t believe in change from this government. It is highly possible, they won’t let go until Piñera is gone. They see what was happening in neighbouring Argentina and don’t want to face the same fate.

Let’s just look at a bit of history. Going way back to the War of the Pacific, also known as the Saltpeter War confronting Chile with the Bolivian–Peruvian alliance, Chile counted with strong support from the UK—supplying war ships, weaponry and military advice. The war lasted from 1879 to 1884 and centered on Chilean claims of Bolivian’s coastal territories, part of the Atacama Desert, rich in saltpeter, coveted by the Brits. Thanks to the British military and logistics support, Chile won the war and Bolivia lost her access to the Pacific, making her a landlocked country. The Government of Evo Morales today is still fighting for Pacific Sea access in The Hague. Peru lost also part of her resources-rich coast line, Arica and Tarapacá.

Fast forward to 11 September 1973—the Chilean 9/11—instigated by the West, again. To be precise by Washington. In the driver’s seat of this fatal coup that changed Chile as of this day—and counting—if Piñera is not stopped—was Henry Kissinger. At the time leading up to the CIA instigated coup, and during the coup, Kissinger was US National Security Advisor. Kissinger was sworn in a Secretary of State 11 days after the coup—22 September 1973; a decent reward for who is today the biggest war criminal still alive.

The murderous coup, followed by almost 20 years of brutal military rule by Augusto Pinochet (1973 to 1990), with torture, killings, human rights abuses left and right—was accompanied by an atrocious economic regime imposed by Washington hired so-called “Chicago Boys”—ruining the country, privatising social services, national infrastructures and natural resources—except for Chile’s and the world’s largest copper mine, CODELCO which was not privatised during the Pinochet years. The military would not allow it—for reasons of “national security”.

The large majority of the population was put under constant surveillance and threat of punishment / abuse if they would protest and not “behave” as Pinochet ordered. Pinochet, along with the western directed financial sector turned Chile into a largely impoverished, complacent population.

The British empire, and later the American empire, was always influential in Chile, expanding its influence and exploitation mechanism to Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Argentina, Brazil and Venezuela. But then, in the late 1990s and early 2000, Latin America stood up, democratically electing her own leaders, most of them left / center-left, a thorn in the eye of Washington.
How could America’s “Backyard” become independent? Impossible! Hence the renewal of the Monroe Doctrine—which emanated from President James Monroe (1817–1825), forbidding Europeans to interfere in any American territory. The Monroe principle has now been expanded to not allowing any foreign nation to even do business with Latin America, let alone forming political alliances.

While within a few years of the early 2000s, most of Latin America has been converted into puppets of the United States, Venezuela and Cuba stand tall. They are the cornerstones, not to fall. They will be the pillars from where a new sovereign Latin America will rise. The Monroe Doctrine will not hold for a falling US empire. Meanwhile, peace seeking Russia and China are closely associating with South America, commercially as well as militarily, helping to rebuild and defend its sovereignty.

In addition, people living under neoliberal regimes, under western financial and IMF-imposed killer austerity programs, are waking up, demonstrating and protesting in Ecuador and Argentina—in the latter country, they have recently disposed of the US-imposed neoliberal despot, President Mauricio Macri, in democratic elections. Now, Chile’s population is angry. Their patience is collapsing, their fear is gone. They want justice. They want to choose their leader freely—and it is not Sebastian Piñera.

Chileans’ fury is not just directed at Piñera’s latest distasteful economic and financial austerity measures. They still suffer from measures dating back to the Pinochet area—measures that did not change even under the so-called socialist Madame Bachelet. The Pinochet Constitution of 1980, under pressure from Chicago-educated advisors, the IMF and the dollar-based banking system, imposed a culture of economic neoliberalism and ideological conservatism. These key parameters, remnants from that epoch, are still valid as of this day:

**Education:** Chile has the most privatised and segregated education system of the 65 countries that use the OECD student evaluation standard, PISA (Program for International Student Assessment). In Chile higher education (university level) is not a right. In 1981 Pinochet privatised most of the higher education institutions, giving access mainly to students from privileged families.

**Health:** In 1979 Pinochet created the Preventive Health Institutions, administered by private financial institutions, providing services that most Chileans cannot afford, replacing the former publicly financed health system.

**Public Transportation:** Chile has one of the most expensive public transport systems in all of Latin America. It’s run by private for-profit concessionaries. In Chile a metro ride costs the equivalent of $1.13, in Brazil $0.99, in Colombia $0.67, in Argentina $0.43. Mr. Piñera’s recent 4% tariff increase was just the trigger for a much larger discontent.

**Abortion:** Since 1939 voluntary and secure abortion was possible in Chile. In 1989 Pinochet made abortion under whatever circumstances a criminal delict.

**Pensions:** In 1980 Pinochet abandoned the old public system based on solidarity among pensioned adults and handed the accumulated funds to newly created and privately run AFPs (Administrations of Pension Funds), groups of private administrators of funds accumulated entirely by workers (no contributions by employers).

**“Carabineros” (Chilean Police Officers):** Under Pinochet, Carabineros have been given powers with military characteristics. They have constantly and with impunity violated human rights. For years civil society groups have requested successive governments to change this to regular police officers, who respect human dignity and human rights. So far to no avail, as demonstrated by police interference in the most recent protests.

These Pinochet leftovers will no longer be accepted and tolerated by Chileans. Chile’s population, and in particular, the more than 1.2 million protesting in Santiago last Friday, are requesting nothing less than Piñera’s resignation and a people’s elected Constitutional Assembly to build a new country with less, much less inequality, more social justice—and, especially without any remaining “Pinochetismo”—which today is still very present under Sebastian Piñera, who sent the military to control the mass demonstrations in Santiago and other large cities. Chileans are clearly saying, these days are over: we want our country back—we reclaim our national political and economic sovereignty—no more western interference.

(Peter Koenig is an economist and geopolitical analyst, who lectures at universities in the US, Europe and South America.)
Haitians Commemorate Liberator Dessalines with Huge Mobilisations

Hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets across Haiti on October 17 to commemorate the national revolutionary and liberator Jean-Jacques Dessalines and to demand the resignation of United States-backed president Jovenel Moïse.

Several huge mobilisations occurred across the country demanding an end to Moïse’s anti-people, corrupt and neoliberal government.

Starting early in the morning, important roads and highways in the capital Port-au-Prince and other departments were blocked by the protesters with barricades and burning tyres. Almost all civil, commercial, governmental and transportation activities were paralysed.

Large-scale demonstrations were held in the entire metropolitan region of Port-au-Prince, with the [communes] of Delmas, Petionville, Tabarre and Croix-des-Bouquets being some of the hottest points. At the airport crossing on Delmas Avenue, hundreds of people gathered to pay tribute to the victims of police repression in the last four weeks of protests. They placed photos of the victims on a wall and held a religious voodoo ceremony in their honour.

Another huge demonstration was held in the capital of the Northwest Department [state], Port-de-Paix, called for by the Patriotic Forum, which brings together more than 60 peasants, workers, women, students, youth and human rights organisations. Similar mobilisations were organised in all ten departments across the country.

The day of huge national mobilisation coincided with the 213th anniversary of the assassination of Jean-Jacques Dessalines, an important leader of the 1804 Haitian Revolution and considered the “Father of the Nation”. Every year, hundreds of thousands of people mobilise on this day to commemorate his life and revolutionary contribution to the country.

The uninterrupted anti-government protests, triggered by a fuel shortage in the country, are in their fifth week now. Since September 16, Haitians have been on the streets daily, demanding that Moïse resign. They see him as one of the principal actors responsible for plunging the country into deep social, political and economic crisis as well as for embezzling US$3.8 billion in PetroCaribe funds, offered to Haiti by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to finance its economic and social development.

Fuel crisis

The fuel crisis has worsened and led to a humanitarian crisis in regions where water and food supplies are not reaching the people.

On October 16, after a month of demonstrations against his misgovernance, Moïse broke his silence and addressed the nation. Surprisingly, he took responsibility for the crisis facing the country, but refused to step down. “It would be irresponsible of me to resign,” he said.

In response, both sectors of the opposition, the social movements and trade unions strengthened their calls for people to continue mobilising and demanding Moïse’s resignation.

On October 17, four of the seven members of the Dialogue Commission resigned. The government commission was recently created to engage in dialogue with the opposition, to find a solution to the crisis. The members said that one of the conditions of the commission was that everything, including the president’s resignation, would be raised at the negotiating table. However, they claimed that Moïse’s speech invalidated the work undertaken by the commission.

In the past month of intense protests, more than 20 people have been killed and more than 200 injured by heavy police repression. According to the National Network in Defense of Human Rights, more than 77 people have been killed this year during anti-government protests, excluding those in recent weeks.

Many incidents of police repression were registered on October 17 as well. The social movements denounced this aggression and reiterated their call for the establishment of a transitional government that would implement economic reforms according to the needs of the population.

UN interference

On October 17, the United Nations Integrated Office (BINUH) also began its one-year mandate in Haiti. The new political mission aims to help the government and police in their efforts to maintain law and order in the country. It was established by the UN Security Council through a resolution passed in June this year. The office is said to be the replacement for the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH).

The UN’s intervention in Haiti began in 2004 when the Security Council approved the Stabilisation Mission (MINUSTAH) to deal with political violence, impunity and proliferation of crime, following the second coup against the democratically-elected president Jean-Bertrand Aristide. This was replaced in 2017 by the MINUJUSTH, with the aim of strengthening the institutions of the Caribbean country. Both the
MINUSTAH and the MINUJUSTH have been accused of committing atrocious human rights violations. The BINUH is nothing but a new face of international interference.

Thousands of protesters marched to the headquarters of the UN, located next to the Toussaint Louverture International Airport in the capital, on October 4, to denounce its support for the current government—which came into power after the fraudulent elections of November 2016.

The government is also supported by the US and the Core Group, made up of the UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative, the Ambassadors of Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Spain, the European Union and the US, and the Special Representative of the Organisation of American States.

Haiti is the most impoverished and unequal country in Latin America and the Caribbean. More than 80% of the country’s population live below the poverty line and unemployment is presently more than 70%. Years of dictatorship, foreign military occupation, political instability, systematic corruption and racism towards the nation, harsh international sanctions and the devastating 2010 earthquake have systematically aggravated the crisis.

However, the courageous and determined people of Haiti have refused to give in. Since July 2018, the poor and dispossessed of Haiti have been organising and mobilising against the widespread corruption in the political system, the imposition of neoliberal measures in accordance with International Monetary Fund policies and the allegiance of the Haitian government to imperial interests.

(‘Green Left Weekly is an Australian socialist news magazine.’)

**Beirut is Burning: Rebellion Against the Elites has Begun**

Andre Vltchek

Tires are burning, smoke is rising towards the sky. It is October, the 18th day of the month; the capital city of Lebanon, in the past known as the “Paris of the East”, is covered in smoke.

For years I was warning that the country governed by corrupt, indifferent elites, could not hold together, indefinitely.

For all those five years when I was calling Beirut home, things were going down the drain. Nothing was improving: almost no public transportation, electricity shortages, contaminated and erratic water supply. Periodically, garbage has been piling up along the streets and suburban roads. Once an airplane lands and the doors open, the terrible stench of garbage welcomes us, residents of Beirut, back home.

Almost everyone knew that all this could not continue like this, forever.

The city was suffering from 4th World diseases, while simultaneously being flooded with Land Rover SUVs, Maserati and Porsche sports cars, and Armani suits.

Beirut has almost collapsed to Jakarta levels, although, one has to admit, with extremely smart, highly educated and sophisticated elites, capable of conversing simultaneously in three world languages: French, Arabic and English. Also, with first rate art galleries, art cinemas, posh bars and nightclubs. With lavish marinas and the best bookstores in the entire Middle East.

Some say that Beirut has always been in possession of brain and guts, but something happened to its heart.

Nothing really works here. But if you have millions of dollars, it does not really matter; you can buy anything here. If you are poor, destitute—abandon all hope. And the majority of the people here are now miserably poor. And no one even knows precisely how many are destitute, as a census is forbidden, in order ‘not to disturb religious balance’ (it was, for years, somehow agreed on, that it is better not to know how many Christians or Muslims are residing in the country).

It is certain that most of people are not rich. And now, outraged by their rulers, corrupt politicians and so-called elites, they are shouting, loudly and clearly: “Enough!”, Halas, down with the regime!”

***

The government decided to impose a tax on WhatsApp calls. Not a big deal, some would say. But it was, it is, it suddenly became a big deal. “The last drop”, perhaps.

The city exploded. Barricades were erected. Tires were set on fire. Everywhere: in the poorest as well as in the richest neighborhoods.

“Revolution!” people began shouting.

Lebanon has a history of left-wing, even Communist insurgencies. It also has its fair share of religious, right-wing fanaticism. Which one will win? Which one will be decisive, during this national rebellion?

The Communist Party is now behind several marches. But Hezbollah, until now the most solid social force in the country, is not yet convinced that the government of Saad al Hariri should simply resign.
According to Reuters:
“Lebanon’s Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah said … that the group was not demanding the government’s resignation amid widespread national protests. Nasrallah said in a televised speech that he supported the government, but called for a new agenda and ‘new spirit’, adding that ongoing protests showed the way forward was not new taxes. Any tax imposed on the poor would push him to call supporters to go take to the streets, Nasrallah added.”

So far, the rebellion has left countless people injured, while two Syrian immigrants lost their lives. Some local analysts say that this is the most serious uprising since the one in 2015 (which included the “You Stink!” campaign, reacting to the appalling garbage crises in Beirut and to the worsening social disaster), but others, including this author, are convinced that this is actually the most serious political catastrophe Lebanon has been facing since the 1980s.

One hears anger, on every corner of the capital, in cafes and local stores:

“Trust is broken!”

Even those who used to be far from any political activities are now supporting protesters. Ms. Jehan, a local staff member at a UN office in Beirut, is one of those who found herself on the side of the rebellion: “What is happening to Beirut and all over in Lebanon is good. It is about time we stood up. I will go too. This has nothing to do with religions. It is about our shattered lives.”

* * *

Reading Western mainstream media, one could begin to believe that Lebanon’s main problems are issues like foreign debt (Lebanon is, on a per capita basis, the third most indebted country on earth; the debt stands at 150% of its GDP), miniscule real reserves (US$ 10 billion), and the way the country interacts with the donors and lenders. IMF and its “advice” are constantly mentioned.

But even news agencies like Reuters have to admit that the entire mess is far from just about structural problems. “As dollars have dried up, banks have effectively stopped lending and can no longer make basic foreign-exchange transactions for clients,” one banker said. “The whole role of banks is to pour money into the central bank to finance the government and protect the currency,” he said. “Nothing is being done on the fiscal deficit because doing something will disrupt the systems of corruption.”

Here is the key word: “Corruption!”

Lebanon’s elites are shamelessly corrupt. Only such countries like Indonesia are able to compete with the Lebanese troglodyte clans, when it comes to stripping the entire nation of its riches.

Almost nothing is clean, or pure in Lebanon, and that is also why there aren’t any statistics available.

Money comes from the monstrous and ruthless exploitation of natural resources in West Africa. Everybody knows it, but it is never addressed, publicly. I worked in West Africa, and I know what the racist Lebanese ‘business people’ are doing there. But money stolen from the Africans does not enrich Lebanon and its people. It ends up, in the Lebanese banks, and is spent on lavish yachts, tacky and overpriced European sports cars, and inside bizarre private clubs in and around the capital. While many Lebanese people are near starvation, airplanes flying to Nice, Venice or Greek Islands are constantly packed with la dolce vita seekers.

Lebanon makes billions of dollars from narcotics, particularly those cultivated and refined in the Bekaa Valley. They get exported mainly to Saudi Arabia, for the consumption of the rich, or injected into the battlefields in Yemen and Syria, so-called combat drugs. Again, everyone knows it, but nothing is done to stop it. Hundreds of families, from farmers to politicians, got filthy rich on that trade. This adds a few more super-yachts at the proverbial Beirut marinas.

Then, there is ‘foreign aid’, ‘European investment into infrastructure’, Saudi and Qatari money. Most of it goes, directly, into the pockets of corrupt officials, to the so-called ‘government’, and to its buddies, contractors. Almost nothing is built, but the money is gone. Lebanon has railroad employees who are getting their monthly paychecks, but no railways anymore. Train stations have been converted into vodka bars. Lebanon begs for money so it can host refugees from all over the region, but much of the money ends up in a few deep pockets. Very little goes to the refugees themselves, or to the poor Lebanese people who have to compete for low-paying jobs with the desperate Syrians or Palestinians.

The poor are getting poorer. Yet, Ethiopian, Philippine and Kenyan maids are dragging the groceries of the rich, wiping spit off the faces of babies born into elite families, and cleaning toilets. Some get tortured by their masters, many commit suicide. Lebanon is a tough place, for those who do not look Phoenician or European.

And the slums in the south of Beirut are growing. And some Lebanese cities, like Tripoli in the north, look like tremendous slums, altogether.
According to various estimates, Lebanon may collapse as early as in February 2020. No more money can be looted. The end game is approaching.

If it does collapse, the rich will have their golden parachutes. They have their families abroad: in Australia, Brazil, France. Some have two passports, others have houses in the most desirable parts of the world.

The poor will be left with absolutely nothing: with a carcass of a country, previously looted by its own elites. There will be rotting, ageing Ferraris everywhere, but one cannot eat carcases of cars. There will be lavish but abandoned swimming pools, right next to polluted and destroyed beaches.

People know it, and they have had enough.

Mohamed, a worker at a Starbucks cafe in Beirut is determined:

“This is terrible but it is about time. We can take no more. We need to change the country, drastically. This time things are different. Not about who we worship but about our daily lives.”

Lebanon, in comparison to other shamelessly-capitalist countries, is well-educated. People here cannot be fooled. The rebellion against the elites has just begun. People want to take back their country.

Editor’s note: Finally, on October 29, the Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri announced that he and his entire cabinet are resigning.

(Andre Vltchek is a philosopher, novelist, filmmaker and investigative journalist.)

Protests in Iraq Gain Momentum

The latest round of protests in Iraq entered its fifth day on Monday, October 28. This round began on October 24 when thousands of Iraqis, mostly young men and women, took to the streets of the capital city of Baghdad and other cities to demand an overhaul of the political system of the country.

Students from several schools and universities joined the protests on Monday. The demonstrators have organised a sit-in in Tahrir Square and have blocked the bridge to the Green Zone, the political center of the city. The security forces have used heavy force to disperse such blockades and prevent a section of the protesters from destroying public buildings. Some of the protesters are also demanding the resignation of the prime minister, Adel Abdul Mahdi’s government.

Prime Minister Mahdi had responded to earlier rounds of protests by announcing several policy changes and fresh initiatives, including pensions for all the families without an income, distribution of residential plots to the poor and loans to the youth. He also announced a policy of 50% reservation for the local youth in all future contracts.

Iraq’s economy is recovering from decades of sanctions and wars. Since the defeat of the Islamic State or Daesh (IS) in 2017, the country has relatively been at peace. However, the political classes in the country, most of them without any popular roots, have failed to deliver on the economic front. The second largest producer of oil among all OPEC members has around 23% of its population living below the official poverty line and the unemployment rate among the youth is more than 25%. The post-war generation, mostly the young, fail to get employment after graduating from universities.

The current government was formed last year with the support of the Sairoon Alliance or the Alliance Towards Reforms. The alliance is made of Sadarist Integrity Party and Iraqi Communist Party and is the largest block in parliament.

Most of the protesters are not convinced by promises of reform and think the only solution is a complete overhaul of the current Iraqi system. This cynicism is a result of almost two decades of external interference and inability of the political class to create a pan-Iraqi support base. The current political system was created under the US occupation of the country in 2005 without any real grassroots support.

It is no wonder that the Iraqi constitution, under which four general elections (2005, 2010, 2014 and 2018) have been held only cater to sectarian divides among the political leadership in the country and has no real agenda to create a pan-Iraqi polity acceptable to all sections of the society. This has led to complete alienation of the
common masses from the electoral system. A majority of voters have remained apathetic.

The current round of protests has so far not shown any sectarian character and has been centered around the secular issues of jobs and poor service delivery and alleged corruption. The popular pressure has led the largest political block in the Iraqi Parliament to come out in support of the protests. Sairoon gave a call for an indefinite sit-in from October 26. Two members of parliament belonging to the communist party, along with two other MPs, resigned from their seats on October 27 in support of the protesters.

The internal inquiry committee, appointed after the allegations of massive repression by the security personnel during the first round of protests, has confirmed that 149 people were killed. This led the government to sack most of the officers responsible. However, the protesters have not been satisfied with the move.

(People’s Dispatch is an international media organisation whose mission is to highlight voices from people’s movements and organisations across the globe.)

Courtesy: Peoples Dispatch

British Elections: ‘Real Change is Coming’ Says Corbyn

Susan Price

Following the European Union’s agreement to grant Boris Johnson’s government until next January to exit the EU, the House of Commons voted to hold a snap election on December 12. At the time of writing the election bill has yet to pass the House of Lords, but looks a certainty.

Labour voted to support the early election proposal after initially having abstained on the vote because of internal disagreement.

During debate, the opposition attempted to amend the bill to allow 16 and 17 year olds and EU nationals residing in Britain to vote, but this was rejected.

Labour can now take its plan to tackle climate change by transitioning to clean energy to an election.

Rebecca Long-Bailey, the Labour MP who drove this policy, wrote in Tribune Magazine on October 30:

“To have any chance of success, it will need to push aside the tradition of incremental policy making. We need a rapid and far-reaching transformation of the UK’s infrastructure, from our homes to our transport and energy systems.

“Delivering a Green Industrial Revolution will require taking on powerful corporations and individuals who have amassed obscene wealth by wrecking the climate, and who will stake everything on delaying action and watering down environmental protections until it is too late.

“We also need to talk about jobs. The Green Industrial Revolution will need a clear and properly-funded plan for workers affected by decarbonisation, one that puts workers themselves and their trade unions at the heart of delivering the transition.”

British Labour leader, Jeremy Corbyn launched Labour’s election campaign on October 31 in South London.

“We stand for the many,” Corbyn said. “Boris Johnson’s born-to-rule Conservatives protect the privileged few. They’ve slashed taxes for the richest and vital services and support for everyone else.

“But real change is coming. We will end the Conservatives’ great rip-off by putting rail, mail and water into public ownership so they work for everyone, not just Tory donors and shareholders in tax havens.

“We will invest in every nation and region, rebuild our public services and give our NHS [National Health Service], schools and police the money they need by taxing those at the top to properly fund services for everyone.

“This election is a once-in-a-generation chance to transform our country, take on the vested interests holding people back and ensure that no community is left behind.”

“You know what really scares the elite?

“What they’re actually afraid of is paying their taxes. So in this election they’ll fight harder and dirtier than ever before. They’ll throw everything at us because they know we’re not afraid to take them on.

“So we’re going after the tax dodgers. We’re going after the dodgy landlords. We’re going after the bad bosses. We’re going after the big polluters. Because we know whose side we’re on.

“Are you on the side of the tax dodgers, who are taking us all for a ride? People who think it is OK to rip people off, hide their money in tax havens so they can have a new super yacht. Or the children with special
educational needs who aren’t getting the support they deserve because of Tory and Lib Dem government cuts?

“Whose side are you on? The dodgy landlords, like the Duke of Westminster, Britain’s youngest billionaire, who tried to evict whole blocks of families, to make way for luxury apartments? Or the millions of tenants in Britain who struggle to pay their rent each month?

“Whose side are you on? The bad bosses like Mike Ashley, the billionaire who won’t pay his staff properly and is running Newcastle United [football club] into the ground? Or his exploited workforce, like the woman who was reportedly forced to give birth in a warehouse toilet because she was terrified of missing her shift?

“Whose side are you on? The big polluters like Jim Ratcliffe, Britain’s richest man who makes his money by polluting the environment? Or the children growing up in our cities with reduced lung capacity because of choking pollution?

“Whose side are you on? The greedy bankers like Crispin Odey, who makes millions betting against our country and on other people’s misery and donated huge sums to Johnson and the Conservative Party? Or are you on the side of working people, the people who create the wealth that’s then squirreled away in tax havens?

“And whose side are you on? The billionaire media barons like Rupert Murdoch, whose empire pumps out propaganda to support a rigged system. Or the overwhelming majority who want to live in a decent, fair, diverse and prosperous society?

“Boris Johnson thought he was being smart holding this election in a dark and cold December. He thinks you won’t go out to vote. He thinks you won’t go out to campaign.

“Even if the rivers freeze over, we’re going out to bring about real change for the many not the few. All we need to keep us warm is the thought of removing Boris Johnson’s Conservatives from government—and the chance to rebuild and transform our country.”

(Susan Price is an activist with the Socialist Alliance, a socialist political party of Australia.)

Haste and Brinkmanship Inadvisable in Reaching a Naga Accord

Sandeep Pandey, Babloo Loitongbam and Meera Sanghamitra

Thuingaleng Muivah, the supreme leader of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muivah) says that Nagaland may be weaker in material sense but it is strong in politics. No wonder, the organisation which started off as an insurgent group was able to engage the Government of India in a process of dialogue for 22 long years after a ceasefire agreement was signed in 1997, now as a parallel government of which Muivah is the Ato Kilonser or Prime Minister. Even after the aspirations of people of Jammu and Kashmir of maintaining a certain degree of autonomy with a separate Constitution and a flag have been quashed by the Narendra Modi government by its decision on 5th August, 2019, Muivah continues to keep alive his vision for a shared sovereignty and enduring relationship of peaceful co-existence with India, inked in the framework agreement signed on 3rd August, 2015 in the presence of Narendra Modi. He has good reasons to be hopeful. Unlike J&K no instrument of accession was signed by then popular Naga rebel leader Angami Zapu Phizo with the Government of India. Nagaland was first made part of Assam by British and then by independent India by brute force. Nagas resisted both times and there was much violence from all sides. But Nagas never surrendered and believe that the ongoing dialogue will result in a political solution. Muivah asserts that Nagaland has never been under any foreign rule either by consent or by conquest. Nagas had told the British that they should not be left to the mercy of independent India, a sentiment that Dr. B.R. Ambedkar had interestingly expressed related to the Dalits, at the time of India’s independence.

Nehru sent the army into Nagaland, against the wishes of Mahatma Gandhi, which faced resistance by Nagas armed initially with only bows, arrows, spears and some rifles left behind by the receding Japanese forces during World War II. According to Muivah, Nehru never respected the Nagas as human beings. It was much later when P.V. Narsimha Rao met with Isak and Muivah in Paris, that he agreed that dialogue will be held without any pre-condition, at the highest level of PM and outside India. He also acknowledged the unique history of Nagas. Subsequently, Indian PM Deve Gowda met Isak and Muivah in Bangkok. He wanted Nagas to accept the Indian Constitution, which was not agreeable to them and Muivah suggested that the two parties should go their own separate ways. Two years later the Government of India admitted that Nagas were never formally under Indian rule and a
unique solution to their problem was required. It was only after this that the concept of shared sovereignty was floated. After talks with PM Atal Behari Vajpayee in Amsterdam, the NSCN (IM) leadership decided to move back to India and continue the process of dialogue with Manmohan Singh government. Narendra Modi government declared with much fanfare that an agreement had been reached with NSCN (IM) leadership only to encounter the roadblock of demand for a separate Constitution and flag for Nagaland. Having taken away the Constitution of J&K, which incidentally mentioned that J&K was integral part of India, and its flag as part of the narrative of One Nation, One Constitution, the Bhartiya Janata Party led government is in a bind with respect to the Naga demand. But Muivah is resolute about the demand for a separate constitution and flag which he describes as core issues.

The response of the interlocutor in the dialogue process, now Governor of Nagaland, R.N. Ravi has been to bring on board another stakeholder since 2017, Naga National Political Groups, a conglomerate of seven organisations. This is an attempt to counterbalance NSCN (IM), which incidentally was the only Naga group with which he signed the framework agreement in 2015. He should learn from history that when the government reached an agreement with Naga People’s Convention leaving out the Naga National Council of Phizo, it didn’t resolve the issue then. If NSCN (IM) is cold shoulderd, the chances are that it’ll slip back into insurgency with a good possibility that NSCN (Khaplang), presently dormant in Myanmar, may also get reactivated. From the J&K experience, even though the government is still not willing to admit its mistake, it should know that imposing any decision against the wishes of people will not help solve any problem. Contrary to government’s claim of total integration of J&K with India, the alienation is now complete.

The J&K kind of solution is untenable. The violence by the state, imposition of Armed Forces Special Powers Act and counter-violence by the insurgent groups is an unequal terrain, which has been a site for major and incessant human rights violations, as Northeast has a direct experience of it. This is a cost we can ill-afford.

Instead of making a separate constitution and a flag a prestige or ideological issue, it’ll be better if the government concentrated on thrashing out the intricacies of the constitution which NSCN (IM) has worked out in detail. NSCN (IM) envisions a governance structure in the form of a pan Naga apex tribal body HoHo for a period of six years with representatives from each village and Regional Territorial Councils for Naga areas in Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, having realised that it may not be possible to integrate Naga inhabited areas in these three states with present Nagaland into a greater Nagalim. Already, Coordination Committee on Manipur Integrity has given a call to people of Manipur to resist a final Naga Accord if it challenges the territorial integrity, economy, cultural practices and administrative setup of Manipur.

The government should not rush into a solution by declaring deadlines to ensnare itself like in J&K but should patiently involve all stakeholders from within and outside the state of Nagaland without marginalizing NSCN (IM) and evolve towards a solution with peaceful dialogue process to the satisfaction of all. NSCN (IM) must acknowledge that even though it may have been the only force to reckon with in the beginning, there are now others whose sensitivities will have to be kept in mind. For example, Kukis, another tribe, engaged in fierce tussle with Nagas in Manipur hills are unlikely to accept Naga dominance over their areas. Lammingthang Kipgen, President of an organisation of Thodous, a Kuki community, has expressed his apprehension to the interlocutor for Indo-Kuki talks.

While it is likely that groups within and outside Nagaland are being projected at this time by the government to blunt the edge of NSCN (IM) demands, it is also a fact that societies like Manipur are an ethnically plural society which have withstood the test of time for many millennia. They are unlikely to acquiesce to any arrangement to part with their resources and polity at the exclusion of other stakeholders in their society. The government and NSCN (IM) must be completely transparent in their approach and must take into confidence all genuine political formations, civil society and ethnic groups co-habiting the geographical area in which a collective polity has evolved over time.

There was a time when Naga leaders were impatient and were willing to go back to Europe leaving the dialogue process open ended and now the Government seems to be in some kind of urgency. Narendra Modi government would do well to resist the temptation of self-congratulatory preposterous grandeur in deciding the fate of Nagaland without culmination of proper consultations. In the name of an accord if the fragile ethnic balance of the region, which has a history of violence, is not handled sensitively it can potentially lead to an ethnic implosion.

(Sandeep Pandey is associated with the Socialist Party (India). Meera Sanghamitra is with the National Alliance of People’s Movements. Babloo Loitongbam is a human rights activist from Manipur.)
Quality and Trustworthiness means 'Apna Bazar'

Our Features

- 70 years-old proud feeling customer service
- All Departments & Branches are Computerized.
- The multi-state consumer co-operative organization in India
- Customer service in Maharashtra and Gujarat
- 8 Department Stores and 15 food stores and 1 medical store
- Annual Turnover of Rs.115 Crore
- 30 million loyal customers
- 'Global Achievers Award for Business Leadership' awarded by Economic Development Forum (2012)
- 'Award of Excellence' awarded by National Cooperative Union of India (2013)

Health service:
- Dadasaheb Sarfare Health Center and Clinical Laboratory at Apna Bazar Naigaon

Social Service:
- 10% Discount to Customers on purchase of Medical items (Drugs)
- Festivals wise various schemes for the customers
- Special programme for women
- Various programme for customer awareness

Apna Bazar for All:
1) Various concessions (discount) on purchases
2) The place 'of surety for quality goods
3) Saving time and money
4) Special discounts in festivals
5) Free Home Delivery Service
6) 'Apna Gift Voucher' to present the Gift.
7) 'A.C. Banquet Hall' at Apna Bazar Naigaon & Apna Bazar Charkop
8) Shopping by Sodexo Pass coupons, Ticket Restaurant coupons, Bank Cards, PayTM, Mobikwik etc.

Apna Bazar - Means Adorable, Pleasant, Noble and Affectionate services

Yours in Co-operation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chairman</th>
<th>Vice Chairman</th>
<th>Executive Committee Members</th>
<th>Chief Executive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shripad Phatak</td>
<td>Anil Gangar</td>
<td>Dnyandeo Dalvi, Santosh Sarfare</td>
<td>S. T. Kajale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vishwanath Malushte, Sandhya Kawai</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“We are, what we repeatedly do, Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.”
Aristotle

SPECIALISTS IN STRUCTURAL REPAIR / GUNITING / WATERPROOFING / REHABILITATION & RENOVATION OF BUILDINGS / INTERNAL & EXTERNAL PAINTING / EXTERNAL FACADE TREATMENTS.

WINNERS OF:

✦ 4 INTERNATIONAL AWARDS (2 IN 1998 & 2 IN 2002)
For BEST RESTORED STRUCTURES IN THE WORLD
(GIVEN BY INTERNATIONAL CONCRETE REPAIR INSTITUTE, U.S.A.)

✦ 3 NATIONAL AWARDS
For BEST RESTORED STRUCTURES IN INDIA IN PAST 20 YEARS.
(GIVEN BY AMERICAN CONCRETE INSTITUTE - INDIA CHAPTER)

✦ 3 URBAN HERITAGE AWARDS
(GIVEN BY INDIAN HERITAGE SOCIETY, MUMBAI)

1-A STAR MANSION, 66 WODEHOUSE ROAD, COLABA, MUMBAI - 400 005.
Tel. : 2218 8375 / 76 • E-mail : painterior@vsnl.com • Website : www.painterior.com
GANNON DUNKERLEY & CO., LTD.
An infrastructure company established since 1924

REGD. OFFICE
New Excelsior Building, (3rd Floor),
A.K. Nayak Marg, Fort, Mumbai 400001.
Tel. : 022 2205 1231
Fax : 022-2205 1232

Office :
Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai & New Delhi