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We Fight Ideas with Ideas

UNEMPLOYMENT AND WORKERS' POWER

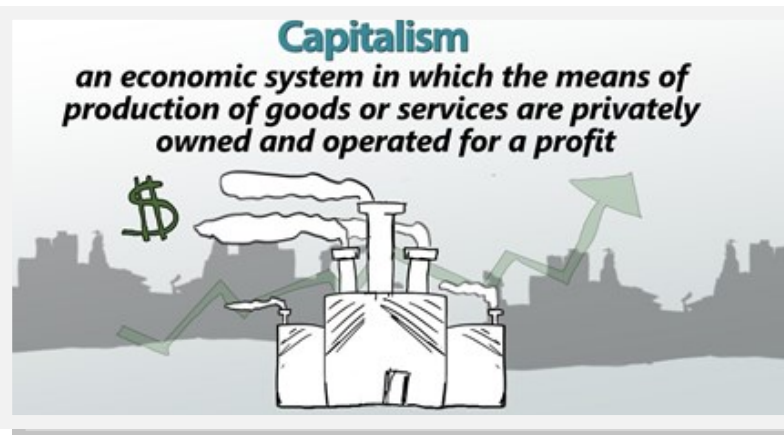
What the current state of world affairs seems to indicate is that (ongoing) war, ecological disaster and growing human misery are inevitable, at least for the foreseeable future. However, the question arises: Do we even have a future? Global warming appears unstoppable; the nuclear threat has never seemed more real, and the gap between the haves and the have-nots continues to widen.

Many commentators, with growing assurance, have begun to predict the imminent death of capitalism. German sociologist, Wolfgang Streeck is a good example. In his 2016 book

“How will capitalism end?” he says: “declining growth, growing inequality, and rising debt – public, private and overall” will see the demise of capitalism. He also makes an important point: It is not inevitable that capitalism will give way to socialism: We could enter (or might already have done so) a “prolonged period of social entropy, or disorder (and precisely for this reason a period of uncertainty and indeterminacy).”

In the well-known slogan by Rosa Luxemburg, the alternative to capitalism is “socialism or

barbarism.” Perhaps what Streeck and others are saying is that we have already entered a state of barbarism.



This underlines the need for the working class the world over to unite in a conscious project to overthrow capitalism and inaugurate the historic project of leading society's transition to

socialism.

But, has the moment for decisive working class/proletarian intervention passed? The era of neo-liberalism has not only seen a jobs bloodbath across the world, but simultaneously, the decline of organised labour. In a 2021 article, former trade unionist Karl Cloete tells us that union membership is on the decline globally, and that

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in SA, “about 77% of workers employed do not belong to a union and thus employers can determine the conditions of employment and wages as they see fit.” We have seen abundant evidence of this, particularly in the growing casualisation (and therefore disempowerment) of labour.

In 2021, the workforce in China amounted to around 746.5 million people (the coronavirus pandemic having reduced the number of employed people by around 25 million – see Statistic.com website). This confirms what analysts have been saying about the shift in the location of labour to low-wage countries (like China and Bangladesh) where the cost of labour is significantly cheaper and therefore more exploitable than in places like Europe and America.

There is also a growing belief that automation is taking its toll on worker-numbers, and that the future could well spell a “workerless workplace,” operated exclusively by robots. Peter Weiss, in a novel set in the 1930s talks of “people who worked in the shoe factories, the breweries and railway workshops, in clothes manufacturing, the yarn bleaching plants, the wool dyeing works, in the production of locomotives, turbines, and agricultural machines,” sketching an image of people-intensive workplaces. Such images are still to be found, though with less frequency. For example, there are the sweatshops in China and Bangladesh.

Shenzhen is the epicenter of Apple’s production in China, and the site of one of the notorious Foxconn plants, which make iPhones, iPads, and other iGadgets. Apple employs almost half a million workers in Shenzhen, many of them living in the plant’s barracks in cramped rooms with triple-decked bunks. (Hadas Thier, 2020)

And

A world away, a Bengali father weeps for his lost daughters - crushed under a heap of concrete by the collapse of a factory in Dhaka, corporate sweatshop capital of Bangladesh. Every factory is built by the lowest tender. Hours are long, wages meagre, bullying routine. The walls of the eight-storey Rana Plaza were visibly cracking when the 5,000 workers were ordered in. The collapse killed 1,138 of them. Safe factories cost more. Safe factories mean lower profits—for Primark and half a dozen other fashion retailers on a high street near you. (Neil Faulkner, 2018)

Modern innovations in production are part of a pattern of increasing resort to automation observed by Marx way back in his day already. In a nutshell, capitalist enterprises, in order to compete-or-die, engage in a relentless process of cost-cutting, entailing substituting labour with capital in the form of machine-automation. The unresolvable paradox which this gives rise to is rising production simultaneous with falling employment, and therefore, falling demand in the marketplace. We have now - with the imminence of the so-called Fourth Industrial Revolution - reached a point where capitalist production capacity has so outstripped demand that the global economy suffers a permanent state of overproduction. Since capitalist production is production-for-profit and not production-for-human needs, capitalist firms find themselves locked into ever more strenuous competition for markets which they have themselves limited. This is possibly a clue as to why America so strongly supports the war in Ukraine. Without war, its military-industrial complex would wither away and die.

Scholar Aaron Benanav (2019) has produced facts and figures to demonstrate that it is less automation than overproduction that is the cause

of unemployment. More is being produced than consumed - and this in a world of mass poverty and degradation!

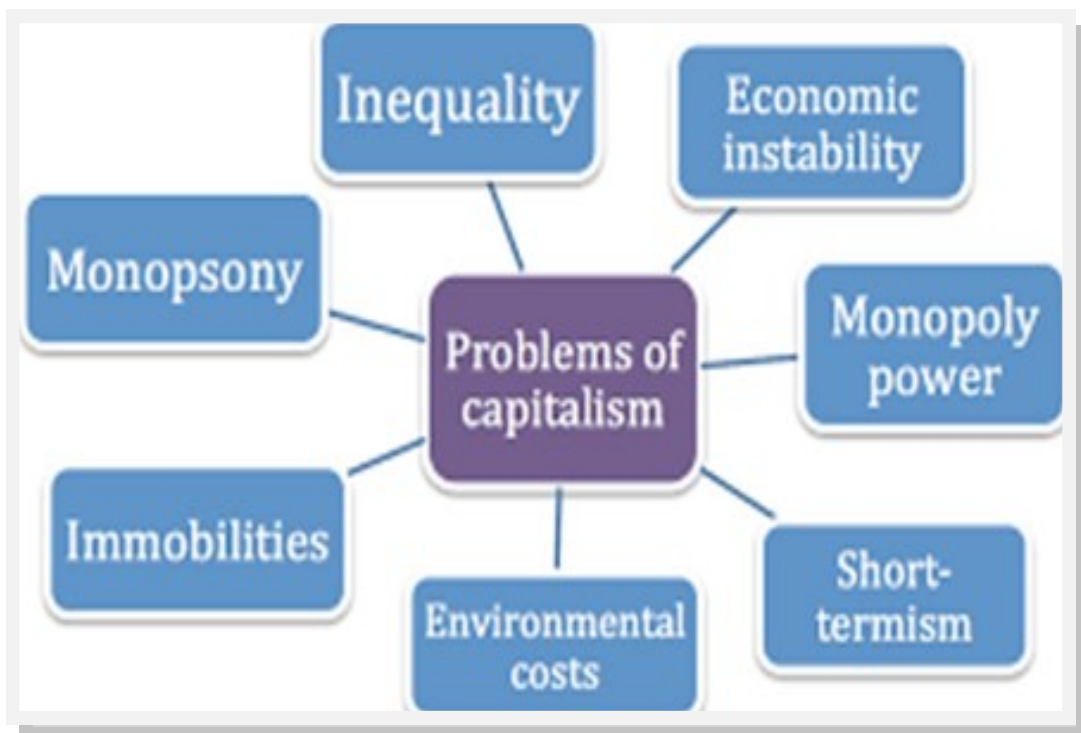
We have long ago developed the means of production to a level to ensure a decent living for every single person on the planet. Capitalism, however, ensures that a tiny fraction of society (the owners of the means of production, particularly the large trans-global corporations) enjoy super-wealth, while millions-and-millions live on the cusp of starvation.

From time to time one comes across social media posts which remind us of our “people’s power,” with injunctions for ALL OF US to go on strike at the same time across the world, and in that way to administer a crippling blow to the capitalists. While this might sound utopian, and easier-said-than-done, it is not an idea that should simply be dismissed out of hand.

While “all of us” might be unrealistic, a critical mass of us is certainly not. One is reminded of George Orwell’s classic observation.

I saw a little boy, perhaps ten years old, driving a huge cart-horse along a narrow path, whipping it whenever it tried to turn. It struck me that if only such animals became aware of their strength we should have no power over them, and that men exploit animals in much the same way as the rich exploit the proletariat.

The challenge remains to “become aware of our strength” and to organise it into a coherent force for the overthrow of the capitalist order and the transition to socialism.



THE MEDIA'S ROLE IN MANUFACTURING DOCILITY

The responsibility of raising the village child has been delegated to digital and technology overlords, who peddle reliance, dependence and whose agenda is mental conditioning. The cultural forces of modern society are driven by so-called reality television, which is heavily scripted and reliant on sound effects, emotive music and micro-managed direction.

The programmes are interrupted by expensive television commercials, that cost millions of rand to craft, and millions to screen. The purpose of these short mini-dramas is primarily to disrupt continuity of thought, and condition the mind into blind acceptance of what is presented on these digital platforms.

The fact of the matter is that two primary institutions have failed society. Firstly the media. The media have been wholly captured, and are now merely a conduit of group-think and a platform for the propagation of accepted narratives. The words of warning offered by Edward R Murrow on 15 October 1958 to the Radio-Television News Directors Association, have not yielded better journalists, rather, it has spurred the owners of media platforms on to better means of silencing, and controlling journalists.

Murrow said to the gathered audience:

Our history will be what we make it. And if there are any historians about fifty or a hundred years from now, and there should be preserved the kinescopes for one week of all three networks, they will there find recorded in black and white, or perhaps in color, evidence of decadence, escapism and insulation from the realities of the world in which we live. I invite your attention to the television schedules of all networks between the hours of 8 and 11 p.m., Eastern Time. Here you will find only fleeting and spasmodic reference to the fact

that this nation is in mortal danger. There are, it is true, occasional informative programs presented in that intellectual ghetto on Sunday afternoons. But during the daily peak viewing periods, television in the main insulates us from the realities of the world in which we live. If this state of affairs continues, we may



alter an advertising slogan to read: Look now and pay later. Edward R. Murrow: Speech at the RTNDA Convention Chicago, October 15, 1958

Secondly, educational structures have been all-but completely eroded to the point of being purposeless. They are edifices of education in name only. The erosion of the liberal arts and humanities into raging cesspools of group-think, and

hyper-sensitivity, have crippled creativity. Without outlets of creativity, then the human brain begins to eat itself. The constant diet of multi-billion dollar talk shows, reality TV, fantasy extravaganzas, and no reading, is a recipe for social catastrophe and intellectual and social disaster.

Social systems of cohesion and recreation and artistic expression, have been crushed. Libraries are denuded of books, community centres such as sports clubs, games nights, drama clubs, art clubs, poetry clubs, are now exceptions, rather than essential Friday night & Saturday night gatherings. These types of social interactions used to fuel community innovation and discussion on survival, problem-solving and creative

ways to sustain life during harsh times.

Germany after WWII, Japan after the horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the United Kingdom after WWII, virtually the entire continent of Europe, and the USSR – even China, underwent cultural and artistic rebirth before emerging from the ashes of WW11. Japan was a pile of rubble and it was many years before the Japanese island of Okinawa saw the return of flora and fauna to its scorched earth.

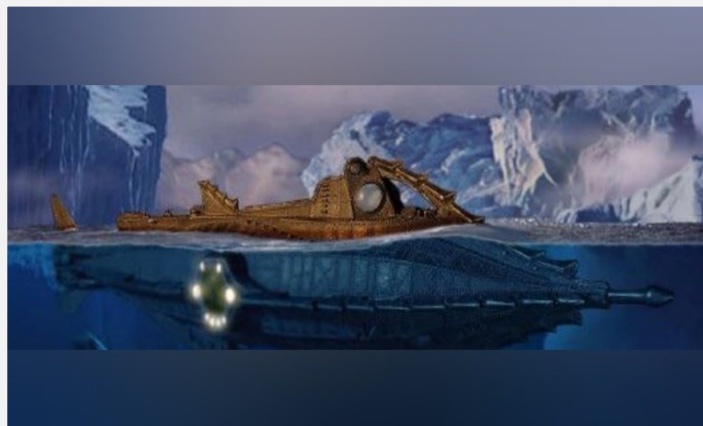
The USA, relatively untouched by the bombers of the Axis powers, tasted the pinprick of the Japanese air force at Pearl Harbour, but other than that, they were unscathed. What followed in these countries were sharply focused educational programs that attended to the growth needs of the devastated nations. Imaginative architecture and futuristic arts programs inspired huge infrastructural projects, many of which are still the envy of the world. Modern China's mega-cities, are examples of what imagination can conjure – though imagination without humanity can also lead to dystopia...

The responsibility of artistic endeavour and creativity, has now been appropriated by multi-national corporations – who control the technologies of creation as well as dissemination. With even the poorest people on earth now consumers and not producers of artistic content, and a near total dependence on these technological platforms, our communities are at a very fragile juncture. We are, in a sense, reverting to the Victorian era, when children had to be adults after they had grasped the very basics of language (technological mastery) and fleeting childhood. Low life expectancy resulted in many child-

headed households, and orphanages were little more than slave labour camps, and school was for the well-heeled and the ruling classes.

During the periods following awful trauma and war, the chasm between the classes faced at times, strong artistic protest, often in the form of graffiti – a public art-form that challenged the establishment. Today, the sad truth is that even so-called liberal educational institutions merely go through the motions of voicing protest, rather, they educate young minds *for* the system, not to *change* the system.

Jules Verne wrote his novel '20,000 Leagues Under the Sea' at least 50 years before humanity started looking at submarines as a means of undersea exploration and transport. It is through the creative industries that humans find innovative ways of encouraging themselves and their communities to strive for better, and to solve problems. This cannot happen when all creativity is syphoned upwards and quelled at the community source – turning even community innovation into a corporate commodity (Think of the 'Please Call Me' debacle/scandal).



Jules Verne's Nautilus—20000 Leagues under the sea

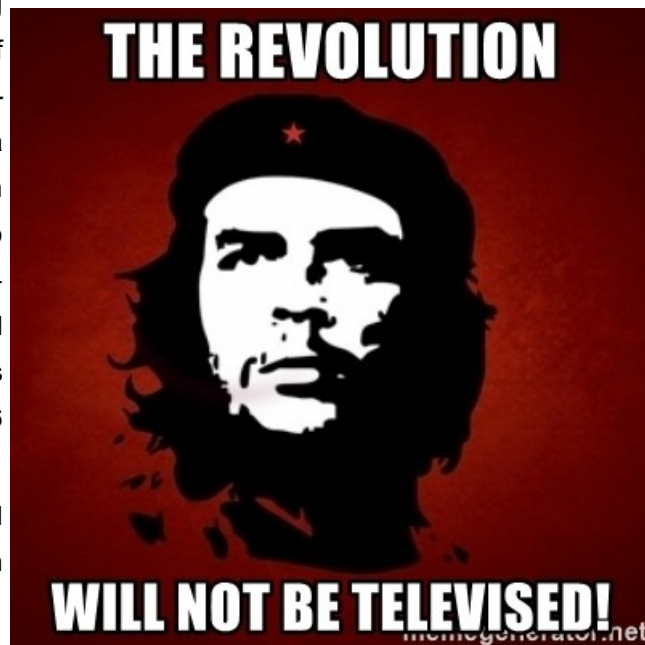
Community schools need to encourage recycling and repurposing as part of an energetic and renewed focus on how to interact with technology. These are long-term strategies that will not solve the short term problems, but could possibly find work for 'idle hands'. The awful treatment of innovative educators and leaders

such as Brian Isaacs and Wesley Neuman, shows that the rulers of the country are easily threatened by educational **radicalism. More radical thinking in education is needed – not less.**

Through the arts, history shows that nations have risen from the ashes of war to become powerhouses of commerce and influence in the modern era. Japan, the

country devastated by two atomic bombs is home to Hitachi, Yamaha, Toshiba, Mitsubishi, Nakamichi, Nikon, Canon, Sony, Panasonic, Nissan, Suzuki, Daihatsu, Pentax, Olympus, Mazda, Sansui, Kenwood, Pioneer, Fuji and other companies that span the widest spectrum from the creative industries through to the automotive, engineering and shipping industries. Germany is much the same, with Telefunken, Blaupunkt, Leitz, Leica, Braun, BMW, Mercedes Benz, Opel, Audi and Hitler's pet project, Volkswagen – all famous names throughout the world.

There exists overwhelming evidence that supports the thesis that the arts are of vital importance to the well-being of any society. The arts contribute to healing and social cohesion as well as playing an educational role in the lives of human beings. In 2017, *Americans for the Arts* published a study on the impact of the arts on the American economy and job creation. The statistics were staggering – US\$166.3-billion in total economic activity, with numerous spin-offs such as supporting 4.6 million full-time equivalent jobs, US\$104.2-billion in household income and US\$27.9-billion in government tax revenues.



The tragic human dramas of WWI and WWII resulted in a huge artistic flood from Europe to the USA, which has unfortunately resulted in the domination of all discourse by the corporatized media. This domination has retarded community reaction to the global economic situation, and the morbid fear of Covid-19 has made the situation markedly worse. People have become terrified of face to face social interaction.

Somehow, we need to reconnect with each other through our communities and raise awareness of dangers other than that posed by Covid-19. A petrol attendant who used to make between ZAR200 & ZAR350

extra per week on tips, now considers himself lucky if he makes ZAR50.00 extra after the fuel price hikes.

These are the real issues facing our working poor. The spectre of a cashless society will harm them even more. And while fuel prices rocket, “because of Vladimir Putin” – according to the corporate narrative – the oil barons are raking in billions of US\$ in profits.

Do we understand that the money we have been paying to ESKOM, SAA, SABC, PRASA, SAPO etc. has been fruitless expenditure? SAA is being sold to a consortium while the taxpayers, who have been bailing out the airline, have no voice on the issue – not even when it

comes to employment of workers. The same goes for ESKOM and other government cash laundromats.

The failures of the media generally, but the news media specifically in contextualising the realities of 21st century life, is made all the more tragic and even sinister, by the complicity of our educational structures.

Educational institutions, instead of addressing the failures of the media, have fallen into line behind the stenographers of the economic and political elites, corroborating and promoting the global pandemics of misinformation and disinformation.

As Gill-Scott Heron said: “The revolution will not be televised”.

THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION

Our report reveals the true extent of Israel's apartheid regime. Whether they live in Gaza, East Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank, or Israel itself, Palestinians are treated as an inferior racial group and systematically deprived of their rights. We found that Israel's cruel policies of segregation, dispossession and exclusion across all territories under its control clearly amount to apartheid. The international community has an obligation to act.

Agnès Callamard, Amnesty International's Secretary General

Every year on May 14, Palestinians around the world, numbering about 14million, mark the Nakba, or catastrophe", referring to the ethnic cleansing of Palestine and the destruction of Palestinian society. The day (14 May, 1948) signals the accompaniment of violence by the Zionist Israeli forces.

to exist after 1946. However, Britain wanted to preserve its political and economic hold over Palestine, and so engineered the occupation of Palestine from both Britain and the US. However, the British had no legal or political right to allocate the land to the Zionist Jews.



The 1948 NAKBA

The state of Israel was created on 14 May 1948. On that same day, the US recognised the new state of Israel – a police state that had been created to guard the economic interest of Britain, the USA, and included the other western countries,

The history of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict began with the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. This conflict came from strife between the Israelis and Arabs in 1920 and erupted into full-scale hostilities in the 1947/48 war of aggression by the Israelis.

The League of Nations, a worldwide intergovernmental organisation, established in 1920 to maintain “world peace”, gave Britain a mandate of administrative control over Palestine. British support for a national home for the Jews was included in what was known as the Balfour Declaration. It is worth noting that at the time of the Balfour Declaration, David Lloyd George the then British Prime Minister had become a Zionist in 1915. The provisions for establishing a Jewish national homeland in Palestine came into effect in 1923. The ineffective League of Nations ceased

Ever since the Palestinians have been in a mammoth struggle to regain the land of their birth. Tens of thousands of Palestinians were displaced from their homes as they were forced to make way for the settlement of the Zionist Jews. This entire process was facilitated by the British.

On that day, the illegal State of Israel came into being. The Balfour Declaration of 1917 had declared support for the Zionist state of Israel. The creation of the state of Israel was accompanied by structural as well as physical violence, which included the expulsion of

hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their homeland.

Between 1947 and 1949, more than 700,000 Palestinians from almost 2 million of the population were made refugees in the country of their birth. Zionist forces had taken more than 78 percent of historic Palestine, ethnically cleansed and destroyed between 400 - 600 villages and cities, and killed about 15 000 Palestinians in a series of mass atrocities, including more than 70 massacres. This started the Zionist war of dispossession of the Palestinians.

What sparked the recent atrocities!

On May 11, 2022, Zionist Israeli forces killed Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, a Palestinian-American citizen. Abu Akleh was a 51-year-old Catholic Palestinian who switched to journalism after studying to be an architect and became one of the Arab world's most famous TV journalists. The Zionist-Israeli state has killed at least 45 Palestinian journalists since 2000. The imperialist and the mass media did not denounce their murders by the Zionist state because unlike Abu Akleh they were not citizens of the USA. The names of journalists killed by Israeli forces are tabulated on the Al Jazeera website.

The arrogance and brutality of the Israelis were shown when the funeral procession of Abu Akleh erupted into chaos as Israeli police set off stun grenades and beat mourners with batons after a group of them tried to carry the coffin on their shoulders, instead of being loaded in a hearse. The Israeli army's Military Police Criminal Investigation Division does not plan to investigate the fatal shooting of Shireen Abu Akleh.

On that same day, in the occupied West Bank city of Al-Bireh, Thaer Khalil Mohammad Maslat 16, was shot and killed with live ammunition by Israeli forces. What is wrong with these people!

This is barbarism of the worst kind. On the face of it, the Israeli government is a much worse than their apartheid counterparts were in SA.

People from all walks of life, the world over, recognising the significance of the war against the Palestinians have resisted the attempts by the Zionists to take over the land from the "river to the sea". The Palestinian people demanding equality and freedom from an occupying power recognise it as a life or death struggle. The Zionist Apartheid state of Israel has over the last few weeks, intensified its advance and destruction of the Al-Aqsa mosque and the Palestinian Christian churches.

Israel depicts the war against the Palestinians as a holy war between the Muslims and the Jews, labelling the Muslims as terrorists. In this, they are aided and abetted by the Western nations including the USA, Great Britain and the other western countries. However, freedom of movement is restricted to all Palestinians as shown by the 8-metre apartheid wall that looms over the city of Bethlehem in Palestine. Everyone in Palestine shares the same suffering under the Zionist Apartheid state of Israel.

The bitter irony is that the brutality of these Israeli fascists is little different from the same levels of hatred and brutality exhibited by Hitler's Nazis against their forebears.

The attitude and support of the USA, Great Britain and other European countries has bolstered the illegal and criminal Israeli regime that has defiantly and arrogantly resorted to the murder of innocent protestors. The total disregard for public opinion by Israel should galvanise the struggle for a free Palestine.

For the realisation of the One State solution in Palestine from the "river to the sea!"

Down with the Apartheid Zionist state of Israel.

The Worker was produced by the Publications Collective of the New Unity Movement

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