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New Unity Movement

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We Fight Ideas with Ideas

1. THE ANC – CHAMPIONS OF NEOLIBERAL OPPRESSION

The media seems united on one thing these days: that the ANC will be out of office come the 2024 elections.

We certainly won't be lamenting their demise, given their appalling record over the last almost-thirty years in government. Witness the all-time high unemployment rate, the crumbling health service, the broken down education system et al. The list is unending.

But firstly, how certain is it that they will indeed be voted out? One needs to avoid substituting wishful thinking for analysis. The ANC is a broad church which relies on a wide range of constituencies. We need just think back to the early nineteen nineties to recall how they got into bed with anything that promised votes. Why else would they have enrolled the opportunistic conservative teachers' organisation under Franklin Sonn (the Cape Teachers' Professional Association – CTPA) at the time? Not to mention the misnamed Labour Party!

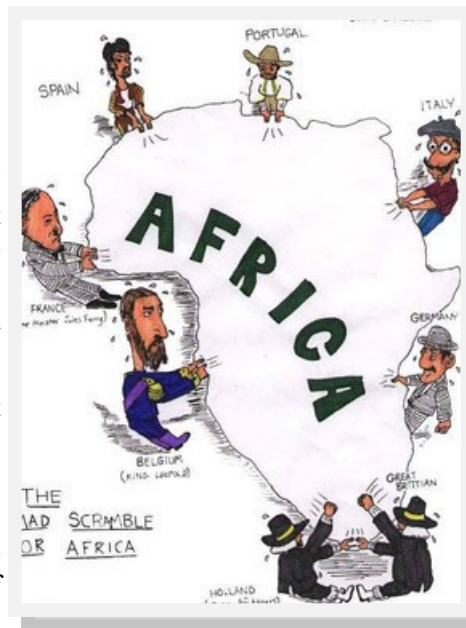
Secondly, what are the chances that whoever accedes to the mantle of power will do any better? What are the chances that any of the competing parties – the DA, the EFF, the RET-wing of the ANC (perhaps in a coalition arrangement) would depart significantly from the

ANC's trajectory of first-and-foremost, serving capitalist class interests? They might certainly do a better job – but serving capitalist class interests is the fundamental purpose of government in South Africa under our prevailing constitution.

Not the interests of the poor and marginalised ...

The ANC swept to power in 1994 on the promise of their RDP. Two years later, the RDP was shelved in favour of GEAR. Even the apologists of the ANC would have to admit: this was indecent haste.

However, it opens up the more sinister reality that there was a power larger than the ANC, that the ANC was in fact a puppet of imperialism; the real government of this country rules through



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the ANC.

As the saying went in 1994- “the ANC is in power but not in control!” This means that when the ANC can no longer do a good job for its masters, it will simply be cast aside, and the next puppet will take over. Hence the glee in the official opposition camps. No doubt Steenhuisen’s visit to Ukraine a little while ago had less to do with sympathy for the Ukrainian people and their plight in the war with Russia, but more to raise his profile among the imperialist bosses of America, the UK and Europe.

So much for parliamentary democracy.

We are a country of the Global South. Ours is an extractive economy. We export mineral and agricultural products to centres in the Global North. In a race to the bottom, countries of the Global South compete to be the lowest cost producers so that they can win some (highly unequal) production contracts from Global North multinationals. If our economy is not “open” enough, and if the surplus generated by these foreign multinationals is not bloated enough, then they would simply relocate to other Global South centres. A government like the ANC is married to this model. The ANC sees its role as being to make investment conditions for Global North capital here as conducive as possible. President Ramaphosa would have us believe that this is the correct if not only road out of the immiseration of the working class. His frequent business summits to sell the country as a desirable investment destination is ostensibly about job creation, but in fact plays into the hands of those who would stand to make super profits out of our economy, and, of course, those local government and business managers eager to sign contracts with the foreign investors. They are the real winners. This is the objective behind the setting up of SEZ’s around the country

But this is the shared fate among workers of all the Global South countries whose ruling classes espouse neoliberalism – a sham electoral democracy (read “talk shop”) plus an “open” economy for maximum exploitation. It would not be insulting – merely factual – to say that the ANC has cast itself in the role of lackey to Big Capital. Sitting between Big Capital and the workers of the Global South and facilitating the process of exploitation has turned out to be very lucrative for some of the

bigwigs in the ruling parties. Here in SA, one can think of a number of ANC cadres who became instant millionaires and billionaires once the sell-out process got under way (Tokyo Sexwale, Saki Macozoma, Cyril Ramaphosa ...). Not to mention those who were catapulted into senior positions in business organisations and departments of state.

There is a theory that 1994 happened only because our imperialist masters forsook the previous National Party government – it had outlived its usefulness. Is the ANC headed for the same dustbin in 2024? It remains to be seen. One thing is certain, though: as long as we the people are dependent on the capitalist rulers of the world and of our own country to “liberate” us, so long will we be in bondage.



It is true that the workers and downtrodden of the world must be their own emancipators. And so we join the call for workers of the world to unite in struggle. It’s socialism or barbarism.

2. CRITIQUES OF CAPITALISM

The anti-capitalist struggle is as old as capitalism itself, and over the centuries has taken many different forms. In an informative article published in August 2022, Matthias Schmelzer, a German economic historian notes, for example, that critiques of capitalism which attack the system for the “socially, culturally and ecologically destructive impacts of capitalist and industrial expansion” date as far back as the seventeenth century.

In historical terms, the most recent critique of capitalism centred around *growth*, and the idea that growth and its measurement – GDP – would be the rising tide which would lift all boats. This fetishism with growth gained currency in the postwar years, coming into its own particularly from the 1950s onward. As we, the working class know from bitter experience, growth has been extremely kind to the owners of capital, but cruel to working people the world over. It could be argued that growth is less a capitalist strategy than a capitalist imperative, which is to say, growth is the engine that powers capitalism – without growth there is no capitalism.

Critics of the “growth approach” do not necessarily have a problem with capitalism per se; they would rather see a capitalism which is more inclusive – a form of welfare capitalism.

While critics who base their critique of capitalism on ecological considerations are also not necessarily anti-capitalist, their logic almost certainly leads to the singular conclusion that capitalism must go, since “infinite growth is not possible on a finite planet.” As we write, Europe is in the grip of its worst drought in 1 200 years. Rivers and lakes are drying up and becoming unnavigable. According to a Guardian headline (4 July) Spain and Portugal are suffering their driest climate in 1200 years.

A major concern raised by the ecological critique is that unchecked capitalist growth has few qualms about its destructive impact on the environment – its “externalities” – and that it disregards diminishing stocks (of resources, ecosystems, services etc.) and transgresses planetary boundaries with irreversible consequences for life on earth.

Apologists of the system will have us believe that capitalism will innovate us out of the mess it has created. But this is one more excuse to tolerate a system that is built on self-interest above all other

considerations. The alarm bells have been ringing for centuries. The direst predictions are upon us now. Are we that naïve to think that the system which created the problem will solve it?

What Schmelzer refers to as the “social-economic critique” promotes the notion that any economic system needs to factor in core non-economic needs of society as well, such as the quality of life, which “depends on other factors, such as equality, democratic institutions, or more leisure time – opening up pathways towards ‘prosperity without growth.’”

While there might be a tendency for this approach to sometimes invoke visions of a pre-capitalist world, as Schmelzer says, “it is not necessarily reactionary or regressive, but sometimes only takes a detour through the past to reach a future emancipatory utopia.”

The “feminist critique” campaigns against capitalism because the system undervalues or devalues “non-monetary labour, housework, and subsistence activities, all of which are mainly done by women. In a society that is geared to economic growth, the vital reproductive work is thus fundamentally not acknowledged, made invisible, devalued, and precarious.” This problem “can only be permanently solved within a different economic system that values and centres care work.”

The “South-North critique” focuses in on the imperialist or colonial aspect. Schmelzer clarifies it as follows:

South–North critiques argue that since the start of European expansion in the fifteenth century, growth in the [metropolitan] centres was based on (neo-) colonial appropriation, extractivist exploitation of nature and the externalization of social and ecological costs as well as on universalizing and hierarchizing forms of knowledge justifying racism and colonialism. Thus, human beings and nature were commodified, culture and knowledges devalued, and regions and people in the global South were reduced to the dependent role of raw material suppliers without large value-added con-

tributions of their own, causing ever-deepening inequalities and unequal power relations. Critics from the South argued that policies of 'development' – if based on the pursuit of GDP growth and not addressing the inter-dependencies of the global world system – will not alleviate poverty, but rather entrench systems of domination and exploitation.

A popular notion in the mid-twentieth century was that suitable growth-paths out of colonial under-development would be industrialisation, along the lines of the Western and Soviet economies at the time. However, what has become crystal clear in this day-and-age is that such an approach would end up reproducing all the worst consequences of a capitalist system which has brought us to an unprecedented level of crisis in our lifetime.

It is no exaggeration to say that the choice which

confronts us as human society going forward is “socialism or extinction.” Marx was prescient when he observed that the capitalist system would lurch from crisis to crisis, but would not liquidate itself. That would have to be the work of the working class, who then as now, have nothing to lose but their chains.

Note: This article was based largely on the excellent piece by Matthias Schmelzer entitled *From Luddites to limits? Towards a systematization of growth critiques in historical perspective*.

See following website <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/362739138> [From Luddites to limits Towards a systematization of growth critiques in historical perspective](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/362739138)

3. “If I were president of the United States . . .”

In his classic exposé on American criminality and atrocities committed “in defence of freedom and the American way of life” entitled *Rogue State* William Blum ends his foreword with the following:

If I were the president [of the United States] I could stop terrorist attacks against the United States in a few days. Permanently. I would first apologize to all the widows and orphans, the tortured and impoverished, and all the many millions of other victims of American imperialism. Then I would announce, in all sincerity, to every corner of the world, that America's global interventions have come to an end, and inform Israel that it is no longer the 51st state of the USA but henceforth—oddly enough—a foreign country. I would then reduce the military budget by at least 90% and use the savings to pay reparations to the victims. There would be more than enough money. One year's military budget of \$330 billion is equal to more than \$18,000 an hour for every hour since Jesus Christ was born. That's what I'd do on my first three days in the White House.

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