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WE FIGHT IDEAS WITH IDEAS

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WE REMEMBER 16 JUNE 1976

JUNE 16, 2023: AND THINGS CONTINUE TO CHANGE FOR THE WORSE.

The assault against the working poor of SA continues. We seem to be regressing further and further from the dream of '76 – which was to usher in a new era of freedom from race-based capitalist oppression.

As we have seen with bitter hindsight, the grouping which styled themselves as the liberators of South Africa hi-jacked the people's movement, and took us into Westminster-style talks to determine the path out of white-baasskap.

For the past almost-thirty years, we have been in the grip of a new tyranny – that of neoliberalism, where paying our national debt (including the odious debt inherited from the apartheid regime) is our country's highest priority; where monetary policy and the interest rate are manipulated to ensure the best returns for foreign investors; where the working masses are fed a diet of austerity; where imperialism's lackeys who have installed themselves in positions of power in both public and private institutions are feverishly engaging in looting and plundering for personal gain. The latest revelation in a decades-long saga of corruption is the auditor general's finding that "Cadre consultants have been milking councils of millions" (Cape Times, 2 June 2023).

There is a popular derogatory saying, "You get the government you deserve."

Did we deserve to fall out of the apartheid frying pan into the neoliberal fire?

It's not the government that's the problem – it's the system. So long as we remain captive within the system of imperialism/capitalism, so long will we continue to suffer dehumanising living conditions in our daily lives: a huge and growing level of unemployment, low wages, load-shedding, runaway crime levels, debased, under-resourced schooling;

shack- and backyard dwellings, roads full of potholes ... the list is endless.

Elections will do nothing to change things. As South African society, we have to build strong independent community-based organisations – vehicles of struggle outside of parliament to frame and pursue demands to turn around the tide of abuse we have been suffering at the hands of our uncaring rulers all these years.

June 16th is a reminder that we need to stiffen our resolve to take up the challenge.

Below is an extract from a pamphlet issued by the Joint Cultural Societies ahead of their meeting in June 2016 to consider the question, "June '76 Betrayed: What must we do to regain our future?" Today, seven years later, the urgency for change has deepened.

JUNE '76 BETRAYED! WHAT MUST WE DO TO REGAIN OUR FUTURE?

16 June 1976 will forever be a seminal date in the annals of South African history. On that day 100 000 school children in Soweto stood up against ruling class power, and initiated an unstoppable rebellion against apartheid baasskap and exploitation. Things were never the same again. From then onwards, and throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s, the mass of working class poor in this country waged escalating struggle against race-based capitalist inequality and oppression.

As is well-known, this led to the sell-out of 1994, when the rulers agreed to ditch apartheid to save capitalism, when

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the rulers agreed to ditch apartheid to save capitalism, when various groupings, including the quisling-layer of collaborators of the apartheid era came together at Codesa to cobble a “solution” – parliamentary democracy, SA-style.

Now 40 years after June 16, 1976, and 22 years after 1994, what do we have? We have massive and growing unemployment, ongoing debasement of the education of the working poor, lack of housing, lack of service delivery, lack of decent healthcare. In short, the working class masses of this country continue to live on the margins of survival, while a privileged elite – including a small number of BEE beneficiaries – enjoy obscene levels of wealth. Capitalism dominates our lives more than ever before. Increasingly, divisive elements in society are seeking to sharpen race-based distinctions, and more and more, are brazenly coming out into

the open to spew their narrow-minded prejudice and bigotry (the Penny Sparrows, Matt Theunissens of this world).

Now, more than ever, we need a new June 16, a new mobilization of the working poor. Now more than ever, the youth of this country need to stand up and say, “NO MORE! We demand an end to injustice! We demand an end to racism! We demand an end to capitalism!”

Now, more than ever, all progressive elements in society have to join hands in the fight to regain what was lost at Codesa. We need to put the future that June '76 promised, back on track.

THE (RE) EMERGENCE OF “RACIAL SCIENCE”

For starters, let’s just remind ourselves:

- **“Race” is a social category invented to justify slavery and colonialism, and to provide some pathetic legitimacy for white supremacy and prejudice.**
- **The completion of the Human Genome Project in 2003 confirmed humans are 99.9% identical at the DNA level and there is no genetic basis for race.**
- **There is more genetic variation within a so-called race than between them.**
- **Social scientists have long understood race to be a *social construct* used in its most benign form to categorize groups of people according to a small group of phenotypes and cultural differences and in its most insidious form to assign value to a social hierarchy.**

Why, then, do “scientific” claims to the contrary persist? The short answer is, because the *need* persists – the need to *prove* white-over-black superiority, the need (more broadly) to justify ongoing predation on the part of modern-day capitalism. More specifically, as researcher Quinn Slobodian reveals, a key part of the neoliberal agenda in places such as Europe, the UK and the US is to find reasons to fight against the welfare state and immigration. “Racial science,” for its part, attempts to “prove” that nature skews intelligence -levels in favour of “whites” (and Asians). Thus, neoliberal think-tanks and racial scientists make ideal bedfellows.

In much of the nineteenth and twentieth-centuries, racial science had to justify slavery and colonialism. Now, in the 1990s through into the twenty-first century, it exists to:

Discredit affirmative action by “proving” that black (and female) brains are *less* wired for the knowledge economy, and

To “prove” that the welfare state, by attempting to reduce inequality is fated to fail, as no amount of “equal opportunity” will reduce or eliminate inherent differences in IQ.

The conclusion we are therefore led to believe is that anti-racism struggle is futile—better to make peace with the status quo.

Neoliberalism, as is well-known, continues the historic project of class domination; its basic mission is to secure the conditions necessary for ongoing capitalist hegemony throughout the world. We also know that neoliberal capitalism did not flower spontaneously, but was (and continues to be) assiduously driven by ideologues faithful to the ideals of such free-market luminaries as Ludwig von Mises, Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman and others from the neoliberal think-tank, the Mont Pelerin Society.

In his seminal work, “The Invention of the White Race,” Theodore Allen clarifies why it was critical for the ruling class in America to divide workers, and how invention of the white race was a key part of this strategy.

In *The Invention of the White Race*, Theodore W. Allen tells the story of how America’s ruling classes created the category of the “white race” as a means of social control. Since that early invention, white privileges have enforced the myth of racial superiority, and that fact has

been central to maintaining ruling-class domination over ordinary working people of all colors throughout American history. (Verso Books)

Dividing working class society continues to be necessary to capitalist accumulation in this day-and-age. It continues to be necessary to create the perception that those groups who are relatively privileged under capitalism have something to lose in an egalitarian dispensation. In this way it fuels class division, and nurtures the growth of fascism.

Arguably, it has also played a significant role in promoting identity politics, in terms of which struggles for equality are based on group identity. This, in contrast to non-racialism, is not about social transformation, it is about correcting injustices *within* the capitalist order; about re-ordering the way in which the spoils of production will be reallocated among “ethnic groupings.”

Non-racialism on the other hand, has revolutionary implications. With specific reference to South Africa, Ciraj Rassool says about non-racialism that it is a

politics of race that calls attention to histories of how races and racial systems were made in legislative, social, and epistemic terms. This makes it possible to understand how each category of race was created as part of [South Africa’s] administration and governmentality, and how ethnicity itself was invented through colonialism and native administration, as well as how these continue to be reproduced and remade after apartheid, notwithstanding the commitment to social equity. Non-racialism is thus not a putative condition of racelessness. It is a politics of knowledge not merely of challenging racism but of questioning race itself. It is a long-term epistemological project of making a new society and new persons. (Rassool, 2019)

There is an interesting debate about whether or not racialism and the oppression of women pre-date capitalism. The answer is not necessarily an unqualified “yes.” Author Soren Mau refers to a *deep entanglement* between race and capitalism –

[It] is perfectly possible to hold that racism is a social phenomenon which does not originate in the capital form yet is conducive to and reproduced by the latter.

We might not completely agree with him, taking into account how instrumental racism has been in the imperialist/colonial phase of capitalism’s growth by enabling primitive accumulation. We need simply to consider our own history. Without the gold mining industry there would have been no South African state (as started by the Act of Union in 1910), and without ultra-cheap, ultra-exploitable labour power there would have been no gold mining industry. We are well-aware that to secure the masses of ultra-cheap, ultra-exploitable labour-power needed for the gold mining industry, the indigenous social structures had had to be destroyed. The Land Acts and apartheid-based social stratification were *necessary* conditions for the origination and flourishing of capitalism in this country. Here, too, the rulers needed a narrative legitimising racial discrimination, and here, too, they developed myths of white superiority in order to defend and promote their ongoing predation.

Racial science is a bogus science. Its role is to defend privilege. It has a history as old as capitalism itself. The struggle against capitalism is also the struggle against racial science.

When we say that the real, decisive breakthrough in our war against racialism will only happen under a socialist order we are not saying that the struggle against racialism should be postponed till then. We are saying that—like trade union struggles, for example, which are basically “non-transformational” the struggle against all forms of discrimination and inequality needs to be assiduously pursued every waking moment. As Ciraj Rassool says in the piece quoted above, non-racialism “is a politics of knowledge not merely of challenging racism but of questioning race itself. It is a long-term epistemological project of making a new society and new persons.”

4IR AND THE AGE OF THE TECHNO-COLONISTS.

Humanity is on the cusp of becoming completely ruled and subjugated by techno-colonialism. Advances in technology have, in essence, provided humanity with further ammunition to feed the hubris of the species.

Technological advances have given humanity complete dominion over biological life on Planet Earth, yet this power has not resulted in improving the human condition. “Technology”, as Neil Postman wrote, “is no substitute for human values.” In 1817, British parliamentarian William Lamb said: “the possession of great power necessarily implies great responsibility.” Former Google X chief business officer, Mohammed ‘Mo’ Gawdat, in a discussion on Artificial Intelligence, says that “responsibility has been divorced from power, and that those in power take no responsibility for their actions.”

The arrival of electronic communication methods through radio and television accelerated access to information, and digital printing methods and other means of communication production soon saw ordinary people, who had the means, commit their family lives to permanent memory through photographs and video recordings. The internet and social media have further compressed the communication distance among human beings.

Why then, the decline in human relationships? The world is not a unified harmonious space. On the contrary, weapons technology is available that could end human existence in one single day. And now, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has arrived.

The largest technology companies in the world command trillions of US\$ in annual revenue, and their primary focus is communication technology. There are 15 billion cell phones in the world, that’s almost two devices per human being on the planet! Billions of photographic and video images are uploaded to social media platforms every day. These images are mostly visual representations of the human condition in full narcissistic repose.

The grim realities of poverty, rape, murder, war, dispossession, racism and other realities, are sensationalised through these media platforms. The recent tragedy in Boksburg, when a fuel tanker exploded close to a hospital, saw numerous fatalities. The deaths were sensationalised on social media as people raced to the scene, cell phones at hand. Technological advances have done nothing to temper the savagery and callousness encased in the human heart.

A young American Somali immigrant was recently called out in Japan for his streaming channel ‘JohnnySomali’, when he streamed his abuse and mocking of Japanese citizens in Tokyo. He reminded Japanese commuters on a train, that Nagasaki and Hiroshima “could happen again” if they did not bow to American dictates.

The technology exists for human beings to bridge chasms that have existed for centuries, but this does not seem to be happening. Selective outrage is being driven by AI, with keywords and phrases programmed into the algorithms, so that “harmful content” can be shut out. In his apology to the Japanese, Johnny Somali points to his skin and says “I was not being racist, how could I be racist? I am black.” This is the

norm accepted by the legions of bots protecting the social media spaces because of how human beings have articulated “race” and “racism”. The ideology and biological reality that humanity comprises of a single species has become irrelevant – and the dominant narrative, strictly policed by AI, is that of multi-racialism. A similar narrative is being propagated regarding the biology of gender. Humanity, through technology, has lost its reason.

Humanity is, in the words of Shosana Zuboff, “fighting for a human future at the new frontier of power”. In 1965 Marshall McLuhan warned about an over reliance on the “electronic media for education and entertainment”, and later, Neil Postman warned about the impact of television on education in America. The advent of the internet and its interlinked relationship with cellular “smart” devices has brought the cautions of McLuhan and Postman forward into a modern-era, dystopian nightmare that we are all living through, with news, education, entertainment, business and politics centralised in smart devices – we go to our smart devices for everything.

Technology companies have, through their stranglehold on the technologies and platforms of communication, ensured that the dogmas of the technocracy are protected. The weaponization of sensitivity has resulted in Artificial Intelligence becoming the bureaucratic watchdog for the technocrats. Questioning of the orthodoxy is crushed at the point of the idea being posted.

Governments deployed smart technologies during the 2020/21 worldwide lockdowns, introducing societies across the globe, to the idea of “digital passports”. The lockdowns suited the “laptop class”, and all but totally excluded the working classes. The damage done to schooling and social cohesion is incalculable. The spectre of deploying AI to become the bureaucratic arm of a centralised governing system looms large, and draws ever nearer.

A bureaucracy is not designed to be of benefit to society, rather a well-designed bureaucracy is a major stumbling block to social development. John Stewart-Mill described bureaucracy as “administrative tyranny”, a governmental mechanism designed to keep the poor and marginalised classes out of the way of the elite groups – groups who have no need to stumble their way through the bureaucratic

jungle. In his final essay in Pravda, Lenin warned against the deployment of an inhumane bureaucracy.

It is within the terrain of the bureaucratic jungle that Artificial Intelligence rules supreme. Its word is law, and there are few humans to assist once things go wrong. Human contact is diminishing and the language of the new era of digital tribalism is already upon us. The divisions in society deepened with the global arrival of Covid-19, and an already divided global community separated into “denialists, vaxxers, anti-vaxxers, experts, and conspiracy mongers”.

The social distances between and among peoples widened and the social media “community” groups expelled those who did not toe the narrative line. The same expulsions have been taking place around issues of political ideology, race and racism, Black Lives Matter, Rhodes Must Fall, gender, Critical Race Theory, sport, transformation, and many other issues. In the meantime, as Shoshana Zuboff writes, the techno-colonists “harvest vast amounts of data about us, but not for us”, while “we sing in our chains”. In 2021 the world’s “leading epidemiologist”, Bill Gates, requested privacy during his divorce, yet the same Bill Gates patented “Human Body Activity to be used in a data-mining process for a cryptocurrency system”. This system, owned by Microsoft, requires that every single human being on the planet be registered to a centralised digital identification system managed by AI.

The techno-colonists are introducing the global population to a world without humanity. The restrictions on speech and thought are bureaucratic borders that very few, if any, dare cross. Universities have become spaces of fear rather than spaces of thought, debate, discussion and ideas. A new era of intellectual in-breeding has dawned, and the pioneers of the Renaissance, that birthed ideas of democracy, freedom, anti-slavery, existentialism, and our modern ideas of school and schooling, are now regarded as retarded, dead “white men”. The new university embraces, rather than challenges the accepted orthodoxy.

It is a brave new world, and technology has replaced human values. Morality is now legislated and policed by AI. The bank teller, supermarket cashier, petrol pump attendant, shopkeeper, postman, milkman, music store owner – people with whom casual, conversation could be held, have all but disappeared. Human contact is restricted, and will become increasingly restricted once green, 15-minute cities become the global norm, especially if these zones are policed by the

“administrative tyranny” of Artificial Intelligence.

Covid-19 was the reset button for capitalism, even as it looked to be on its last gasp of breath. The testing of lockdowns, digital passports, health passes, fear mongering and ratting on friends, family and neighbours yielded positive reward for the techno-elite. A fearful population trooped in unison to the tunes belted out by governments that were wholly untrustworthy just before the “pandemic”. Freedoms were lost overnight, and the masters of the earth saw that in their technological toys, they had the yoke firmly bolted onto the neck of society. They will tighten their grip.

But it is within their religion of technology and unshakeable science that techno-feudalists overlook the need of humans to not only learn from technology, but more so from each other. It is easy to switch off a smart device, or to go without television for one day and to return to the pastimes of the Renaissance – sitting and thinking, considering an idea, reading a book, savouring each word, contemplating the motives of the writer – breathing slowly and speaking to a stranger. These are traits that cannot be programmed into technology... yet.

We have time, to become human again. Let us connect with each other, without the need for digital devices. As it is, digital conversation is dead conversation, why not converse face to face? We are facing the very real prospect of this becoming an outlawed practice. Let us discuss ideas while we can.

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