



## OPINION

## Covid-19 a ruse for mass surveillance

SAM DITSHOGO

WHY were freedom fighters Robert Sobukwe, Zeph Mothethi, Jafa Masemola and many others imprisoned? Why were freedom fighters Onkgopotse Tiro, Steve Biko and many others killed?

They were imprisoned and killed because they were fighting for the liberation of the African people from mental, physical and economic oppression.

In 1994, the ANC was given nominal independence after years of secret negotiations. The ANC hasn't used that nominal independence to pursue the objectives for which the freedom fighters mentioned gave their lives.

They have not pursued those objectives with the same zeal they are using to fight against a non-existent disease and virus.

The ANC government takes its cue from the World Health Organization (WHO), which shows there is no self-determination and that ANC leaders are not mentally liberated. President Cyril Ramaphosa sounds like a broken record about getting vaccines to prevent the spread of Covid-19. Ramaphosa and his ANC government ignore a corpus of scientific literature showing the dangers of vaccines.

The Italian government has recently commissioned a study to establish if the WHO and Bill Gates vaccines do what they claim they are supposed to do. When is Ramaphosa and his ANC government going to do what Italy has done?

The supposed spread of Covid-19 is meant to be used to put people under surveillance and to control them. From June 1, Australia is going to begin to use face-recognition cameras to monitor if people observe social distancing at their workplaces. In totalitarian China there are more than a million face recognition cameras.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Bill and Hillary Foundation, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, big pharma and China control the WHO. The vaccine will not be for Covid-19 because that disease doesn't exist; the vaccine will be for something else. This is when the improper use of the Covid-19 disease as a pretext to effect surveillance and control people comes in.

If the sinister vaccination project of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the WHO is not exposed the way the Italian government did, people will be forced to get vaccinated before they travel or are provided with services using nanotechnology. I am watching with keen interest what's going to happen to people who are supposed to receive the R350 grants.

If people are forced to be vaccinated then Gates's digital ID2020 that's going to be implanted in our bodies will become a reality. Christians refer to it as the mark of the beast, found in the Book of Revelation. That's why the churches are discouraged from congregating, because they will mobilise against the implants.

These implants are going to be connected to the 5G grid and we will all be China's slaves or robots because China controls 5G technology.

Look at how China oppresses its people. In his 1959 inaugural address PAC founding President Robert Sobukwe criticised China's totalitarian regime, saying the Africanists are against China's totalitarianism.

We can ignore Sobukwe's warning at our own peril. May 25 was Africa Liberation Day and the media celebrated it without mentioning Sobukwe. Local radio stations can't even play one of the late Miriam Makeba's three songs which she dedicated to Sobukwe.

But the songs I mentioned by Makeba expose the truth with our northern neighbours, the European Union, and the media – that they are concealing the name of one of the key historical figures who made it possible for them to celebrate Africa Liberation Day.

The South African media and ANC government can distort and falsify the history of the liberation struggle as much as they want, but the facts will contradict them. As Sobukwe said: "We have history on our side."

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For safety is not a gadget but a state of mind

ELEANOR EVERETT

## LOCKDOWN

# We were set up to lock down

Government policy decisions do not estimate the health burden of Covid-19

THERE'S A standard line.

South Africa's decision to lockdown when we did was sensible.

Little was known about Covid-19 and its potential impact here. Since then, the situation has changed. We know more about how the pandemic is likely to unfold and who the disease affects, and we have made preparations to deal with the likely impact. The economy continues to deteriorate each day we stay locked down, and with it, people's livelihoods. It is now time to unlock; in fact, unlocking is overdue.

Decisive steps should now be taken to restore the economy, education, health services, and other pillars of the nation to their "new normal" function. This familiar story is wrong.

The evidence available at the time we locked down supported doing something more moderate.

Lockdown was not the right response for South Africa to the threat Covid-19 posed in South Africa.

Its potential benefits for a population the majority of whom is under 27, and can expect to be dead by their mid-sixties, did not outweigh the certain costs to the one in four living in poverty, and the many more who would join them on losing their livelihoods.

Besides, it was obvious that, for most of the population, lockdown was impossible, due to overcrowding, shared sanitation, and the necessity of travel to receive social grants.

Contrary to what's said, the evidence hasn't changed. The relevant characteristics of Covid-19 were apparent by the end of March, when the decision to lockdown was taken.

Much of it is cited in an opinion piece published on the same-day lockdown was announced, March 23, a piece arguing that a one-size-fits-all approach could not be applied to achieving social distancing.

The piece was written by a colleague and myself, unaware that same day the country would move in exactly the opposite direction to the one we advised. We wrote several further pieces, and by April 8, I was sure that lockdown was wrong for Africa, including but not limited to South Africa, and published an opinion to that effect. The next day lockdown was extended.

What has changed? Is it the evidence, or is it intellectual fashion?

It's possible that those of us making anti-lockdown arguments two months ago are like stopped clocks that inevitably tell the right time when it comes.

## COMMENTARY

## Scrapping 'sovereignty clause' is Africa's first step



LETEPE MASEELA

LAST Monday marked the 57th Anniversary of Africa Day, inaugurated at the founding of the OAU – in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 1963 where there were only 32 countries who raised their collective hands vouching to become member states of the Organisation of African Union.

Later the name was changed to African Union in 2001, probably to fall in sync with the other northern neighbours, the European Union, but the ideals remained unchanged.

South Africa joined the AU on June 6, 1994 after the demise of apartheid and the ushering in of the new democratically elected government in 1994. South Africa attended its first Assembly of Heads of State and Government (OAU Summit) held in Tunis, Tunisia on May 23, 1994.

The SA delegation was led by the late foreign affairs minister Alfred Nzo. President Nelson Mandela was

to address the OAU Summit on July 8, 1996, held in Yaounde, Cameroon.

Today the AU boasts 55 member states, representing the rest of the continent.

The next significant question to ask is: Is it worth celebrating Africa Day which is also factually celebration of the AU and its predecessor the OAU? Since its founding more than five decades ago, what has the AU achieved that warrants all the pomp and ceremony still in its name?

From my recollection of historical events, there are a myriad of mishaps that took place over the years under the guard of the AU, that in my opinion mitigate strongly against celebrating African Day in its current format.

When the likes of Kwame Nkrumah, first prime minister of Ghana and one of the earlier preachers of the pan-African philosophy upon whose foundation the AU was built, went astray and declared himself president for life and this led to his being deposed in a military coup in 1966, where was the voice of the AU?

Hiding behind the skirts of "country sovereignty", the OAU and later the AU soon became an exclusive country club for African dictators.

When Muammar Gaddafi, another passionate supporter and funder of the



## LOCKDOWN

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CAUGHT in the middle of a lockdown on World Hunger Day the community of Cosmo City were given some relief when the Engen retailers' association delivered food hampers that would feed a family of four for a month. TIMOTHY BERNARD African News Agency (ANA)

as being claimed to the bed, or indeed being shot dead on the spot.

These have different consequences for mortality, none of which show up in the models. Perhaps, this doesn't matter in the developed world, where economic downturn means poverty but not starvation. But it's crucial in the developing world, where recession often means death.

Second, and relatedly, contextual differences were obliterated by the use of a simple percentage scale to measure the reduction in social distancing. This meant that, for instance, a 60% reduction in social distancing was represented as the same thing in Geneva and Johannesburg.

Whereas, of course, that is an outcome one takes by implementing policy decisions, which would usually be informed by the local context.

Third, the different scenarios modelled were then given different names, re-introducing a qualitative difference between them that was simply absent in the input. Qualitative differences were thus obliterated in the inputs perfectly reasonably, from a modelling perspective – then introduced in the output. Where before we had (say) a 40% reduction in distancing, we have "mitigation".

And instead of (say) a 60% reduction, we have "suppression". These began life as arbitrary points on a con-

tinuous scale, as the modellers would have been the first to admit.

But with different names, they became treated as qualitatively different strategies. Moreover, the leading models at the time predicted hugely greater benefits from suppression compared to mitigation.

Thus, almost magically, the huge range of possible measures, varying between context depending on context and policy priorities, became transformed into a choice between lockdown and no-lockdown.

Lockdown was exemplified already in China and Europe as a set of specific restrictions, and not as an abstract percentage reduction in social contact. All context, all nuance, all qualitative factors were lost, washed out in a modelling exercise that was insensitive to contextual differences when formulating its inputs, and unwise in giving qualitatively different labels to its outputs.

Against this background, precautionary thinking naturally over-takes cost-benefit thinking. Proportionality gave way to precaution.

The anti-Covid-19 measure has a clear form: restricting on economic activities and confining people to their homes. It is so much more effective than any other measure that it presents us with a binary choice; other measures are pathetically ineffective

by comparison, because in the process of de-quantifying the effectiveness of suppression over mitigation, regional differences have been lost. The choice is between action and inaction, and the cost of doing nothing appears huge; just look at the footage from Italy. Yes, it will be painful, but it's better than the alternative.

But the precautionary approach was never necessary. There was always a range of possible actions, the costs of lockdown were always obvious, and the most significant determinants of the risk profile of the South African population were known.

Now, European countries have passed their peak, and we are again ignoring our own context.

Our curve remains exactly the same as it was the day we went into lockdown (a straight line on a logarithmic scale, which is the relevant scale here – for both cases and deaths).

Lockdown made no difference, if those graphs are to be believed; and it's hard to know what other data to look at.

The decision to unlock is, as Glenda Gray pointed out, not backed by any scientific case.

Yet it's the right one, not because the evidence changed, but because it was right all along.

Lockdown was always wrong for Africa, including South Africa.

countries like it's still happening now in the Western Mali.

The worst remains the Rwandan genocide of 1994. Though the massacres occurred during a four-month period from April to July, no country in the world intervened including the AU. In the final analysis, does the AU honestly expect African citizens despite its decades of neglect or indifference, to commemorate Africa Day every May? Does it really expect Zimbabweans, exiled or still in their country, whose misery was caused by one of the leaders of its member states and subsequent chairman, to still celebrate the day?

Does the AU expect citizens from countries whose leadership has long overstayed their welcome, unilaterally changing constitutions to lengthen their hold to power like in Uganda (34 years), Equatorial Guinea (41 years), Cameroon (28 years), Congo Republic (46) and our neighbour eSwatini, sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarch in power since 1986 (34 years)? And there are more.

Coming down to South Africa, what is also there to celebrate? During the apartheid years the majority were left to hang and dry since the country was not even a member of the AU, though by default. In the aftermath of our democratic

rule, not much that I know of has benefited the people of this country, besides our costly indulgences like hosting the Pan African Parliament, the legislative body of the AU.

Post Covid-19, I will expect the new AU chairman – President Cyril Matamela Ramaphosa, to ring in some serious changes to make the organisation more effective, user-friendly and accountable to the citizens of Africa.

The AU ideals and objectives must be drastically overhauled beginning with the blanket withdrawal of the "sovereignty clause" that the AU conveniently hides behind, when overlooking excesses committed by leaders of member states. It is also imperative that the AU becomes self-funding in order to act independently.

All these must be accompanied by strict austerity measures to control costs and not allow the AU to be converted into a sheltered employment agency for Africa's ageing diplomats and bureaucrats.

It's going to be a long haul but as the Chinese put it: the journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step.

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