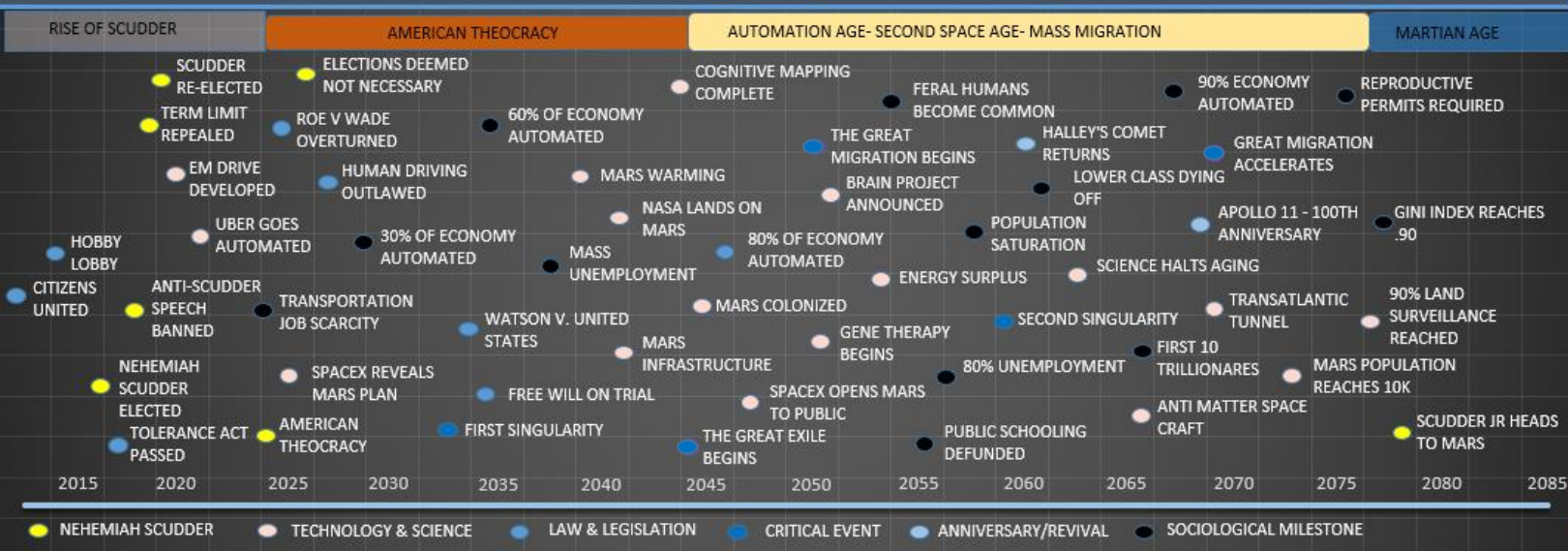




Eclipse

Robert A. Heinlein's Never Written Story

Events Leading Up To "Eclipse"



Foreword

In 2016, Nehemiah Scudder, a charismatic televangelist, was elected President in the most heavily funded campaign in American history. A well-intended piece of liberal legislation was passed the same year, the Tolerance Act, banning offensive speech. The act went seemingly uncontested by Scudder, and was quickly put to use in ways the framers never intended or anticipated. Scudder used the Tolerance Act to ban speech contrary to his rule, homosexual acts, adulterous acts, and non-Christian religious practices. Per Hobby Lobby v. Burwell, the will of the established religion was imposed upon the working class, necessitating conformity as a means of employment survival. Scudder leveraged his control over the masses and his majority in the Supreme Court to repeal term limits for presidents, and subsequently established the American Theocracy. The Scudder campaign successfully manipulated the public, dividing Americans with wedge issues that were strategically tied to economic policies which promised growth, but favored an extreme minority. Nevertheless, Scudder had the foresight to anticipate the oncoming rise of automation, and as Stephen Hawking warned in 2015, "If machines produce everything we need, the outcome will depend on how things are distributed." The first Singularity in 2035 marked artificial intelligence's passing human intelligence. Watson v. United States ruled soon after that corporations run by AI would have the same rights in campaign finance as the corporations still under human control (which would quickly be unable to compete). Unemployment reached unprecedented heights as more and more jobs became automated. The sudden halt in new income for the working class marked the beginning of an era of never before seen inequality. Elon Musk, building on his plan to someday offer commercial travel to Mars, worked with the government to launch millions of nuclear bombs at Mars' poles, effectively warming the planet and building an atmosphere that could be terraformed to provide a foundation for successful human colonization. When the most primitive infrastructure was established in the 2040's on Mars, Scudder began using government funding to exile offensive citizens to Mars in an event known as The Great Exile. Soon after, harnessing the power of the physics redefining EM Drive, and using government subsidies, Elon Musk was able to make migrating to Mars affordable for many who could no longer compete with automation on Earth. Many secret dissenters of Scudder jumped at the opportunity, as a massive population of closet-liberals flocked to Mars in an event known as The Great Migration. Soon, in 2060 the second Singularity would arrive, a cataclysmic event, when biology and AI merged through neural implants, giving inconceivable cognitive power to the rich, but more dangerously, giving AI the human desire to survive. The second Singularity was the first step of the eugenic process, as the rich began genetically modifying their children, establishing a blonde haired, blue eyed, visibly recognizable ruling class, more separate from their subservient counterparts than ever before. Among these perfect children was Nehemiah Scudder Jr, the first ruler of Mars, who was sent to the red planet in 2080 to cultivate a perfect society, to reign in the political dissenters, and to carry the will and testament of his father across the Universe. He did not go unopposed, however, and in 2084, at the first interplanetary conference, the Martian people saw their window of opportunity to take back humanity from the biologically enhanced elitists

I.

On Mars, children dreamt of drones. In secret, they preached *Das Kapital* in the mines. On Sundays, they cleaned the soot off their faces, and became actors and actresses in the church. Their fathers taught them to sing for their lives. Their mothers were unwilling surrogates of the first prophet Nehemiah Scudder Sr. They were born without flaw, without sin, with hope that they would one day join the biologically enhanced elites, receive their neural implants, and bring rule and order to the heathen populace. Nevertheless, they had not yet been programmed to do so, and the community had different intentions.

Although the pains of theocratic rule were widespread amongst those exiled and those who fled from America in the Great Migration, Mars was undeniably a land of opportunity. For the first time in decades, human work had value. Infrastructure needed to be established, medical services were necessary to sustain the workforce, and mineral ore deposits needed to be mined. David, however, and many of the so-called offensive citizens who had to struggle through the early years of colonization, was physically incapable of performing these jobs. They were lab rats in the exilic era, most unable to pay for the necessary medical procedures to successfully adapt to the new terrain. David had grown blind and stiff, as the decrease in gravity caused cerebrospinal fluid to rush to his head, destroying his vision and accelerating muscular atrophy throughout his body. Though he proved to be an invaluable teacher, there was no pecuniary incentive to keep him alive. He was saved by his husband Neil, a once prominent engineer who successfully evaded exile in 2045, and migrated through SpaceX when the Martian land was adequately terraformed and denser spinal fluid transplants became affordable. Still, as underground leaders of the counter-culture, David and Neil were always at risk, and evading the all-seeing-eye of government surveillance was a foolish ambition.

“The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win.”

David’s voice trembled with fervor as he lectured Marx to the children who had assembled in his home next to the niobium mine. His thick white hair ran wild on top of his head, and his blackish eyes wandered aimlessly within his head. “All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away; all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts. into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life and his relations with his kind. Revolutions are the locomotives of history.” The short blonde hairs on their backs of their necks raised, like an army standing at attention. Akilah Ahmad, the thirteen year old daughter of one of the only physicians on the planet, sat tall with her jaw clenched, her fingers writhed and tensed as David’s words washed over the room.

“They’ll see us coming.” She muttered under her breath, staring intently into nothing.

David lifted his chin and waited in stillness for a moment.

“Go on.” He said.

“They have social and genetic profiles on everyone here. They’ll know who is a threat. They’ll know when to expect it. They’ll know what to feed you to stop your hunger. They probably know we’re here, and what you just said, and what you’ll say next. It’s been forty years since your husband worked with AI. It improves itself exponentially. It’s not about outsmarting – ‘him’ – It’s us versus mechanical minds billions of times more intelligent than he could ever be on his own.” At last, she blinked, and scanned the room with paranoid caution. The other boys and girls grew stiff and avoided eye contact.

“Maybe.” David broke the silence. “But he cannot stop us.”

“Prove it.” Aaron Rosencrantz, one of the boys from the mine spoke up, his white teeth flashing out from his dirt-blackened face.

“How do you mean?” David asked.

“Say his name.” He choked on the words as if his throat was full of dust. The faces of those who were avoiding eye contact sank to the floor in an instant. He grew bolder, “If he can’t stop you, then say his name.” Their eyes were watching David, searching for fear in the wrinkles of his face.

“You’re missing the point.” David squirmed in his chair as if he could feel their glares. “They cannot function without us, they will always act in their own interest, and they operate on the fact that we will do the same.” He said, in part because he needed for them to believe it, in part to avoid Aarons challenge, and perhaps to make himself believe it.

The sirens from the mineshaft rang out to signal the end of the lunch break. The boys and girls counted to twenty out loud, waiting for the surveillance drone to pass over the area before exiting the house. Neil opened the front door, an aurora of light shined around his tall frame as he stood in from of the doorway. He looked like a cookie-cutter perfect citizen, his greying black hair was always neatly combed over, his shirt always tucked it. Neil was returning home on his usual schedule, and as always, he ushered the group out into the open terrain, feigning a conversation about increasing productivity.

Despite their seemingly patrolled behavior, there was no authoritarian agency of police officers standing by. There were no “officers” at all. The system of order was perpetuated completely through surveillance. Every bit of data that was recorded would be analyzed by complex algorithms that provide user profiles and conformity ratings for every citizen, subsequently syncing that information with the neural implants of the government elite, who rarely needed to resort to force. The population was entirely made up of social pariahs and political dissidents, all of them knowing that they may be monitored at any time, though none sure to what extent or regularity. In this manner, they policed themselves.

Neil may have been the exception to the Foucauldian rule. He was never identified as an offensive citizen in the 2040's, he listed himself as David's caretaker upon receiving Martian citizenship, and his work with artificial intelligence established the foundations of the surveillance technology used on both Mars and Earth. As a result of his discretion, knowledge, and connections, he was able to play the system, and became a dangerous weapon in the aspiring revolutionary arsenal.

When the whines of sirens subsided, and Phobos made its daily eclipse in front of the sun, Neil opened the front door, wincing from the gusting dust that forced its way in behind him. As the door swung shut and the dust settled, the sound of labored breathing replaced the sound of wind. David sat in the living room slouched over with his head in his hands.

"They're losing their faith Neil" Like a broken wind-up toy, his body was motionless.

"That's when progress begins, historically speaking" Neil carried an oxygen tank into the room and lifted David's head to position the tube. His eyes were swollen as if he had been punched in the face. No cynical quip could distract from the disappointment of a man doubting the only vision he had left to cling to.

"The revolution Neil. They're losing faith in the revolution." David cried out audibly as Neil wiped the tears from his sunken cheekbones.

Neil lifted David's chin and kissed his brackish quivering lips. "What if I told you that you can make them believe?" A knowing smirk crawled up his face.

"I'd say you obviously haven't spoken to them in a while" David managed to force out a laugh.

"What if I told you that every person in the known Universe with a neural implant will be on Mars, in the same room, at the same time?"

David's entire demeanor was resurrected in an instant. "You can't do this to me. If you're lying, I swear, I will kill you in your sleep."

"What if I told you that I have access to that room for the next week?"

David grew impatient with the Socratic dialogue "What if I told you to fuck off already and tell me?"

"I was assigned the duty of organizing and preparing the venue for the first Interplanetary Union conference hosted here. Each of the twenty-five American leaders, along with the five Martian leaders, will be in attendance. The Church of The Second Prophet will be renovated to accommodate and secure their presentations and deliberations. I'll be under constant watch, but I have clearance to go in and out until the day of the event."

David erupted into a cacophonous fit of wheezing and laughter until his breath and the gravity of the situation caught up with him. "They can't be that careless. They'll know Neil. Won't they?"

"You didn't let me finish." Neil interjected. "There's a lunar eclipse the night before the event. Phobos will be in the shadows of Mars for a short window of time."

"I don't follow. We have eclipses every day."

"You're missing the point. Those are solar eclipses. The surveillance system here is a network of drones, satellites, and devices on the ground. They send out data via radio-frequency radiation to the solar powered radio telescope on Phobos. From there, it gets encrypted and transmitted to the implants' receivers on Mars and Earth. There was no reason to waste resources on a capacitor forty years ago when the scope was built, considering it would only be in the dark for seven minutes a decade."

"So for seven minutes, we're invisible, but there's still a room full of trillion dollar men and women, and each is billions of times more intelligent than you and I put together. We have

no weapons. Even if we could mobilize the entire population, people who are perfectly happy just to be working, the walls are reinforced with steel and the entire perimeter will be on armed lockdown.”

“You’re thinking like a true outdated veteran. If you can fry the implants, you fry the brain and bypass the body. I’m going to rally up Akilah and Aaron. I need you to drop the pessimism. Remember the words you preach. ‘The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win’”

II.

In the depths of the niobium mine, the workers sang the hymns of the second prophet. The air was saturated with sweat and delusion, and Aaron sifted through debris with a piece of iron in hand, covertly collecting pieces neodymium ore for Neil.

In the medical clinic, Akilah watched her mother slave over black lunged miners. She searched through the cabinets to the monotonous march of the EKG's and the heart-lung machine metronomes, occasionally stopping to clean the coughed-up black mucus from the floors, desperately hoping that nobody would notice a missing defibrillator.

At David and Neil's house, David blindly disassembled an old air conditioning unit, removing the thick copper wire. Neil was doing reconnaissance at the church, searching for vulnerabilities in security, and looking for a detonation point over the seating area. The conference was within a day's reach. The whole community was abuzz, but none for the same reason as the self-identified proletarians.

Once again, the sirens cried out over the land. Akilah and Aaron made their way to the meeting point, and Neil put on his usual façade of conformity as he scanned his eyeball at the exit for clearance to leave the premises.

When Neil returned to the house, Akilah and Aaron sat ready in the family room talking to David, who had broken from his routine of preaching Marx during lunch break. They laid on the table the items that they were asked to collect, as Neil packed a short hollow iron rod with sugar, then sulfur and saltpeter from the surface deposits. He picked up two pieces of neodymium ore that Aaron acquired, affixed them to each end of the iron pipe, and carefully connected the wire from the air conditioning unit. David had removed the capacitor from the defibrillator and stripped the wires so Neil could connect a remote igniter.

“This –” Neil said proudly, holding up the ugly mess of a contraption, “This is the silver bullet of the Martian revolution. It’s the first Martian made remote electromagnetic pulse bomb. It will completely destroy any electronic devices within a hundred foot radius, and likely the hosts they belong to. ‘There is only one way to shorten and ease the convulsions of the old society and the bloody birth pangs of the new – revolutionary terror’”

“You’re damn right.” David said smugly.

The children stared at the device in admiration as Neil packed it into a briefcase. He kissed each of them on the forehead and took a deep breath as the sirens called them back to work. As they counted to twenty, he cleaned the powder residue off his hands.

“I’ve decided I’m going to spend the night in the church. I found a crawl space in the rafters up above the main room, and I scavenged a couple discarded medical vests used for x-rays to block me off from any sort of radiation based security scanning. I can promise you that I will see you all tomorrow.” He tried to avoid eye contact as he turned away from David, grabbed the briefcase, opened the door, and feigned the same old conversation, with no certainty that it would be the last time he had to fake it.

When he arrived at the church, his hands began to sweat, there were cameras everywhere, and he would only have seven minutes to get into position. If anybody were to ask to search the briefcase, he’d be a dead man. He watched the sky as a shadow began to swallow Phobos. He couldn’t jump the clearance check-in until he was sure that the radio telescope was in the dark. As the moment drew near and the doubt began to pour over, he tightened his grip and hurried past check in, undoubtedly setting off a silent alarm, but if he was right, it would not be able to notify anybody. Too late to turn back, he opened the door to the main room, ran up the altar and behind the curtains, and ascended the latter to the rafters. Of course, unable to hear over the pounding of his own chest, the night crawled by in terror as he waited for his fate to arrive.

III.

No Marxian pep talk could have prepared Neil for the moment the conference began. His body shook as he heard “God bless America” for the first time in nearly forty years. Their accents had grown foreign but invoked nostalgia within him. An unfamiliar voice welcomed John Koch to the stage.

“Today, we gather for the first time, in gratitude and in solidarity with the leaders of the brave new world. I’d like to thank his holiness, Nehemiah Scudder Jr., for his invitation, his sacrifices, and his continued excellence in bringing peace and stability to a difficult population.”

Neil placed his finger on the latch of the briefcase, praying to nobody that it would unlatch without a sound.

“Nevertheless, we have arrived with hope in our hearts, that we may liberate the Martian people from their afflictions. We have made tremendous advancements in medicine, especially in the realm of gene therapy, and I am pleased to announce today that we have the abundance and capital to repair a broken society.”

As the room filled with applause, Neil seized the opportunity to open the briefcase. His head laid still on the hard steel rafter, and the remote EMP bomb sat in front of his face, protruding from the case.

“First and foremost, we have identified genetic markers for homosexuality, and we are now able to cure this blasphemous disease in adults, in addition to making certain that our children do not become offensive citizens.”

Neil cringed and reached for the remote control with nuclear eyes. The crowd applauded again, and he pushed the briefcase closer to the edge, easily within effective distance if he did not want to drop it, or risk it breaking, or risk giving the crowd a chance to react. The EMP had

little physical blast and would do insignificant damage to his body, so he resolved to put his thumb on the trigger, fully prepared to press it at the next utterance of the word “disease”.

“In fact, we are so proud and confident of our genetic therapy, that we are willing to open our doors once again to these citizens, and help them return to the families they may have left behind, provided that they accept our offer.”

Neil’s eyes welled as he remembered his sister, David’s younger brother, and their friends in America. He tried to remember the horrific poverty, the corruption, the bigotry, but it was all drowned out by the voice on stage.

“In addition, the exile brought suffering and death to many who were sent to colonize Mars while they were insufficiently prepared for the physical burdens of the untamed environment. We have developed easily administered and affordable cures for the blindness and muscular atrophy caused by the effects of lower gravity on cerebrospinal fluid.”

All he could do was think of David. Who was he to let his husband and hundreds of others die a slow and painful death? Who was he to deny David the chance to once again see the man he fell in love with, or to see the Martian landscape, or to stand up straight and breathe without pain? But still, who was he to deny hundreds of millions of people the chance to live free from the theocracy? Was that all it was? A chance? What would become of Mars without leadership that was intellectually sufficient to survive it? The weight of two worlds was on his shoulders, he clutched the remote and thought of Akilah, and Aaron, and David...

“Last, but certainly not least, we have developed a consumer level neural implant that will enhance the cognitive power of our citizens, and the citizens of mars, to nearly one billion times the power of the human brain on its own. Through this, and through gene therapy, we aim to liberate our overgrown prison population, with complete certainty that every citizen will be

able to function without malice, to rejoin and resurrect the American workforce, and to share in the abundance that has put our country in the position to make more advancements than any time in human history.”

It was not the time for sympathy. It was the time for revolution, for equality, for retribution and independence. He had to make a decision, and he had a promise to keep. Still, he thought, what if he had the power of an AI implant? What if he and David could transcend ostracism, and poor health, and poverty, and finally live in that house by the San Francisco Bay? What if he could become an engineer again and work toward the same dream of liberating the masses? He fell back to the Marxian mantra. “The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains.” It could be another hundred years of insufferable inequality if he didn’t pull the trigger. He closed his eyes tight, shielded his back from the bomb, and his finger hovered over the ignition button.

They knew he wouldn’t press it.