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European Union

A Europe of the peoples or of capital?

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Since the Maastricht treaty in 1992, the European Union (EU) has accumulated regulations, conventions, agreements, directives, but also pacts. These are information, data and control systems concerning migrants from third party countries. The novelty of the new century is the increase and intensification of so-called outsourcing. This procedure inaugurates the passage in Europe from the paradigm of states, marked by the defence of human rights based on conventions, charters and so on, signed by states and of a binding nature, reference orientation agreements for European countries, towards the reference of national rights under the pretext of the protection of citizens actually originating from member countries. [1] The EU then plays a role in supporting member countries in the race to restrict the entry of migrants to Fortress Europe.

It is no coincidence that the French Interior Minister responded in an interview with *Journal du Dimanche* on 22 October to questions concerning his condemnation by the European Convention on Human Rights to pay a fine for expulsion of two Chechens, that he does not sit on the ECHR. On the question of whether the two fields of European jurisprudence and the French Constitution are legitimate, the minister replies that "there is no taboo question" and that "the ECHR does not excessively prevent me from doing my work as Interior Minister."

In the name of the fight against illegal immigration, in 2008 the EU, for the first time, patrolled the Strait of Sicily to prevent the crossing of boats full of migrants coming from the African coasts to Italy or Malta. This is a joint operation with Libyan border guards. The cooperation of the latter is a novelty which will serve as an example later. At the same time, migrants are sent back to Mauritania or are kept in Libya, where they will be victims of ill-treatment, torture, rape, or trafficking.

In 2016, the EU negotiated a joint action plan "which will bring order to migratory flows and contribute to stemming irregular migration" with Turkey's president Erdogan, following the influx of Syrian refugees onto the continent through Greece or Italy. The agreement provided for the return to Turkey of migrants rejected as asylum seekers. This agreement cost European taxpayers 6 billion euros delivered in two instalments to Turkey. EU payment delays to the Turkish president are causing him to encourage migrants to stay in Greece in 2020, which in turn hosts them in deplorable conditions. Once again, the EU undertakes to pay 700 million euros to the Greek government so that it can take care of the distribution of minors to voluntary EU countries, which has not prevented increased returns of migrants at sea.

Since then, this defined subcontracting of "outsourcing" of asylum seekers and refugees of all kinds has multiplied, as have bilateral agreements carefully managed in the form of commercial, financial aid and so on with third party countries. At the same time, the measures concerning refugees, adopted since its creation, reveal the exponential erosion of human rights guaranteed by international conventions, signed by most EU countries.

In 2021, the social-democratic government of Denmark legislated the return of asylum seekers to Rwanda, under the pretext of dissuading migrants from returning to the EU area.

In the United Kingdom, Boris Johnson, then Prime Minister in 2022, launched the idea of sending asylum seekers back to East Africa. These transfers of migrants arriving via the Channel crossing were to be sent to Rwanda under the Rishi Sunak government, but the Supreme Court unanimously blocked his intentions, in line with United Nations reports on human rights and refugee rights.

In Italy, Giorgia Meloni signed an agreement last November with Albania for the reception of 39,000 migrants who survived shipwrecks at sea to detention centres, with the exception of women and children whose asylum requests would be dealt with by Italian agents, but on Albanian soil.

In France, the government is trying to tighten its regulation of migrants, already very discriminatory, based on the general orientation founded on the potential dangerousness of refugees, selection of arrivals, suppression and discrimination of certain rights to health, to work , and so on, echoing the proto-fascist speeches of Marine Le Pen's National Rally.

Germany has closed a relatively open chapter towards migrants with the reduction of aid, extension of police extensions concerning deportation to the borders followed by the tightening of control, an accelerated process of requests for authorization and like its French neighbour, the government wants to move towards a "significant and lasting reduction in illegal immigration" while, like the British, it is starting negotiations with countries in Africa.

In the Spanish state, the Canary Islands are the gateway to Europe for those who risk their lives with often fatal consequences. This situation led the Interior Minister of the Socialist government to try to convince the government of Senegal to tighten control of the country's coasts, which was refused.

Last July, the EU concluded an agreement worth 150 million euros with the government of the racist Tunisian president Kaïs Saïed to "save the country's finances" and 100 million euros to "fight against illegal immigration". In fact, the government returned 60 million euros, in the person of its Minister of Foreign Affairs, due to European accusations that Tunis had shown "negligence in the fight against smugglers". However, this did not break down relations between this country and the EU.

During the session of the Permanent People's Tribunal in Paris January 2018, their indictment demonstrated that the EU and its member states systematically violate fundamental rights and freedoms in matters of immigration and asylum policy, despite the countless condemnations of some of their countries.

Despite accusations from human rights organizations in the EU, its officials continue to insist that the Union "defends its values". We wonder what values are at stake in the Europe which despises, which rejects, which mistreats, which discriminates against, a part of humanity.

The motivations for a racist policy

The ideological chasms between human rights defenders and nationalists or sovereignists seem to be narrowing as the gaps between wealth and poverty increase, either locally or globally.

This is not surprising because the need for capital accumulation is inherent to the very existence of the system. It is therefore normal that its representatives seek not to disrupt this dynamic. And one of the ways to consolidate it is to create myths, scapegoats, stigmatization of undesirable individuals produced by systemic fantasies.

The reality is that European taxpayers find themselves victims of a great scam by the representatives of capital. The justification for the colossal expenditure for maintaining the policy of Fortress Europe not only proves useless, but also reveals limitless hypocrisy because the authors of the countless security measures of control, repression, registration, retention and so on know perfectly well that their implementations are in vain. In reality, their policy allows the continuity of the economic cycle of capital, in continuous renewal with the panoply of products to ensure

the hypothetical closure of borders and the impossibility of entry onto EU soil.

In 2015, *La Tribune* published material based on a study by a consortium of European journalists on the cost of the policy against so-called illegal immigration for taxpayers.

The cost of expulsions of illegal migrants carried out by the 28 member countries and the four other non-EU countries (Norway, Switzerland, Liechtenstein and Iceland) is 11.3 billion euros from 2000 to 2015. Then, the cost of coordinating efforts Europeans of almost 1 billion euros, including 226 million for the purchase of border control equipment. Satellites, robot dogs, radar barbed wire, facial recognition, drones, high-speed boats, cameras, night vision binoculars, make up the landscape of the EU borders.

The ever more sophisticated effort of surveillance and rescues involved during this period 230 million euros of investments in research and development, especially in aeronautics and the arms industry. In 2022, this market, estimated at 29 billion euros in Europe, has stimulated the race of the entire military industry towards the civilian arms industry. Currently, Russia's invasion of Ukraine is changing the role of the arms industry, which can only benefit from the expansion of the quantitative volume of orders, but also their objectives.

 Border "protections" cost European taxpayers just as much. 77 million euros for separation walls in Greece, Spain, Bulgaria, and others, have since followed: Hungary, Austria, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, to the immense joy of the barbed wire producers , reinforced concrete walls.

The creation of the European border guard agency, Frontex, deserves a separate chapter. Not only by its prerogatives, but also by what it represents in terms of spending. The border "security" provided by the agency cost 19 million euros in 2006, and during the period 2021-2027 its budget increases to 900 million euros per year. Spending ranges from military and security equipment to control and surveillance technologies, easily financed with taxpayer money. This agency, subjected to countless accusations from human rights organizations, acts with complete structural impunity in non-respect of the right to asylum, mistreatment of refugees and so on.

In 2017, satellites, ships, planes, walls, robot dogs, barbed wire, radars, facial recognition, drones, and cameras make up the landscape of the EU borders. This market, estimated at 29 billion euros in Europe in 2022, is stimulating the race of the entire military industry towards the civilian sector. Construction is also expanding into the EU with border walls. In addition to the human or financial cost of people, these activities have an ecological cost due to the intense consumption of fuel and pollutants from the machines.

It is not wrong to assert that EU policy regarding immigration is mainly aimed at satisfying the interests of groups expanding the military security arsenal, such as Airbus, NEC, Atos, IDEMIA, Jenetric, Secunet for aeronautics and defence groups and others. Ultimately, it is not so serious these colossal expenses are taken out of the pockets of the people on the continent, provided that the continuity of the system is guaranteed.

Such a policy only comforts racist or proto-fascist candidates, who benefit from the anchoring of an ideology that they will be able to secure in their future positions of responsibility. We should not be surprised by the reactionary, conservative, discriminatory turn of the latest electoral results in EU member countries.

When will the hundreds of millions of European citizens decide to no longer trust and even less, spend more than 2,000 billion euros to barricade the EU border, to support an inhumane, suicidal and criminal policy?

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[1] Such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 10 December 1948, the various agreements like the Geneva Convention of 28 July 1951, concerning the status of refugees, the European Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of 4 November 1950, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and others