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ByNico

Reposted from nettime - powerfully cogent response to the latest manifestation of the DemoRadical spinmachine (sorry!) Original post to be found at:

<http://www.nettime.org/Lists-Archives/nettime-l-0701/msg00024.html>

Hi, I have a few problems with this text, not least because of the contradictions that exist between a call for a new social compact that would continue the existence of both capital and the state, and open borders. A call for a new Europe, built on the model of the nation-state under capitalism, is both in contradiction to any call for 'no borders' (or even open borders) and in direct conflict with the aims and momentum of many of the social movements that have come to the fore within the countries of the global North within the last ten years: in fact, I'd go so far as to say it is a conservative cashing in on their potential, and an attempt to temper their revolutionary edge. Anyway... "The spectres of pauperization and exclusion are haunting the people of Europe. Over the last twenty years, precarity and inequality have broken the Christian/Social Democratic compromise of the postwar period on which modern Europe was founded - namely, rising incomes for employees and rising power for their unions, in exchange for acceptance of the capitalist system - and have left in its wake the rise of immense corporate and private wealth, next to escalating exclusion and social angst. Acting for radical Europe means first of all mobilizing decisively against social inequality, labor precarization, and the arrogance of the elites and their privileges, as millions have recently done in France and Denmark. In Europe today, the central struggle against neoliberalism is the fight against precarity." There has most definitely been a reorganisation of work/non-work both globally and within Europe recently (though I feel a more interesting and accurate account is to be found in Silvers 'Forces of Labour' than within the paradigm of 'precarity' as it exists within say the chainworkers model). This 'new order' won't be overly disrupted or challenged by such a project as a new 'radically democratic' Europe however. The new Europe depends on cheap labour, and its precarious or casual nature. And you are right to point to the current European border regime as maintaining it. However, a new Europe depends on a new re-drawing of its borders and boundaries -- not their erasure. To continue Europe is to continue its limits -- there can be no such space without borders or limits. You are not calling for an end to Europe, but to its reorganisation under a new social compact -- new welfare systems, new structures. Both logically and with regards to sheer economics, this requires borders and controls. Who can enter, when, how, to access what... the new welfare and social compacts must be funded by the global inequities you would wish to challenge. Borders are essential for the functioning of Europe, new or old. There can be no 'democratic space' without them, nor can a new welfare state be funded without them. Hence, there is a contradiction in the basic aims of the manifesto: **OUR BASIC AIMS** To open the borders of Europe to all cultures and peoples. To promote stronger European political integration and horizontal federalism and regionalism around these values. There cannot be open borders **AND** a stronger European political integration and federalism. What there will be under this is a Swiss-style corporatist 'buy-in' welfare system for the privileged few, and a 'human' border control system operating in conjunction with, perhaps, 'ethically aware' police forces. You are not calling for the end of the camps, but for their reorganisation under a new social compact. The cosmopolitanism that you speak of is, as in previous forms of cosmopolitanism, based on a racist division of both labour and forms of life "A new European cosmopolitanism of radical-democratic (rad-dem) orientation must take its place, with horizontal federalism, social action, green politics, and gay rights at its core. Otherwise, the nation-state will rear its ugly head: strong-armed nationalists and right-wing populists already are a serious threat in many countries of Europe." This new cosmopolitanism cannot be but a continuation of the nation-state if it is European: a 'democratic Europe' is a Europe governed by institutional bodies that can only be a continuation of those bodies of governance that currently exist. This is obvious from

some of the 'aims': To give the European Commission a new role: that of European Government, expression of the European Parliament, accountable to and petitionable by the European Public. To promote pan-European referenda on constitutional issues, EU directives and legislation. To reform the European Court, so that it can be directly addressed in lieu of national justice in case of the violation of European fundamental rights. To levy a European corporate tax and a European carbon tax. To return to Keynesian, expansionary fiscal and monetary policies, thus abrogating the Stability Pact and its provisions. These aims cannot be but a continuation of the nation-state in an expanded 'European' form. And, as such, constitute a continuation of the nation-state, albeit in a 'block' formation (see Brian Holmes's Continental drift piece -- apologies Brian if I have gotten the name of the piece wrong -- I do not have it to hand). Racism is an implicit part of this continuation (Foucault's Society must be defended' is excellent on this point). Any reordering of the current world-system, presumably with China-India at its productive centre and Europe as its financial heart, will not be overly threatened by such a democratic reordering -- nor will the controls of the flows of migration, as the borders of Europe will remain intact. The 'income security' that you write of based on a new 'European welfare system' is incompatible with an open border. And hence there are limits on the reduction of the 'persecution of immigrants and refugees' that you propose. Under your proposal there would be no end to the persecution, just a more humanitarian regime of control, ultimately making a mockery of the transnational solidarity that you talk of. Moreover, the actual ability of Europe to re-structure or implement a new welfarism is highly questionable, considering it is precisely because of the profitability crisis of capitalism that occurred in the 70's due to numerous factors that included the cost of welfare for all that claimed it within the countries of the North (or desired its expansion to a similar level that you speak of) that welfarism is being dismantled. In addition, it is also unlikely because both state and capital seem to be pursuing a strategy of mixing workfare, welfare for the rich, and endo-colonialism, and would be, I think, unlikely to want to return to the paradigm of welfare such as existed in the 70's. "Today, Europe's multiethnic youth is economically discriminated and increasingly alienated. The European younger generation is caught between unemployment and precarity, and unable to attain basic social goods (home, higher education, welfare etc). Gerontocracy of the elites and consequent privileges for the rentier classes are killing Europe's future by unfairly burdening European young families and excluding the creative class from economic and political decisions." To start from the category of youth, rather than from the variations within this category, is to ignore the very real differences young people face within Europe. The conditions within the suburbs of say Paris or London more closely resemble the colony than the metropolis inhabited by the 'aristocratic precarious' or the varying managerial and creative classes (as problematic as those categorisations are). It is not just a matter of inclusion -- these are people who, by and large, cannot be included in the project of Europe. It is not by accident or for purely ideological reasons that a counter-insurgency program is being followed in the countries of the global South, or that a process of endo-colonialism has been begun in the areas of the global North that house the 'dangerous classes'. Again, this distinction is necessary for the smooth functioning of the current epoch of capitalism. Not everyone can be 'cut-in' under the current system -- this is only for a few. To reorder Europe without completely destroying capitalism would be to merely change the redistribution of wealth amongst those lucky few 'within Europe' (within the deal of Europe, not its borders...). The recourse to a discourse of rights in more evidence of the desire for the reconstitution of the state -- a nation-state where the national is the European. These rights, as it has been pointed out by many people previously, are grounded on the lack of rights of others, on global inequities and ultimately violence. A system that must be destroyed, not modified. nico