

The New York Times backs anti-refugee drive in Germany

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15 January 2016

In a brief editorial published Wednesday, the *New York Times* solidarizes itself fully with the government of Chancellor Angela Merkel as it exploits the media hysteria whipped up over alleged sexual harassment attributed to immigrants in Cologne, Germany in order to mount a crackdown against refugees fleeing the successive and ongoing imperialist wars in the Middle East.

The editorial, entitled “Lessons from the Cologne Assaults,” begins with the statement:

“The shocking mass sexual assaults against women in Cologne, Germany, on New Year’s Eve have provoked public fury, including a backlash against Chancellor Angela Merkel’s policy of welcoming asylum-seekers, who were among the suspects identified by authorities. To protect women and to ensure that Europe can maintain the political will to absorb millions of refugees fleeing war and deprivation, the Continent will have to face this problem head-on.”

The *Times* goes on to assert that “More than 500 complaints have been filed with Cologne police, most for sexual assault.” In point of fact, out of 516 complaints relating to the New Year’s Eve events, less than half—237—were of a sexual nature, according to the German Interior Ministry.

Why the deliberate inflation of the number of what remain unproven allegations? The *Times* is quite simply joining in with a hysterical and racist campaign by the German and international media to vilify millions of immigrants and Muslims and create the conditions for denying the right of asylum to refugees fleeing the hellish conditions created by imperialist intervention in countries like Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan.

This campaign has taken on an ominous and frenzied tone, reviving language and imagery associated with Hitlerite fascism that would have been ostracized

within official circles in Germany until recently.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* noted in its January 12 Perspective, German media incites racist hysteria: “Some 70 years after the collapse of the Third Reich, the media is making use of the same disgusting types of racial stereotyping, with open appeals to paranoid sexual obsessions, in which the Nazis specialized. Once again, a shameless German media is evoking images of pure Nordic women being preyed upon by dark-skinned *untersmenschen* (sub-humans).”

Nor is this noxious racist propaganda restricted to Germany. The French satirical journal *Charlie Hebdo*, which routinely portrays Muslims in openly racist caricatures, published a particularly vile cartoon depicting the drowned three-year-old Syrian child Aylan Kurdi, whose image sparked international sympathy for the plight of refugees, as an adult chasing women down the street. The cartoon’s caption reads, “What would little Aylan have grown up to be? An ass groper in Germany.”

The media hysteria has already fueled a violent backlash, with vigilante gangs taking to the streets of Cologne, Leipzig and other cities to assault random immigrants.

Of course the *Times* does not engage in such openly racist agitation. Rather, it wraps its anti-immigrant chauvinism in the mantle of women’s rights. It insists that the problem that now must be confronted is “sexual aggression by refugees from countries where women do not have the same freedoms as in Europe.”

It continues, asserting that “the challenge is to acculturate large numbers of mostly young, Muslim men to the sexual and gender norms of Europe.”

Of course, this theme of women’s rights is not extended by the *Times* to a consideration of how women were affected by the interventions of US

imperialism in Iraq, Libya and Syria. The overthrow and the attempt to overthrow secular regimes, the wholesale destruction of societies and the backing of sectarian and Islamist forces committed to the imposition of Sharia law have wiped out such freedoms for millions of women.

The *Times* supported and propagandized in favor of each of these interventions. In addition to retailing and expanding upon the Bush administration's lies about "weapons of mass destruction" in Iraq, the newspaper has specialized in the promotion of "human rights" imperialism.

Wars for oil that have killed over one million people in the Middle East over the course of little more than a decade have been cast by the *Times* editors and columnists as crusades for democracy and interventions on behalf of the oppressed. Even the plight of the refugees themselves was exploited by the newspaper as a pretext for escalating the ongoing US intervention in Iraq and Syria.

In a similar fashion, the theme of women's rights is now invoked to provide a phony liberal veneer for the virulent anti-immigrant chauvinism being whipped up in Europe. Outside of tone, there is really not that great of a divide between the *Times*' portrayal of Muslims in Europe and Donald Trump's vicious slandering of Mexican immigrants as "rapists."

In the final analysis, the services provided by the *Times* in crafting "human rights" pretexts for murderous and predatory wars and in lending pseudo-liberal, gender-based cover for anti-immigrant chauvinism are inextricably linked.

In the United States, just as in Germany, the vilification of refugees and immigrants goes hand-in-hand with the promotion of militarism and the preparation for ever-wider imperialist wars.



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