

International Viewpoint joins in racist anti-refugee agitation

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While the hysterical campaign over the events of New Year's Eve at Cologne's main train station has subsided somewhat in the bourgeois media, it continues in pseudo-left circles undiminished. Since February 4, an article has been displayed prominently on the front page of *International Viewpoint*, the central organ of the Pabloite United Secretariat, entitled "Sexist violence: New Year's Eve in Cologne: some reflections." It openly joins the current campaign of agitation against refugees and calls for a strong state.

The author is Angela Klein, a long-standing member of the International Socialist Left (ISL) and editor of the monthly newspaper SoZ (*Sozialistische Zeitung*). Together with the Revolutionary Socialist League (RSB), the ISL is the official representative of the United Secretariat in Germany. Both groups are the remains of a split in the Group of International Marxists (GIM), the German section of the United Secretariat in the 1970s and 1980s, and components of the New Anti-Capitalist Organisation (NAO), which operates within the environs of the Left Party.

Klein's article does not differ in any fundamental way from the tirades in the bourgeois media, which sought to exploit the events in Cologne for an all-out racist campaign against mainly Muslim refugees. In common with countless articles in the bourgeois press, it paints a picture of allegedly dangerous and criminal foreign men determined to molest German women and combines this with demands for more police and state surveillance.

At one point, Klein accuses "the left and the police" of "not taking the New Year's Eve events seriously." By "taking seriously" she means spreading racist propaganda. She writes, "As the media began to agitate against 'North Africans' the left objected to the racist instrumentalization of the attacks. Partly they went so far as to refuse to take into account the participation of the North African community because this seemed to be a racist attribution."

"Only the women's manifestations and the reactions of numerous women groups demanding a better protection of women against sexual violence led to a partial re-thinking by

the left," she continued. Klein nonetheless complained, "The unspoken fear of the left is that the women's demands—by making no difference between German and non-German offenders—inadvertently join the racist chorus."

This is precisely what Klein and *International Viewpoint* do! At the end of her article, Klein sums up the reactionary implications of her orientation. She writes, "The women's demand to strengthen the legislation regarding sex crime is a problem for many left-wing people who are against the rearmament of the state apparatus. Yet we should make a difference between the repressive function of the state and its protective function... The left cannot compensate the state's failures by its own structures. Therefore women have no choice but to demand sharper laws, which force the police to act."

This paragraph alone proves that the pseudo-left has nothing to do with left, let alone Marxist politics. In his classic work *State and Revolution*, Lenin describes, based on Engels, the capitalist state power as "a special power of oppression," composed of "special bodies of armed men having prisons, etc at their command." It is part of the ABC of Marxism that the state has no "protective function" but is rather an "instrument for the exploitation of the oppressed class."

As if to underscore that the pseudo-left is a "body" which the capitalist state has "at its disposal" to suppress and exploit workers, Klein and *International Viewpoint* seize on the events in Cologne for their own propaganda purposes.

As the first sentence of Klein's article states, "On New Year's Eve the city of Cologne witnessed massive attacks against women. These attacks had a qualitatively new dimension."

She then presents "some facts that can be reconstructed from the police reports." She writes, "Up to 1000 men were assaulting women on the square in front of the Cologne central station between 8.30 p.m. and 6.30 a.m. The women were surrounded by groups of men, insulted, sexually harassed and robbed. Even a rape is reported to have taken place. The mood in front of the station was aggressive. This

might have partly been due to the fact that during the evening people, for fun, were throwing fireworks, in some cases with the aim of hitting other people. The local police were present with 143 officers, the federal police inside the railway station with 70 officers. Neither group was able to cope with the situation.”

What Klein and the Pabloites present as “facts,” have in the meantime been exposed as groundless propaganda.

It is a fact that after six weeks, it remains generally unclear what really happened on New Year’s Eve in Cologne. In response to the vast majority of complaints filed with the police, investigations were not pursued due to a lack of concrete evidence. There is no firm evidence thus far of mass sexual assaults or even rapes. There is also no indication that what happened in Cologne was any different to what unfortunately happens frequently at large events in Germany where high volumes of alcoholic consumption are involved. Even some bourgeois newspapers have since acknowledged this, though they otherwise participated in the agitation campaign.

This has not hindered the pseudo-left from taking up a leading role in a xenophobic campaign on a scale Germany has not experienced since the fall of the Nazi dictatorship. Some of their articles are so explicitly racist that they could have been written by the far right Alternative for Germany (AfD) or Pegida movement.

A prime example of this is an article by Michael Schilva, co-founder of the New Anti-Capitalist Organisation and member of the Socialist Alternative (SAV) and the Left Party, which appeared on the NAO’s website on January 20 under the headline, “After the shock of Cologne—a helpless left between ritual and reflex.”

It is impossible within the framework of this article to deal with all of the outbursts by Schilva against foreigners and “lefts.” Here are only a few examples of his disgusting tirade which covers several pages.

With barely concealed cultural racism, Schilva states that “the average man from Muslim-dominated countries...[has] a more patriarchal attitude towards women than the average European man.” Whoever considers “this an exaggeration, right-wing populism or racist,” should “test it in practice” and visit “a popular club at the weekend, i.e. in Berlin.”

Schilva explicitly urged the deportation of “criminal” foreigners. “What can be said against deporting a rapist convicted on a legal basis to Bulgaria or Morocco if his case has been subject to comprehensive and fair legal proceedings?” he provocatively asks. In Kosovo, there was also poverty, but no civil war and “Serbs, Sinti and Roma” were persecuted, “not Albanians.” Schilva’s conclusion was thus, “Would it be an insufferable difficulty for an Albanian convicted [...] according to the law to be sent back there?”

The article continues in the same vein. To be “contemptuous or simply denounce as right-wing extremist” the “fears of the population”—a coded phrase used by politicians to justify the intensification of measures against foreigners and justify a dialogue with right-wing extremists like Pegida— “has long been a pastime for left-wing radicals” and a “huge mistake.”

At the end of his article, the self-proclaimed “Mandelite” declares that the Left must “finally be honest.” This is understood by Schilva to mean the open transformation of the pseudo-left into a racist new right. He writes, “I believe that the radical left must also abandon the idea/demand that absolutely everyone should be allowed in and begin to genuinely engage in the debate over migration criteria.” The left must finally find the courage to “abandon the slogans of ‘no borders’ or ‘the right to remain for all’.”

How is the sharp shift to the right among the pseudo-left and an entire privileged, petty bourgeois section of the population, for whom it politically speaks, to be explained?

In the final analysis, the same fundamental processes are at work identified by Lenin in *State and Revolution*. Lenin explained there, once again citing Engels, how in the epoch of imperialism, 1. the “state power” is strengthened in line with the “intensification of class contradictions within the state,” and 2. the “scoundrels of social chauvinism” rush into the camp of the bourgeoisie on the outbreak of war in order to “defend the predatory interests of (their) bourgeoisie with phrases about the ‘defence of the fatherland’.”

Today, the pseudo-left’s “phrases”—the exploitation of the issue of sexual violence against women and the “protective function of the state”—also serve the “predatory interests of the bourgeoisie,” which is responding to the crisis of European and international capitalism, the growing tensions between the imperialist powers and the reemergence of the class struggle with dictatorship and war.



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