

New York Times hypocritically accuses Russia of “weaponizing race” in 2020 elections

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On March 10, the *New York Times* published an article titled “Russia Trying to Stoke US Racial Tensions Before Election, Officials Say”.

The article, by Julian Barnes and Adam Goldman, is an escalation of the neo-McCarthyite campaign by the intelligence agencies, waged in large part through the pages of the *Times*, to present all forms of social division in the US as the product of a vast Russian conspiracy.

The first sentence reads: “The Russian government has stepped up efforts to inflame racial tensions in the United States as part of its bid to influence November’s presidential election, including trying to incite violence by white supremacist groups and to stoke anger among African-Americans, according to seven American officials briefed on recent intelligence.”

As is its method, the *Times* provides no facts to support the unsubstantiated claims of anonymous intelligence agents. The fundamental purpose of the article is to advance the anti-Russia foreign policy interests of US imperialism and to deny the existence of real social divisions in America. The latter assertion appears all the more absurd in the midst of the Trump administration’s response to the coronavirus, injecting \$1.5 trillion into the markets while leaving the working population to fend for themselves.

Russia is “amplifying divisions among races” by publishing “stories emphasizing allegations of police abuse in the United States and highlighting racism against African-Americans in the military,” the *Times* claims. These “divisive racial narratives” are proof that the Russians are “weaponizing race” in order to “damage the country’s social fabric.”

The *Times* expresses its frustration that the government cannot censor articles and social media posts that fan “division,” writing: “Because Russia is trying to amplify

the messaging of existing groups, its interference is difficult for American officials to combat given First Amendment protections for speech.”

The *Times*’ is tapping into its own anti-communist—and racist—traditions. Its March 10 article echoes the paper’s headline of August 21, 1930, “World Negro Rising Said To Be Soviet Aim.” At that time, the *Times* wrote, “The Soviet is busy stirring up unrest among the Negro masses in Africa and America.” Soviet “agents” are “working among the colored races” and have provoked “Negro unrest in the United States.”

The *Times* is re-hashing the argument of intelligence officials from A. Mitchell Palmer to J. Edgar Hoover who claimed that the movement for black civil rights was a “communist conspiracy” that was stoked by “outside agitators.” The *Times* article reads like the statements by segregationist politicians such as Louisiana Democratic Congressman John Rarick, who warned the House in 1965 “that the Communist revolution now going on in this country, under the cloak of ‘Civil Rights’” consists of “the drive for a Soviet Negro Republic,” and “is of course conducted by the ‘Reverend’ Dr. King. It is the Soviet Negro Republic that the current ‘voter registration campaign’ is all about.”

Then, as now, opposition to inequality and state repression is not the product of Russian propaganda. Americans do not need Vladimir Putin to inform them of massive student loan debt, unbearable medical costs, police violence, never-ending war, and vast levels of social inequality.

And if it is the case that “weaponizing race” and advancing “divisive racial narratives” are proof of Russian meddling, then the *Times* need look no further than its own editorial board to find Vladimir Putin’s best agents. In recent years, the *Times* has transformed itself

into a racist newspaper, presenting politics and social issues predominantly through the prism of race or gender.

The *Times*' argument is built on a contradiction. On the one hand, the *Times* blames Russia for "stoking anger" among African-Americans. On the other hand, the paper insistently argues that the intrinsic racism of "privileged" white people defines most aspects of American social, cultural and political life.

For example, the word "whiteness" appeared in 153 *Times* articles in 2018, up from 41 in 2013. "Gender" appeared in more than twice as many articles in 2018 (4,639) as in 2013. In the past five years, the *Times* has dedicated a staggering amount of column space to racist arguments highlighting the fundamental differences between "white people" and "black people."

The headlines exemplify this racial premise: "White People are Noticing Something New: Their Own Whiteness" (June 13, 2018), "The Grief That White Americans Can't Share" (July 22, 2016), "I Wanted To Know What White Men Thought About Their Privilege. So I Asked" (July 17, 2019), "Should I Give Up On White People" (April 16, 2018), or "Kirsten Gillibrand Is Right: Racism Is About White People" (August 1, 2019).

The *Times*' transformation into a racist newspaper has culminated in the 1619 Project, launched in August 2019. This project, as the WSWS has extensively documented, argues that the very founding of the United States was a racist effort to preserve slavery and that the American Civil War was led by racists to secure white supremacy. In other words, it is the *New York Times*—not Russian outside agitators—who are promoting the "racially divisive" narrative that the Declaration of Independence and Constitution are racist screeds worth dismissing.

There is nothing "left" about racial politics. In the past three weeks, the Democratic Party, with the help of the *Times*, has been engaged in precisely what they accuse the Russians of doing—meddling in the 2020 primary—by using race and identity politics as a bludgeon against the Bernie Sanders campaign and to resuscitate the campaign of right-wing former Vice President Joe Biden.

Sanders' overwhelming victory in the February 22 Nevada caucus came the day after the *Washington Post* first reported that intelligence agencies were warning that Russia was attempting to interfere in the Democratic primary to support Sanders' campaign.

The *Times* also tried to make this narrative stick, despite it also having no factual basis. In a February 22 article titled "Same Goal, Different Playbook: Why Russia Would Support Trump and Sanders," *Times* national

security reporter David Sanger wrote that Sanders supporters' anger over social inequality makes them "ripe for exploitation by Russian trolls, disinformation specialists and hackers for hire seeking to widen divisions in American society."

Sanders' victory in Nevada showed the anti-Russia hysteria lacked sufficient salience to compel a shift against Sanders. The primary mechanism through which the Democratic Party sank Sanders' campaign became race, with Biden's South Carolina victory presented as proof that Biden was the candidate for "Black America."

As the *World Socialist Web Site* explained after Super Tuesday, the results showed that "the racial politics actively promoted by the pseudo-left for decades has far-reaching, right-wing consequences. Race was the principal weapon used by the Democratic Party against Sanders last week." As a result of their efforts, Sanders went from presumptive nominee to imminently dropping out in less than three weeks.

The *Times* is using the politics of race and gender for the most right-wing aims: to secure the Democratic nomination of a right-wing candidate who will pursue war with Russia, to justify that war through claims of "foreign meddling," and to paper over social divisions and censor discussion of issues of social inequality and state violence that dominate every level of American and international society.

In its nearly 200-year history, the Democratic Party has acquired immense skill at using racial politics and cries of Russian "outside agitators" to manipulate social grievances and block the unification of the working class in a struggle against capitalism. It is the obligation of socialists to expose these efforts.



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