

Alleged Incidents of Sexual Harassment in Cologne: German Media incites Racist Hysteria against Immigrants and Muslims

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Using the pretext of alleged incidents of sexual harassment in Köln (Cologne), the German media has launched a hysterical, racist campaign against millions of immigrants and Muslims.

On New Year's Eve, thousands of people gathered in Köln and in other major cities throughout Germany to celebrate the holiday. The next day, police issued a press release stating that there was a "festive mood" at the celebrations and that the atmosphere that evening was "overall peaceful."

However, one day later, a second statement was issued that referred for the first time to alleged attacks on women. On January 5, Köln's Christian Democratic Union (CDU)-backed Mayor Henriette Reker said at a press conference that there was "no evidence that people who are residing in Köln as refugees are amongst the perpetrators."

Suddenly, the media exploded with allegations of mass sexual abuse, setting into motion a hysterical campaign directed against the immigrant population. On January 7, anonymous police officers told the media that "most" of those suspected were migrants. A January 8 report by the Federal Ministry of the Interior announced that out of 31 suspects, 18 were refugees. Among the suspects were two Germans and an American.

It was not until the period between January 8 and January 10 that the number of those alleging sexual harassment rose from 170 to over 400. So far, only two people have been arrested, and they have been released.

What actually occurred in Köln is not yet known. Some reports point to a provocation. Various international media outlets, including CNN, have reported that at least one undercover police agent had infiltrated the crowd and later reported she was assaulted.

It is, of course, possible that there were incidents of hooliganism in which women were harassed. Unfortunately, such behavior is not uncommon in large crowds almost anywhere in the world where liquor is flowing freely as it was on New Year's Eve. At last year's Mardi Gras celebrations in New Orleans, Louisiana, for example, over 140 people were arrested, 50 for felonies. At last year's Oktoberfest in Munich, the number of sexual assault allegations rose to 20.

At any rate, given the absence of factual substantiation of what remain, at this point, no more than allegations, the ferocity of the press response can be explained only in political

terms. The political parties and the media have launched a campaign that for many decades would have been considered impossible in Germany.

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 *untermenschen* (sub-humans).

On Saturday, the magazine *Focus* published on its cover an image of a nude woman covered by black handprints. The weekend edition of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* carried an image of a white woman's body with a black hand grasping her genitals. The newspaper also disseminated the image on Facebook.

When a wave of protest erupted, the *Süddeutsche* apologized. However, Chief Editor of *Focus* Ulrich Reitz refused to apologise on the grounds that "we are depicting what is unfortunately happening." Whoever said the cover was racist, he claimed, was "fearful of the truth."

It is not only degenerate journalists who are purveying this racist filth. Leading German academics are also getting into the act. Professor Jörg Baberowski of Berlin's Humboldt University has written a column for the far-right *Basler Zeitung* accusing "Germany's leading media" of remaining silent when "on New Year's Eve, hundreds of Arab men sexually harassed, humiliated and robbed women on the Cathedral Square in Köln."

There is no mass popular base for the racist campaign. It is being instigated and directed by the political elites.

The new edition of *Der Spiegel* states: "A year ago, on New Year's Eve 2014, similar assaults would have been (unfortunately) just an issue for the local press." *Der Spiegel* adds, "Any attack could just as well have provided the material for national excitement—a child murder in a city park or any other crime in which primal fears are concentrated, stereotypes combined and foreigners involved in one form or another."

However, this does not prevent *Der Spiegel* from legitimizing the media campaign. It declares that the events in Köln show the need for the strengthening of the police to defend "our canon of values."

The political coordinates in Germany have shifted so far to the right that even the Left Party—a monument to political spinelessness—endorses calls for an authoritarian state. This universal shift to the right in all sections of the political establishment has, in fact, nothing to do with the events in Köln. It is, rather, entirely bound up with the resurgence of German militarism.

It is now two years since President Gauck and officials in the federal government announced the end of foreign policy restraint and stated that Germany was, in the words of Social Democratic Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, "too big to comment on foreign policy only from the sidelines." Since then, the government has supported the right-wing coup in Kiev, participated in NATO's deployment against Russia, sent troops to Mali and reinforced the military mission in Afghanistan. Recently, German Tornado jets joined the bombing campaign in Syria.

But despite intensive efforts, the ruling elites have thus far failed to break the ingrained resistance of broad social layers to militarism. The vast majority of Germans still oppose foreign missions and war operations by the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces). Now the issue of sexual violence against women is being employed in an attempt to overcome this resistance. The events in Köln are being exaggerated and exploited to this end. The racist smear campaign against refugees and immigrants is a means to prepare the expansion of the military intervention in the Middle East.

The entire tragic and disastrous experience of the 20th century proves that Germany's ruling class cannot wage war without resorting to racism and erecting an authoritarian regime.

In recent months, the most popular film in Germany has been *Er ist wieder da* (*He's Back*). It is a satirical political fantasy that imagines how a resurrected Hitler, emerging from his World War II bunker, would rebuild his political career with the help of the modern media. During the past week, the filmmaker's satire has acquired an all too disturbing element of reality.

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