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Anti-Islam cartoons

Zero tolerance for reactionary forces

- News from around the world -

Publication date: Saturday 11 March 2006

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All imaginable reactionary forces have involved themselves in the "Mohammed cartoon" crisis and the more they have fought one another, the more they have strengthened one another. Jyllandsposten's caricatures were a conscious humiliation and provocation against a marginalised and oppressed minority in Denmark - bullying of the powerless by what is at the moment the most reactionary spokesman of the ruling class (the newspaper Jyllands-Posten (JP)). Unfortunately it was diverse reactionaries who became spokesmen for the Muslim community's protests.

The working class and other oppressed groups have either been sidelined as spectators or conned into being spear carriers for various parts of the capitalist class or power-hungry reactionary elites and many of those who wish to fight for democratic rights and social justice have withdrawn in confusion; not knowing how to orientate themselves in a conflict where none of the main actors are worth supporting.

[<https://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/cartoonrow.jpg>]

JP published the cartoons to give further momentum to the anti-Muslim witch-hunt against both a large part of the population of the third world as well as immigrants and refugees in Denmark.

The objects of this campaign are:

1. The legitimisation of imperialist dominance and military aggression in the third world.
2. The legitimisation of the marginalisation, oppression and super-exploitation of immigrants and refugees in Denmark.
3. To take the focus away from social problems in Denmark by creating a culture of "them and us".

If JP had wished to contribute to the debate with a sensible critique of the dangerous role that religion and religious leaders often play they would not have focused entirely on Islam or aimed to offend all Muslims by caricaturing an important religious symbol.

If JP's intention had been to defend free expression and convince its readers of its importance they could have found more compelling examples of its abuse from the powers they normally support- the USA, Denmark and the West.

After the publication of the cartoons Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh chose to jump on the bandwagon and screw up the pressure, partly by refusing to distance himself from the cartoons and the motives behind them and partly by taking the unheard of step of refusing to meet with ambassadors from a number of Muslim countries.

There are two reasons why he did this:

Firstly, because their wish for a general discussion on the treatment of immigrants in Denmark with a Muslim background, symbolised by the cartoon incident, was embarrassing for him and secondly because he wished to send the domestic political symbol during the local election campaign that he was "hard-core" in relationship to immigrants and refugees and the countries they come from.

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It was only when the interests of Danish export were threatened that he pragmatically tried to change course.

In the wake of JP and Fogh came a whole gang of reactionary politicians and opinion-formers who used the issue of defending freedom of expression to witch-hunt people with a Muslim background.

On the other side there were also reactionaries waiting in the wings.

A number of reactionary Imams used the cartoons to strengthen their power-base in the Muslim community in Denmark. The cartoons were a gift to them - they couldn't themselves have found a better argument that democratic rights were a just tool to abuse and oppress Muslims. It was therefore JP's stupid but essentially harmless cartoons rather than the war in Iraq, Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib or discriminatory social legislation which drove them to the barricades.

By stirring the pot in Denmark they strengthen their positions and recruited people to their vision of an undemocratic and oppressive theocracy and by travelling to the Middle East they were able to cement their position and links to the powers-that-be in those countries.

In the Middle East some governments and fundamentalist groupings took up the ball and joined the game.

They encouraged, organised, and in some cases, demanded people took part in anti-Danish demonstrations. Government leaders got involved to deflect the population's discontent with their lot and fundamentalist leaders did it to mobilise behind their movements for even more oppressive policies.

Both got involved to undermine the desire for freedom of expression and other democratic rights.

Everybody involved from JP, Pia Kjaersgaard (Leader of the populist right Danish People's Party- DF), and Anders Fogh on the one side to Abu Laban (a Danish Imam), Hizbollah and Syrian President Bashar Al Assad on the other all had an interest in upping the ante and creating an atmosphere of insecurity, anger and agitation and they have all succeeded to a certain extent.

It was easy to stir people up because so many Muslims were offended by the caricatures while in Denmark DF have stormed forward in the opinion polls precisely because most Danes and others around the world in fact fear an attack on freedom of expression and other democratic rights.

Looking at it in this light it is in fact surprising how little real trouble these reactionary and oppressive currents were able to start. It has only been a small minority of the population of the Muslim population who have protested and the vast majority of them have shown their anger through normal democratic activities such as peaceful demonstrations and a trade boycott. Burning flags or empty Arla boxes shouldn't excite Danish democrats - it is, like the cartoons, symbolic.

Only a minority of the minority have taken part in attacks on Danish citizens or embassies and in Denmark have neither Imams nor Nazis or other extreme right-wingers been able to mobilise demonstrations large enough to be of significance.

Neither the oppressed in the third world or workers and democrats in Denmark have any interest in supporting either of the two reactionary sides in this dispute - neither JP, DF and the government and their attack on immigrants and refugees or the fundamentalist Imams here and in the Muslim heartlands with their oppressive anti-democratic ideology.

We oppose any attempt to divide people who, at the end of the day, have common interests, irrespective of whether they are Atheists, Christians, Muslims or followers of some other religion. We desire tolerance and dialogue between ordinary people irrespective of ethnic background, religious conviction or not and nationality. But we call for zero

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tolerance of the political elite and reactionaries who have created this situation. It is them we oppose because they stand against everything we stand for and they work for everything we oppose:

- They stand in the way of social progress here and in other parts of the world.
- They are responsible for the inhumane and degrading treatment of immigrants and refugees.
- They have used imperialist wars to achieve world-dominance for themselves and multinational corporations.
- They oppress their own populations and help the big imperialist powers maintain world dominance.

The tasks of the left in this situation are as follows:

- To expose the actions and motives of the reactionaries.
- To build and take part in all local activities which encourage solidarity between the oppressed, the exploited and the democratically-minded.
- To oppose activities that creates false unity that in practice undermine social solidarity. This means opposing Danes against foreigners who together with bourgeois politicians cry crocodile tears about freedom of expression; and reactionary Imams, who cry crocodile tears about the suffering of immigrants and refugees.
- To defend the right of free expression whilst combating all racist and oppressive ideologies.
- To oppose the oppressive and discriminatory Danish immigration and refugee legislation.
- To support the social and cultural rights of oppressed minorities.
- To fight for the withdrawal of Danish and other US allied forces from Iraq and Afghanistan.
- To support progressive movements in the Third World in their struggle for social and democratic rights against imperialist domination and their native elite.
- To use and develop a socialist critique of national and religious reactionary forces - a critique which defines in contrast to the Liberal right's.

Adopted by SAP's 22th annual conference on the 26th February 2006.