

Infamy

January 21, 2015

INFAMY. That is the only word that can sum up how we feel about the the murder of our buddies at *Charlie Hebdo*. A crime made even more hateful because these comrade artists were people on the left, anti-racists, anti-fascists, anti-colonialists, sympathizers with communism and anarchism. It was only recently that they participated in an homage to the memory of a group of Algerians assassinated by the French police in Paris on October 17, 1961. Their only weapons were the pen, humor, irreverence, and insolence—including against religion, in keeping with the historic tradition of the French anti-clerical left. But on the cover of the last issue of the magazine before they were killed was a cartoon against the Islamophobic French novelist Michel Houellebecq, while one would find inside a page of cartoons against religion...the Catholic religion. We recall that Charb, the editor-in-chief, was a cartoonist with a revolutionary sensibility, who did the illustrations for the book *Marx: mode d'emploi* [Marx: A User's Manual] by the French revolutionary socialist Daniel Bensaïd. Charb was also present at the evening of the homage to Bensaïd, where he drew some touching and ironic caricatures which were projected as the event took place.

The act of these intolerant jihadistists is a crime against freedom of the press, freedom of thought, and artistic liberty. But it is also a crime against Islam, against the Muslims of France who run the risk that they will be made to pay for this infamy for which they had no responsibility.

The Islamophobic trend that has developed in France in the last several years, with the support of racist journalists like Eric Zemmour, or established novelists like Houellebecq, confuses Muslims with fundamentalists, and fundamentalists with jihadists in a bewildering and manipulative mix-up. The unhealthy political climate encourages various racist currents, racial purists and fascists, and above all the Le Pen family business which makes racism and Islamophobia the basis of its trade. They will naturally use the jihadists' crime to spread their poison.

Both jihadists and Islamophobes try to create an atmosphere encouraging a "war of civilizations," following the sinister proposition of Samuel Huntington (one of the architects of the Vietnam War). It is urgent that we remember that the real conflict is not between "Islam" and the "West," but between the exploiters and the exploited, the oppressors and the oppressed, between the interests of capitalism and those of humanity.

Translation by Dan La Botz