

The Racist Character of *Charlie Hebdo* and the pro-imperialist campaign “Je Suis Charlie”

Solidarity with Muslim People! NOT Solidarity with *Charlie Hebdo*!

By Michael Pröbsting, Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 17.1.2015, www.thecommunists.net

All socialists and democrats in Europe are aware that the ruling classes in France and throughout the entire EU are working day and night to exploit the terrorist attack against the offices of the magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, depicting it as a European 9/11. ¹ In France, we are already witnessing clear signs of a Bonapartist police state as 10,000 soldiers patrol the streets of France. The Belgium government has also mobilized 300 soldiers for their “Anti-Terror Operation” – for the first time in three decades. The attack against *Charlie Hebdo* is also serving the imperialists as justification for extending of France’s and the US/EU’s wars in the Middle East and Africa, as well as the intensification of surveillance and intimidation of Muslim migrants in France and the EU.

In order to achieve these goals, the imperialists are using a primary propaganda tool – the campaign “Je Suis Charlie” (I am Charlie). Under this slogan the capitalist governments and the media are attempting to manipulate the population into showing their solidarity with the *Charlie Hebdo* magazine. ² In this way, they are trying to create sympathy among the popular masses for the racism against Muslim people which has been disseminated by the editors of *Charlie Hebdo* for many years.

For this reason one of the central tasks for socialists, particularly in Europe, is to counter the imperialist campaign in solidarity with *Charlie Hebdo*. It is crucial to show that behind the mask of the liberalism and the so-called “Western values” which the imperialists proclaim as universal values, lurks a racist ideology justifying the capitalist oppression and super-exploitation of national and racial minorities as well as oppressed peoples in the South. Hence, while the RCIT opposes the terrorist attack on the office of *Charlie Hebdo*, we refuse to demonstrate any solidarity with this racist magazine.

As we have pointed out, elsewhere, a number of French and international left-reformist and centrist organizations have denied the racist nature of *Charlie Hebdo*. The reformist PCF, the centrist NPA, LO, CWI, CoReP, etc., all declare that the *Charlie Hebdo* journal is progressive. They claim that this is just satire, fun, and provocations against religion and taboos. In this article, we will demonstrate that the only funny thing about any of this is that people who consider themselves progressive can state and actually believe such a reactionary lie!

¹ On our position on the terrorist attack see RCIT: France after the Attacks in Paris: Defend the Muslim People against Imperialist Wars, Chauvinist Hatemongering, and State Repression! 9.1.2015, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/statement-paris-attacks/>

² It should not go unnoticed that, in the imperialist media, the slain journalists of *Charlie Hebdo* receive much more attention and declarations of solidarity than the four Jewish people who were killed by one of the jihadist terrorists. This is all the more despicable since these people, who were killed in a Kosher supermarket, were completely innocent, as they were uninvolved in any racist propaganda, contrary to the journalists of *Charlie Hebdo*. Clearly, socialists sharply condemn the murder of these Jewish people; something which will also provide further ammunition to Zionist propaganda encouraging Jews around the world to colonize Palestine by settling in Israel.

In the appendix of this article we have reproduced a number of cartoons from the *Charlie Hebdo* magazine. We apologize in advance to all readers who resent these cartoons. However, we are reprinting them here only to demonstrate the deeply reactionary, racist, and sexist nature of *Charlie Hebdo*.

How *Charlie Hebdo* Degenerated into a Racist Hate Sheet against Muslims

Defenders of *Charlie Hebdo* claim that the magazine has a long tradition as a progressive paper. While that may have been true long ago, it definitely changed after 9/11 and the launch of the imperialist “war on terror” in 2001.

Olivier Cyran, who was a member of the *Charlie Hebdo* staff from 1992 to 2001, described in an *Open Letter* to the journal’s editors (published in December 2013) the magazine’s transformation towards racism in the hands of its editors:

*“Doubtless I would not have had the patience or the stoutness of heart to follow, week after week, the distressing transformation which took over your team after the events of September 11, 2001. I was no longer part of Charlie Hebdo when the suicide planes made their impact on your editorial line, but the Islamophobic neurosis which bit by bit took over your pages from that day on affected me personally, as it ruined the memory of the good moments I spent on the magazine during the 1990s.”*³

A Selection of *Charlie Hebdo*’s Reactionary Cartoons

As our readers can see themselves in this article’s appendix, *Charlie Hebdo*’s editors attacked and humiliated Muslim and Arab people in a number of ways. Usually, they present them as primitive, fat, and smelly. In addition, they repeat the racist depiction of Semitic people as was and is done by anti-Semitic Jew haters: the Arabs and Muslims are always pictured with a grossly exaggerated hooked nose. (See, for example, Picture 1 in the Appendix.)

To the pseudo-left defenders of *Charlie Hebdo* we say: Replace the traditional Muslim clothes of the figures in the *Charlie Hebdo* cartoons with traditional Jewish clothes and you will find only very little difference between them and the cartoons of Julius Streicher’s Nazi journal *Der Stürmer!* (See Picture 2.)

Another cartoon (Picture 3) compares Islam with a highly inflammable Molotov Cocktail.

They also like to repeat the racist stereotype of Muslims and Arabs as preferring polygamy which, in fact, does not at all correspond to reality. (See Picture 4)

A particularly cynical cartoon is one in which a Muslim man in Egypt (as is so often done in *Charlie Hebdo*, he is depicted as deranged) is shot and is supposedly saying “*The Quran is shit; it doesn’t stop bullets.*” This cartoon (Picture 5) was published in the weeks following the brutal military coup d’état in Egypt when the generals killed several thousand supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood!

³ Olivier Cyran: “Charlie Hebdo”, not racist? If you say so..., 5 December 2013, translated by Daphne Lawless, http://posthypnotic.randomstatic.net/charliehebdo/Charlie_Hebdo_article%2011.htm

The racism of *Charlie Hebdo* is often mixed with sexism. Muslim women are always presented as ugly and unattractive. In one cartoon (Picture 6) they are called “*potato sacks*.” In another cartoon (Picture 7), these reactionary scum present a Muslim women “wearing” a burka by showing her naked and sticking the burka up her anus.

In another cartoon (Picture 8), it is suggested by the editors of *Charlie Hebdo* that young Muslim girls in Nigeria who have been raped by Boko Haram are happy about this because they can now claim more state benefits for children. In this way *Charlie Hebdo* perpetuates the racist stereotype of migrants as lazy, just looking to get state benefits.

Another example is a set of cartoons (Picture 9) which present Muslim women not only as stupid and incapable but also wearing burkas with slits in the location of their vaginas or, in another cartoon, revealing their naked bottoms.

Olivier Cyran correctly draws our attention to this connection of Islamophobia and degradation of women: “*On the other hand, in Charlie Hebdo, nothing resembles a Muslim more than another Muslim. Always represented as weak-minded, fanatical, terrorist on the benefit. A Muslim woman? Always a poor dumb thing reducible to her headscarf, with no other social function than to arouse the libido of your comedians.*”

True, sexism is not limited to Muslim women. In another cartoon (Picture 10), *Charlie Hebdo* simply presented a naked Jewish woman on her knees from the back view – like many sexist porno magazines do.

Without doubt, *Charlie Hebdo's* favorite game is the humiliation of Muslim people by presenting the Prophet Mohammed in every imaginable disgusting way. The presentation of the Prophet in pictures is in itself a violation of a religious taboo which every decent person should respect. But *Charlie Hebdo* not only violates this taboo, but also deliberately chooses to present the Prophet in extremely humiliating ways. They show him naked with his anus being the focus of attention, as an aggressive brute, etc., (see Pictures 11 to 15). In addition, let's not forget that *Charlie Hebdo* republished the disgusting Mohammed cartoons which the Danish right-wing paper *Jyllands-Posten* published in 2005 where the Prophet was presented with a bomb on his head.

Charlie Hebdo does not limit its racism to Muslim people. They also like to present black people using drugs or as a dog for white people (see Pictures 16 and 17). They even published – building on the well-known racist stereotype about the primitiveness of black people – a cartoon of the French minister Christiane Taubira (who is black) where she appears as a monkey! (See Picture 18.)

In another cartoon (Picture 19), showing people cheering the pope, they write “*The French are idiots just like the Negros!*” No comment necessary.

Reader should always bear in mind that we are talking about a magazine which many so-called left-wing groups characterize as progressive!

Some Explanatory Comments from a Former *Charlie Hebdo* Journalist

As Cyran correctly implies, this journal's contempt of “the other” is related to arrogance, typical of middle class intellectuals, against the lower working class strata of the society. “*To Charlie Hebdo, it's always been good form to scoff at the “fat idiots” who like football and watching TF1 [television network]. A slippery slope. Belief in one's own superiority, accustomed to looking down on the common herd, is the surest*

way to sabotage one's own intellectual defences and to allow them to fall over in the least gust of wind. Your own, although supported by a good education, comfortable income and the pleasant team spirit of "Charlie's gang", collapsed at a stupefying speed."

The pseudo-left friends of *Charlie Hebdo* like to defend these disgusting cartoons as expressions (yes maybe exaggerated) of satire. In fact, as we pointed out in our statement on the Paris attack, *Charlie Hebdo* was and is an ideological tool of the imperialist "war on terror." The editors themselves formed alliances with openly reactionary and war-mongering figures like Bernard-Henri Lévy. Together they signed the pro-imperialist liberal "*Manifesto of the Twelve against the New Islamic Totalitarianism*".

Former *Charlie Hebdo* journalist Olivier Cyran reports: "*Racist? Charlie Hebdo was certainly no such thing at the time when I worked there. In any case, the idea that the mag would expose itself to such an accusation would have never occurred to me. There had, of course been some Francocentrism, as well as the editorials of Philippe Val. These latter were subject to a disturbing fixation, which worsened over the years, on the "Arabic-Muslim world". This was depicted as an ocean of barbarism threatening, at any moment, to submerge the little island of high culture and democratic refinement that was, for him, Israel. But the boss's obsessions remained confined to his column on page 3, and overflowed only rarely into the heart of the journal which, in those years, it seemed me, throbbed with reasonably well-oxygenated blood.*

Scarcely had I walked out, wearied by the dictatorial behaviour and corrupt promotion practices of the employer, than the Twin Towers fell and Caroline Fourest arrived in your editorial team. This double catastrophe set off a process of ideological reformatting which would drive off your former readers and attract new ones - a cleaner readership, more interested in a light-hearted version of the "war on terror" than the soft anarchy of [cartoonist] Gédé. Little by little, the wholesale denunciation of "beards", veiled women and their imaginary accomplices became a central axis of your journalistic and satirical production. "Investigations" began to appear which accepted the wildest rumours as fact, like the so-called infiltration of the League of Human Rights (LDH) or European Social Forum (FSE) by a horde of bloodthirsty Salafists. The new impulse underway required the magazine to renounce the unruly attitude which had been its backbone up to then, and to form alliances with the most corrupt figures of the intellectual jet-set, such as Bernard-Henri Lévy or Antoine Sfeir, cosignatories in Charlie Hebdo of a grotesque "Manifesto of the Twelve against the New Islamic Totalitarianism". Whoever could not see themselves in a worldview which opposed the civilized (Europeans) to obscurantists (Muslims) saw themselves quickly slapped with the label of "useful idiots" or "Islam-leftists"."

Progressive Critique of Religion?

The pseudo-left friends of *Charlie Hebdo* like to point out that the journal does not only attack Muslims but also other religious groups. But first, rubbish does not become a diamond just because you produce more of it.

Secondly, and more importantly, there is a huge difference in such attacks on different religions. France, as well other imperialist countries which are dominantly Christian, wage war against semi-colonial countries which happen to be nearly all predominantly Muslim. In addition, many migrants in France, where they are discriminated and super-exploited as cheap labor forces, are also Muslims. In this context, there is a huge difference if a French magazine – of which to our knowledge all editors are white and non-Muslims (!) – attacks the Christian religion or Islam.

Naturally, as Marxists we consider all religions as opium for the people. The Marxist world view is dialectical materialism which is based on a scientific understanding of the world. Hence, it has an atheistic perspective. We want to overcome religion. But we want and will overcome religion neither by humiliating the religious feelings of believers nor by force. This can only be done by persuasion and, more importantly, by material and social progress in a socialist world which will empower humanity more and more to manage its entire life. ⁴

However, our opposition to religion, which naturally includes Islam, does not blind us to racism and the discrimination of national and racial minorities. This oppression can take place under the open flag of Christianity or under the flag of pseudo-progressive laicism. As communists, we state that there is nothing progressive in the oppression of a religious minority by the capitalist state!

In fact, the discrimination of the Muslims' religion and the attacks on their freedom to practice their religion is part of and an expression of their national oppression as migrants in imperialist countries.

As communists we stand in the tradition of the Bolsheviks. In their program, they opposed every form of religious discrimination and demanded "*complete equality of rights for all citizens, regardless of sex, religion, race and nationality.*" ⁵ The Bolsheviks always tried to work among the oppressed masses which included working among oppressed religious groups. In 1904, they published a special paper called *Rassvet* (Dawn) which was aimed towards the so-called "*Old Believers,*" a religious Christian-Orthodox group which was persecuted under tsarism. Bonch-Bruевич, a leading Bolshevik, even lived among one of their communes for a year or so. The Bolshevik party also accepted religious members. ⁶ After the socialist October revolution in 1917, the Bolsheviks abolished all forms of discrimination for Muslims as well as all other religious minorities.

The RCIT stands in this tradition and we will work towards implementing this method of the Bolsheviks under present-day conditions.

Freedom of Expression?

What's about the pseudo-left's argument that socialists should solidarize with *Charlie Hebdo* in defense of "*freedom of expression*"? We reject this argument, too. This does not mean that we call the bourgeois state to outlaw this racist journal. As Marxists we oppose state bans of political or religious groups. Hence, we do not call the state to ban such cartoons. We don't even call upon the state to ban the fascists. We do so not because we are libertarians, demanding freedom for everything and everyone.

⁴ We have elaborated our analysis of religion in some documents. See Michael Pröbsting and Simon Hardy: Theses on Islamism, 2011, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/theses-on-islamism/>; Michael Pröbsting: Das Christentum als Rechtfertigungsideologie des imperialistischen "Krieg gegen den Terror" (2007); ArbeiterInnenstandpunkt: Kampf dem Klerikalismus. Thesen zur christlichen Religion und Kirche (1991), both in: Unter der Fahne der Revolution, No. 1 (2007), <http://www.thecommunists.net/publications/forev-1/>

⁵ Programme of the Russian Social-Democratic Workers' Party, adopted at the Second Congress in 1903, <https://www.marxists.org/history/international/social-democracy/rsdlp/1903/program.htm>

⁶ See e.g. Arto Luukkanen: The party of unbelief: The religious policy of the Bolshevik party, 1917-1929 (Studia historica), SHS 1994; Jesse Adkins: Strange Bedfellows: The Bolshevik-Molokanye Relationship; Dave Crouch: The Bolsheviks and Islam, International Socialism No. 110 (2006); Eberhard Müller: Opportunismus oder Utopie? V. D. Bonc-Bruевич und die russischen Sekten vor und nach der Revolution, in: Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas 35 (1987)

We oppose such state bans because this would only give the capitalist state more executive power. And such an enlarged repression machinery would sooner or later, and to a much greater extent, also be used against the working class and the oppressed.

But neither do we have a petty-bourgeois understanding of "*laissez faire, laissez passer.*" Yes, we defend freedom of speech. But "freedom of speech" is not freedom for reactionary hatemongering. We ask the pseudo-left friends of *Charlie Hebdo* if they would similarly defend the "freedom of speech" of openly anti-Semites, of Le Pen denying the Holocaust, etc. We are convinced that, in such cases, there would correctly be, an outcry among these leftists if they saw an anti-Semitic cartoon. But when it is not the Jews but the Muslims who are attacked, things are somehow different for these leftists. The sad truth is that they rally in solidarity with *Charlie Hebdo*, because they themselves are openly or clandestinely Islamophobic.

The truth is that the imperialist campaign for *Charlie Hebdo* is not about "*freedom of expression.*" This becomes obvious from the fact that the same Hollande government which is now crying crocodile tears for *Charlie Hebdo's* "*freedom of expression,*" the same government outlawed appearances of the French comedian Dieudonné M'bala M'bala, who has African roots and is highly popular among migrants, and even had him arrested a few days ago. His crime? His opinions, which include anti-Semitic and chauvinist positions. While we do not have any political sympathy for Dieudonné's views, we point out the total hypocrisy of the French government. The only difference between *Charlie Hebdo* and Dieudonné is that the former concurs with France's imperialist war-mongering and racism and the latter does not.

In fact, the issue is not "*freedom of expression*" but "*freedom*" to launch an ideological racist offensive against Muslim people and in support of the imperialist agenda.

What should the workers' movement fight for? Should we call for state bans? No, the capitalist state already has too much power, and in any case is not to be trusted. But do we think that the right of racists to publish such cartoons should be defended? We say "No." So who and how should the fight be conducted against such reactionary cartoons? As communists, the RCIT is in favor of working class mobilizations against such racists. We are against killing them. We also do not advocate killing Le Pen or other reactionary figures. But we advocate demonstrations against *Charlie Hebdo*. Furthermore, socialists should call the unions to boycott the distribution of this magazine. In addition, we would call for direct actions to ban them from shops, newsstands, etc.

To put it in a single slogan: "Boycott and drive out the racist *Charlie Hebdo* magazine!"

Appendix

Picture 1



Picture 2



From Julius Streicher's Nazi Magazine "Der Stürmer": A Picture called "The Poisonous Mushroom"

Picture 3

9 NOVEMBRE 2011/N°1012/GRATUIT

CHARLOT HEBDO



NUMERO
SPECIAL

3ème degré à prendre
absolument au sérieux !

CECI EST UN
COCKTAIL
MOLOTOV
ISLAMIQUE

Picture 4

CURTIS McCARTY : 19 ANS DANS LE COULOIR DE LA MORT P. 8

24 OCTOBRE 2011 / N° 1010 / 2,50 €

CHARLIE HEBDO

www.charliehebdo.fr

HOLLANDE

« IL A PAS LA
CARRURE », PAR
BERNARD MARIS P.3

QATAR

NOUVELLE DESTINATION
BRANCHEE
DES POLITIQUES P.2

ÉCOLOGIE

LES PRODUITS
POLLUANTS DE LA
FONDATION ALLEGRE P.7

TUNISIE

LES BARBUS
PLOMBENT LE
PRINTEMPS ARABE P.11



N° 1010 • FRANCE MÉTROPOLITAINE : 2,50 € • DOMAINE : 3,00 € • ALGERIE : 4,00 € • ANTOINE : 4,00 € • BELGIUM : 3,50 € • BRUNNEN : 3,50 € • ESPAGNE CONT. : 3,50 € • CH. 475 - GAL. 5,45 € - TUNISIE : 5 TND

L 14057 - 1010 - F - 2,50 €



Picture 5

TUNISIE : L'ISLAMISME MENACÉ PAR DU RAP ET DES TÉTONS P. 8 10 JUILLET 2013 / N° 1099 / 2,50 €

CHARLIE HEBDO

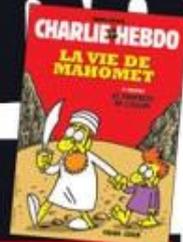
JOURNAL IRRESPONSABLE

ÉCOLOGIE
BATHO, COMIQUE
DE L'ÉTAT P. 7

RELIGION
VOYAGE DANS
LE GRAND BAZAR
ÉGYPTIEN P. 6

LE PEN, DASSAULT
L'IMMUNITÉ À
GÉOMÉTRIE VARIABLE
P. 5

**LA VIE DE
MAHOMET**
LE TOME 2
EN KIOSQUES



www.charliehebdo.fr

N° 1099 • FRANCE METROPOLITAINE 2204 • BELGIUM 2204 • ALGERIA 2204 • AND 2204 • ESPRINT COM • 24 • DOMR 2204 • CH • 475 • CAN 2204 • NORJA 2204 • POLSK 2204 • TUNIS 2204

L 14057 - 1099 - F 2,50 €

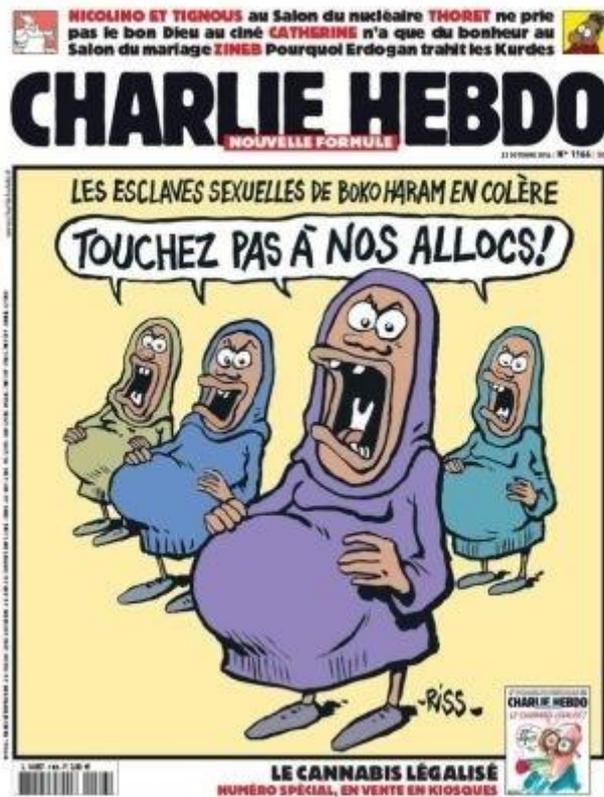
Picture 6



Picture 7



Picture 8



This cartoon shows Nigerian girls who were kidnapped by Boko Haram. It depicts pregnant girls saying "Touchez pas à nos allocs!" which translates to something like "Don't touch our (welfare) allocations!"

Picture 9

JOURNÉE TYPE D'UNE DJIHADISTE SEXUELLE

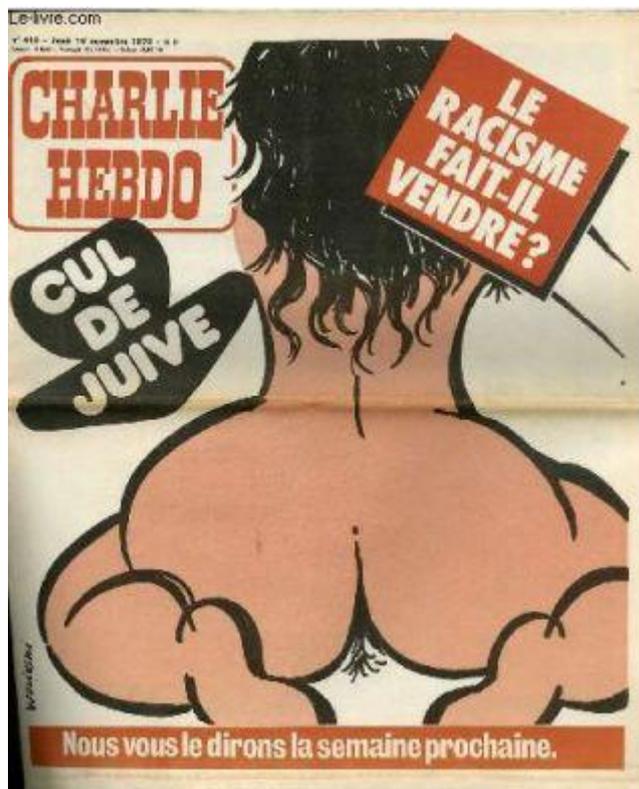
③ ÉPILATION. À LA CIRE ? TROP PROBLÉMATIQUE.



PRÉFÉREZ L'ÉPILATION AUX CISEAUX :



Picture 10



"Jewish ass!: Does racism create more sales? We'll tell you next week!"

Picture 11



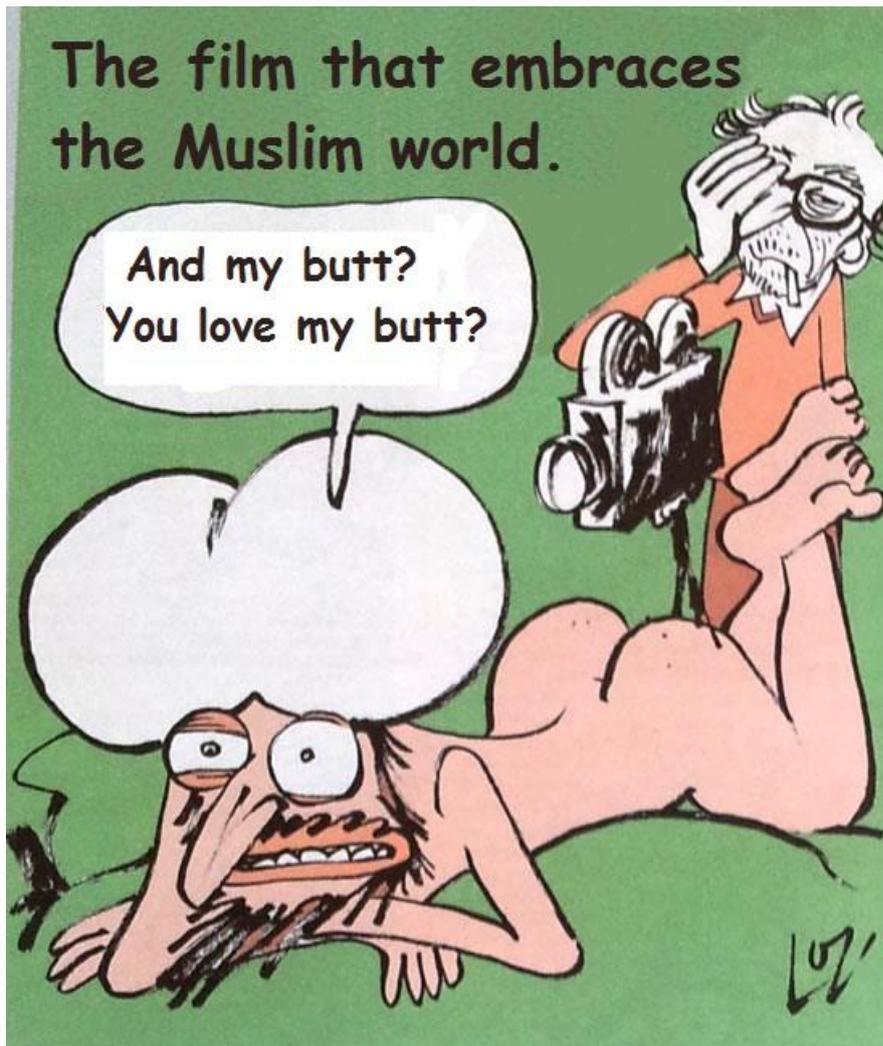
Charb cartoon: "Are we allowed to draw Mohammed's butt?"

Picture 12



In this image of the Prophet Muhammad says "100 lashes if you don't die laughing!"

Picture 13



Picture 14



CHARLIE HEBDO LES COUVERTURES AUXQUELLES VOUS AVEZ ÉCHAPPÉ



UN FILM CON SUR L'ISLAM DÉCLENCHE LA RAGE DES INTEGRISTES



LE MONDE ARABE RÉVOLTE PAR LES IMAGES D'UN FILM SUR MAHOMET



PÉTROLE

Le prix de l'essence repart à la hausse. On s'en fout! Avec les 12 centimes d'économies qu'on a réussi à faire grâce aux mesures du gouvernement, on prend le taxi!

FILLON A DES AMIS

Patrick Devedjian apporte son soutien à François Fillon. L'ex-Prmier ministre marchait avec une béquille, maintenant il marche avec un boulot.

BEAUT LAND

De quoi ont peur les ennemis du mariage gay? « Que des péchés épousent nos sœurs! »

ICROISSANCE

L'iPhone 5 pourrait apporter jusqu'à 0,5 point de croissance aux États-Unis. Jalouse de cet exemple, la France songe à lancer le Minitel 6.

LA DÉCHE

Une personne sur cinq finit chaque mois à découvert. Et un milliardaire sur cinq finit en Belgique.

ROMS

La France ne peut pas accueillir toute la misère de l'Europe, selon Valls. Dommage que les parents de Valls aient été espagnols plutôt que roms...

TRAITRES

Comme Bernard Arnault, les pauvres choisissent l'exil fiscal. Ils quittent leur deux-pièces surtaxées pour vivre dans des cartons défiscalement.

L'ESCLAVE

Apple sert l'iPhone 5. Les iPhone 4 qui bossaient sur l'ancien modèle ont été remplacés par des iPhone 5.

CENDRES

Trois cents Pakistanais périrent dans l'incendie d'une usine de chaussures et d'une usine de vêtements. Si vos Nike sentent le feu de bois, c'est qu'elles ont été faites main.

GUERRE

Des robots-chiens pour soutenir les soldats américains. Les marines ne seront plus obligés de pisser sur les os de talibans morts, les robots-chiens le feront à leur place.

SCIENCE

Du biocarburant obtenu grâce à une bactérie. Les champs de colza vont être remplacés par des élevages de staphylocoques dorés.

PICADOR

Valls sentent la corrida: « Le Rom a sa chance! »

COUP DE TONNERRE

Robert Hue quitte le groupe communiste du Sénat. C'est un deuxième mur de Berlin qui s'effondre!

MIRACLE

Il n'y aurait aucun lien entre la prise d'oméga-3 et la diminution du risque d'accidents cardio-vasculaires. Par contre, s'ils ne débouchent pas les artères, ils bourrent bien les poches des marchands de yaourts.

LA RUMEUR INTERNET DE LA SEMAINE

Cinquante pour cent des médicaments seraient inutiles. Par exemple, les suppositoires à la menthe seraient totalement inefficaces contre la mauvaise haleine.

MAHOMET FAIT RECULER LE CHÔMAGE DES JEUNES



MAHOMET: UNE ÉTOILE EST NÉE!



ARRÊTEZ DE DÉCONNER SUR MAHOMET!



CONNERIE SLAPFOTÉ



ÉMEUTES DANS LES PAYS ARABES



Johnny tweete son retour.



Picture 16



Picture 18



Max Blumenthal
@MaxBlumenthal



Follow

Charlie Hebdo cartoon portraying black Minister of Justice Christiane Taubira as a monkey #JeNeSuisPasCharlie



RASSEMBLEMENT BLEU RACISTE



TWITTER/@MAXBLUMENTHAL

Picture 19

Le-livre.com

