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Hebdo would scoff at appeals to (...)**

French colonial tradition - Charlie Hebdo would scoff at appeals to 'Western civilization'

Wednesday 19 August 2015, by [BEAUDET Pierre](#) (Date first published: 12 January 2015).

The carnage of January 7 in Paris will remain in our memory as a criminal act against the freedom of expression. Over the years, the scathing humor of Charb, Cabu and the other members of *Charlie Hebdo* made us sit up and take notice even when we disagreed with them. They, wherever they are, must be laughing mirthlessly now that the right and the far right, whose nostalgia for colonialism was regularly denounced by the magazine, now beatify them as victims of the enemies of "civilization."

These victims would be turning over in their graves if they were to read Christian Rioux's column of January 9 in *Le Devoir*. He calls for, in Molière's name nonetheless, for the defense of the French "civilization," if not Western "civilization" as a whole, supposedly threatened by radical Islam. It's extremely dishonest to put France forward as this "bastion of freedoms".

Modern France is the result of several centuries of colonial depredations that began with the "Triangle of Death" imposed on Africa and the Americas in the seventeenth century. The French regimes, including those following the revolution of 1789, enslaved millions of Africans and perpetrated now forgotten genocides in the Americas.

As well, modern capitalism took shape in the wretched plantations that made the fortunes of French merchants.

Let us not forget that the French state also carried out predatory practices in the name of "civilization" and "progress" to supposedly save the colonized people from "barbarism." As late as the 1960s, colonial France continued on its not so merry way despite the opposition from within France itself, including from those who bequeathed a legacy of such resistance to groups like *Charlie Hebdo*.

It must be underlined that these colonial practices were replicated within France's own borders. Colonial subjects, hungry and dispossessed, flocked to France to fill low-paying jobs under miserable working conditions. By the sweat of their brows they contributed to the building of modern capitalist France, all the while being subject to daily repression and even, in one instance, on October 17, 1961, to the mass murder by police forces of scores of peaceful protestors demanding Algerian independence.

Still today, systemic discrimination exists in "civilized" France. Racial profiling of Arab and African youth is well documented, which does not mean, however, that all of the four-to-six million immigrants in France are all subject to such ill treatment. But ask yourself the question: who lives in public housing on the outskirts of Paris, of Marseilles or other large urban centers ? Go have a look. French social movements, and not only those from within immigrant communities, have continuously demanded radical changes, something more than empty promises.

For quite some time now, France, from Sarkozy to Hollande, has chosen to be an ally in the war without end orchestrated by the United States in the struggle against “terrorism.” “Civilized” France seems to prefer to defend its investments in its post-colonial areas of interest, particularly in Africa and, at the same time, participates in supporting the dictatorships in Iraq, Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia. As for the French “socialists”, they once again insist that all this is done in the name of “civilization” to “save the natives”. In truth, the atrocities of the Islamic State (IS) or Al-Qaeda pale in comparison with the destruction carried out by American warplanes and their local allies on the ground who kill, rape and torture thousands of Iraqis, Syrians, Palestinians, Yemenis, Afghans...

Does all this excuse the warriors of IS? Certainly not. In addition to violating rights through murderous and sectarian acts, these movements end up playing the game of the superpowers by allowing the latter to pretend that they are acting to “save the Afghan people,” to cite an oft-used example. Meanwhile popular-based movements in this part of the world are fighting back and resisting. They are fighting against incredible odds, against deeply corrupt regimes supported by the U.S. and its junior allies, such as France and Canada, as well as terrorist organizations that claim to speak on behalf of a political Islam. But we don’t hear them, and we don’t support them. Why not ?

To remain faithful to a democratic tradition in France, we must fight against the authoritarian and anti-immigrant currents invoked in the defense of “civilization.” It is necessary to isolate the terrorist elements and, at the same time, counter the politics of a war without end carried out by the Western powers and which are at the heart of the present world turmoil. We must wage a battle of ideas against an Islamophobia promoted incessantly by a complicit media in support of an increasing rightward shift. It won’t be easy.

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P.S.

* “Charlie Hebdo would scoff at appeals to ‘Western civilization’”. PIERRE BEAUDET’S BLOG.
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<http://rabble.ca/blogs/bloggers/pierre-beaudet/2015/01/charlie-hebdo-would-scoff-appeals-to-western-civilization>

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