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## **Facts, Conflict and Echo - The Mohammed-Caricatures and their impact on the political education in Europe**

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### **The facts**

On September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2005 the centre-right Danish daily „Jyllands Posten“, which is proud of its long history of critical news covering, published twelve caricatures of the prophet of Islam Mohammed, and it did so not without a certain provocative intention. The caricatures were mainly of inferior quality and showed Mohammed in an unfavourable way except in one caricature. They did not transgress, though, the legal boundaries of European caricature style, less the even more aggressive American style, not to speak of anti-Semitic hatemongering loathsomeness, which you can find in Iranian or Arabian publications, some of which forged e.g. pictures of Jews murdering children.<sup>1</sup> or ridiculed the holocaust.

Critics can call these caricatures badly made drawings<sup>2</sup>, you can call them unwise, you can question the contents, they may be objectionable, without respect, indecent, provocative, offensive towards religious feelings, they may irritate, annoy, make angry, enrage. But then, this is the function of caricatures. By distorting and deforming, exaggerating and finding surprising associations and correlations they intend to make people think, comment, and even get involved. In case of real outraging insults all European countries have protecting laws and everyone can take libel action to the courts.<sup>3</sup>

But in this case something else was at stake. In spite of some warning voices nobody had expected such a world wide and such a violent echo.

A Danish author, Kåre Bluitgen, who is very active in promoting a peaceful understanding multicultural society in his neighbourhood, had the intention to write an innocent book for children to foster a better understanding of Mohammed and the Koran. But he could not find anyone to draw the pictures. After the murder of the Dutch film director Theo van Gogh by a Muslim extremist, no designer was willing to draw pictures for a book about Mohammed, not even for a well intended children's book. The author perceived this as self-censorship, an effect of a totalitarian religious selfrighteousness, and saw this as totally unacceptable in a free society.

A journalist of the daily “Jyllands Posten” heard of this failure. The daily is the biggest Danish newspaper, but in an European context it is comparatively small, publishing only 150 000 issues a day. The editor of the cultural section, Flemming Rose, wrote to 40 Danish caricaturists and asked for drawings depicting Mohammed as they saw him. He saw this as a proof for freedom of press and the spirit of freedom in Denmark. Only 12 caricaturists sent drawings and the editor published them on September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2005<sup>4</sup> adding a comment that nobody intended to hurt religious feelings deliberately, but that these feelings in principle were subordinate to the freedom of press.

### **The religious background**

The Hebrew Bible teaches e.g. in the First Commandment that God forbids the making of any impression of Him. The Christian teaching is in principle the same, though Christian art did not hesitate to depict God or Jesus Christ. The Koran takes again a stand like the Hebrew Bible and tradition. To depict Allah is absolutely forbidden and Islamic art has never done so. But a general inhibition to depict people and things cannot be deduced from the Koran directly. The later evolution of Islamic law has attributed this to the Hadith-literature, and there is a strong tradi-

<sup>1</sup> Propagandafilm zeigt die Schächtung eines Kindes, Hamburger Abendblatt 10.2.2006, S. 5

<sup>2</sup> Des dessinateurs surpris par l'emballement, Cinq caricaturistes jugent que les dessins en cause ne méritent pas un tel déchainement, Libération 3.2.2006, S. 7

<sup>3</sup> Muslimische Organisationen in Frankreich haben gegen Charli Hebdo im Sommer 2006 Klage eingereicht. J.A.: Karikaturenprozess, FAZ 12.8.2006, S. 43

<sup>4</sup> Vgl. Dieter Bednarz u.a.: Tage des Zorns, Der Spiegel 6/2006, S. 88ff.

tion to stick to this inhibition.<sup>5</sup> But Islamic cultural history is highly controversial. There is a tradition to inhibit the depiction of all living beings, there is another less strict religious direction which inhibits only the depiction of especially respected persons e. g. the prophet Mohammed. In this tradition Mohammed is depicted as flame or veiled or without eyes, as the eyes were believed to have a special relation to God. On the other hand Islamic art e.g. in Persian, Indian, Ottoman miniatures or pictures shows the complete figure of the prophet Mohammed sometimes including the face. So one cannot say that there is a general inhibition of pictures because of religious reasons or a common Islamic tradition.<sup>6</sup> Only the depiction of God is really always taboo in Islamic history. Mostly though - especially in Sunnite tradition - the general inhibition was kept in history, and there is only a limited number of pictures that show Mohammed. Today the more strict interpreters, under the influence of Wahabite orthodoxy and Shiite radicalism, try to control the public, although pictures, photos, TV, film and etc. apart from the religious sphere today are undisputed. The idea of an Islamic inhibition of pictures, though, shapes our perception even if this has to be seen more differentiated.<sup>7</sup> The conflict then is less triggered by the depiction itself but by the way of the depiction, the way of caricatures, which lack by definition the demanded especially elevated religious respect. Caricatures are by nature not meant as presentations of reverence.

### First reaction

The provocation of "Jyllands Posten" ran idle at first. There were hardly any reactions. The whole question has to be seen in the context of the internal Danish policy, where the question to have stricter immigration and integration laws is hotly discussed. "Jyllands Posten" has an outspoken restrictive position in this argument. Only when the newspaper itself called on Islamic organizations to comment on the caricatures the protest of Danish Imams rose more loudly. On October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2005 the editor of "Jyllands Posten" received the first murder threats. On October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2005 there were the first Muslim demonstrations in Copenhagen and some minor ones in the Near East. On October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2005 Arabic ambassadors in Copenhagen demanded to speak with Prime Minister Fogh Rasmussen about the caricatures. The Danish Prime Minister refused the meeting, stating that this question was not in his competence because Denmark was a country with a free press.<sup>8</sup>

During the following days the excitement seemed to calm down. The caricatures were published on October the 17<sup>th</sup> in Cairo without causing much interest.<sup>9</sup> Moderate Danish Muslim organizations commented positively the New Year's speech of Prime Minister Fogh Rasmussen, in which he moved away from his previous stand condemning the caricatures on the one hand, defending freedom of press on the other.<sup>10</sup> There was no real public interest in the caricatures in Egypt<sup>11</sup>, but the Egyptian and the Turkish government stimulated the conflict in this phase because of their own motives.<sup>12</sup> The Turkish government had an interest to press the Danish government to take action against the active Kurdish Separatist movement in Danish exile and the Egyptian government had a strong interest to divert public criticism from interior problems. So both had also an interest to present their governments as defenders of Islam at no

<sup>5</sup> Vgl. Muhammad Kalisch: Stellungnahme zum gegenwärtigen Konflikt um die Karikaturen, die den Propheten Muhammad abbilden, ungedrucktes Manuskript, Münster 2006 (Prof. Dr. Muhammad Sven Kalisch hat den ersten Lehrstuhl für islamische Theologie in Deutschland und bildet in Münster Lehrer für den Islam-Unterricht an öffentlichen Schulen aus.)

<sup>6</sup> Abdelwahab Meddeb: La représentation du prophète est devenue tabou, Libération 3.2.2006, S.6

<sup>7</sup> Wolfgang Günter Lerch: Kopflös, Das strenge Bilderverbot des Islam und seine Ausnahmen, FAZ 8.2.2006, S. 35, vgl. auch Wolfgang Günter Lerch: Zeichnung, Fernsehen, Video, FAZ 4.1.2006 S. 8

<sup>8</sup> vl: Islamische Boykottandrohung gegen Dänemark, FAZ 28.12.2005, S. 4; Robert von Lucius: Im Namen des Fortschritts 3.11.2005, S. 44

<sup>9</sup> hcr./Her.: Ägyptischer Nachdruck ohne Proteste

<sup>10</sup> vl: Muslime loben Rasmussen, FAZ 3.1.2006, S.4

<sup>11</sup> Rainer Hermann: Tabu ist die Religion. Arabische Karikaturisten und ihre Grenzen, FAZ 1.2.2006, S. 5

<sup>12</sup> Robert von Lucius: Die Zeitungsleute sollen sterben, FAZ 5.12.2006, S. 46

costs to the public. To add to the problems the Norwegian magazine *Magazinet* reprinted the caricatures on January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2006.<sup>13</sup>

### **An instrumental crisis**

The crisis could still have been controlled, but islamistic political forces saw a ready chance to profit, make a mark and gain public attention. A tiny Danish splinter group lead by Abu Laban and affiliated to the Egyptian Muslim Brothers,<sup>14</sup> whose influence has declined during the last years in Denmark,<sup>15</sup> saw a chance to gain wider recognition in Danish Muslim circles. They assembled a collection of pictures, among them the twelve caricatures and other caricatures pictures, some of which were not the least connected with Mohammed or Islam, spread lies about Denmark and its Prime Minister and toured the near East in December to seek support.<sup>16</sup> On December 29<sup>th</sup>, 2005 the Arab foreign secretaries condemned the caricatures during a session of the Arab League, and the situation escalated further. On January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2006 the Union of Islamic Ulemas in Cairo threatened to activate millions of Muslims around the globe. The TV-preacher, Jusuf al Karadawi, who sometimes tends to support quite radical positions, saw to it that the caricatures were topic of thousands of Friday sermons in mosques all around the world through his internet portal and his broadcastings at Al Djasira television in Qatar.<sup>17</sup> On January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2006 Saudi Arabia called its Ambassador home. Kuwait, Libya and later Syria followed. On January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2006 the pressure became too strong, "Jyllands Posten" apologized to the Muslim world for having insulted their religious feelings<sup>18</sup> in an interview with Al Djasira, though the editor still insisted on Denmark having the freedom of the press. Exactly the passages in which the editor regretted the publication were not translated by Al Djasira into Arabic. Also other Arabic media suppressed the apology. On January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2006 the Arabian secretaries of the interior called for a boycott actions against Denmark.<sup>19</sup> The case had become an international crisis. The provocation of a private Danish newspaper had developed into a conflict, which was to damage the relations between the European and the Arab states and poison the inter-religious atmosphere. Besides reasonable criticism and peaceful protest by organizations and public figures, organized violence by extremist groups took over more and more. Nevertheless politicians and governments in the Near East still had in mind to exploit the chance for conflict.<sup>20</sup> Early in February, five months after the publication of the caricatures, the crisis was out of control in some countries. The double strategy of some Islamic regimes to gain public support by attacking the West on grounds of the caricatures and because of the insistence on the freedom of the press by the West<sup>21</sup> on the one hand and to control the groups that took to the streets on the other hand was a miscalculation. Extremist organizations and politicians took over control.<sup>22</sup> On February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2006 a big extremist Muslim crowd called for the murder of Danes and other Europeans outside the Danish Embassy in London<sup>23</sup>, whereupon moderate British Muslim organizations called for legal action against the extremist demonstrators. In Lebanon Hisbollah had also internal Lebanese reasons to trigger off protest.<sup>24</sup> During the Shiite Ashura-Festivities Hisbollah called for a big demonstration which ended with

<sup>13</sup> afp/ap/HA: Dänische Zeitung lenkt im Streit um Karikaturen ein, Hamburger Abendblatt 1.2.2006, S. 6

<sup>14</sup> Islamisk Trossamfund; Morten Ramslund: Mohammeds Münze, Kopf oder Zahl? Die Geschichte vom Karikaturenstreit kennt in Dänemark zwei Versionen, FAZ 4.4.2006, S. 42; vgl. auch Anm. 3

<sup>15</sup> Robert von Lucius: Mit gespaltener Zunge, Radikale und gemäßigte Muslime in Dänemark, FAZ 7.2.2006, S. 3

<sup>16</sup> Robert von Lucius: Die Morddrohung kommt aus Mekka, FAZ 9.2.2006, S. 46; Christoph Reuter: Die gesteuerte Empörung, Stern 7/2006, S. 38f.

<sup>17</sup> Fra: Ein Scheich brachte den Karikaturenstreit ins Rollen, Hamburger Abendblatt 8.2.2006, S. 4

<sup>18</sup> Vgl. Anm. 5

<sup>19</sup> Vgl. Quatre mois de crise, Libération 3.2.2006, S. 2f.

<sup>20</sup> Frédéric Lenoir: L'instrumentalisation est évidente, France Soir 4.2.2006, S. 4

<sup>21</sup> Christoph Reuter: Die gesteuerte Empörung, Stern 7/2006, S. 38f.

<sup>22</sup> Rainer Hermann: Sie schlagen Dänemark und meinen den Westen. Radikale in der islamischen Welt nutzen die Gelegenheit, den latent vorhandenen Volkszorn zu verstärken, FAZ 6.2.2006, S. 3

<sup>23</sup> Reuters, FAZ 16.3., S. 5

<sup>24</sup> HA: Hasstiraden gegen Versöhnungsgesten, Hamburger Abendblatt 10.2.2006, S. 5

the support of the secret service of Syria in bloody terror against Christians<sup>25</sup>. In Gaza the Al-Aksa-Brigades, which had lost the elections, used the situation to out do the extremist Hamas in religious zeal and violence by attacking European institutions<sup>26</sup>. Danish, Norwegian and other European Embassies and institutions, as well as the embassy of Chile where attacked, devastated or set on fire<sup>27</sup> in Syria, where normally every demonstration is prohibited from the start, in Pakistan and in traditionally moderate Indonesia. In Iran the government made use of the situation to inflame an anti-European hate campaign and violence to hide the inner weakness of the regime and to divert the public from the isolation regarding the Iranian Atomic program. In Afghanistan a Norwegian ISAF-post was attacked and in a number of cities violent demonstrations had to be ended by the police. In Turkey a catholic priest was murdered<sup>28</sup>, in Nigeria the religious north-south-conflict erupted, just as in Pakistan churches went up in flames. In Pakistan and India even politicians rewards were offered publicly for the execution of the Danish caricaturists.<sup>29</sup> The Al Qaida terrorists stepped in and promised to carry out the death penalty<sup>30</sup>. Far more than one hundred people, mostly Christians, were killed during the various riots by the fanaticised mob or died in clashes with the police.<sup>31</sup> From Hong Kong to Germany smaller groups of Muslims protested peacefully in many cities. In Malaysia newspapers, who had dared to reprint just a photo of the incriminated issue of "Jyllands Posten"<sup>32</sup>, were shut down. In Jordan an editor was ousted and even arrested because he had dared to ask who smeared Islam more, the caricaturists or the terrorist, who massacred peaceful people in the name of Islam.<sup>33</sup> In Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia French and German newspapers and magazines were stopped publication and forbidden because they had printed Mohammed caricatures as well.<sup>34</sup> The unacceptable misunderstanding of the meaning of a state, founded on the rule of law, by the Danish Imams is shown by their offer to call for an end to violence as soon as "Jyllands Posten" gave up its insistence on the freedom of the press. Throughout Islamic countries politicians called for a boycott of Danish goods. Sadly enough some European companies were only too eager to do the work for the religious radicals.<sup>35</sup> The French supermarket chain Carrefour took all Danish products from its shelves in the Near East countries and advertised this on big posters, the Swiss Nestlé-company put in advertisements in Arab countries stating that their products did not come from Scandinavia.<sup>36</sup>

### **The development in Europe**

At the same time, when the first flames glared up, the defenders of the freedom of the press flexed their muscles. Many European newspapers in France, Germany, Italy, Spain, The Netherlands etc. showed solidarity with their Danish colleagues and their persistence. They reprinted some or all of the twelve caricatures. And some of them printed more of their own designers, as "Charly Hebdo" in France did.<sup>37</sup> The German newspaper Die "Welt am Sonntag" and the French "Libération" e. g. printed in addition historical pictures of Mohammed from Islamic sources.<sup>38</sup> The title of the cover story of the widely read magazine "Stern" reads "Islam – how much consideration shall we take?" And the cover picture is one of the caricatures, show-

<sup>25</sup> Rainer Hermann: Die Karikaturen als Vorwand, Wie Syrien radikale Islamisten benutzt, um den inneren Frieden im Libanon zu stören, FAZ 22.2.2006, S.3

<sup>26</sup> vl.: Streit um Karikaturen weitet sich aus, FAZ 2.2.2006, S. 6

<sup>27</sup> Tom Levine und Peter Müller: In Damaskus brennen die Botschaften, Welt am Sonntag 5.2.2006, S.1; vl.: Drohung mit Anschlägen wegen der Karikaturen, FAZ 4.2.2006, S. 1

<sup>28</sup> HA: Afghanen überfallen Norweger, Hamburger Abendblatt 8.2.2006, S. 4

<sup>29</sup> dpa/rtr: Papst fordert Ende muslimischer Gewalt, Hamburger Abendblatt 21.2.2006, S. 5, WS: Hohe Kopfgelder für die Ermordung dänischer Karikaturisten ausgesetzt, Welt am Sonntag 19.2.2006, S. 1

<sup>30</sup> smek.: Bin Ladins Drohung, FAZ 25.4.2006, S. 44

<sup>31</sup> ap/HA: Karikaturen unterm Hemd – Minister muss gehen, Hamburger Abendblatt 20.2.2006, S. 2

<sup>32</sup> AP/dpa: Proteste gegen Karikaturen, FAZ 27.2.2006, S.5

<sup>33</sup> Christoph Reuter: Die gesteuerte Empörung, Stern 7/2006, S. 38f.

<sup>34</sup> HA: Hasstiraden gegen Versöhnungsgesten, Hamburger Abendblatt 10.2.2006, S. 5

<sup>35</sup> Marlies Fischer: Am Anfang war ein Kinderbuch, Hamburger Abendblatt 3.2.2006, S. 5

<sup>36</sup> When markets melt away, The Economist 11.2.2006, S. 60

<sup>37</sup> J.A.: Satanische Satiriker, FAZ 9.2.2006, S. 46

<sup>38</sup> Libération 3. 2. 2006, S. 6; Die Welt am Sonntag \*\*\*\*

ing Mohammed's Turban with a fuse, recognizable for those who know, but mostly hidden behind that title. Inside the caricature is shown.<sup>39</sup>

Some European politicians tried to exploit the conflict. The rightwing-populist "Danish People's Party" could enhance its popularity by strong rhetoric and by calling for the expulsion of those Imams who had triggered off the conflict. And they announced that they would further enrage the Muslims by a set of advertisements against the Danish Muslims.<sup>40</sup> The Italian rightwing-populist Minister Roberto Calderoli told the public, he would hand out a big number of T-shirts showing the caricatures. He had to step down from his post, though, after he had worn such a T-shirt himself in public broadcasted by the news, which triggered severe bloody unrest in the former Italian colony Libya.<sup>41</sup>

### **Prudent and considerate voices**

The extremist Islam showed himself just as some of the caricatures had depicted it. Rightly the vast majority of the European Muslims saw themselves degraded by the violence even though they felt hurt in their religious feeling by the caricatures.

The Islamic World Association (OIC) protested against the caricatures but declared strongly their complete disapproval of calls for murder e.g. and called upon ending all violence.<sup>42</sup> 16 Islamic organizations in Germany, including all bigger associations, deplored the caricatures but in an unprecedented joint declaration condemned the violence and also the outraging anti-Semitic attacks of the Iranian president Ahmadinedschad<sup>43</sup>. In the meantime, the Arab regimes also saw, what their policy had done. In Mid-February 16 Arabian ambassadors condemned at an ambassador's conference the violence during the protests and demonstrations.<sup>44</sup>

Many European politicians expressed solidarity with Denmark, the European Parliament<sup>45</sup>, the Vice-President of the European Union Franco Frattini, the British Prime Minister Blair, the French President Chirac<sup>46</sup>, the former Danish foreign minister Ellemann-Jensen, the foreign minister of Spain, Danish politicians and diplomats disapproved the thoughtless dealing with the feelings of faithful Muslims and criticised the publication on the one hand. But they all defended the freedom of the press on the other. Even the Secretary General of the United Nations stepped in and summoned a reconciliation conference in Qatar bringing politicians from European and the Near East together.<sup>47</sup> In Germany Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel, and other leading politicians, showed sympathy for criticising the publication of the caricatures, condemned the violence and asked for prudence, but all insisted on the freedom of the press. Opposition-leader Westerwelle demanded financial sanctions against countries which allow violence against western institutions<sup>48</sup>. The American government surprised the Europeans by, in effect, siding more or less with Muslim criticism without defending the European position, which irritated their Danish allies.<sup>49</sup>

### **The result of the conflict**

Summing up the facts brings disturbing results. In Denmark the Danish caricaturists had to be protected by the police, did not talk to the public and went into hiding. The threats against editors, journalists, newspapers had to be taken seriously. The editor of the cultural section of "Jyllands Posten" had to go into hiding for some time in another country. In the meantime the author of the children's book, which started everything, published the book. It sells well, but

<sup>39</sup> Stern 7/2006, vgl S. 38

<sup>40</sup> vl: Partei will Muslime provozieren, FAZ 11.3.2006, S. 7; Robert von Lucius: Der dänische Januskopf, FAZ 10.2.2006, S. 2

<sup>41</sup> Vgl. Anm. 11

<sup>42</sup> rtr: Muslimischer Weltverband geißelt Mordaufrufe Geistlicher, Hamburger Abendblatt 22.2. 2006, S.5

<sup>43</sup> apa/dpa/Frau: Europäische Muslime fordern Ende der Gewalt, Hamburger Abendblatt 9.2.2006, S. 4

<sup>44</sup> hmk.: Ausschreitungen verurteilt, FAZ 16.2.2006, S.5

<sup>45</sup> hmk.: Ausschreitungen verurteilt, FAZ 16.2.2006, S. 6

<sup>46</sup> Vgl. Anm. 15

<sup>47</sup> Vgl. Anm. 12

<sup>48</sup> dpa: Angela Merkel mahnt zu Gewaltverzicht, Hamburger Abendblatt 7.2.2006, S. 4

<sup>49</sup> Matthias Rüb: Zurückhaltung in Amerika, FAZ 6.2.2006, S. 3

the designers of the drawings insisted on anonymity. The Danish pop-singer Jomi-Massage postponed the start of her CD, because suddenly the cover seemed too risky to her. German carnival associations banned the conflict from their programs explicitly because of the fear of Muslim extremists.<sup>50</sup> In a German school in Bavaria a century old drawing of Mohammed in a student presentation was removed from the homepage of the school after threats of violence.<sup>51</sup> Scholarly research on Islam, like that of Christoph Luxemberg, can only be published under a pseudonym, as Luxemberg feels. Worrying textbook editors in Germany have searched in already published issues for religious incorrect parts as judged by radical clerics somewhere in the world. It would be impossible to stage the great Voltaires “Mohammed” in France today because the drama is so topical again after 250 years.<sup>52</sup> The co-producer of Theo van Gogh’s film, Hirsi Ali, had to produce her new film in the Netherlands in complete anonymity.<sup>53</sup> The well-known highly regarded feminist lawyer Seyran Antas shut down her practice in Berlin because her life was threatened by Islamic extremists<sup>54</sup> The list of intimidated self-censorship can be prolonged endlessly. There were series of conferences, hundreds of newspaper articles, a multitude of politicians in many countries thought to be forced to make public statements on the conflict. And the threat goes on. The terrorists, who tried to blow up two commuter trains in Germany in August, stated after they had been caught by the police, that the caricatures were the motive for their act of terrorism.<sup>55</sup>

The political landscape has changed. Mistrust against Islam in general rose and reservations against Muslims were strengthened in Europe. Undoubtedly the gulf between the religions widened, though the Muslim organizations in Europe mostly acted very prudently. But one tiny Danish Muslim splinter group had shown, what pressure from the outside a country has to be prepared for, if a group succeeds in finding the right lever to mobilise religious zeal and radical forces and extremism.

But there were also some signs of a counter-movement. Nowhere in Europe were there any riots, only peaceful and - except in Britain – law abiding protest. Following the example of the “Progressive British Muslims”, the Member of the Danish Parliament Naser Khader founded a network of Muslim organisations and public figures to balance the influence of political fundamentalism in his country.<sup>56</sup> German Muslim organizations moved closer together to defend their interest, but also to fend off extremism and extremist violence. The top-level Muslim organizations in England expressed unreserved solidarity with the British government.

### **Questions to be asked after the crisis had ended a month later**

Can we really see a widening gulf between the democratic countries of the West and the Islamic world, where most countries have autocratic regimes or where clerics have a great influence on politics, as “Libération” in Paris asks? Has the clash of cultures reached the West at last, as the newspapers “Welt am Sonntag” and “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung” state?<sup>57</sup> Or is on the contrary the Minister from Singapore George Yeo right, who analysed the conflict as in reality to be between the militant radical Muslim faction and the liberal side in Islam, a proxy conflict to gain the lead in shaping the public opinion on Islamic societies.<sup>58</sup> Do we really need more rules in the West than we have for the press, as the Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan demanded, not thinking of the suppressed press in most Islamic countries and the

<sup>50</sup> isk.: Karneval ohne Mohammed, FAZ 15.2.2006, S. 9

<sup>51</sup> Wolfgang Günter Lerch: Zeichnung, Fernsehen, Video. Der Prophet Mohammed und das Bilderverbot im Islam, FAZ 4.1.2006, S.8

<sup>52</sup> Jürg Altwegg: Voltaire, hilf!, FAZ 3.2.2006, S. 38

<sup>53</sup> Der Spiegel 6/2006, S.97

<sup>54</sup> dpa: Türkische Anwältin gibt aus Angst Beruf auf, FAZ 5.9.2006

<sup>55</sup> F.A.Z.: Kofferbomben gegen Karikaturen. BKA-Chef Ziercke: Veröffentlichung Hauptmotiv der Attentäter, FAZ 4.9.2006, S. 4

<sup>56</sup> Robert von Lucius: Mr. Islam, FAZ 8.2.2006, S. 10

<sup>57</sup> NN: Der Kampf der Kulturen bricht offen aus, Welt am Sonntag 5.2.2006, S. 3; K.F.: Zusammenprall, FAZ 4.2.2006, S.1 (Leitkommentar)

<sup>58</sup> Klaus-Dieter Frankenberger: Unter Verschluss halten, FAZ 8.3.2006, S. 8

problems in his own country?<sup>59</sup> Can we accept that a fanatically excited mob in Karatschi , Beirut or Teheran tries to set the rules for a Danish newspaper in Denmark, as Gazeta Wyborcza rejects?<sup>60</sup> Can a democratic government in a country that is rightly proud of its freedom of the press apologize for a publication in this free press, or can anyone demand that it must do so, as Arabian politicians not accustomed to free press demanded? Can we allow that the range of scholarly research and teaching in Europe is influenced or even decided by pre-modern clerics in the Near East?

### **What results of the conflict sees the press for political education in the end?**

“Jyllands Posten” editor in chief Carsten Juste complains that the west has lost the battle for freedom of expression. In the next generation, he writes, nobody will dare to speak out about Islam, Mohammed or the Koran. Muslim dictatorships will decide, what Danish newspapers are allowed to write.<sup>61</sup>

The late famous poet, satirical author and designer Robert Gernhardt was asked, whether the radical Muslims and their inhibition of pictures had won also in the west. He answered that by a far reaching intimidation they had succeeded to force western media to abandon the main principle of the freedom of shaping ones own opinion, which is: look first yourself and judge thereafter. The protesting Muslims had an opinion without ever having seen the caricatures.<sup>62</sup> Richard Herzinger wrote in “Welt am Sonntag“: “there will remain an effect of intimidation. Journalists and politicians will be even more cautious to take up issues in Islamic countries or communities which are worth criticising. So self appointed Islamic leaders and functionaries will succeed piece by piece to conquer the undisputed authority to interpret all matters of the Islamic world. This is a massive attempt to force the western democracies to abandon essential principles of their civilisation and the rule of the law. If we would give in here, we would damage the centre of our freedom.”<sup>63</sup>

Christian Geyer admonishes in the “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung“: „In the end a cultural achievement is at risk in this conflict, which in the interest of peace the west must not let be infringed by whatever political or economic power, that is the knowledge of subtly differentiating a perspective from within versus a perspective from without, which was laboriously achieved against dogmatic and totalitarian demands of all kinds. A lesson taught by Christianity, which has in most parts still to be learned by Islam, reads: to each legitimate conception of oneself, there is a legitimate perspective from another point of view, which may well and legitimately contradict this conception of oneself. Only if this lesson is understood, will there be no more caricatures that show a Muslim wearing a turban with a burning fuse to it, meant to be Mohammed by the caricaturist. As long as violence is justified on religious grounds, those faithful zealots, who do so, themselves justify caricatures of their faith. The difficulties of Muslim believers to accept critical or satirical pictures of their prophet or other religious content are related to the unbroken religious understanding of the world, which cannot accept that faithful and atheist people are entitled a discourse based on equal rights, which stops short of nothing, even not the most holy topics. Only taste and the law set the limits.”<sup>64</sup>

A first page commentary of “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung” says: The Islamic world has - different from the Europeans – never used fundamental criticism to view its cultural roots. This is – one must admit – a difficult process, which must not shy away from doubt and scepticism, but which also can make free – free for the faithful just as non-believers . For a good many

<sup>59</sup> dpa: Verbrechen Islamfeindlichkeit, FAZ 29.6.2006

<sup>60</sup> dpa: Dänemarks Imane wollen verhandeln, Hamburger Abendblatt 7.2.2006, S. 4

<sup>61</sup> Robert von Lucius: Wir haben den Kampf verloren, FAZ,7.2.2006, S. 40

<sup>62</sup> Die Islamisten haben die Medien eingeschüchtert. Gespräch mit dem Dichter und Satiriker Robert Gernhardt zum Karikaturenstreit, FAZ 6.3.2006, S. 42

<sup>63</sup> Richard Herzinger: Kulturkrieg gegen den Westen, Welt am Sonntag, 5.2.2006, Forum S.13; vgl auch: Wir haben eine Schere im Kopf. Olaf Metzel zeigt in der Produzentengalerie die Skulptur einer nackten jungen Frau mit Kopftuch. Ein Gespräch mit dem Bildhauer über Meinungsfreiheit und vorausseilenden Gehorsam, Welt am Sonntag, 26.3.2006, S. 74

<sup>64</sup> Christian Geyer: Karikatur. Der Westen darf sich religiösem Druck nicht beugen, FAZ 2.2.2006, S. 37; zum philosophischen Hintergrund der Moderne in Europa und der Vormoderne im Orient vgl. Wolfgang Günter Lerch: Gleichzeitig, ungleichzeitig, FAZ 6.2.2006, S. 1

years faithful but critical Muslims emigrate to Europe to do scholarly research, to think or to write poetry free of threats. Also because of them the Europeans have to be steadfast.<sup>65</sup>

The whole situation has lastingly altered. One third of the population in Germany is in fear of the Islam. More than one third thinks that we are too tolerant dealing with the Islam. More than 50% think that there will be a lasting conflict between Christians and Muslims. About 70% think that Muslims pose a threat in Germany, even if more than 50% think that they might enrich the society at the same time.<sup>66</sup>

In his analysis, Hans-Ulrich Jörges, points out that the crisis has made the Europeans realize sharply the differences towards Islam in general and that it has deepened the cleft with the Muslim population in Germany.<sup>67</sup> And the one time guiding intellectual force of multiculturalism Daniel Cohn-Bendit gave up in resignation, saying: „Huntington has won.“<sup>68</sup>

In the end the reactions in Europe were divided and political action was feeble. The EU came late in showing solidarity with Denmark.<sup>69</sup> So in a sense this is doubtless a victory of the orthodox or radical forces of Islam. You can call the following incident symptomatic. I was immediately called by a worrying editor, whether we had also pictures of Mohammed in our textbook – we have of course. In another textbook, written this year, a colleague did without from the start. But we never got any reaction by German Muslims regarding anything in our textbooks published by the Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, in which there are enough pictures and caricatures, none expressively offending religion, but caricatures.

Most European Muslim-organizations reacted very considerate inside the frame of the respective constitutions and laws during the conflict, though apparently with more self-confidence and demands. I don't see the situation therefore entirely with resignation, because the big Muslim-organizations in Europe saw, how easy they can be manipulated by outside forces and how easy they become hostages of interests that are not their own. During the crisis European Muslims could become aware of their own interests. Outside influence has declined in the official organizations, though on a lower level international networking might have been strengthened.

European scholars and media have learned to be adamant in defending the freedom of the press, to see to it that critics of religious topics must have the freedom of expression as long as they abide the law. Lack of taste or lack of respect alone are not criminal offences, even if they are deplorable sometimes. Critical research on Islam as on other religions must have a place in our universities, institutes and in our media, and educators will make sure that our students deal with all religions in an understanding, tolerant but scholarly way which knows no taboos.

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<sup>65</sup> wgl: Propheten-Protteste, FAZ 3.2.2006, S.1

<sup>66</sup> Forsa 3.2.2006 vgl.: Stren 7/22006, S. 42

<sup>67</sup> Hans-Ulrich Jörges: Mach Mohamed. Der islamische Aufstand gegen die Verhöhnung des Propheten die deutsche Sicht auf die Welt - und auf die Muslime in Deutschland, Stern 7/2006, Frontseite, vgl. S.60

<sup>68</sup> Christoph Ehrhardt: Harte Hand,. Eine Tagung zu Islamismus und Journalismus, FAZ 6. 2.2006, S.38

<sup>69</sup> Wolfgang Günter Lerch: Gleichzeitig ungleichzeitig, FAZ 6.2.2006, S.1