

Italy, France, and the Satirical Dispute

Federico Ghelli (September 09, 2016)



French satirical magazine, Charlie Hebdo, sparks outrage after publishing insulting cartoons portraying the recent earthquake that afflicted central Italy. Later, Italian cartoonists wreaked vengeance against France.

France and Italy are like two brothers who bicker all the time over different things. First, it was over land control and military power. Then the conflict translated to kitchens, runways, and soccer fields. Now this.

The French satirical magazine, Charlie Hebdo, made the news again last week after publishing a cartoon portraying the aftermath of the earthquake in which nearly 300 people were killed.

The cartoon, titled Earthquake Italian Style, depicted a bald man covered in blood named “Penne with tomato sauce,” a scratched woman titled “Penne au gratin,” and a stack of debris and dead bodies labeled “Lasagna.” Italians didn’t take this very well.

“How the fuck do you make a cartoon about the dead,” said Sergio Pirozzi, mayor of Amatrice. “I’m sure this unpleasant and embarrassing satire does not reflect the real French sentiment.”

Charlie Hebdo responded to the indignation with a second cartoon, published on its Facebook page. This time it showed a wounded man saying, “Italians, it’s not Charlie Hebdo who has built your homes, it’s the mafia!”

In return, Italian media and cartoonists published a few cartoons mocking the terroristic attacks that recently afflicted France. Italian newspaper, Il Tempo, put on its first page a cartoon, titled Tartare a la Parisienne, referring to the attack on Charlie Hebdo’s newsroom that left 12 dead on Jan. 7, 2015.

On social media many Italians voiced their discontent, calling the cartoon “disrespectful” and in “bad taste” and telling the author of the cartoon, Felix, to “be ashamed.” Others called it simply an expression of their freedom of speech.

The French embassy in Rome released a statement saying, “The drawing published by Charlie Hebdo definitely does not represent the position of France.” It continues to read, “These are caricatures by the press (and) the freely expressed views expressed are those of the journalists.”

Prime Minister Matteo Renzi didn’t release any official statement on the event. Pietro Grasso, President of the Senate, recognized the freedom of people to state their opinions.

“I respect the freedom of satire and irony, but I am free to say that all this is disgusting,” he said.

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