

Denmark: Police arrest members of the Left Socialist Party

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Last month, under the banner of freedom of speech and the press, Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen defended the provocative Mohammed cartoons published in the *Jyllands-Posten* newspaper—cartoons that set off protests by outraged Muslims worldwide. Before the month ended, however, a police operation showed where the right-wing federal government in Copenhagen really stands on free speech.

On February 20, the Danish police arrested four members of the Left Socialist party (Venstresocialisterne, VS), including its leader, and issued arrest warrants against three others. The reason: Last year, VS formed the company Fighters & Lovers, which since January 10 has sold over the Internet T-shirts imprinted with the initials of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PLFP). Part of the proceeds from the sale of the shirts was to go to these organisations.

The VS members were accused of supporting foreign terrorist organisations, an act prohibited in Denmark that carries a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison. The relevant Paragraph 144a was added to the Danish penal code in 2002 in the wake of the terror attacks in the United States.

While those arrested have since been released, the investigation against them is proceeding. In addition, the police confiscated money and computer equipment and closed down the Fighters & Lovers web site.

The VS is an established political party that has a long history of representation in the Danish parliament. It was founded at the end of the 1970s during the student and protest movement against the Vietnam War, arising from a split within the Stalinist Communist Party of Denmark (DKP). From 1967 to

1987, it has had between four and six members in parliament. The collapse of the Stalinist regimes in the 1990s provoked a deep crisis within the VS. It is currently part of the Red-Green parliamentary faction, which has more than six seats. Between 1994 and 2001, it supported the minority Social Democratic government.

One of the VS's longstanding activities has been support for national movements in former colonial countries, such as the FLN in Vietnam, the ANC and SWAPO in southern Africa, the PFLP in Palestine, the FMLN in El Salvador and the UNRG in Guatemala.

The criminal proceedings against the VS members represent a massive attack against freedom of expression and an act of political censorship. Neither the FARC nor the PFLP are terrorist organisations, but rather petty bourgeois nationalist movements with long political histories. The VS's support for these organisations is completely legitimate.

The FARC was founded in 1966; however, its roots go back further, to the late 1940s, when the murder of the Liberal Party presidential candidate Jorge Eliécer Gaitán led to a popular uprising and civil war in Colombia. The FARC arose from the peasant self-defence groups that were oriented toward the Stalinist Communist Party. It fought a decades-long guerrilla war with right-wing, paramilitary groups that operated closely with the Colombian military.

The PFLP was founded in 1967. It has been part of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) since 1968, constituting its second-largest faction, after Fatah. In the 1960s and 1970s, it made a name for itself via a series of airplane hijackings.

The WWSW does not support these organisations. Their aim is not the emancipation of the oppressed worker and peasant masses. This can only be achieved

on the basis of an international socialist perspective. Their methods reveal a gross indifference and contempt towards the population—bombs attacks against innocent civilians (in the case of FARC) and the levy of protection money from cocoa farmers and drug dealers.

Nevertheless, the VC has the unconditional right to politically and financially support the FARC and PFLP. Such activity is not a crime, but clearly protected by basic democratic rights of free expression and political activity. Fighters & Lovers has expressly stated on its web site that the money raised from the sale of T-shirts was intended for civil and not for military purposes: a radio station run by the FARC in Colombia and a PFLP graphics studio in the Palestinian territories.

The fact that the FARC and PFLP employ the method of the armed struggle does not make them terrorist organisations, as the United States and European Union (EU) assert (the FARC and PFLP appear on their lists of terrorist organisations). The US and European powers have repeatedly supported armed organisations, when it serves their own strategic objectives, even when these groups have fought against elected governments. One only has to recall the case of the Mujahadeen in Afghanistan in the 1980s or the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) in the 1990s. In the case of the latter, NATO even helped it to power through its armed intervention against Yugoslavia, although the KLA was responsible for ethnic massacres and was deeply involved in the drug trade.

The FARC and PFLP are only classified as terrorist organisations because they are in conflict with regimes that are supported by Washington and Brussels. The Colombian military, which has a long history of bloody repression and human rights abuses, is armed and financed to the hilt by the US. The same is true for the Israeli regime, which continues to occupy the Gaza Strip and the West Bank in violation of international law and which brutally suppresses the Palestinian people.

According to a press release from the VS, the lists of terrorist organisations compiled by the US and EU have no juridical relevance in Denmark. It states that the criminal proceedings against the VS represent a purely arbitrary act designed to intimidate those who question the role of the Danish government as a champion of Washington's policies.

“We view the allegations and the closure of our web

site as an open violation of the Danish constitution and its guarantees for free speech and prohibition of censorship,” the VS explained in a press statement. Its spokesman, Michael Schölaradt, called attention to the fact that the resistance movement against the Nazi occupation of Denmark during the Second World War was also characterised as terrorist.

The actions of the Danish police against the VS underscore the hypocritical nature of both the international campaign to defend the publication of the Mohammed cartoons in the *Jyllands-Posten* and the Danish government's contention that it was merely respecting the basic right of free speech in turning a blind eye to the racist nature of their publication and its insult to Muslims.

The issue was never about banning their publication or bringing criminal charges against *Jyllands-Posten*, but the reality was that printing the cartoons was entirely in line with the political agenda of the government of Anders Fogh Rasmussen. It has systematically spread xenophobia and tightened laws against immigrants in order to divert attention from the country's domestic social crisis.

Overnight, the right to free speech counts for nothing as soon as a left-wing party shows its support for an organisation that opposes the aims of the Bush administration, which counts Rasmussen among its closest supporters.



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