The slaughter in Oslo

Peter Schwarz
25 July 2011

The terrorist attacks in Oslo on Friday that killed at least 92 mostly young people have been compared with the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, which also had a right-wing background. The Oslo atrocity has also been compared with school shootings, such as at Columbine High School in Colorado and in Erfurt and Winnenden in Germany.

But the murders in Oslo have a new quality. Far-right extremist violence is now aimed at a political party because the perpetrator sees it—its actual policies notwithstanding—as embodying "cultural Marxism," internationalism and generally left-wing views.

Anders Behring Breivik, who was arrested at the scene by the police, sought out the offices of Social Democratic Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg as the target for his bomb attack. Then, on Utoya island, where the Norwegian Labour Party had held its youth camps for decades, he carried out a cold-blooded massacre of the camp's participants. It was a politically motivated terrorist attack by a fascist against a social democratic party.

Everything that is known about the perpetrator suggests that it was a targeted political action and not the act of an uncontrolled psychopath. Breivik prepared the attack over two years and carried it out with meticulous precision. Unlike many of those who run amok, he did not kill himself, but surrendered to the police.

Whether Breivik acted alone or had accomplices is not yet established, though reports are emerging that six more people have been arrested in connection with Friday's massacre.

There is a particular political significance to the fact that this attack took place in Norway, a small and wealthy country that has profited from its large oil reserves. Its social benefits—still generous compared to those in other European countries, which have imposed deep social cuts—led some to see it as something of a Scandinavian utopia, proving the possibility of having peace and prosperity under capitalism. The tragedy in Oslo has shattered this complacent view.

Breivik's political itinerary shows that his views and actions emerged from broad and powerful trends in European bourgeois politics. He left a trail of postings in right-wing blogs. Shortly before the attack he emailed a 1,500-page document that provides some insights into his thinking. It is based on views that find support not only in fascist circles, but within the established bourgeois parties, including the social democrats.

The focus is a hatred of Muslims. Anti-Muslim racism to some extent serves the function for today's fascists that anti-Semitism did for the Nazis.

The warning that Islamic immigrants are destroying Europe's national cultures runs through Breivik's written statements. According to *Welt Online*, which has analysed his blogs, he committed the mass murders in order to "crudely light a beacon against Islamism and a multicultural society."

He regarded the left, "cultural Marxism," "multiculturalism" and "political correctness" as obstacles to the defence of national culture. In a blog entry, he included alongside the Labour Party "100 percent of the national media companies" and "98 percent of Norwegian journalists" in these categories.

From 1997 to 2007, Breivik was a member of the Norwegian Progress Party and its youth organization. In the parliamentary elections of 2005 and 2009, the Progressive Party won about twenty percent of the vote. Originally founded as a tax-cutting party, it now puts forward a mixture of social demagogy and free market economic policies, coupled with Islamophobia and xenophobia.

As recently as last year, two leading members of the Progress Party accused the Social Democrats of "stabbing" Norwegian culture "in the back." They wrote in the newspaper *Aftenposten*, "It is the Labour Party that every year gives us thousands of new Norwegians from different cultures and non-cultures." This tracks the views of Breivik.

The 1,500-page statement emailed by Breivik shortly before his killing spree, under the title "2083—A European Declaration of Independence," is a collage of quotations

© World Socialist Web Site

from the European scene of “multi-culti-haters and enemies of Islam,” as *Spiegel Online* put it.

The German web site Politically Incorrect admitted: “What he (Breivik) writes are mostly things that can be found in this forum.” Most of the quotations used by Breivik are from a blogger named Fjordman, whose contributions are widely distributed on the Internet.

The European scene referred to by *Spiegel Online* is a network of blogs and web sites with contacts to (among others) the American Tea Party movement, the Austrian Freedom Party and the English Defence League. Unlike the traditional neo-Nazis, this network is explicitly pro-American and pro-Israel. It even works occasionally with the Jewish Defense League.

The witch-hunt against Muslims and other cultures is not limited to these right-wing circles. Many European governments foment anti-Islamic sentiments to divert attention from mounting social tensions at home. For example, France and Belgium have banned the wearing of the burqa, with the support of social democrats and the parties of the petty-bourgeois “left.”

In Germany, Chancellor Angela Merkel recently declared that “multiculturalism” has failed. Former Berlin state finance minister Thilo Sarrazin (who is still a member of the Social Democratic Party) is praised for his anti-Islamic theories by Fjordman.

Anti-Islamism is also whipped up as part of the “war on terror” to justify the imperialist wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya. It is therefore more than cynical when President Obama responds to the murders in Oslo by calling for the “war on terror” to be stepped up. In fact, this “war” has directly contributed to the tragedy in Oslo.

Responsibility for the growth of fascist forces lies with the policies of the entire bourgeoisie. Within this, however, the role of the social democratic and petty-bourgeois ex-left parties—who ultimately become the fascists’ target—is particularly pernicious. As the social democrats dismantled the welfare state, cut wages and deregulated the job market, the petty-bourgeois ex-left and the union bureaucracy suppressed all opposition in the working class. As a result, the rhetoric of protest was ceded to the extreme right.

Norway is no exception in this respect. In his first short (2000-2001) term in office, Jens Stoltenberg oriented to the New Labour of Prime Minister Tony Blair in Britain, radically cut back the welfare state and privatized key public services. In 2005, he drew his inspiration from Obama and returned to power with the slogan “Jens, we can.” Since then, he has ruled through a social democratic-Green coalition with the Socialist Left Party and the right-wing Farmers Party.

This government has deliberately stirred up anti-foreigner sentiments. For example, in January this year, the Russian-born writer Maria Amelie was demonstratively deported, even though she has lived in Norway for nine years and a broad movement for her defence had been formed. Despite considerable domestic opposition Norway has also participated in the war in Afghanistan and bombing raids on Libya.

These events in Oslo are a warning to the working class throughout Europe. This political soil, poisoned by anti-Islamism and imperialist war, has now produced its first toxic fruit. A great danger is brewing, and the ingredients for a murderous fascist movement are emerging.

The ultra-right forces are still small, however. The main danger arises from the continued subordination of the working class to social democracy, the trade unions and their defenders among the ex-lefts. It is the resulting paralysis of the working class that creates the conditions for the growth of the fascists’ political influence.

To draw the lessons of the massacre in Oslo is to break with the social democrats, the trade unions and their fake-left defenders and establish new, democratic and popular organizations of working class struggle and build a new revolutionary leadership. Workers must cut the ground from beneath the right-wing demagogues by taking up the fight against welfare cuts, unemployment and wage reductions on the basis of a socialist programme.

Peter Schwarz

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site