

The Breivik trial

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The trial of mass murderer Anders Behring Breivik has been dominated to date by the testimony of the 33-year-old right-wing terrorist. Breivik has expounded at length on the development of his political views and on his actions. But there is every indication that these statements will be dismissed as psychotic ravings. The Norwegian state has no intention of examining the substantive questions raised by Breivik's horrific crime.

In his testimony and writings, Breivik has cited extensive connections with other fascists, describing himself as part of a European-wide network of "militant nationalists". In a detailed presentation of the political views that inspired him, he made clear that he regards himself as a political soldier, leading a "pre-emptive" assault on what he describes as "cultural Marxism" and "multi-culturalism."

The court, the European political establishment and the media are eager to evade the fundamental questions raised by Breivik's testimony and focus instead on whether or not he is insane. The court's ruling on this question will determine whether he is incarcerated in prison or in a mental facility.

This is a continuation of the political cover-up that began from the moment of Breivik's arrest on July 22, the day he murdered 77 people, mainly social democratic youth. Casting him as a psychopath and a "lone wolf" has been central to the official narrative.

Breivik's was the worst terrorist atrocity in Europe carried out by an individual. But instead of the Norwegian authorities treating it as the crime of the century—the occasion for a police investigation of unprecedented scope and thoroughness—the official handling of the case has been characterised by seemingly inexplicable failings.

For example, it was reported while Breivik was already in police custody that several people had been arrested at a flat belonging to him in Oslo. They were

promptly released without charge and nothing has since been reported about them or their relationship with Breivik.

Evidence quickly emerged of Breivik's close links to the English Defence League (EDL), including the fact that he had sent hundreds of EDL members the manifesto in which he set forth his plans for carrying out a terrorist atrocity. Breivik claims to have had contact with far-right blogger Paul Ray, who writes under the name Lionheart and has been linked to convicted terrorists. Indications that Breivik attended EDL rallies and held discussions with the EDL leadership were never fully explored.

In January, Norwegian national broadcaster NRK revealed that Breivik had contacted authorities in March 2011 to inform them of his plans for an attack on the Labour Party.

But more is at stake in the portrayal of Breivik as an insane fantasist than an attempt to divert attention from the failures of the state and intelligence services. Of even greater importance is the attempt to obscure the responsibility of the European political establishment for the promotion of xenophobic policies and an atmosphere of anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim racism.

The most revealing and damning statement made by Breivik came during his prepared opening statement last week, when he pointed out that "the three most powerful politicians in Europe" shared his views. "Sarkozy, Merkel and Cameron have all noted that multiculturalism doesn't work," he declared.

Breivik has acknowledged that 50-60 percent of his manifesto was copied directly from other sources, including the writings and statements of leading figures in the political and media establishment who have promoted anti-Islamic bigotry. Every day, the general population is exposed to a propaganda barrage promoting the "war on terror" and justifying the wars against Afghanistan and Iraq by citing the threat of

Islamic fundamentalism. This goes hand in hand with the attempt to scapegoat immigrants for the destruction of jobs, wages and social services for which the ruling elite and their system are to blame.

In recent years, far-right politics that were previously deemed to be the province of a demented fringe have been legitimized and integrated into the political establishment of many European countries. A growing list of countries—including Greece, Italy, Hungary, Poland, Austria and Denmark—have brought extreme right-wing parties into governing coalitions. In others, such parties have become a significant electoral force.

For a decade, between 1997 and 2007, Breivik was a member of the far-right Progress Party, which has made attacks on immigrants in Norway the centre of its programme. Progress has been fully integrated into Norway's political establishment, with anti-immigrant measures taken up by all the major parties, including Labour.

Breivik, who lived for a time in Sweden and was active in Swedish rightist circles, is a professed admirer of the Sweden Democrats, who want immigration slashed by 90 percent. His manifesto also made repeated favourable references to the Dutch anti-Islam politician Geert Wilders.

Breivik's admiration was reciprocated. A leader of Italy's Northern League, Francesco Speroni, told the Il Sole-24 Ore radio station: "Breivik's ideas are in defense of Western civilization... Some of the ideas he expressed are good, barring the violence. Some of them are great."

Jacques Coutela of France's National Front was suspended by the party after he described Breivik as an "icon."

Breivik is no "lone wolf," to be viewed merely as an aberrant personality. He is the diseased product of a long-running political campaign within Norway and throughout Europe to cultivate anti-immigrant and anti-Islamic sentiment. The aim is to develop a political movement primarily within the middle-class layers from which Breivik emerged of a fascistic character.

Amid the deepest economic and political crisis since the 1930s, the bourgeoisie will mobilise such forces against the insurgent movement of the working class it knows will be unleashed by the assault being mounted on jobs, wages and essential social services.

Breivik's political crime must, therefore, be taken as

a stark warning of what is being prepared and the occasion for workers to dedicate themselves to a socialist, revolutionary and internationalist opposition to capitalism.

The chief obstacles to such a vital political initiative are the various pseudo-left groups and the trade unions, which everywhere oppose any independent political mobilisation of workers against the capitalists and their state apparatus.

In Norway, the Socialist Left Party (SV), led by the Maoist Communist Party, and its hangers-on in various smaller petty-bourgeois groups have worked to lead working class discontent back towards parliament and the major pro-business parties. The SV participated in the 2005 Red-Green coalition with the Labour Party and Centre Party. For their part, the trade union federation LO has even addressed the annual congress of Progress and sought agreement with it.

It is this defence of the existing social order and refusal to challenge the constant erosion of living standards and democratic rights by parties claiming to be socialist that has done the most in allowing far-right parties to exploit social grievances and channel them in a reactionary anti-immigrant and nationalist direction.



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