

Norwegian government report whitewashes Breivik terror attacks

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The report of the 22 July Commission, the official body set up by the government to review the events of Anders Behring Breivik's twin terrorist attacks on July 22, 2011, has concluded that authorities could have prevented the slaughter from taking place.

But in all respects, the report is still a whitewash.

The commission, whose investigation lasted almost a year, released its findings on the eve of the announcement of Breivik's sentencing, due Friday.

The 500-page report seeks to cover over the political character of the attack, ignoring any consideration of the motives behind Breivik's actions. In the opening section the commission declares, "We have foregone issues related to the perpetrator's motive, childhood and state of health, and we have not explored the measures society puts in place for the early prevention of radicalisation."

This offers a political amnesty to the Labour-led government, along with the other establishment political parties, by ruling out any discussion of the ideological outlook which guided Breivik's act. There is no reference made as to how openly fascist conceptions have emerged ever more clearly in recent years, and the considerable evidence that Breivik was merely one representative of an international far-right movement. There was also no reference to the fact that Breivik drew many of his anti-immigrant and anti-Islamic positions from views expressed within the political establishment, both in Norway and throughout Europe.

The report goes out of its way to insist that Breivik acted alone, and that his motives were basically irrelevant. His terrorist attacks are described alternatively as "evil acts", "evil deeds" or "shocking and incomprehensible acts." The effect of such language is to turn what was a political crime of

horrific proportions into an inexplicable act of "solo terrorism."

This latter claim was again undermined this week when Czech police announced that they had arrested a man who was a Breivik sympathiser and who had been preparing a "copy cat" attack. The regional director of the Czech police commented, "We are working with the idea that this 29-year-old man probably sympathises with known murderer Anders Breivik from Norway."

Information which emerged in the immediate aftermath of Breivik's attacks revealed extensive ties with known extremist groups, including the English Defence League (EDL). Breivik attended meetings in Britain with leading members of this organisation, and also claimed to have been the founding member of a group calling itself the Knights Templar in 2002. Included in this group were right-wing nationalists from across Europe and a convicted terrorist from Germany.

On the day of the attacks, Breivik sent his 1,500-page "manifesto" to over 1,000 contacts online, many of whom were EDL members. The extent of the knowledge the British authorities had of Breivik's involvement with the EDL remains an open question, particularly given the widely-known presence of intelligence operatives within this neo-fascist organisation.

Shortly after his attacks, several individuals were found living at a flat Breivik owned, but were subsequently released. As well as being heavily active in internet chatrooms and right-wing forums, evidence pointed to Breivik travelling abroad to purchase equipment and meet with contacts to discuss preparations for his attacks.

Avoiding discussion of these issues is an effort to minimise the damning conclusions which even the

authors of the official report are compelled to acknowledge. The report finds that the bomb attack on the government buildings could have been prevented, that there were fundamental flaws in the response of the authorities to the massacre on Utoeya, and that there were serious problems in communication between state institutions. It admits that Breivik's attacks did not come out of the blue, stating, "With better ways of working and a broader focus, the Police Security Service could have become aware of the perpetrator prior to 22 July."

This devastating indictment of the police, government and security services is followed by the extraordinary and contradictory assertion that "Notwithstanding, the Commission has no grounds for contending that the Police Security Service could and should have averted the attacks."

The Norwegian and international ruling elite are complicit in fostering forces like Breivik and the ideological conceptions upon which they thrive. Given the evidence which has now come to light, the question should not be if authorities could have detected Breivik, but rather why did they not?

The report dealt with some of the most well known failings of the police and security services, including the identification by Norwegian customs officials of Breivik's suspicious purchases of explosives from a firm in Poland. Although this information was passed on seven months prior to July 22, no further action was taken by the police or intelligence services. The police also failed to investigate Breivik's purchase of a farm on the outskirts of Oslo where he made preparations for his attack, even though local residents had reported unusual activity.

National broadcaster NRK reported in January that Breivik had then contacted police in March 2011, informing them of his preparations for an attack, but apparently this was not passed on until after July 22.

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Breivik was a member of the far-right Progress party for over a decade, holding local positions within the organisation before he left in 2007. He made attempts in 2010 to obtain membership lists from the government for the youth organisations of political parties, which was denied.

During the attack on July 22, the report revealed

flaws in the emergency preparedness of the police, an inability to respond to tip-offs from members of the public identifying Breivik, as well as a failure to issue a nationwide terror alert. The report was critical of the length of time it took forces to reach Utoeya island, describing it as "unacceptable."

An honest investigation of Breivik's attacks could by no means rule out the possibility that elements within the police and security forces actively facilitated his act of mass murder.

There is after all mounting evidence emerging in countries across Europe of close ties between the capitalist state and fascistic forces. The long-running scandal in Germany over ties between intelligence services and the National Socialist Underground (NSU) terrorist group, which was responsible for at least ten murders over a decade, has led to the resignation of several top officials and exposed deliberate attempts to cover up the collaboration through the destruction of evidence.

In Greece, the state recently organised the rounding up of over 1,500 immigrants, with the full support of fascist forces like the Golden Dawn party—an organisation for which over half of the country's police voted for in recent elections.

The report offers no such thorough investigation of the role of the security and police forces and other government agencies, merely criticising each institution in the mildest terms for "failures in leadership", deficiencies in the coordination of activities between state departments, and the inability to exploit new developments in information technology. It opposes holding anyone but Breivik responsible for the events of July 22, emphatically declaring in the opening paragraph of its conclusion, "It is necessary to repeat that it is the perpetrator and no one else who is to blame for the loss of 77 precious human lives, for physical and mental harm and for great material devastation."



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