

The ideological roots of the Oslo atrocity

By Stefan Steinberg
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Since the attacks carried out in Oslo last Friday, there has been a concerted campaign by the bourgeois establishment in Europe to deny that the murderous rampage conducted by Anders Behring Breivik was motivated by anti-Islamist prejudices with deep roots in mainstream politics.

Following an outburst of public outrage against a man who cold-bloodedly gunned down dozens of young people and children, leading politicians and media commentators have gone to extraordinary lengths to play down their own role in encouraging the climate of xenophobic hatred which provided the background to Breivik's attack.

Writing in the *Daily Telegraph* a few days after the attack, the Mayor of London Boris Johnson reduces Breivik's assault, planned over a long period of time, to a question of personal egoism. Johnson writes: "It wasn't about immigration, or Eurabia, or the hadith, or the Eurocrats' plot against the people. It wasn't really about ideology or religion. It was all about him..."

For the conservative Swiss paper *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, Breivik is a social misfit addicted to violence. According to the *NZZ*, "There is a gulf separating populism and extremism," and any attempt to associate the mass murders in Norway with the rise of right-wing populism is "akin to modern superstition". The *NZZ*'s argument is patently aimed at deflecting attention from Switzerland's main anti-Islamist party, the ultra-right SVP (Swiss People's Party), which was instrumental in introducing a ban on the construction of Islamic minarets.

The disingenuous attempts by the political establishment to wash its hands of responsibility for what took place in Oslo were summed by the British journalist Simon Jenkins. Writing in the *Guardian* early this week, Jenkins said: "The Norwegian tragedy is just that, a tragedy. It does not signify anything and should not be forced to do so. A man so insane he can see nothing wrong in shooting dead 68 young people in cold blood is so exceptional as to be of interest to criminology and brain science, but not to politics."

Such disavowals of political links between the "bourgeois centre" to the atrocity in Oslo have been accompanied by interviews and reports explicitly denying that Breivik is a fascist. Writing in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* a Swedish journalist denies that Breivik is a neo-Nazi, arguing that neo-Nazis are anti-Semitic, while the anti-Islamist movement to which Breivik belonged is pro-Israel.

The same argument is made by the German intelligence forces (BfV), which sent out a 10-page letter this week to other security agencies declaring that, due to his support for Israel and diffuse ideology, Breivik could not be described as a neo-Nazi.

In fact, an examination of Breivik's ideology laid down in his 1,500-page manifesto reveals his profound affinity to fascist ideas. In particular Breivik's hatred of the organised working class and socialism, expressed in his numerous vicious tirades against the left and cultural Marxism, are the stock-in-trade of all fascist ideology. Breivik is too politically ignorant to comprehend the essential difference between communism and Stalinism, but it is no coincidence that his on-line video begins with the hoisting of a Soviet flag over the ruins of the German Reichstag at the end of the Second World War. For Breivik this act represented the beginning of the domination of post-war Europe by what he terms the "Marxist cultural left".

In fact the Marxist movement has always clearly articulated the historical and class roots of fascism. Writing at the time of the coming to power of Hitler in the 1930s, Leon Trotsky described the essence of Fascism as "a reaction of bourgeois society to the threat of proletarian revolution."

It should also be noted that the target of Breivik's terror attack was an organisation—the Norwegian Labour Party—which he erroneously identified with the left and the working class.

Breivik's rants against multi-culturalism and his defence of nationalism also resemble commentaries found on many neo-Nazi websites and publications.

In the place of the anti-Semitism which characterised Nazism, Breivik has substituted anti-Islamism. On this score he shares not only common ground with a host of far-right organisations and parties, which play a significant role in mainstream European politics, but also broad layers of the political centre, including social democrats and ex-"radicals."

Breivik's warnings about an Islamic takeover of Europe and the dangers of a multi-culturalist society are virtually identical to those made by the fascistic Norwegian Progress Party, of which he was a member for nearly 10 years. Even though the Islamic community in Norway is a tiny minority (1.6 percent) of the population, the Progress Party has made the campaign against "rampant Islamisation" a central aspect of its program.

Similar anti-Islamic nostrums are propagated by the Danish People's Party, which has provided political support to the country's minority liberal-conservative government since 2001. Denmark, long regarded as one of the most liberal countries in Europe regarding the integration of foreigners, has recently introduced viciously repressive immigration laws.

Breivik's anti-Islamism also finds an echo in the ideology of the Swedish Democrats party (who have adopted the slogan "Keep Sweden Swedish"), that won representation in the national parliament for the first time last September—as well as that of the

“True Finns”, which entered the Finnish parliament earlier this year with nearly 20 percent of the vote.

Commenting on the Nordic far-right’s increasing incorporation into official bourgeois politics, a Swedish specialist on nationalist movements recently concluded: “They’re established, they’re now part of the mainstream”.

Beyond Scandinavia, anti-Islamic declamations similar to those of Breivik can be found in the program of the Dutch Party for Freedom (PVV) and the speeches of its leader, Geert Wilders, as well as in the program and practice of the Northern League, which governs Italy in a coalition with the party of Silvio Berlusconi. Indeed, several leading members of the League have come to the defence of Breivik and his ideology in recent days.

In France, successive governments have not only propagated anti-Islamism for years, they have moved to put its program into practice. Already in 2004 the government of Jacques Chirac introduced legislation banning Islamist headscarves in public schools. At that time the racist law was backed not only by the Socialist Party, but also by the former radical group, Lutte Ouvrière (LO). Since then the campaign against the country’s Muslim community has been systematically escalated by the government of Nicolas Sarkozy—once again with the support of the Socialist Party.

The espousal of anti-Islamism is not restricted to European political parties. It has been fuelled by a number of intellectuals, journalists and ideologues both in Europe and America, who in the wake of the 9/11 bombings, have heeded the call by US President George W. Bush for a “crusade against Islamism.”

In 2006 the American publicist Bruce Bawer published his book *While Europe Slept*, which claims to describe the cultural decline of Europe resulting from Muslim immigration. In his own blog, Bawer admits that he developed his racist views following his move to Europe (specifically Oslo) in the late 1990s.

One year later the same theme was revisited by the US author Walter Laqueur, with his book *The last Days of Europe*, and again by US journalist Christopher Caldwell in his book *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe*. In addition to writing for Rupert Murdoch’s *Weekly Standard* in America, Caldwell also writes regular articles for the world’s leading finance paper, the *Financial Times*.

In Europe the ideological campaign against Islamism was spearheaded by the Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci, a former member of the Italian resistance to Mussolini, who wrote no less than three books deploring Muslim migration to Europe. In a 2005 interview with the *Wall Street Journal*, Fallaci declared that, due to the growing influence of Islamism, Europe should more accurately be defined as “Eurabia”.

In Britain the theme of “Eurabia” was taken up in the same year by the right wing *Spectator* magazine in an edition with the cover headline “Eurabian Nightmare.”

One of the main contributors to the torrent of anti-Muslim prejudice in the magazine was none other than the aforementioned Boris Johnson. In his contribution Johnson blustered that it was necessary to dispense with “the first taboo, and accept that the problem is Islam. Islam is the problem.” Johnson then went on to describe Islamism as the “most viciously sectarian of all

religions”. This is from the same man who now claims that the anti-Islamist and fascist Breivik operated entirely on personal motives!

In Germany the pernicious campaign against Islamism has been led by the ardent Zionist and former leftist Hendrik Broder, who is cited positively several times in Breivik’s manifesto. Broder pens his anti-Islamist diatribes for one of Germany’s main daily papers, *Die Welt*, and its most read weekly magazine, *Der Spiegel*.

Last year Broder received significant support in his campaign from the Social Democratic Party member and former Berlin finance senator Thilo Sarrazin, who wrote his own bigoted tract defaming the country’s Arab and Turkish communities—*Germany Abolishes Itself*.

Now, just one week after the Oslo massacre, Sarrazin has been afforded a front cover photo and a centre spread featuring gushing tributes in the magazine of Germany’s most widely read daily newspaper, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. After initial expressions of support for Sarrazin’s racist poison, the German Chancellor Angela Merkel sought to distance herself somewhat from his theses: She is on record, however, for her own condemnation of a multicultural society (together with British Prime Minister David Cameron).

The message from the media columnists and leading politicians on both sides of the Atlantic is clear. Virulent anti-Islamism, the condemnation of a society based on the co-existence of different peoples, rabid nationalism and hatred of the political left—i.e., all of the basic elements of modern Fascism—are acceptable elements of mainstream political discourse. Breivik’s ties to fascist politics are to be downplayed and hidden from the public, so that the discussion and the implementation of his ideas can continue.

Such a political and media reaction to the terrorist atrocity carried out in Oslo a week ago reflects a social order in a profound state of political and moral decay.

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