

# Terror in Norway

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Norway saw two far-right terrorist attacks in the largest killing since the Second World War on Norwegian soil. So far 91 people have been confirmed dead and several seriously injured. Gregor reports from Norway.

## Political massacre at the Labour Party Youth Camp in Utøya

About an hour drive from the centre of Oslo, in the usual tranquil Tyrifjorden, a fjord Trotsky visited with great enjoyment during the first happier part of his infamous Norwegian exile, the Labour Party youth was gathered for its annual summer camp at the small island Utøya. One or two hours after the explosion in Oslo a man, posing as policeman, with a Glock in his hand and an automatic rifle hanging from his shoulder, had managed to get across to the island, according to some reports by claiming to have to check out the security there. He struck while the participants of the camp were gathered discussing, watching or hearing the news about the explosion in Oslo. According to a survivor the gunman started by executing the cutest girl he could see.

As the bourgeoisie media by this time was describing the explosion in Oslo as an act of terrorism, as it was clear it was a bomb, they were also debates both nationally and internationally about which group could be behind the bomb. Many news channels jumped to the conclusion that it must have been an international jihadist terrorist organisation behind it. Whilst this unsubstantiated claim can be explained by the prevailing Islamophobia rife in Europe at the present time, it was backed up by at least one jihadist group who claimed responsibility for the attack using Twitter.

But these claims didn't fit with the picture of jihadists punishing the Norwegian government for its crimes in Libya or Afghanistan, or for the recent printing of caricatures of the prophet Muhammad, when it was said by several eye witnesses that the gunman was tall and blond and spoke with an eastern Norwegian accent.

## Norwegian nationalist arrested

The 32 year old ethnic Norwegian arrested immediately after the shootings, Anders Behring Breivik, is suspected of also being involved in the explosion in Oslo. He is supposedly part of a far-right milieu, and rumours, although so far unconfirmed, have it he is part of the same grouping as the killers in the racist murder of Benjamin Hermansen in 2001 in Oslo. He was an active debater on the internet on a forum of a far right newspaper/blog called document.no. Referring to historical intellectuals and figures such as John Stuart Mill and Machiavelli in his posts and on his Facebook and Twitter-account, the first impression you get is not that of an unthinking racist brute, but rather a stone cold, cynical reactionary with a nationalist, right wing grouping behind him. Interestingly, he was active in the youth wing of the populist, neoliberal parliamentary Progress Party from 1997 to 2007 before moving further to the right. He was also a member of the secretive, elite networking society the Freemasons.

Whether he was alone or not, time will tell. An eye witness to the shooting was sure there was a

collaborator there. In any case the Norwegian secret services have long been aware of far right-wingers interested in reviving a fascist movement in Norway, which has been in decline since the 90s. Still, Norwegian fascists have been around, and have even publicly been known to have established contacts in Sweden, the UK and Russia, to mention only a few. With the general polarisation of labour and capital following the economic crisis, and the increased wave of immigration into Norway, it is not unlikely that fascist groupings are taking measures into their own hand to try to preserve reactionary, idealized visions of Norway. Indeed it is instructive that Breivik talked constantly in his postings about the need to be an 'idealist', his unreal, romanticised view of Norway and the modern world was twisted into hatred for it a desire to destroy progress. Such terror can serve the purpose of spreading fear in the population giving a signal that it is not safe for ethnic minorities to be public people, and sending a strong message to those in government who does not push hard enough for reactionary measures such as tighter immigration laws. As the attack was after summer office hours this may or may not have been a way of scaring more than killing people in the government departments.

Norway is now in a period of mourning, and serious questions will be asked. We have to ensure that this tragedy is not used to strengthen the powers of surveillance and repression as they were in the USA after 9/11. The events in Norway on 22 July are proof that for all the talk of Islamic fundamentalism there is a growing threat of the far right adopting a strategy of terrorism. Workers and immigrants need to beware and organise to defeat the far right and fascists wherever they are.

### **Eyewitness to the blast**

On 23 July, just after 3pm I and my colleagues were in a higher floor of a building in the centre of Oslo when we were interrupted by an extremely loud, deep and penetrating bang. During the short time the bang lasted I remember thinking if it was perhaps thunder, as thunder and lightning was forecasted later that day. The windows on our floor were all shaking and vibrating so much I thought they were going to come out.

Seconds afterwards - as the bang was not followed by lightning, and because we saw the initial, brief cloud of smoke above and somewhere behind a government department building close by - I thought it might be a terror attack. Everyone on our floor came running towards the windows where we were stood as it was in the corner of the building which was facing the direction of the blast. We looked up and down our street and noticed that windows, mostly on the lower floors, were shattered as far as the streets would allow us to see.

After about three minutes the fire alarm went off and guided us out of the building in a calm, pre recorded British voice. Myself and a few others went in the direction of the initial cloud of smoke that we earlier had seen to try and see what had happened. As we were manoeuvring between shattered windows lying about in the streets we were discussing whether this was likely to be the result of terror or a perhaps a gas explosion.

Walking one block we came to a road overlooking Youngstorget, the square between buildings associated with the ruling Labour party, it has the largest trade union federation headquarters building there as well as the People's house and the People's theatre. Seeing the facade of the People's theatre I started thinking that there perhaps had been some sort of a gas explosion inside it as around three quarters of the windows on the side facing us were out while no fire or smoke was coming from the building. The blast from the gas could have put out any fire we thought. Shortly afterwards I saw emergency vehicles started parking in the square.

We were then evacuated from the road we were stood at by the police and headed back for the street

outside our office building. After the initial total confusion was over, we learned that it was not any of the buildings surrounding Youngstorget that was hit worst, but government department buildings, including the offices of the PM, one block further along from Youngstorget, where there were talks of fire. As we stood there, maybe 30 minutes after the blast, I received some phone calls from people who had heard the blast even outside Oslo and others who were watching international news channels talking about it. Our building was about 500 meters away from the epicentre of the blast, with several tall buildings between, which gives an indication of the huge strength of the shockwave. An explosives expert estimated about an hour later on the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation channel that if this was a homemade bomb around 4-500 kilos of explosives must have been used.

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