

A Norwegian Nightmare

‘Could we somehow have avoided feeding the killer at our
own breast?’

Alf Kjetil Walgermo

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On Friday a massive explosion in central Oslo claimed the lives of eight people. Later, the same day, there followed the massacre of sixty-eight young people on Utoeya island, twenty miles north of the capital, at the hands of a gunman disguised as a police officer. It is the worst tragedy the country has faced since the Second World War. Today, the man responsible, Anders Behring Breivik, is due before the court.

His explanation, though, will hardly make us understand why this disaster happened. How could a fellow Norwegian find it ‘necessary,’ as he justified it to his lawyer, to kill close to one hundred of Norway’s best young women and men? It all seems completely meaningless, like nightmares often do. But we already know that Breivik wanted to get attention, and according to his plan, the madman has succeeded. The world is listening now.

One tragedy after another: first, the bombing which turned the governmental district of Oslo into a war zone. Hours later on the same day, a mass murder of youngsters from the Norwegian Labour Party, gunned down at their summer camp on an idyllic island. A third tragedy: the mass murderer is a Norwegian, driven by extreme ideological views and hatred against what he describes as cultural Marxism and multiculturalism. In fact, it seems like the main reason for the slaughter was fear of Muslims and disappointment with the liberal Norwegian government. Clearly he is neither a conservative Christian, as some newspapers have put it, nor a martyr for a higher cause, as he sees himself. He is just a very sick individual, a self-proclaimed revolutionary with connections to right-wing extremists.

Oslo is the home of the Nobel Peace prize, and Norwegians like to think of ourselves as ambassadors for peace, even if we’re involved in military operations abroad. Most of us like to think we have no enemies. After 9/11 we knew there was a certain risk of a terrorist attack on Norwegian soil, but fear of terrorism has been more theoretical than actual.

Friday saw our twin terror attack, only this time it was not a distant enemy but ‘one of our own’. Now Anders Behring Breivik probably will be remembered as some kind of a combined Timothy McVeigh and Seung-Hui Cho. We don’t know the full story yet, but as it appears now, he is responsible for twice as many lives as the killers at Columbine High School and Virginia Tech combined.

Breivik supposedly wants to use the upcoming trial as an arena for spreading his propaganda. He has written, under the anglicized name Andrew Berwick, a 1,500 page document (freely available online) in which he expresses his thoughts. The main title of the text, 2083, could be inspired by George Orwell’s 1984 (one of his favourite books). Only that Berwick’s/Breivik’s book is the work of a madman, containing quasi-political ideas about solutions for Western Europe in the fight against multiculturalism, Marxism and jihad. Some of the text is taken almost directly from the American terrorist Ted Kaczynski’s Unabomber’s manifesto. I feel very reluctant, though, to get

into Breivik's mind and prose. He has committed the worst crime ever seen in Norway. He will now face a trial. Then he will be locked away for years.⁽¹⁾

Our whole nation is in shock. As people gather together in support, tonight about 50,000 and perhaps more will march against terror in Oslo, as people march against terror all over the country. In the coming weeks several questions need to be answered. Could we somehow have avoided feeding the killer at our own breast? Were the attacks just the work of a lone madman or the result of a growing climate of fear and hatred directed against Islam?

One of Breivik's main points seems to be what he calls 'the ongoing Islamic colonization of Europe'. The truth is a number of Norwegians actually share his anxiety. This is worth giving some thought. If the mass murderer had been a Muslim, as some people first thought when the bomb exploded in Oslo, it could have had a narrowing affect on the Norwegian mindset. Instead people stand united together. In the darkest of hours, there is actual hope. We've learned that hatred kills. The answer is not more hatred, but justice (for the killer) and love (for each other). It's a hard lesson. And it will be tested. The signals from the government have been firm: 'You will not destroy our democracy or our ideals for a better world,' Prime Minister Stoltenberg said, directly addressing the terrorist. Even so, something has changed. We don't know yet what it will lead to. The mass murderer may not have altered our nation's soul. But Norway has lost its innocence.

⁽¹⁾ The Norwegian maximum sentence is 21 years in prison. Norway doesn't believe in death penalty, even for a massacre like this.

The Ted K Archive

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