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Oslo Shooter A Frightening Reminder of Radical Right Terrorist Threat

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The horrific events that took place in Norway this past Friday— a huge bombing in central Oslo closely followed by a bloody shooting rampage on nearby Utoya island that left 93 dead—are a sobering reminder of what extreme radical-right beliefs can drive some to do.

And the threat is not confined to Norway or Europe. Exactly the same ideas that motivated the Oslo shooter to take up arms are popular in radical-right circles on this side of the Atlantic.

Anders Behring Breivik, 32, described by Norwegian police as a right-wing Christian fundamentalist, was apparently driven to act by hatred of Muslims and fears of multiculturalism. Breivik's 1,500-page manifesto, *2083: A European Declaration of Independence*, equates liberalism and multiculturalism with "cultural Marxism," something Breivik says is destroying European Christian civilization. Posted online just before the

attacks, the manifesto is described in *The New York Times* as a diary of Breivik's months of planning.

Writing under the Anglicized name "Andrew Berwick," Breivik predicted a massive war that would kill or injure more than a million people as he and his small group seize "political and military control of Western European countries and implement a cultural conservative political agenda." Breivik's manifesto also describes a secret April 2002 meeting in London to reconstitute the Knights Templar, a military order active in the medieval Crusades, that was attended by "representatives" of European countries and one "European-American." The document does not name the attendees, and authorities are unclear the meeting actually occurred.

Fears of "cultural Marxism" have a long pedigree in this country. It's a conspiratorial kind of "political correctness" on steroids — a covert assault on the American way of life that allegedly has been developed by the left over the course of the last 70 years. Those who use the term posit that a small group of German philosophers, all Jews who fled Germany and went to Columbia University in the 1930s to found the Frankfurt School, devised a cultural form of "Marxism" aimed at subverting Western civilization. The method involves manipulating the culture into supporting homosexuality, sex education, egalitarianism, and the like, to the point that traditional institutions and culture are ultimately wrecked.

A number of hate groups, including the racist Council of Conservative Citizens (CCC), have raised the spectre of cultural Marxism as a way to explain contemporary events (click here to watch the CCC's DVD on the theory). Some prominent conservatives also adopted the conspiratorial theory (culturalmarxism.org features MSNBC contributor Pat Buchanan and Texas Congressman Ron Paul). In 2002, William Lind of the Free Congress Foundation, a far-right outfit long headed by the now deceased Paul Weyrich (one of the founders of the Moral Majority), gave a speech about the theory to a Holocaust denial conference. Saying he was "not among those who question whether the Holocaust occurred," Lind went on to lay blame for "political correctness" and other evils on so-called "cultural Marxists," who, he said, "were all Jewish" (Lind is mentioned in passing in Breivik's manifesto).

Breivik shares more than fears of cultural Marxism with America's radical right. A recent SPLC report documented an increasingly reckless campaign to vilify American Muslims, driven in some cases by mainstream political figures. If irresponsible ideologues or public figures use the upcoming ten-year anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks to further demonize American Muslims, this population may be in great danger (in the past year, there have been serious attacks on mosques and other Islamic institutions. For more, read here

and [here](#)).

Tensions are arising here for very much the same reasons as they are in Europe: societies on both sides of the pond are becoming more demographically diverse. In Europe, the targets of radical-right extremists are typically Muslims, because they make up a large share of European immigrants. In the U.S., until recently, ire has mostly been directed at Latinos and Latino immigrants. This growing population is blamed by racist ideologues for the impending end of a white majority, which will come midcentury according to the Census.

That racial fears could drive someone to kill on a massive scale should come as no surprise. Timothy McVeigh killed 168 people in 1995, taking his blueprint for the Oklahoma City bombing from the gruesome race-war novel, *The Turner Diaries*, written by neo-Nazi leader William Pierce. Between McVeigh's April 19, 1995 bombing and early 2011, the SPLC has documented some 100 domestic terror plots by right-wing extremists. In recent years, these attacks have been propelled by additional factors such as the election of the nation's first black president and the troubled economy.

The obvious danger from radical-right domestic terrorism makes it all the more galling that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has largely given up its efforts to monitor such threats. In April 2009, the department released a report, "Right-wing Extremism: Current Economic and Political Climate Fueling Resurgence in Radicalization and Recruitment," warning of possible violence from racists, radical antigovernment types and others. The report was prescient; within a few month of its release two major domestic terrorist attacks took place. But that didn't stop conservative analysts from savaging the report after it was leaked shortly after its release.

It was one thing for the right-wing media to savage the report; what was truly shocking was DHS's reaction. The department ended up gutting its non-Islamic domestic extremism intelligence unit, which had been led since its inception by veteran intelligence analyst Daryl Johnson. Johnson recently talked to the SPLC about how the DHS bowed to the political pressure and basically abandoned its role in protecting the country from radical-right threats (*The Washington Post* provided further evidence [here](#)).

"[M]y greatest fear is that domestic extremists in this country will somehow become emboldened to the point of carrying out a mass-casualty attack, because they perceive that no one is being vigilant about the threat from within," Johnson told SPLC referring to the fact that DHS is out of the non-Islamic domestic terrorism business. "That is what keeps me up at night."

The SPLC's CEO J. Richard Cohen recently asked DHS Secretary Janet Napolitano to reconsider the department's actions. The Oslo attacks are a reminder of why this is so critically important.

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