

New Zealand pseudo-lefts support Washington's war preparations against China

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16 August 2014

The campaign for New Zealand's September 20 election takes place amid growing international geo-political tensions. In response to the crisis of US capitalism, the Obama administration is attempting to use its superior military power to secure Washington's domination over every part of the world. Obama's "pivot to Asia"—a strategy to encircle and prepare for war against China—has turned the entire Asia-Pacific region into a dangerous tinderbox.

Washington is backing the re-militarisation of Japan, while encouraging the Philippines and Vietnam to press their territorial disputes against China. The Australian government has agreed to host US troops in Darwin, and to effectively transform the southern continent into a base for any attack on China.

New Zealand's National Party government and the opposition Labour Party have both pledged their support for Obama's "pivot" and for stronger military and intelligence ties with the US. Last month, the parties also welcomed the Japanese government's decision to "re-interpret" Japan's constitution to allow its troops to take part in aggressive military operations alongside the US and its allies.

The preparations to support a US-led war have reached an advanced stage, largely behind the backs of the public and without any organised opposition. The main political reason for this situation is the crisis of leadership in the working class. Every political party supports US imperialism, while middle class pseudo-left groups—which in an earlier period protested against wars in Vietnam and Iraq—have moved sharply to the right and joined the political establishment.

NZ Labour and its political allies—the Greens, the right-wing NZ First, and the Internet-Mana Party—are spearheading an anti-Chinese campaign aimed at conditioning public opinion for war. At the same time they are scapegoating Asian immigrants for the unemployment, soaring cost of housing, and other aspects of the country's social crisis for which governments, Labour and National, are responsible. The opposition parties have all denounced

Chinese investment and called for cuts to immigration.

The pseudo-left groups Fightback, the International Socialist Organisation (ISO) and Socialist Aotearoa are integrated into this xenophobic campaign; they are all part of the Maori nationalist Mana Party and are campaigning to help install a Labour-led government.

All three groups supported the US-backed Islamist militias fighting for regime change in Syria. They also tacitly endorsed Mana's support for parliamentary motions condemning Russia over the civil war in Ukraine, which was sparked by a US-backed, fascist-led coup in February. Now, like the US State Department and the Pentagon, the pseudo-lefts are falsely depicting China as an aggressive power destabilising Asia and the Pacific—in order to justify US military action against it.

On June 26, Fightback published a statement, in conjunction with the Committee for a Workers' International, titled "New Zealand state's quandary in the Asia-Pacific." It declared that a "new order is developing in East Asia after 40 years of relative stability" as the result of China's growing "strategic and political weight on the world stage."

The clear aim of the statement was to obscure Washington's warmongering by depicting China as a powerful "imperialist rival" that aims to "conquer new markets and exploit cheap resources." While not explicitly endorsing the US military build-up, the statement presented it in relatively benign terms as "an attempt to check China's emergence as a challenger to US dominance in the region."

Far from being in a "quandary" or hedging "its bets with US imperialism" as Fightback claims, NZ's ruling elite has cemented its de facto alliance with the US and supports its aggressive operations in every part of the world. The former Labour government strengthened ties with Washington by sending troops to the US-led neo-colonial occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq. The current National government has continued cementing defence and intelligence relations with

the US.

Fightback's characterisation of China as "imperialist" is false. While China's search for resources has brought it into conflict with US interests throughout the world, China remains a cheap labour platform dominated by the US, Japan and European powers. Corporations based in these countries take the lion's share of the profits extracted from the Chinese working class.

The characterisation of China as imperialist serves a definite function: it provides the rationale to support war against China, either directly or indirectly, by remaining "neutral" and refusing to defend it as the US and its allies prepare for war. Fightback, like most of its counterparts internationally, have avoided spelling out these conclusions, which flow from its position.

Socialist Aotearoa (SA), which is affiliated with Britain's Socialist Workers Party, has explicitly proposed that the working class align with the US in order to defeat "Chinese imperialism in the Pacific." Its January 2011 article, titled "Empire: China, the US and the shape of global capitalism to come," envisioned a near future (2019) in which China, having already colonised several Pacific island nations, sent troops to invade New Zealand to protect assets purchased by Chinese companies.

The article was full of distortions. It claimed that "China is quickly militarising and the production of Chinese aircraft carriers and anti-ship missiles while the US navy continues to shrink will in time redraw the geo-political shape of the world's biggest ocean."

This turns reality on its head. The size of the US navy has declined marginally, but the US remains overwhelmingly the world's predominant naval and military power—outstripping China, and any other country, in every sphere. China has just one aircraft carrier, while the US has 10. Washington's military spending is four times that of Beijing and it has pressed its allies, including Japan and Australia, to build up their armed forces. As part of the pivot, the Pentagon is moving 60 percent of its naval and air assets into the Pacific.

SA made a token reference to the struggles of the Chinese working class and called for a "global socialist revolution" to "liberate us and them." But this is mere window dressing for SA's essential agreement with the US preparations for war. A key paragraph states:

"... as Chinese capitalism grows it will undoubtedly turn neo-colonialist in the south Pacific. As a prominent American military think tank has said, 'As the U.S. military's "balanced" strategy foresees mostly small wars, it must also maintain high-end capabilities to deter potential Chinese aggression and maintain freedom of action in the Asia-Pacific region.' **As American elites prepare to deter Chinese aggression and domination in the new century,**

so should the international working class." [emphasis added]

This call for a bloc between US imperialism and the working class to prepare for war against China is the position of right-wing nationalists. Last April, the small fascist group Right Wing Resistance got widespread media coverage for distributing anti-Chinese leaflets in Auckland and elsewhere, which put forward the same basic perspective as SA: that China could invade New Zealand to protect its investments in the country.

NZ First, pro-Labour columnist Chris Trotter and pro-Mana Party blogger Tim Selwyn have also asserted that NZ is being colonised by Chinese investors. The Maori nationalist Mana Party, which includes all the pseudo-left groups, has issued statements denouncing immigration from Asia and the sale of land to Chinese companies. Mana represents indigenous capitalists who see Chinese investors as rivals (see: "NZ opposition parties wage xenophobic campaign against Asian immigrants").

The pseudo-left support for US imperialism is not a mistake; it is rooted in definite class interests. These organisations represent layers of the middle class who, in the final analysis, derive their wealth from NZ's strong links with US and Australian finance capital. They have embraced the capitalist layer represented by Mana and its ally, the InternetParty—founded by multi-millionaire KimDotcom—as well as Labour and the Greens.

The hatred of war felt by workers and youth will only find conscious political expression through the building of a genuinely antiwar movement, which unites the working class internationally in a fight to end capitalism: the source of war. Building this movement requires a conscious political struggle against the influence of pseudo-left supporters of imperialism like Fightback, the ISO and Socialist Aotearoa.



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