

Anti-Chinese witch-hunt against New Zealand MP intensifies

Tom Peters

28 December 2017

On December 20, Deputy Prime Minister Winston Peters, leader of the anti-Asian New Zealand First Party, demanded an “investigation” into “serious allegations” made in the media against opposition National Party MP Jian Yang. In an inflammatory statement in parliament, Peters denounced Yang as a “Manchurian candidate,” i.e. a Chinese secret agent.

The previous day, the *New Zealand Herald* claimed that in 2012 Yang “lobbied” then-National Party ministers on behalf of an unnamed China-born applicant for an unspecified “sensitive position in the defence force.” The applicant had been denied clearance for the position by the Security Intelligence Service (SIS).

Labour Party Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, who leads a coalition government with NZ First and the Greens, tacitly supported Peters, telling the *Herald* “it’s inappropriate for MPs to lobby around security clearances.”

Yang denied “lobbying” to overturn the SIS decision, saying he “simply sought answers on the constituent’s behalf through the appropriate channels.” National Party leader Bill English defended Yang, saying: “It’s overstretching it to say that he tried to overturn a security classification.”

The witch-hunt against Yang is part of an intensifying anti-Chinese campaign in Australia and New Zealand, aimed at aligning both countries more closely with US war preparations.

In an effort to reverse its economic decline, US imperialism has waged a series of criminal wars over the past quarter century and is now building up its military against China. President Donald Trump’s threats to “totally destroy” North Korea, if acted upon, would inevitably lead to war with China. The Trump administration’s National Security Strategy, released

this month, denounced Russia and China as “revisionist powers” and singled out China for seeking to “challenge American influence, values, and wealth” and “displace the United States in the Indo-Pacific region.”

Washington is insisting on full support from all its allies, including New Zealand, a member of the top-level Five Eyes intelligence network.

The attack on Yang, who entered parliament in 2011, began before the September 23 election. NZ First demanded Yang’s resignation after media reports that the SIS had investigated his background as an English teacher at a Chinese military intelligence training institute decades ago. Yang denied the insinuation that he was a spy.

Days before the election, academic Anne Marie-Brady, from the US government-funded think tank, the Wilson Centre, produced an inflammatory paper denouncing the National Party’s business links with China. Without any evidence, she accused Yang and Labour MP Raymond Huo of being Chinese Communist Party agents. She called for the SIS to investigate Chinese “influence” in the New Zealand’s media, business, universities and politics.

After the election produced a stalemate, with neither Labour nor National able to immediately form a government, US ambassador Scott Brown publicly criticised Bill English, then the National Party prime minister, for failing to endorse Trump’s threats to annihilate North Korea.

Brown’s extraordinary intervention made clear that Washington expected a much stronger pro-US stance from the next government. It was undoubtedly a significant factor in NZ First’s decision to form a coalition government with Labour and the Greens.

Prime Minister Ardern told the media last month,

following high-level talks with the US, that New Zealand was prepared to intervene militarily in North Korea.

The media has echoed the US war propaganda against North Korea. A December 15 report by Newshub described New Zealand as a “possible—but unlikely—target” for a North Korean nuclear attack, which it declared would lead to 500,000 deaths.

Andrew Hampton, director of the Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB), told the media on December 20 he was “concerned” that North Korea was responsible for recent “WannaCry” ransomware attacks. No evidence has been produced to substantiate the allegations made by the US and UK.

In opposition, Labour repeatedly attacked National’s business ties with China and scapegoated Chinese immigrants for the housing crisis and low wages. The Labour-NZ First government has banned all house purchases from overseas and plans to cut annual immigration by as much as 40 percent.

Labour and NZ First have also signalled restrictions on Chinese investment in New Zealand. Last week the Overseas Investment Office made the unusual decision to block an offer by Chinese conglomerate HNA Group to purchase UDC, a New Zealand vehicle finance company, from ANZ Bank.

The SIS and GCSB recently stated in briefings to the new government that over the past year there were “attempts to access sensitive government and private sector information, and attempts to unduly influence expatriate communities.”

No details were revealed, but on December 11 the London-based *Financial Times* cited unnamed “security experts” who claimed the agencies want “a more vocal government response to ... Beijing’s attempts to influence the country’s growing Chinese community.” The article implied that nearly 200,000 ethnic Chinese people living in New Zealand could be targeted as purveyors of Chinese Communist Party “influence.”

The next day the *Wall Street Journal* reported that “at a meeting in July of the Five Eyes intelligence alliance in Ottawa, officials from Australia and New Zealand raised unease about Chinese interference, according to a senior Australian official.”

A stream of articles critical of Beijing have appeared in the New Zealand media. In the *New Zealand Herald*

on December 19, Victoria University policy studies director Simon Chapple denounced China’s human rights record, describing the country as an “insidious influence,” and called for New Zealand to seek alternative trading partners.

The newspaper’s liberal columnist Bryce Edwards applauded Brady’s “research on how the Chinese Government seeks to influence New Zealand.” On the *Newsroom* web site on December 12, he declared that China’s activities raised “legitimate questions about power, influence and democracy” and criticised those “who will seek to close down such discussions with accusations of racism or xenophobia.”

Over the past three months, Brady has been elevated and glorified as a “world-leading” researcher. She has been praised by NZ First and the trade union-funded *Daily Blog* and given frequent media interviews to demand that the spy agencies crack down on China’s so-called interference.

Brady is a co-founder of the Wilson Centre’s Small States and the New Security Environment Project, funded by the NATO military alliance, led by the US and European imperialist powers.

The project’s website describes its objective as producing research to “assist NATO and its partner states to respond to the changing global international security environment,” including “Russia’s aggression in Crimea and new naval doctrine [and] China’s intransigence over South China Sea territorial disputes.”

In other words, its aim is to produce propaganda to integrate small countries such as New Zealand into the US-led war drive against Russia and China.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)