

The Christchurch terror attack and the promotion of fascism by the ruling elite

Tom Peters
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On Saturday, May 4, the International Committee of the Fourth International held the 2019 International May Day Online Rally, the sixth annual online May Day Rally held by the ICFI, the world Trotskyist movement. The rally heard speeches on different aspects of the world crisis of capitalism and the struggles of the international working class from 12 leading members of the world party and its sections and sympathizing organizations around the world.

On successive days, the World Socialist Web Site is publishing the texts of the speeches delivered at the rally. Below is the speech delivered by Tom Peters, the leader of the Socialist Equality Group (New Zealand). On Monday, the WSWS published the opening report to the rally, given by David North, the chairman of the international editorial board of the WSWS and national chairman of the Socialist Equality Party (US).

At this May Day rally, the International Committee of the Fourth International is making the most urgent warning to workers and young people throughout the world about the growing danger of fascism.

The horrifying March 15 terrorist attack on two mosques in Christchurch, in which 51 people, including young children, were killed and dozens more injured, was the product of the systematic promotion of right-wing extremism internationally. The gunman, Brenton Tarrant, was not a disturbed “lone wolf,” as depicted by police, politicians and the media.

He was a highly conscious fascist who actively supported racist and anti-Muslim groups in Australia and Europe which have been emboldened by the lurch to the right of official politics.

Unlike in the 1920s and 30s, fascism does not yet have a mass movement, but it is being deliberately cultivated by the political establishment, state agencies, the corporate media and right-wing academics. As the ICFI warned in January: “The growth of far-right and fascistic movements, including the revival of anti-Semitism, poses immense danger to the working class. Under conditions of deepening capitalist

crisis, unprecedented levels of social inequality and preparations for world war, the ruling elites are resurrecting all the political filth responsible for the worst crimes of the 20th century.”

Like other far-right terrorists in the United States, the Christchurch shooter was inspired by the 2016 election victory of President Donald Trump. His manifesto calls Trump a “symbol of white renewal” because of his statements encouraging racist violence and attacking Mexican and Muslim immigrants as “invaders.”

Trump is only the most blatant personification of a global phenomenon. In Australia, where Tarrant grew up, successive Labor and Liberal-National governments have demonised refugees and imprisoned thousands in appalling conditions, while participating in criminal US-led wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria, encouraging the growth of racist parties such as One Nation.

Extreme nationalist parties are in governments in Italy, Poland, Hungary and Austria, and have entered parliaments in many other European countries. The fascist Alternative for Germany is the parliamentary opposition in the Bundestag and the coalition government has adopted its anti-immigrant policies.

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern responded to the Christchurch massacre with hypocritical denunciations of racism and appeals for “kindness” and “compassion” towards Muslims and immigrants. She has been depicted virtually as a saint in countless articles in the American, British and Australian media.

The international campaign to glorify Ardern is based on the most shameless lies and distortions. The aim is to cover up the fact that her Labour Party-led coalition government, and all the parties in parliament, have created the conditions for the growth of the extreme right by supporting wars abroad and whipping up xenophobia at home.

For more than a hundred years, the Labour Party has advanced anti-immigrant and nationalist policies and viciously opposed the internationalist program of socialism to unite workers of every country against the capitalist and

nation-state system. Following the Russian Revolution, Labour supported racist “White New Zealand” legislation to severely restrict immigration from China and other Asian countries. The first Labour government, elected during the Great Depression in 1935, had an anti-Semitic immigration policy and accepted only a small handful of Jewish refugees fleeing the Nazis.

Like social democratic parties throughout the world, in the years following the 2008 financial crash, Labour scapegoated foreigners for the sharp drop in living standards caused by brutal austerity measures supported by all the major parties. Jacinda Ardern campaigned in the 2017 election demanding a major cut to immigration, which Labour and the trade unions scapegoated for low wages, unemployment and the refusal of successive governments to provide enough housing, health care or other basic services.

Labour formed a coalition with the anti-immigrant New Zealand First Party, which has frequently demonised Asian and Muslim immigrants, using language similar to the Christchurch shooter’s manifesto. New Zealand First leader Winston Peters is now playing a leading role in determining foreign and defense policy and cementing the country’s alignment with US war preparations against China.

To prevent public discussion about the striking similarity between Tarrant’s ideology and the racism and xenophobia spouted by the established political parties, New Zealand’s chief censor has suppressed the Christchurch terrorist’s manifesto. This anti-democratic decision means anyone found in possession of the document is threatened with up to 10 years in prison.

The manifesto also makes clear Tarrant’s hatred of Marxism and socialism, his admiration for the trade unions’ nationalist and anti-immigrant policies, and sympathy for the military and police, which he estimated in Europe employ hundreds of thousands of right-wing nationalists.

There is palpable anger among masses of people that the Christchurch atrocity—New Zealand’s worst-ever mass shooting outside wartime—was not prevented, despite the immense resources and powers of the police and spy agencies in New Zealand and Australia. Not only did these agencies turn a blind eye to warnings of anti-Muslim and neo-Nazi violence; it has been revealed that the police deliberately shielded Tarrant.

In 2016, the Christchurch shooter sent a death threat to an opponent of the racist United Patriots Front, which stated: “[I]f you are a Marxist I hope you one day meet the rope.”

This threat was reported to the police in Melbourne, who dismissed it and made no record of the complaint. The political explanation for this is that the state sympathises with the extreme right and shares its hostility to Marxism.

Governments are terrified by the growing support for

socialism among workers and the resurgence of mass strikes and protests in France, Poland, the United States, Mexico, Algeria, India and other countries, including New Zealand. To defend capitalist rule requires police state measures, including imprisoning journalists and whistleblowers like Assange and Manning, and the mobilisation of extreme right-wing forces against the working class.

The Christchurch massacre is being exploited to justify attacks on democratic rights, including free speech on the internet, on the pretext of combating “hate speech” or “extremism.” Such measures will be used against socialists, anti-war groups and workers, such as nurses in New Zealand and the “yellow vests” in France, who have organised and shared information on social media.

There is widespread opposition to the far right internationally, as demonstrated at vigils throughout New Zealand and Australia, mass protests against Trump’s election and against the Alternative for Germany. Millions of workers and youth can see the danger and are determined to fight to prevent a repeat of the horrors of the twentieth century.

The vital lesson of the 1930s and 1940s is that fascism cannot be defeated by appealing to the state or capitalist parties, but only through the fight to overthrow capitalism and build a socialist society. That is why the urgent political task facing everyone listening today is to join and help build the ICFI as the conscious socialist leadership of the working class—independent and opposed to the established parties, the trade unions and their pseudo-left cheerleaders, which have all helped to create the toxic environment of nationalism, xenophobia and militarism.



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