

New Zealand fascist group targets Chinese-born MP

Tom Peters
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On January 10, the fascist group Action Zealandia (AZ) posted pictures on Facebook of posters it stuck outside the office of Jian Yang, a Chinese-born member of parliament in the opposition National Party, in Auckland. One poster declared, “Don’t let them steal our country,” with a picture of the Chinese flag being painted over New Zealand’s flag. Another bore the slogan “honour your heritage.”

AZ said it had “sent a message directly to the traitors in parliament. The office of National MP and known Chinese Communist Spy, Jian Yang, was posterized by our Auckland Members.”

AZ was founded in mid-2019. Its website echoes the white supremacist manifesto of Christchurch terrorist Brenton Tarrant, who killed 51 people at two mosques on March 15, 2019, and injured 49. Like Tarrant, AZ rails against corporations “importing cheap foreign labour... at the expense of the European community” and calls on “NZ Europeans” to “halt this ongoing replacement.”

The group received widespread media attention last October after placing posters around the University of Auckland, prompting anti-racist protests. The attack on Yang’s office, however, was reported only by *Newshub* in a brief article.

The incident reveals how the extreme-right in New Zealand has been emboldened by the anti-Chinese campaign of the Labour Party-NZ First-Greens government, along with much of the corporate media and academia. Labour and NZ First attacked the 2008–2017 National Party government for its links with Chinese businesses, while scapegoating Chinese people for the lack of affordable housing and other problems caused by capitalism.

Denunciations of Chinese “interference” escalated as the United States, New Zealand’s main ally, ramped up

its economic war and military build-up against China, which threatens to unleash a war involving nuclear-armed powers.

A key turning point was the 2017 election, which resulted in the right-wing nationalist NZ First Party, which has repeatedly demonised Muslim and Asian immigrants, forming a coalition government with the Labour Party in exchange for key ministerial posts. NZ First leader Winston Peters became deputy prime minister and foreign minister, while NZ First’s Ron Mark was made defence minister.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern’s government has strengthened the alliance with the US and labelled Russia and China the main “threats” to the global order. It has also restricted the rights of immigrants to live and work in New Zealand. The coalition, supported by the unions and pseudo-left groups, helped create the atmosphere of racism and xenophobia in which the Christchurch massacre took place and fascist groups have become emboldened.

Claims that Yang is a “spy” were first made by academic Anne-Marie Brady just before the 2017 election and repeated by NZ First and much of the media. There is no evidence for the claim, which is based on the fact that, decades ago before immigrating, Yang taught English to Chinese military and intelligence cadets.

Brady’s so-called research, which echoes US propaganda against Beijing, is funded by the NATO military alliance and has been praised by members of the Trump administration and former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

On January 5, former Labour Party Prime Minister Helen Clark joined the chorus against Yang. On Twitter, she said she was “surprised” by Yang’s involvement in organising an official visit to Beijing by

National Party leader Simon Bridges last year. Bridges was denounced by Brady and numerous media commentators for advocating closer ties with China, highlighting divisions within New Zealand's ruling elite.

Brady has also been hailed by the ostensibly "left-wing" *Daily Blog*, which is supported by the Unite union, Rail and Maritime Transport Union and the Dairy Workers Union. It supports the Ardern government, while calling for tougher anti-immigrant measures and anti-Chinese policies. The blog has echoed Brady's demand for stripping voting rights from recent immigrants and depicts Chinese people in New Zealand as pawns of Beijing.

Two days after Action Zealandia posted photos of its vandalism of Yang's office, the *Daily Blog* effectively supported the fascists by launching a petition to "demand Chinese Spy Jian Yang be removed from National Party List" before this year's election. The blog's editor Martyn Bradbury declared, "National is less a political party and more a front for Chinese business interests."

Bradbury cited a recent article in the *Financial Times* (FT) which quoted a "senior intelligence official" from the Five Eyes—the network of spy agencies from NZ, Britain, Canada, the US and Australia—warning that New Zealand could lose its membership of the grouping "because of its 'supine' attitude to China and its 'compromised political system.'"

The FT noted that "China is New Zealand's biggest export destination" and suggested this was why Ardern's government had so far avoided acting against Yang. In contrast, the newspaper praised Australia's spy agency ASIO, which has made lurid claims that Chinese agents are seeking to infiltrate its parliament. Australia has introduced draconian legislation against "foreign interference" which can be used against organisations with international connections and presages major attacks on the democratic rights of the working class.

The alignment of Labour, the *Daily Blog* and other "liberal" pundits with the war propagandist Brady, the chauvinist NZ First and the fascist Action Zealandia (AZ) is not accidental. It reflects the sharp shift to the right by the entire political establishment, which is underway in every country in response to the worsening economic crisis.

Significantly, along with promoting racist pseudo-science, praising European colonisation and denouncing "Marxists," "globalists" and "Chinese influence," AZ's website contains a statement describing the first Labour Party Prime Minister, Michael Joseph Savage, as "one of the greatest Prime Ministers of the 20th century."

To this day the Labour Party, the unions and their pseudo-left supporters hail Savage's 1930s government as a model. Its reforms, like Roosevelt's New Deal in the US, were enacted to save capitalism from the danger of socialist revolution, which had growing support in the NZ working class. At the same time, Labour took New Zealand into the Second World War to defend the country's interests as a minor imperialist power in the Pacific.

Anti-Chinese "yellow peril" racism was a staple of the Labour Party since its founding in 1916. Like its counterpart in Australia, Labour supported a "white New Zealand" immigration policy to prevent the international unification of New Zealand workers with those from Asia, the Pacific and elsewhere against imperialism.

Amid the most severe crisis of capitalism since the Great Depression, the ruling class and its political parties are reviving this chauvinist filth in an attempt to derail the growing struggles by workers against social inequality and to justify preparations for war against China.

The promotion of nationalism is directed against a resurgence of working class struggle around the world. Increasingly, workers recognise that they are part of an international class that confronts the same enemies and has the same fundamental interests.

As in the 1930s, the ruling elites are fostering extreme right-wing and fascist tendencies to be used as a weapon against the efforts to unite working people based on an international, socialist program.



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