

Daily Blog urges “treason” investigation into New Zealand Trotskyists

Tom Peters
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On April 16, Martyn Bradbury, editor of New Zealand’s *Daily Blog*, published an extraordinary attack on the Socialist Equality Group (SEG), the New Zealand supporters of the International Committee of the Fourth International.

Bradbury calls on the Security Intelligence Service (SIS), the state’s domestic spy agency, to “openly investigate Socialist Equality Group as Chinese enablers and for possible treason.” The SIS has a long and well-known history of spying on left-wing and anti-war organisations and activists, including during the movement against the Vietnam war and protests against nuclear weapons.

In crude McCarthyite language, indistinguishable from that of the extreme right, Bradbury writes: “the craven China worship by quisling website Socialist Equality Group decry [sic] any criticism of the largest human rights abusing regime on the face of the Planet, China, by attacking anyone challenging their authoritarian abuses.”

It is necessary to call this out for what it is. Bradbury has emerged as a shill for the security agencies, and is fingering the Trotskyist movement for state repression. His hysterical outburst, under the headline “China lab leak theory refuses to die,” is further confirmation that there is nothing remotely left wing or progressive about the *Daily Blog*, a middle-class nationalist publication that supports the Labour Party-Greens government of Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern.

The attack on the SEG, which was reposted on April 27 with an extended denunciation of China, has the character of a preemptive strike. It is aimed at intimidating anyone who opposes the pro-war hysteria being whipped up by Washington and its allies, including the New Zealand political establishment and media. The *Daily Blog*’s post undoubtedly reflects discussions that are underway within the political establishment about how to stop the development of a genuine internationalist revolutionary leadership in the working class to oppose the drive to war and the capitalist system that is its source.

Bradbury’s reference to China’s human rights abuses echoes the cynical propaganda from the media and US intelligence agencies, which have accused China, without

any evidence, of carrying out “genocide” against the Uyghur population. The US ruling class has zero concern for the working class in China, including the Uyghurs, who certainly suffer repression and exploitation at the hands of the capitalist state.

The political opposition of the Trotskyist movement to the Maoist Chinese Communist Party regime in Beijing and its oppressive methods from the standpoint of the international working class is longstanding and well-documented. However, the US is actively preparing for war with China and deliberately escalating tensions with Beijing.

Over the past three decades, it is US imperialism and its allies, not China, which are responsible for the criminal wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria and Libya—to name only a few of the most recent—that have killed millions of people and destroyed entire societies. The invocation of “human rights” has been used to justify every single war against America’s enemies—including the present US-NATO proxy war against Russia in Ukraine.

Bradbury’s attack on the SEG comes as the war in Ukraine escalates, and there are growing threats against China, which US imperialism regards as the major obstacle to its domination over the Eurasian landmass. The Ardern government has sent dozens of troops to Europe to join the war effort and faces a growing crisis in New Zealand. As elsewhere around the globe, historic class struggles are on the agenda, fuelled by the soaring cost of living and the disastrous spread of COVID-19.

There are precedents for the sort of state repression the *Daily Blog* is demanding. During the First and Second World Wars, the New Zealand state imprisoned hundreds of anti-war and left-wing activists for “sedition”; leftist and socialist publications were banned. In the United States, 18 members of the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party were put on trial and sentenced to prison terms during WWII for opposing the war.

Bradbury’s comparison of the SEG to Vidkun Quisling, Norway’s Nazi-collaborationist leader in World War II, is not accidental: during World War II, the Trotskyists were

smear as fascist collaborators, by Stalinists and others, because of their principled opposition to war. By absurdly painting China as the modern-day equivalent to Nazi Germany, the *Daily Blog* presents any opposition to the US-led war drive as criminal.

Bradbury makes clear that what he regards as “treason” is the SEG’s exposure of the anti-Chinese propaganda that he has been publishing for years to justify New Zealand’s integration into the US military build-up in the Indo-Pacific region. The blog post particularly objected to a *World Socialist Web Site* article by SEG member John Braddock, which outlined the *Daily Blog*’s role in promoting the right-wing conspiracy theory that COVID-19 originated in a laboratory in Wuhan.

The theory, which has been thoroughly discredited by scientists, was concocted by Trump’s fascist ally Steve Bannon and his associates. The lab leak lie serves definite political purposes: to divert blame for the disastrous US response to the pandemic, which has led to more than a million deaths; and to demonise China in preparation for war. The *Daily Blog* editor unabashedly lines up behind Trump, declaring that he “might have been right all along” and that “deep suspicion of China is justified.”

The *Daily Blog* paints China as a threat to New Zealand and calls for it to be turned into a “fortress,” with military spending increased from 1.5 to 5 percent of GDP. Bradbury has joined the latest media furor over China’s security agreement with the Solomon Islands. On March 26, he declared: “China is stepping into our sphere of influence through insidious means masquerading as security.” He called for NZ “to decouple its economy from China,” describing this as a “national security issue.”

Since 2017, the *Daily Blog* has promoted the pro-US academic Anne-Marie Brady, a key player in New Zealand and Australia’s anti-China campaign. She has accused Chinese-born MPs of being spies, and demanded state surveillance of Chinese student organisations, cultural groups, media organisations, academics and businesses with ties to China.

Now, Bradbury wants this witch hunt to be extended to target the Trotskyist movement, the only political tendency fighting to build a global movement of the working class against war, based on socialist and internationalist principles.

Internationally, as the danger of a third world war increases, the ICFI faces increasing censorship and threats of state surveillance. In Germany, the Socialist Equality Party has been labelled as “left wing extremist” by the state security agency, because of its opposition to capitalism and to the revival of militarism. In Australia, where the Morrison government and Labor are promising billions of dollars for

the military to prepare for war with China, electoral laws have been changed in order to prevent the SEP and other minor parties from participating in the current election under their party name.

Internationally, the US-led war plans are backed by various pseudo-left groups, which are close to the trade union bureaucracy and represent sections of the upper middle class. These include the Democratic Socialists of America, Socialist Alliance in Australia, and the Left Party in Germany, among others.

In New Zealand, the *Daily Blog* speaks for a similar middle-class layer, close to the Labour Party and its allies, including the unions, which fears any working class movement developing against the Ardern government’s militarist policies, as well as its assault on living standards and the criminal decision to end NZ’s COVID-19 elimination strategy.

In the final analysis, the privileges of the upper middle classes depend on the suppression of the class struggle at home, and on New Zealand’s alliance with the US and Australia, which safeguards NZ’s neo-colonial “sphere of influence” in the Pacific and its business interests throughout the world.

The blog’s contributors include former Unite union leader Mike Treen, liberal commentator Chris Trotter, former Alliance Party member Liz Gordon, former Mana Party member John Minto, and other individuals from the pseudo-left liberal milieu. None of them has objected to Bradbury’s embrace of the SIS and his denunciation of socialists as traitors; this is because they agree with him.

We call on workers to reject the nationalist and militarist propaganda spewed out by the *Daily Blog*, and to defend the SEG and the WSWs against Bradbury’s provocative call for suppression by the state.

Workers and young people seeking to oppose war can only do so by turning to the socialist and internationalist program fought for by the SEG, which is aimed at uniting workers throughout the world in opposition to the capitalist system. In New Zealand, this requires a political break from the Labour Party and its supporters, including the *Daily Blog*.



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