

New Zealand “left” commentator Chris Trotter defends Israel’s genocide in Gaza

John Braddock, Tom Peters
1 December 2023

Any historic turning point in the global situation—particularly involving war and the eruption of major class struggles—has the effect of unmasking and laying bare political positions and tendencies that have been developing over a preceding period. In doing so they help clarify who are the true friends, and enemies, of the working class.

For nearly two months, millions of people have flooded town squares, train stations and streets demanding an end to the genocide in Gaza unleashed by Israel with the support and oversight of the US-NATO axis. Mass protests have erupted on every continent and every imperialist country, including New Zealand, a minor imperialist power allied to the United States.

Workers and young people have made a decisive stand: they will not accept war, dictatorship and colonialism. A vast gulf has opened between the world’s populations and the entire political and media establishments of all the capitalist powers.

At the same time, the genocide in Gaza is exposing a number of upper middle-class supporters of capitalism and imperialism, who have bitterly attacked the mass movement and aligned with both the Israeli regime and the political and media establishment.

In New Zealand, one culprit is Chris Trotter, who writes for the “liberal” *Daily Blog* and other publications, including the Victoria University of Wellington “Democracy Project” blog, which describes him as “New Zealand’s leading left-wing political commentator.” For many years his weekly newspaper columns appeared under the headline “From the Left.”

This description is an absurd joke, as Trotter’s numerous statements defending the Zionist regime and its genocidal actions make clear. In a November 23 article on his personal blog Bowalley Road, Trotter begins with the media lie that “Israel’s legal right to strike back at Hamas is unchallengeable.” As Francesca Albanese, UN special rapporteur on Palestine, stated in Wellington just two days earlier, Israel has no right under international law to use its

military to “defend” itself against a territory that it illegally occupies.

Trotter blames the overwhelming civilian death toll in Gaza—now well over 20,000, almost half of them children—on Hamas’ October 7 military operation. “Israel’s response to the horrors of 7 October was unquestionably proportionate,” he declares, adding a biblical quotation: “He who sows the wind, shall reap the whirlwind.”

Trotter declares that Hamas committed its “atrocities” in the knowledge that Israel would inevitably respond with overwhelming force. According to his narrative, Hamas deliberately set up the Palestinian masses for vicious reprisals and genocide.

Trotter has been around for long enough to know the source of this filthy and mendacious accusation. Desperate imperialist powers have always claimed that militant factions of anti-colonial struggles can win no popular support and must instead rely on force, terror and subterfuge. Thus, in Vietnam the US bombed, napalmed and invaded hundreds of villages and their inhabitants in order to “save” them from the insurgent National Liberation Front.

Trotter’s article, which could easily have appeared in a far-right Israeli publication, dismisses clear evidence of ethnic cleansing, in the past and present, as “Palestinian propaganda.” He blames Palestinian resistance to colonisation for provoking the 1948 Nakba (catastrophe), in which Israeli settlers carried out numerous massacres and drove 700,000 Palestinians from their homes.

In the manner of the Netanyahu government, Trotter compares the Palestinian leadership with the Nazis and says the slogan “from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free” is a threat to wipe out the Jewish people. This ludicrous claim has been used by politicians and the media internationally—including Labour Party leader Chris Hipkins in New Zealand—to smear the mass protests against Israel’s genocide in Gaza as “antisemitic.”

In an earlier article on October 30, headlined “Failing the ‘Leftist’ litmus test,” (published by the *Daily Blog* and the Democracy Project) Trotter asserted that those who oppose

Israel's "war against Hamas" have lost their "moral compass." He compared Hamas' actions with anti-Jewish pogroms carried out in Eastern Europe during World War II.

This is a grotesque slander that turns reality on its head. The tragic deaths on October 7 were the result of a desperate suicide mission—a breakout from the besieged open-air prison that is Gaza—in which about 1,000 Palestinian fighters were also killed. Numerous reports indicate that hundreds of civilians died in crossfire or in the indiscriminate response by the Israeli Defence Forces.

Responsibility lies squarely with the Israeli regime, which has brutally oppressed the Palestinian people for 75 years, including through the illegal blockade of Gaza. Israel seized on the events of October 7 as a pretext to carry out long-standing plans to either kill or expel the population of Gaza. Its carpet bombing has destroyed half of the housing in Gaza, as well as schools, hospitals and bakeries. Water and electricity have been cut off and disease is being weaponised to kill even more people—similar to what the Nazis did during the Holocaust.

This is a genocidal war waged by the fascistic Israeli regime, protected and backed by the world's military superpower, the United States.

According to Trotter, US imperialism and its NATO allies have totally clean hands. He flatly declares that Iran "is moving these terrorist pieces on the Middle-East chessboard.... The same Islamic Republic that is committed to the utter destruction of Israel—and is rapidly acquiring the nuclear capacity to do exactly that." There is of course no evidence provided for such a wild accusation.

Trotter is placing himself at the service of US imperialism to provide justifications for a much wider regional war. As the WWS has pointed out, Iran is not looking for war with the United States, but Washington is looking for war with Iran. For the Biden administration, the Middle East is another front in what is a developing world war aimed at ensuring US global hegemony, the main targets of which are Russia and China.

New Zealand is actively involved with these wars and war plans. With the support of every parliamentary party, New Zealand has sent troops to the UK to assist in training Ukrainians to serve as cannon fodder in the US-NATO war with Russia. Meanwhile, in August, Labour's then defence minister Andrew Little declared that New Zealand had to prepare its military in case it was "called on" to join a war against China.

The role of Trotter and the *Daily Blog* is to provide "left" propaganda for imperialism and to denounce and slander anti-war and socialist politics. In 2021 Trotter attacked the WWS as "sectarian" for opposing Labour's support for the build-up to war against China. The *Daily Blog's* editor

Martyn Bradbury went further in 2022, demanding that the Socialist Equality Group, the New Zealand supporters of the International Committee of the Fourth International, be investigated by the secret service for "treason."

Trotter has always been bitterly hostile to socialism and sought to subordinate the working class to the parliamentary system, primarily the Labour Party and its defunct offshoots, NewLabour and the Alliance. He has railed against Marxism and the Russian Revolution, repeating right-wing lies that it was a Bolshevik "coup d'état."

Recently, Trotter has lurched even more openly to the right. During the October election he endorsed NZ First, a racist, anti-immigrant and especially anti-Asian party. Speaking with the right-wing media outlet *The Platform* on November 27, Trotter welcomed the formation of a National Party-led coalition government with NZ First and the libertarian ACT Party, which will accelerate the attacks on the working class and pour billions more into the military.

The evolution of Trotter and others like him exposes a sharp class polarisation. The mask of "reformism" and "liberalism" is being torn off as the ruling class and its media mouthpieces turn to war abroad and war against the working class at home.

Masses of workers and young people are moving in the opposite direction, mobilising against imperialist war and austerity. To transform this objective process into a conscious movement for socialism requires the building of a political leadership which has as its aim the conquest of power by the working class, the overthrow of capitalism, and the establishment of socialism on a world scale. The exposure of all the "liberal" and pseudo-left apologists for imperialism is a central component of the fight to build this socialist leadership.



To contact the WWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wws.org/contact