

The Revolutionary Communist Party abandons Corbyn only to embrace Zack Polanski's Green Party

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Having abandoned the sinking ship of Jeremy Corbyn's Your Party, the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) is now hoisting the red flag over Zack Polanski's Greens.

According to the RCP, the Green Party has undergone an extraordinary transformation from an organization of middle-class liberals into a workers' party. All that remains is for communists to advise the adoption of "a revolutionary programme" to "actually achieve all that the Greens are pledging".

Everything they write is in the language of "imperfect and contradictory" expressions, but the unavoidable conclusion to be drawn by workers and young people is that the Green Party, in the here and now, represents the forward march of socialist sentiment. And to oppose illusions in the Greens must be condemned as the height of sectarianism, just as opposing illusions in Corbyn and Zarah Sultana's Your Party was less than a year ago.

Indeed, much the same "comradely critique" (the RCP uses the same phrase in both cases) was offered to Your Party, and to Corbyn as leader of the Labour Party before that. Hailing the Greens is the latest incarnation of a political line aimed at promoting every pro-capitalist trap for left-wing sentiment as the next step towards revolution.

Polanski offers crumbs to the working class

The Green Party's programme reflects the concerns of a section of the "progressive" middle class, concerned by the threat posed to social stability by extreme inequality and austerity and favouring minor reform measures to limit the worst effects, which they hope will insulate capitalism, and their own privileged position within it, from political upheaval.

Polanski's calls for a 1 percent tax on wealth over £10 million and 2 percent over £1 billion, equalising capital gains tax with income tax and expanding National Insurance to cover income from investments amount to roughly £30 billion a year. That is *less than 4 percent* of current government spending on social protection and public services.

This does not even touch the sides of the social crisis gripping the working class. Over 14 million people in the UK, one in every five, are living in poverty. Half of them are in "very deep" poverty, with an average income 59 percent below the poverty line. Close to 4 million experience destitution in any given year, unable to meet their most basic physical needs to stay warm, dry, clean and fed.

State-provided services are collapsing: the National Health Service to the point that the UK has one of the highest rates of avoidable mortality

among OECD nations, 22 percent of deaths. School funding per pupil is still 3 percent lower than in 2010. Local authority spending power is 18 percent lower than it was in 2010. The public sector is falling apart, with a national maintenance backlog of £49 billion.

Meanwhile, the richest 1 percent hoard over a fifth of society's wealth, more than four times that held collectively by the poorest 50 percent.

When it comes to a proposal to nationalise water utilities, Polanski avoids the questions of whether shareholders would be paid, or the terms on which the government would run the service. The Greens' spring conference voted to scrap a commitment to nationalising the major utilities.

A proposal for rent controls is similarly light on detail, though Polanski's endorsed Green MP Carla Denyer's rejected amendment to Labour's "renters' rights" bill referencing recently implemented rent controls in Scotland. These are strictly geographically limited and still allow for annual raises of inflation plus 1 percent, "capped" at an eye-watering 6 percent.

The RCP's report card: room for improvement

The RCP presents this risible offering in the best possible light. "What's not to like here?" it asks, adding that "The real question is: how do Polanski and the Greens intend to deliver on this?"

Later we read that they are "extremely modest", "tokenistic", "tweaking and managing capitalism, rather than replacing it". But even these criticisms are couched in the mildest terms. Polanski is "vague", he "sidesteps", his comments "do not exactly instill confidence or provide clarity." We can "only presume" from "what Polanski has said so far" that "there would be no major encroachment on private property"!

This is said of someone who, in his own words, asks "a little bit more" from "those who have accumulated the most money," who advocates a happy partnership between them and the working class: "money being made" by the super-rich "running a business, creating jobs or making a product," as the Greens leader told the New Economics Foundation.

Readers are then told by the RCP that "Polanski needs to follow-through his bold talk with bold action" and what "is needed to secure all of these hoped-for gains," to "actually achieve all that the Greens are pledging," is "a revolutionary programme".

The effect is to boost Polanski among workers and limit them to the horizons of the Green leader's condescending appeals to put "purchasing power back in the pockets of ordinary people," for "buying a coffee on the way to work or a few pints at the end of a hard week".

The RCP's "orthodox" criticism of "Polanski's grand plan" for investment is that it involves continued "borrowing hundreds of billions of pounds from the capitalists, in order to invest this money in public services."

Commenting on the same speech, even the bourgeois *Guardian* offered a more incisive analysis: "the Green leader cautiously avoided falling into potential elephant traps, such as promising billions of pounds in unfunded spending," steering "well short of modern monetary theory," the latest Keynesian reformist trend, "which Polanski has previously been accused of flirting with".

The Green Party and the bond markets

Polanski strictly circumscribes his spending plans to what the bond markets will allow, promising to "communicate" with them over his economic plan. "Bond markets aren't ideological," he told the BBC journalist Nick Robinson, "they just want to know that there's a plan and there's stability and certainty." The problem with the recent Tory and the current Labour government was, he said, "a lack of a plan"!

However, the bond markets and international investors are not socially neutral forces who only require reassurances. They are the brutal enforcers of the interests of the capitalist class—fundamentally, the exploitation of the working class to produce profits. That is the only "stability and certainty" which interests them.

In 2023, Prime Minister Liz Truss announced plans to cut taxes by £45 billion. International finance responded by wiping £300 billion off the UK's stock and bond market and, at one point, 20 percent off the value of pound sterling, toppling her government after 45 days.

What mattered to the markets was not the tax cuts, but the fact the attacks on the working class necessary to fund them had not been carried out first. And they have been demanding these cuts ever since.

The Truss treatment was handed out to a Tory government aiming, cackhandedly, to boost the incomes of the super-rich. Attacks on a left programme, however meagre, will be orders of magnitude worse, and will not be limited to financial measures. This was indicated by the military threats of mutiny levelled against a government led by Jeremy Corbyn, soldiers using pictures of his face for target practice, and the US Secretary of State promising "pushback".

In Greece in 2015, the merest suggestion of refusing to submit to the European Union (EU) and European Central Bank's austerity demands brought threats of bankrupting the country overnight.

Drawing the political conclusions: the RCP versus the SEP

The RCP acknowledges that Polanski's proposals "are well out of reach, given the size of the public debt, and the chokehold that Britain's wealthy creditors have the country in, through the bond markets."

At the same time, they excuse the political role being played by Polanski in sowing illusions in the possibility of a kinder, gentler capitalism and restricting the working class to the futile pursuit of parliamentary reforms. Instead, the RCP paints the Green Party in glowing colours as a reflection of "a growing hunger for fighting, class politics."

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) fulfils the elementary obligation of a revolutionary party by working to alert and educate the workers about Polanski's function, as part of establishing the working class's political independence from the bourgeoisie.

We have argued that "The popular striving for a left-wing solution to Starmer's police-state government of austerity and war can only go down to defeat if kept within the confines of either the Greens or [Your Party]... What is required is a genuinely socialist party of the working class, relentlessly opposed to the false hopes offered by Corbyn and Polanski".

Through our critique of Your Party, we explained why this is the case:

The right-wing transformation and collapse of Labour and all the social democratic parties was not the result of bad leaders, but of shifts in world capitalism which rendered national reformism obsolete.

Globalisation, declining rates of profit and the massive, cancerous growth of financial speculation mean that meaningful social reform can no longer be reconciled with a defence of the profit system. The order of the day for world capitalism is trade and military war for the control of essential resources and markets and class war at home to impose the brutal levels of exploitation and destruction of essential services to make this global conflict possible.

Fighting back demands the independent political mobilisation of the working class, freed from the dead hand of the "left" representatives of the Labour and trade union bureaucracy, in a struggle against capitalism and for socialism.

The record of Corbyn, a mortal opponent of the class struggle—one of endless retreats and betrayals, over the antisemitism witch-hunt, NATO, nuclear weapons and austerity—was a case study in the consequences. The same cowardly, anti-socialist politics infused Your Party from the beginning and has now produced what the former Labour leader always wanted: an umbrella group for left—and not so very left-talking local parliamentary careerists.

Polanski sniffed an opportunity in this shipwreck and took up Corbyn's mantle as Britain's left-wing figurehead. But the same politics will play out no differently under his stewardship than the former Labour leader's.

Our argument is underscored by the Greens' foreign policy, about which the RCP says nothing.

The same capitalist crisis and restructuring which has eviscerated reformist political programmes underlies the rapid development of a third global war, whose live fronts now include the entire Middle East, Russia and Ukraine—with shockwaves felt around the world. The demands of these conflicts are driving massive re-armament drives, at the expense of the social reforms won by the working class through fierce struggle in the 20th century.

No defence of the working class is therefore possible outside of unequivocal opposition to imperialist warmongering and the lies and nationalist ideologies used to justify it.

Polanski and the Greens offer nothing of the sort. He is a supporter of the European Union, whose members are ploughing billions into vast re-armament programmes and under conditions in which comments are being written suggesting its own collective defence clause (article 42.7) may be a necessary substitute for NATO's Article 5 given the unreliability of the United States.

As for NATO, the Green leader's stance is duplicitous. His call to leave the alliance crumples under the slightest questioning, immediately caveated with the statement "not immediately" and with talk of an "alternative alliance". He is at pains to point out that even this is motivated by safeguarding British capitalist interests through "an alternative alliance with our European neighbours, so we can ensure our military, our security".

Polanski has made great play of his opposition to the Gaza genocide and

Zionism. But he has failed every test of this commitment, recently capitulating to the right-wing, anti-democratic firestorm over the Golders Green attack, and before that refusing to back a motion at the Greens' spring conference titled "Zionism is racism", which ended up successfully filibustered. One Green councillor claimed that Green MP Carla Denyer had been standing by to oppose the motion on Polanski's behalf if required.

The most the RCP says on any of these issues is to refer to Polanski's "tepid reception" of the Zionism resolution, claiming he "sat on the fence". This is so as not to unduly embarrass Polanski, and secondly because the Revolutionary Communist International is committed to downplaying the reality of the erupting global war.

Justifying opportunism with allegations of "sectarianism"

According to the RCP, the SEP's line on the Green Party is "sectarian". It "completely misses the point" that "The desire for radical change is finding an expression, no matter how imperfect and contradictory it is" in the Greens.

The attitude of Marxists towards a bourgeois political party is of a principled character and cannot be reconciled with promoting it in the name of tactical flexibility and "getting closer to the masses".

But it is also a fact that the desire for change far exceeds the narrow boundaries of the Green Party's 215,000-strong membership, and the far smaller numbers actually active within it. The function of the Green Party—as it was Corbyn's Labour Party, of which the RCP was the most dedicated supporter—is to capture and neuter this sentiment by imposing on it a paralysing programme of the meekest parliamentary reform.

It is the responsibility of Marxists to intervene against this process by shattering illusions in Polanski and his ilk. This is not done by including ritual affirmations of "the need for workers' power and the revolutionary overthrow of the decrepit capitalist system", and for "a revolutionary communist perspective, programme, and party", in articles written by the RCP which read as advice to the Green Party.

This extends to presenting Polanski as someone who might take up these revolutionary conclusions. "What's more, if Polanski doesn't move beyond a reformist outlook and strategy, his party will inevitably be plagued by all of the same problems that afflicted the Corbyn movement in the 2010s," the RCP writes. What came of the attempts to advise the Corbynites in this spirit?

The co-leader of the Russian Revolution and founder of the Fourth International Leon Trotsky wrote cuttingly of those who are "induced to court the goodwill of the most moderate, to keep silent about their opportunist faults and to regild their actions before the workers."

He added that it was not a rare thing for them to hide their "nature by calling out about the dangers of 'sectarianism'; but by sectarianism he understands not a passivity of abstract propaganda... but the anxious care for principle, the clarity of position, political consistency, definiteness in organization."

The RCP writes: "the limits of the Greens' reformist programme and strategy will be revealed in due course. Until the Greens are seriously tested, however, we can expect that they will continue to find the support of a growing layer of radicalised workers and youth."

This is its noxious objectivist perspective in a nutshell, whose purpose is, in Trotsky's words, "to cloak the sins of opportunism with solemn references to the objective tendencies of development... to shirk revolutionary tasks by shifting them on to the shoulders of the so-called historical process." All the responsibility of the revolutionary party is offloaded onto events unfolding "in due course".

What it really means to fight for socialism

More concretely, the RCP states that "a bond market rebellion against a Green budget, aimed at removing Polanski and co., would expose – in practice – the dictatorship of capital." Vastly more likely is the Greens participating in a right-wing coalition government with Labour.

In either scenario, the working class's ability to respond would depend on the degree to which it was already mounting a socialist opposition to the Greens, based on all the prior demonstrations, "in practice", of not only the dictatorship of capital but the bankruptcy of the Corbyns and Polanskis.

It was the lack of such an organised opposition that meant Syriza's (Coalition of the Radical Left) betrayal in Greece, handing the working class over to the austerity agenda of the European banks, was successful. It was the creation of such a movement by the Bolshevik Party under Vladimir Lenin that meant only the Russian working class was able to meet the First World War and the betrayals of the social chauvinists with socialist revolution.

Building socialist consciousness means fighting to bring the historical and international experience of the working class to bear on contemporary political issues, in order to break the working class from its potential misleaders. This is what Trotsky meant when he wrote that "The memory of the working class is in its party".

The RCP represents enforced political amnesia. And it has found an appropriate ally in Polanski. The Green Party leader excuses his past as a Liberal Democrat and supporter of its austerity coalition with the Tory government with the words of one of his "favourite politicians" Tony Benn: "I don't care where you came from, I care where you're going."

Benn, a Labour cabinet minister in the 1960s and 70s, and later president of the Stop the War Coalition, embodied the collapse of social democratic reformism.

Polanski cites as another "hero" the Mayor of New York Zohran Mamdani. In similar terms to Polanski, Mamdani coupled a left-liberal reformist pitch with the claim that his New York would not "be a tale of two cities, the rich versus the poor. It will be a tale of 8 and a half million cities, each of them a New Yorker with hopes and fears, each a universe, each of them woven together."

This has meant his making peace with the right-wing Democratic Party machine in New York City, kicking his lukewarm reformist proposals into the long grass, and holding friendly meetings with the most famous New Yorker of them all, Donald Trump.

These are not "problems" in Polanski's politics to be corrected, as if a revolutionary party is some sort of benign schoolmaster. They are demonstrations of his class politics which must be used to politically educate the working class and build a socialist opposition.

What the SEP wrote in its first comment on Your Party stands word-for-word for the Greens:

We will not be advocates of and apologists for "Your Party". It is not ours...

Our aim is to ensure that the working class does not spend its energies in a demoralising campaign for a party which will lead them to betrayal and defeat, to ensure that illusions in Corbynite reformism are dispelled as quickly as possible in preparation for the revolutionary class battles ahead.



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