



Why liberals hate Zarah Sultana

Zarah Sultana's recent round of interviews has sent liberals into meltdown. Her "crime"? Calling NATO an "imperialist war machine", saying that Zelensky "isn't a friend of the working class" and—sin of all sins!—attacking the Green Party for supporting NATO and refusing to cut ties with Israel. These basic truths have led a whole cabal of liberals, pro-imperialist "progressives" and pro-Ukraine warmongers to line up and denounce Zarah.

From Labour MPs like Luke Charters (who he?) to NATO stooge and turncoat Paul Mason; from Pussy Riot to *Spectator* hacks; all took turns to lash out at Sultana, shrieking about "Putin's talking points"—the standard accusation thrown at anyone who does not support nuclear war with Russia. Any socialist worth their salt should know that if these imperialist cockroaches are furious, she's touched a raw nerve.

Alas! A whole line-up of liberals who think they are socialists not only joined in but even initiated the backlash. Owen Jones (who, as a rule, picks the wrong side in a fight) attacked Sultana for hair-splitting over "minor" differences. Same theme from Novara Media host Michael Walker. Nish Kumar dutifully defended NATO. The Foreign Office socialists of the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign launched a whole tirade against her on X in defence of NATO's war aims. Unsurprisingly, all these figures orbit around the Greens.

Sultana's comments, and the reaction to them, have the benefit of revealing that a huge part of the British left is in fact nothing more than liberals who think internationalism means supporting NATO's war drive against Russia, and that socialism is possible without opposing the biggest imperialist alliance ever created.

Also, the reaction to Sultana's comments shows that NATO isn't a "minor" issue, as the liberals argue, but a red line for the ruling class. Why do you think every journalist always asks left-wing leaders their views on NATO? It isn't to make conversation. It's because the ruling class needs to know who they can work with (ie, co-opt), and who is simply beyond the pale.

That's the difference between Polanski, who merely criticises NATO but wants to remain in it, and Sultana, who calls it what it is—an imperialist war machine that Britain must quit. Polanski's position is compatible with the aims of the ruling class, just sprinkled with pacifist glitter that will be easy to brush off when push comes to shove. Sultana's is a clear threat to the British rulers that must be crushed. And, for this, they are already getting the assistance of their liberal coterie.

Sultana is under tremendous pressure to stop talking about NATO and criticising the Greens. But the main danger will not necessarily come from those who are attacking her in public. Rather, chances are that it will come from the layer of crusty councillors and conservative independent MPs who have real control of Your Party. No doubt, behind the scenes they will try to twist her arm to shut her up.

What Sultana needs to do is to openly declare a faction. She needs to stop pretending that the leaders of Your Party are not absolutely opposed to her politics, and openly rally people to her positions. Without this, her good words are only her personal opinion and will provide a left cover for Corbyn, Adnan Hussain and the rest of the discredited clique that pulls the strings in Your Party. Socialists must argue for this, and must fight in the regional assemblies so that Sultana's sharp points over NATO, Zionism and class-struggle politics become party policy.

But so far, where has the socialist left been? There has been a deafening silence in almost all quarters of the far left against the anti-Sultana liberal backlash. Apparently, the RCP has just given up on Your Party and has become infatuated with the Greens. The SP is banging on about next year's local elections and a "no-cuts People's Budget", completely removed from the actual struggle in Your Party. The SWP is jockeying for organisational control of local branches, careful not to offend Corbyn. Then there's Archie Woodrow, an RS21 member and leading figure of the Democratic Socialists inside Your Party. While claiming agreement with Sultana's points...he still joined the anti-Sultana bandwagon, denouncing her interventions as "dishonest" and complaining that she is "dictating policy".

To the far left: "Hello! Anybody there?!" Yes, we need to criticise Sultana. But we must first *defend her* against the liberal lynch mob! Those socialists who refuse to do this out of fear of alienating Corbyn, the Greens and liberals, are useless to the class struggle. Change course, or get out of the way. ■

