

## WIN conference - September 9 and 10, 2023.

### Warning

Our reflection led us not to comply with the order of presentation of the debates as established in the convening of the conference. The authors of this text, Olivier and Vincent, start from the global criticism of the orientation proposed by Roger concerning the building of the International to arrive at the concrete case of Ukraine. This reflection was carried out within the editorial collective of Arguments Pour la Lutte Sociale / Arguments for Social Struggle – [aplutsoc.org](http://aplutsoc.org) which debated this response during its last two meetings in August 2023. The text on Ukraine is in the finalization phase.

### Response to Roger Silverman

Aplutsoc has just examined the documents submitted to the WIN international meeting on September 9 and 10, 2023. We cannot share the analysis or the method. Roger Silverman writes in his article on the war in Ukraine that *War for socialists is the greatest test and challenge*. That is the problem. This great test, this decisive challenge, is dismissed in Roger's long text on “building the International today”, and concentrated in his text on Ukraine, which is a catastrophe. But this catastrophe results from the method presented in his text on the International.

This text does not include a word about Ukraine, as if it were a reserved area, distinct from the general determination of a construction method. Moreover, it does not include a word about any concrete experience of war caused by colonial imperialism whatsoever: it is therefore no more a question of Ireland than of Ukraine.

Concerning the Second World War, there is a hole. A spectacular, blatant and unconscious self-censorship!

After having, at the end of the part devoted to the founding of the Fourth International, written that its proclamation in 1938 was an anticipation and a necessary preparation for the wave of revolutions that would come after the war, what are we talking about? He doesn't talk about the war, he doesn't talk about the years 1939-1945. In the next part of the text which begins immediately after this passage, he resumes: *So what did happen after the war?* Nothing, absolutely nothing, about the action of the forces of the Fourth International **during** the war, everything is postponed until **after**. During the war, what do we do? We hold on, we wait, but the revolution is for after...

Trotsky had not wanted the proclamation, in 1938, to prepare for **after** the war, but to act **during** and **in** the war.

Aplutsoc has, on the contrary, re-studied the Second World War and the attitude of revolutionary currents in the light of Russia's current war against Ukraine, and published an important 109-page brochure, by Vincent Pr sumey, [\*Politique Militaire du Proletariat! The corpse comes out of the closet. So much the better !\*](#) Its English translation seems urgent to us!

Without the military policy of the proletariat, there can be no revolutionary policy in times of wars and revolutions...

Incidentally, this brochure addresses the very origins of the current of Ted Grant, which comes precisely from the fact that he tried, against the "Orthodox", to have a military policy, in which the military defeat of Hitler was a revolutionary goal of the proletariat distinct from imperialist policies.

In this text, the model of the attitude to have during the war is a favorite summary of the attitude of the internationalists in 1914-1918. But Zimmerwald becomes, in Roger's conception of it, a way of putting oneself "above the fray" by showing that we do not support any imperialist camp and that we do not want war, because war, it is very cruel. We therefore do not understand where the role of the Bolsheviks in the Russian Revolution comes from. Lenin and the Zimmerwald left advocated defeatism in Tsarist Russia, the breakdown of the sacred union everywhere (and also support for the Irish Easter Uprising of 1916 even knowing that Connolly had not hesitated to contact German imperialism). If the Bolsheviks had not been active **in** the war, they would not have played a key role in 1917, which was not a revolution that arose **after**, but **during** and **in** the war.

The revolutionaries are against any sacred union with any imperialism whatsoever, but the ideal schema of 1914-1918 if we summarize it as "we are not from any camp" absolutely does not allow us to understand the Russian revolution of 1917, as well as the Ukrainian and Finnish revolutions, occulted in the historical memory, which rubbed shoulders with it.

Karl Kautsky did not go to Zimmerwald and justified the sacred union by explaining that the war is terrible, a bad time to go through, and that we had to wait to restart as before. It is in fact to this type of attitude that Roger's representation of what the attitude of socialists should be in wars leads, not to what the Bolsheviks did.

Even going back to the wars at the time of the First International, the 1860s and then the war of 1870, Roger completely erases the concrete aspect, in no way reducing himself to abstract pacifism, of the positions of Marx and Engels, and he made a historical error in writing that the AIT (IWMA) advocated the general strike against the wars that Bismarck and Napoleon III were preparing at the time: they in fact fought this slogan as an impotent abstraction for congresses of petit-bourgeois "friends of peace"!

This dismissal of real war situations is also a dismissal of all the real catastrophic and convulsive situations generated by the crisis of capitalism, starting with global warming and its visible runaway, precisely at this moment, in these days, of the year 2023.

Under these conditions, the only reality of the class struggle understood, in fact, as allowing intervention, lies in mass economic strikes. And, certainly, there is no shortage of mass economic strikes, and today concern China, Brazil, Bangladesh or South Africa, but the method of this text, under the guise of creating a historical fresco aimed at justifying WIN's current activity, or its non-activity, does not make it possible to link mass strikes to the revolution, to the question of power in each state and internationally.

Under these conditions, if we stick to that, what the method of this text allows us to achieve is not the construction of an International (in a necessarily non-sectarian, open and democratic way), but the holding of open and international debate forums, which has its interest but is not the building of an organization.

But as reality knocks at the door, Roger cannot stop there and, after his first general text, he talks about the real world, that is to say the war in Ukraine, in his second text.

What to say ? It's overwhelming. A few passages admit that Russia is an imperialism, but "second-rate" (which means what? second-rate imperialisms are often the most aggressive and the most reactionary...), and it is said that the invasion of Ukraine by Putin is, certainly, a great injustice, and that his regime is totally reactionary. We have no doubt about Roger's hostility to Putin and his regime, but the concrete analysis finally presented in this text responds in a directly hostile manner to the revolution, to the challenge that a war represents, a real war, for socialists.

We learn that Russia has suffered a terrible defeat, the most humiliating since the Treaty of Versailles, in 1991. And this would be the source of the current problems. Note that the source is not the imperialist and colonialist will to dominate Ukraine, it is the humiliation of Russia. There is a confusion here between a people and its leaders. Was the loss of their colonial empires a "humiliating defeat" for British and French imperialisms? In a sense, yes. But it was a good thing for their working classes and their political independence and constituted progress. Was the same true of the loss of its "Soviet" sphere of domination, and again, not far from it, by Russia, or not?

It seems not for Roger, since the whole Russian imperialist legend about the enlargement of NATO and the encirclement of Russia is taken up by him. It is indeed a legend. On the one hand, because the reality of NATO policy consisted of forcing Ukraine to accept the Budapest Memorandum in 1994, handing over nuclear weapons to Russia, denuclearizing and neutralizing Ukraine and conceding to Russia bases in Crimea. The IMF even put pressure on K'yiv for this! On the other hand, because the extension of NATO to the Baltics, Poland, etc., in reality did not encircle Russia, but Germany, the United States wanting to preserve its military domination on European imperialisms. At that time, Putin championed the NATO-Russia partnership and the joint fight against Islamic "terrorism." He turned in 2007-2008 when Russian imperialism regained strength at the same time as the global economic crisis reduced profit rates and forced the struggle to share losses.

Overall and in detail, Roger's text on Ukraine repeats all the legends and lies of the Russian imperialist right against Ukraine, and also completely ignores the existence of anything like a Ukrainian nation having its own existence, its aspirations, its "agency." It's appalling. Roger goes so far as to explain that the president elected in 2004 was indeed Yanukovych, while it was massive rigging that caused the "Orange Revolution". The fantasy of the "Nazis", like Great Russian imperialist propaganda, is taken up and, to the legendary presentation of the "massacre of the trade union house" of May 2, 2014, it adds fantasized stories about the massacres of Azov to Mariupol in 2014 without a word about what is happening now in destroyed and occupied Mariupol. Concerning Crimea, he must recognize that the only time a free vote took place, it decided in favor of belonging to Ukraine, but Roger invents a fiction according to which, if we understand correctly because it is very confusing, this vote would also have shown a desire to remain linked to Russia which would then have been betrayed...

If Roger effectively ignores any reality of the long national and revolutionary history of fighting for Ukrainian independence, while dwelling on "Bandera" (which he does not understand was a by-product of Stalinism) and "the Nazis", he seems on the other hand convinced of the existence of the mysterious national minorities (are they Russians? ...) referred to as the "people of Donbass" and "people of

Crimea" (apparently this expression does not refer the Tatars...). Worse: Roger in passing invokes the [emphasis added] Russian ethnic affiliation of Crimea!

Roger defends the "Minsk agreements" by ignoring that they contained provisions aimed at vassalizing Ukraine in the name of autonomy for the de facto Russian-occupied regions of Donetsk and Luhansk, preserving their Russian control and giving them a right to veto in the Ukrainian state: therefore typical neocolonial agreements, worse than the Anglo-Irish treaty of 1923.

He gets angry at Zelenski, "an unlikely president" in terms which, again, denote the impregnation by the Great Russian imperialist discourse, and fantasizes that Zelenski would have "banned all left-wing parties": what can we say, when we, in Aplutsoc alongside other militants inside [ENSU](#), are, almost weekly, in video with activists of the Ukrainian left fighting both Russian imperialism through arms and Zelensky's anti-social policy, activists with a well-established presence, organized in political associations and workers unions with, certainly, meet obstacles specific to any bourgeois regime, but under conditions of legality whereas in Donbass they would die under torture and in Russia they would have to keep silent? The Ukrainian left, not the Stalinist oligarchs, exists and fights...

In short, we could continue (for example on the fantastical representation of the Maidan in 2014): it is a catastrophe, but above all it is a text which seems not to include a socialist dimension specific to the tradition and culture of Roger, a text which could have been dictated by this or that guest of Roger, in debates on this war, and dictated, directly or indirectly, by imperialist policemen, exactly as if one had written about Algeria in France with reference to the supporters of "French Algeria", or on India by referring to colonial experts for whom the Indian nation did not exist...

The slogans put at the conclusion certainly seem very "internationalist" to Roger. What is their practical significance? The first two result from his principled hostility to Putin, but fail to specify from which territories exactly Russian troops must withdraw and, above all, how this withdrawal can be ensured if not through armed struggle. They therefore leave the door open to negotiations and an imperialist sharing outlined by the four slogans which follow: referendums for "the people of Donbass and Crimea", forced Ukrainian "neutrality" (as in 1994!), demilitarization, in short, a series of demands which in fact correspond to the interests and demands of Russian imperialism, certainly in their most limited form (but they serve as a pretext to demand much more!). Under these conditions, the final formula on the union of the ones and the others against their oppressors is only an abstract generality, the revolutionary reality passing through a proletarian policy, **defensist** in Ukraine and **defeatist** in Russia (and Belarus).

The political question is: how do we move from the abstractly correct generalizations about the necessity of socialism and an International contained in Roger's first text to a catastrophic social-imperialist alignment in his second text? How do we move from the quiet posture of taking a position for broad and non-sectarian groupings in the name of the necessity of socialism in general, to this positioning which actually succeeds, and despite the real hostility to Putin and his regime, to a partial but decisive alignment with reactionary imperialism?

The answer is: in a very natural way. From the moment we make the fight for socialism an abstract general necessity not materializing in the struggle for the power of the proletariat here and now and the concrete intervention in the geopolitical, military and climatic crises, in and not after these, this political vacuum is filled by something else.

This other thing is, by believing to oppose the main imperialist power which is the United States, the de facto rallying to procedures for sharing the world which correspond to what the supporters of the BRICS call “the multipolar world” and what we call multipolar imperialism. Multipolar imperialism is the world today: the crisis of hegemony and the internal crisis of the United States, since 2008, have seen this transition even if the US remain number 1, but are no longer hegemonic. Multipolar imperialism leads to world war, but it leads there through its agreements and its sharings and re partitions. This is why peace negotiations in Ukraine behind the backs of the Ukrainians, enabled by restrictions on arms deliveries from US imperialism, would be most on the path to world war, while Putin's fall through Russian military defeat would pave the way for proletarian revolution and repel the risk of world war between the United States and China.

Ed and David's text on China is very interesting and well documented, but their analysis must be situated in a global analysis of imperialist multipolarity which, precisely, Roger's two other texts do not allow, on the contrary.

In conclusion, we do not think it is possible to form an active international political organization within the framework of analysis and method provided by Roger's two texts. And it's not about continuing an abstract discussion as far as we can see. The situation imposes tasks on us – including those of entering into contact with Ukrainian revolutionaries in the flesh, which WIN could have done and did not do for substantive political reasons, while [Oakland Socialist](#) on the one hand and [Aplutsoc](#) on the other hand did it. Such activity does not develop on the current bases of the WIN and on what they would be even more on the basis of the orientation that Roger is developing, which, even if it is not the subject of any vote, is precisely the one that appears and which is the orientation of the WIN. Respect and fraternity with comrades requires us to tell this truth, that this common framework, since February 24, 2022, does not really exist, and that the implementation of the orientation that Roger recommends opposes us in the international class struggle. This does not prevent us from maintaining fraternal relationships and exchanges as much as possible, but it makes belonging to a supposed common international framework a counterproductive lie.

VP & OD, 07-09-2023.