

Contribution by the CRI Group

On the “Project of convoking a conference of the healthy forces of Trotskyism and of revolutionary internationalist working-class forces” adopted by the CWG, GB, LOI and LM in July 2003.

Contribution submitted for the discussion of the signatory organizations, Sept. 27, 2003.

1. On the general objective of the international conference

While regretting that we were not associated with the elaboration of this Call for an international conference, as had been envisaged with the GB and the LOI at the end of April 2003, the CRI Group declares as its own the motivations of the organizations which published and signed it. In particular, we share the following appreciations and characterizations, contained in the preamble which justifies this initiative: standing for the defeat of imperialism in the war against Iraq; characterization of the present epoch as that of defeats of the international proletariat and oppressed peoples faced with imperialist offensives, while the preceding period was on the contrary that of a pre-revolutionary and revolutionary rising; denunciation of the decisive role of the treacherous "traditional" leaderships of the workers' movement (the CPs, social democracy, the union leaders, etc.); denunciation of the World Social Forum in which these leaderships today tend to group; denunciation of the treacherous bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalism of the oppressed countries; denunciation of the U.N., an integrally imperialist institution; denunciation of the completely and definitively harmful role played increasingly in the class struggle by the different centrist revisionist organizations that are liquidationist of the 4th International, lackeys of the counterrevolutionary apparatuses (Usec, Lambertism, LO in France, MST and PO in Argentina, etc.).

These elements (correctly made precise afterwards in several points of the Call) are fundamental; they constitute the Trotskyist bases making the discussion possible and necessary. Consequently the CRI group shares the objective of the international conference: "preventing the banners of Trotskyism and of revolutionary Marxism from remaining in the hands of these usurpers and imposters, uniting the dispersed ranks of revolutionary internationalists, fighting to set up Leninist combat parties, providing them with an international center." We are therefore in agreement with saying that "the regroupment of the healthy forces of the workers' movement and in particular of those who say they continue to fight for Trotskyism and the Fourth International is indispensable." We ask therefore to participate in the "International Conference to go forward towards setting up an International Center of Revolutionary Marxism," and in its preparation.

However, the CRI group is not convinced at this stage that in its present state the proposed text is sufficiently clear and precise to be able to really advance the discussion. In fact, aside from a certain number of points which are certainly fully essential but are nevertheless very general and with which authentic Trotskyists cannot but agree, it is doubtful that this text is sufficient to lead concretely toward the elaboration of a general strategy and a practical orientation in the class struggle which can become common to the different organizations taking part in this conference. That is why, in the hope of beginning immediately the fundamental discussion, the present contribution gives priority to the points

of the Call which seem insufficient, confused or erroneous.

2. On the objective situation in general and in certain countries in particular: confusion in analysis and overestimation of the revolutionary possibilities of the present class struggle

The text evidences above all (and this is the essential problem) a great confusion in its general understanding of the world situation (A) and, in consequence, an abstract overestimation of the revolutionary possibilities of the class struggle in different countries (B).

(A) On the world situation: stock formulas and schematism -- or Marxist analysis?

a) The productive forces have not ceased to grow: break with Lamberto-Morenoism

The Call speaks several times of a "world economic crisis." It seems to consider this as something obvious. However, at no point does one really understand what this expression means: does it mean that there is a slowing of world economic growth since 2001, including tendencies toward recession -- which is true? Or does it mean a general structural "crisis" -- which is false?

The position of the signatory organizations is clear in points 1, 2 and 20 of the document. To put it in a word, it flows from their affirmations which, like the Lambertists and Morenoists from whom several of them have issued, they believe evidently that "the productive forces of humanity of ceased to grow." They speak of "decadent capitalism," deny that capitalism can "find the means to overcome its crises" and affirm that "for a long time capitalism has already exhausted its progressive role" (point 1); they likewise affirm that "the current imperialist counter-offensive and the war against Iraq are the response of the dying capitalist system in its imperialist phase, incapable of overcoming national frontiers, etc." (point 1); finally, they characterize the present epoch as an "epoch of crises, wars and revolutions, highlighting all the characteristics of capitalism in decomposition" (point 20).

The CRI Group favors opening a fundamental discussion on this question. For us, such a position signifies fantasy, metaphysics and blindness in analysis. It has to do with a formalist veneer, deprived of critical spirit and critical sense, with stock schemas having to do with a situation they don't or no longer correspond to. It is not possible to proceed here to a refutation and to a demonstration that we have already made elsewhere. (See on the site <http://groupecri.free.fr>, the two texts by L. Wolfgang which make up a critique of the book of the Lambertist leader Daniel Gluckstein, *Globalization and the Class Struggle*, and the contribution of Antoni Miviani on the productive forces, which will be put on line very soon; the remarks in these three contributions hold as well in a general way against the entirety of the non-Marxist "theory" developed by Lambert-Chesnais-Just at the end of the 1960's, followed also by Moreno and taken up by the majority of the groups and organizations deriving from these two currents -- and by them only in the whole world -- whatever the differences in their formulations). Bu it must be said very clearly that it is indispensable, in order to advance in the construction of the Marxist party, to break definitively with the myths and fantasies on the "decadence of capitalism" and the non-development of the productive forces; it is necessary to break with the stock phrases and sclerotic schemas, in order to advance with lucidity and rigor on the road of a scientific comprehension of the present, thanks to the mastered theory of a living Marxism.

b) The proletarian revolution: transcendent force... or concrete reality?

In tight correlation with this blindness in the analysis of the world situation, the Call speaks of "the revolution" in itself (for example, towards the end of the preamble: "the incandescent events of the international situation: the crisis, the revolution and the war"), as if it were a process permanently at work, which realizes itself schematically through each popular rising, each change of bourgeois regime, even each fall of a government under mass pressure. However, it is clear that the current period, as the Call itself correctly says elsewhere, is that of successive defeats of the world proletariat for about 20 years; it is not the epoch of an extension of the proletarian socialist revolution; as spectacular as they may be, it is absolutely not possible, without falling into the most superficial empiricism, to confuse with the process of proletarian revolution this or that popular rising leading to nothing but the fall of a government (as in Argentina in 2001) or even provoking a change of regime (as in Indonesia or in Albania in 1997). As long as the bourgeoisie masters the situation and gets out of it through repression and eventually by a change of government, or even by an overthrow of its own mode of domination (political regime), one cannot speak of a proletarian revolution. Here also it is necessary to break with the stock formulas, potential sources of illusions, which drive a sort of myth of The Revolution, presented as a reality transcending the real historical processes, like a *deus ex machina* incarnated in every event, more or less spectacular, of the international class struggle. For, as Lenin said, only a "concrete analysis of the concrete situation," which presupposes rigorous formulations of scientific precision, allows a correct and effective intervention in the class struggle.

c) The crisis of class consciousness: repeating the phrases of the past .. or analyzing the present?

Finally, linked with this abstract and erroneous characterization of the objective situation, the Call denies that there is any crisis of class consciousness today, or "crisis of mass subjectivity" or "backward consciousness" (point 20). It restricts itself to a repetition, again formalist and metaphysical, of the celebrated formula from the Transitional Program: "The historical crisis of humanity reduces to the crisis of revolutionary leadership." Now this sentence does not remain true today unless it is made more precise: in all countries, whatever their diverse forms and rhythms, the crisis of revolutionary leadership leads to a crisis of the workers' movement itself, a crisis of decomposition of the organizations and the consciousness of the working class, under the combined effect of the general counter-offensive of imperialism, beginning at the end of the 1970's and supported by the social democracy and the traditional reformist union bureaucrats, along with the open crisis and then the collapse of the USSR, its satellites and the Communist Parties throughout the world.

Not to understand that the question of the crisis of revolutionary leadership is posed in a way qualitatively different -- since the workers' movement has ceased to be powerful, since the communist parties have collapsed, since the social-democracy has become (or is in the process of becoming), not only in the eyes of revolutionaries but in the eyes of the masses themselves, notably in the imperialist countries, one of the principal bourgeois parties -- is again to blind oneself and to be content with mechanically applying the schemas of the past in the present situation.

Let us quickly recall the CRI group's arguments on this subject (one can consult on our site the CRI Program Project, Part I). In most countries of the world, "Stalinism," considered as an organized political current, is in the final phase of its decomposition. As for classical social democracy, the situation is more differentiated according to country, but everywhere it has ceased to be a workers'-

bourgeois force and has become a purely bourgeois force, for it has abandoned every reference to socialism, including the formula itself, with the aim of breaking with capitalism -- and even (abandoned every reference) to the class struggle; moreover, when it exercises power, it is to put in place counter-reforms necessary for capital and to smash the workers' gains (unlike the period through the 1970's, when the social democracy exercised power, in general with the support of the Stalinists; they would either realize reforms in the framework of a long-term compromise with the bourgeoisie -- as for example in Sweden, Australia, Britain, etc. -- or would break a revolutionary rising, even if brief, long enough for the bourgeoisie to use the social-democratic control of the masses to reestablish the broken bourgeois order at the price of substantial social concessions -- as in Germany after WW1, in France in 1936, in Chile in 1973, etc.); finally and correctively, social democracy ceased mobilizing the proletarian masses. In a word, today the social-democratic parties have become (PS in France, Labour Party in Britain) or are en route to becoming (German SPD), or will become in the next period (Brazilian PT) parties resembling, other things being equal, the American Democratic Party (the bourgeois party linked to the labor bureaucracy of the AFL-CIO).

Evidently this in no way removes the need to denounce and fight the leaderships of the workers' organizations when they continue to massively mobilize the workers despite their more or less advanced crisis of decomposition -- that is, the unions above all; but it modifies the manner in which the combat for the revolutionary party must be undertaken: the remnants of decomposed Stalinism, on one side, and the social democracy which has become purely and simply a bourgeois force in the eyes of the masses themselves, on the other, no longer represent for the masses forces able to realize their hopes or achieve a better world free of capitalism. The general crisis of the workers' movement, and therefore that of class consciousness which results from it, weakens the capacity to resist of the working class confronted with the bourgeois attacks; but at the same time this creates an unforeseen situation where the workers and notably the young generations are no longer captured from the moment of their political awakening by the "bourgeois lieutenants of the working class" and are thereby more easily accessible than before to the authentic revolutionary communist organizations. On the condition at least that the latter know how to break with the stock phrases and sclerotic schemas of the old official "Trotskyism", that they know how to elaborate their own analyses and current and living orientations, starting from the demands and aspirations of the masses, to help them break with the dominant bourgeois ideology which infects the consciousness of everyone in capitalist societies, and [know how] to guide concretely their combat on the road to the revolutionary communist program. In this sense, it is correct to say that the general crisis of proletarian subjectivity (organization and consciousness correlatively) has indeed become one of the major gaps that the revolutionary organizations must bridge.

(B) On the situation in several countries ... or how to take one's dreams for realities

The application of abstract schemas led to an erroneous vision of the situation in the different countries evoked in the Call for the international conference; this erroneous vision consists in a general way in an overestimation of the revolutionary possibilities of the present class struggle.

a) Argentina: revolution ... or limited and partial popular uprising?

First of all, the text speaks constantly of the "Argentine revolution" (in the preamble, in point 11, in point 12 ...; that is indeed the event which it speaks up most often ...). However, was there a passage

of power from one regime to another in Argentina? Was there at least a generalization and national federation of the popular assemblies, of the assemblies of piqueteros and occupied factories, opening up a situation of dual power? Was there even simply a change of bourgeois regime? The answer to these three questions is clearly negative: there was therefore no revolution in Argentina. Moreover, there was not even an openly revolutionary situation: from one end to other, the bourgeoisie, even if it had been burned and had vacillated more than once, succeeded in controlling the situation, particularly thanks to the Peronist bureaucracy. In fact, the industrial proletariat did not mobilize itself as such; it did not budge other than in the days of the pretended "general strike," in which it was obliged to participate by the bureaucracy under penalty of dismissal, but whose function was absolutely not to engage in a real combat against the regime (they served above all as safety valves and of means of pressure in the service of the interests of the Peronist bureaucrats themselves). In reality, the mobilizations were the act above all of the urban petty bourgeoisie ruined or impoverished by the banks, of a fraction of the unemployed (but there were never more than 100,000 piqueteros out of the 3 million officially unemployed and the 6 million really unemployed), and of several isolated fractions of the proletariat of small and middle-sized enterprises (occupied factories). A correct appreciation of what happened in Argentina in 2001-2002 consists therefore in saying that a part of the popular masses took the first steps toward a partial pre-revolutionary mobilization; that's all. Certainly this could have triggered a revolution; but because of the coolness and experience of the bourgeoisie, because of the power of the Peronist bureaucracy and its agents, and in the absence of independent workers' organizations and in particular of a revolutionary leadership, the mobilization went no further, and it was finally defeated in an overall peaceful way, notably by recourse to the vote.

Now, carried away by its elan, the text goes so far as to speak of "an infamous regime hated by the masses" (preamble). How could it persist at this point in its overestimation of the Argentine situation, in a text that was written in July 2003, namely two months after the proletariat and masses of Argentina, instead of having been able to follow through on their mobilization, chose a return to order by renewing electorally their support for the most traditional Peronism, to the surprise of all the Trotskyist and pseudo-Trotskyists who had only the words "Argentine revolution" or "revolutionary situation" in their mouths? There again, to deny that there was a "crisis of subjectivity" in Argentina as elsewhere, is to blind oneself instead of lucidly examining the situation, whether it pleases us or not.

Finally, this overestimation of the situation in Argentina in 2001-2002 determines the limits of the orientation foreseen by Point 12 of the Call, which is an orientation too unilateral to not be essentially propagandist in the objective context. Certainly, it is correct to say that it was necessary to develop this "sovietist" line in the framework of the piquetero assemblies, the popular assemblies and the occupied factories; but, while resting on the fundamental gains which the very existence of these self-organization structures represented, it was necessary at the same time to know how to combine such a perspective with transitional slogans, the only ones capable of mobilizing the majority of the proletariat and the popular masses which, once again, remained outside these heights of the spectacular mobilization. It was indispensable to not convince oneself that the patient and difficult work of seeking to break the masses from their traditional political representatives, in particular from Peronism, had become useless, under the pretext that an ultra-minority fraction was more or less profoundly radicalized. In this sense, in the present state of our information and understanding, the CRI Group believes that the slogan "workers' and peoples' government" and even, at some moments, that of "free and sovereign constituent assembly" were correct, contrary to what the comrades of the LOI and GB think, for they allow the masses to and the proletariat in particular to understand that it is necessary and possible to break with the bourgeois regime and its two parties, to demand and impose the break on the union leaderships from Peronism, all the while beginning to expel the most corrupt bureaucrats from

the unions -- in a word, to realize the workers' united front for a government of workers' and peoples' organizations. There is nothing contradictory in this; on the contrary, it would have had to be combined with the fight for the development of organisms of self-organization, with the perspective of creating a situation of dual power. (On the analysis of the Argentine situation in 2001-2002 and the orientation which it would have been necessary to develop there, the CRI Group has almost finished editing a special pamphlet which it will send shortly to the signatory organizations.)

b) Palestine: "heroic people's struggle" ... or disarray and desperate acts?

The text speaks equally of a "heroic struggle of the Palestinian people" (preamble). But how accurate is this? Since Autumn 2001, one has not seen a heroic struggle of the Palestinian people as such, but rather a "passive resistance" and terrorist attacks organized by nationalist petty-bourgeois groups, Islamists in particular. The Palestinian people, the proletariat in particular, is plunged on the contrary into a relative apathy, evidenced by its immense disarray in the face of the impasse its traditional political representatives, the PLO and Arafat, have led it. Today, the Palestinian people flees organizations grouped in the PLO, so much is it disgusted by the betrayal of its national interests for which it blames them, by the permanent capitulations of the so-called "Palestinian Authority," and by the corruption of the Palestinian bourgeoisie.

A more and more important fraction of the Palestinian people in Palestine is controlled by Hamas, which is developing a policy of implantation in depth in the population, by taking on increasingly the functions of the police and above all of large-scale social assistance; in the eyes of this fraction of the Palestinian people, only Hamas and the other Islamist forces (reactionary petty bourgeois) are pursuing combat with the Zionist state. But since it does so by the impotent petty-bourgeois policy of individual terrorism against Jewish civilians (a method correctly denounced in point 13 of the Call), it is clear that one cannot speak today of a struggle of the Palestinian people as such; quite the contrary, the crisis of Palestinian political representation is such that, despite the policy of escalation and incessant provocations of Sharon, the resistance of the Palestinian people is at one of the lowest points it has ever reached.

Connected with this overestimation of the present Palestinian combativity, point 17 [17] of the Call is too abstract and propagandistic. One reads there, in fact: "We fight for the destruction of the State of Israel and for a secular, democratic and non-racist Palestinian State with a Workers' and Peasants' Government on the road to a Federation of Socialist Republics of the Middle-East." Certainly that is the goal of all Trotskyist militants and revolutionaries worthy of the name. But this perspective - - which must be openly presented to the eyes of the masses -- does not determine a concrete policy. There also, it is necessary to elaborate transitional slogans for intervening practically in the class struggle. For our part, the CRI group judges that it is necessary to make these slogans converge toward that of the Palestinian Constituent Assembly, in order that the Arab and Jewish workers of Palestine understand that it is up to them to find the forms of their union in a single secular and democratic Republic; that is a slogan indispensable both for breaking the Arab proletariat and masses from bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalism, and for breaking the Israeli proletariat and masses from Zionism, understanding that the sole solution for doing away with the spiral of Zionist violence is the replacement of the Zionist state itself by Republic of which they themselves will have elaborated the forms -- and for which the internationalist communist organization itself must immediately propose the program of socialist revolution. (We note, moreover, that the GB is in agreement with this slogan in Palestine, as is shown by its declaration on Argentina of April 2002.)

c) France: demand a general strike after April-May 2002?

The denunciation (in the preamble) of the Pabloist LCR's call for voting for Chirac is perfectly justified, as with those of LO and the PT, who refused to fight for a workers' and people's boycott on the 2nd round of these elections; however, to say that it was necessary to fight for a "general strike before the 2nd round" shows once again an attempt to lay down slogans that are certainly very pleasant but perfectly abstract, that is, insufficient for the concrete situation. In fact, such a perspective was not at the time on the order of the day and was far from corresponding to the state of the masses' spirit. It was only after January 2003 (the victory of the "No" vote in the referendum over EDF-GDF [public electricity and gas companies] and the big mobilizations against the Iraq war, then against the reforms of retirement benefits) that the class struggle in France entered into a rising phase, giving the general strike slogan (concentrated in the demand that the workers' organizations call for the general strike) a concrete actuality for hundreds of thousands of workers. In Spring 2002, on the contrary, it meant sowing its own illusions in the masses' heads to pretend that a general strike against the elections was possible (just as today, in September 2003, the general strike, betrayed by the bureaucrats in May-June, is no longer on the order of the day and thus could not be the objective of a slogan for practical intervention).

d) Imperialist countries: propagandist generalities ... or transitional program?

The orientation proposed for the imperialist countries in general is even more abstract, if possible, than in the other countries cited. First of all, information on the objective situation in Europe, the U.S. and Japan is almost non-existent in the Call. For the U.S., there is only a general and banal denunciation of "the national-patriotic politics of the AFL-CIO" (point 3)! For Europe, other than several some three-word characterizations and not more of this or that government or regime, there is only an extremely vague and otherwise simplistic declaration which denounces "the utopia of a united capitalist Europe." (ibid [point 4].)

Now this serious deficiency of the Call is evidence in itself of an erroneous orientation; for it is clear that no revolutionary communist politics worthy of the name can be envisaged if it does not start first of all from the situation of the class struggle in the imperialist countries, which are the heart of the world capitalist system and where the proletariat as a consequence has to play a determining role for the international class struggle. This must be said clearly, in order to put aside the empiricist tendency which consistently underestimates the importance of the class struggle in the imperialist metropolises that it currently takes less spectacular forms than in Palestine or in certain countries of Latin America, countries which are nevertheless only the weak links of the imperialist chain. An international conference of revolutionary communist organizations which does not accord, according to its means, a political priority to defining the strategic orientation which it needs to put in place in the imperialist countries, above in the U.S., in Western Europe (notably Germany, Britain, France and Italy) and Japan could not be characterized as a really communist internationalist conference.

Because of this total absence or vacuity of information on the situation in the imperialist countries, the orientation put forward by the Call reverts to a line of pure propaganda which absolutely prevents us from knowing what concrete policies the signatory organizations propose. In point 16 of the Call they declare: "We call on all the currents that say they fight for the interests of the working class to break with the bourgeoisie and to start the struggle for power based on the autonomous and armed organizations of the masses." And in point 4 they "call on the European working class to ... defeat the governments and the states of the imperialist powers, by overthrowing the bourgeoisie, by

demolishing the bourgeois state and imposing the dictatorship of the proletariat in these countries", etc. All this is certainly the objective of every communist revolutionary organization; but in the present situation it is entirely abstract and does not suffice for defining a concrete orientation in the class struggle. Moreover, formally the Trotskyist-liquidationist organizations are not in disagreement with such goals; rejection of the opportunism and the covering-up for the bureaucrats which characterizes their politics must not signify a collapse into the simple repetition of the most elementary bases of the program (even if, once again, it is indispensable to constantly popularize the latter).

For the CRI Group, the international conference of December must not be limited to this type of declaration, much too general and vague, lest it result only in superficial agreements which will not survive their being put into practice if the concrete orientations to be followed in each country are not elaborated collectively in the clearest and most precise way possible. In other words, it is indispensable that the international conference have the objective of resulting not just in one or several common "declarations" but in a veritable platform of common action, conceived as the embryo of an actualized transitional program which a new international organization would have as its task to elaborate and to put into operation. This platform of common action must start from an analysis of the international situation, integrating as a priority an analysis of the situation in the chief imperialist countries, including necessarily an analysis of the other big regions of the world (Middle East, Africa, Latin America, the ex-USSR, China, India ...); and it must produce transitional slogans adapted to these different situations, with concrete examples (in particular for the chief imperialist countries, and if possible for Russia, China, India, Brazil, Palestine, South Africa ..., as well, obviously, for the countries where the organizations taking part in the conference intervene -- that is, for the moment, aside from France, Argentina, Chile, Peru and New Zealand).

e) Brazil: was the call to vote for Lula on the 2nd round incorrect in itself?

Finally, the case of Brazil must be examined here, because the very brief hint in the preamble of the Call on this subject shows again the propagandist and abstract way of posing the problems of the class struggle; now, even if that is not stated explicitly, this seems justified in the eyes of the editors by an overestimation of the situation in this country. In fact, one cannot put on the same plane the "support (which) the revisionist currents of Trotskyism and liquidationists of the Fourth International have openly" [Call, preamble] given to the Lula-Alencar coalition, then to the government after January 2003, on the one hand, and the call for voting for Lula on the second round of the presidential election of October 2002, on the other. For the CRI Group, if the support for the electoral program and the government of Lula-Alencar is indeed a betrayal, the call to vote for Lula in a context which is in no way revolutionary and in the framework of the second round of the presidential elections was correct, on the condition that it is accompanied clearly by a call to break the Popular Front accord with Alencar.

In fact, everyone knew that the masses were going to seize that electoral event to get rid of FHC [President Cardoso] and to express their wish to break with the IMF and the disgraced regime; everyone knew that the proletariat and poor peasants were going to vote massively for Lula despite Alencar, since they believed that the PT and Lula were their historical representatives. From that, so that they could understand the true nature of Lula and the PT (as a bourgeois workers' party), it was necessary that they have their own experience, that they verify the betrayal not on paper but in the flesh. That is why it was correct at the same time to denounce Lula and the PT (it would have been necessary to denounce these reformist traitors even if they had not been allied with Alencar), to demand the break with Alencar and at the same time to call for a vote for Lula despite Alencar, in order that he wield the power and that the break of the proletariat and the poor peasants with the reformist PT

(and its self-described Trotskyist props, who are really revisionists and centrists) could begin at that time. For large fractions of the proletariat will never launch themselves into the construction of the revolutionary party as long as they retain their illusions in the treacherous parties; and only practical experience of life can make them lose their illusions. In this perspective, it is clear that the openly pro-imperialist determination of the policy taken by Lula-Alencar-Rossetto for nine months offers big opportunities of development for an organization which would be really revolutionary communist, which therefore really, daily and without concessions denounces this reactionary policy, and which organizes the proletariat and the poor peasants to fight for the most resolute class struggle.

3. On the workers' united front and the anti-imperialist united front: tactical questions

(A) Against the automatic and schematic application of the workers' united front tactic

The workers' united front tactic, including the demand on the leaders of workers' organizations to break with the bourgeoisie (even if putting forward this demand can in no case constitute the alpha and omega of an orientation in practice for the class struggle) is indispensable in helping the workers gain consciousness of the nature of the traitorous leaderships of their organizations, in whom they have, in general, some confidence. In this sense, the Groupe CRI agrees with the very general directions on this subject advanced in the Call, notably in points 3 and 16. However, there also we can't act as though we were still in the epoch of classic social-democracy and Stalinism controlling the mass organizations of the working class (nor can we be satisfied to repeat such fairly general and obvious phrases as those in point 17). It is, on the contrary, absolutely necessary to be precise and concrete if we want to end up with a common orientation on questions of strategic as well, equally, as tactical orientation.

In particular, it should be inconceivable for the conference not to declare itself very clearly on the question of whether the participating revolutionary organizations should or should not demand the workers' united front in addressing the British Labour Party, the French SP, the German SPD ... not only when they're not in power, as is the case, for example, of the French PS at this time. This evidently brings up again the discussion on the nature of these organizations, which we have proposed above (in point 1, A, c). To be perfectly clear, the CRI Group, which disagrees on this point with the GB in particular, continues to emphasize that it would be mistaken in every way, seriously so, to apply this workers' united front tactic by demanding of the parties in question that they break with the bourgeoisie at a time when the proletariat and the masses have no more -- or have fewer and fewer -- illusions in the bourgeois character of these parties, even when a part of them, at least of those who still vote, give them their votes (the same way that American workers vote preferentially for the Democratic Party, when they vote).

(B) Defense of the Anti-imperialist United Front Tactic

The CRI Group states its overall agreement with point 3 (for the defeat of imperialism confronting oppressed nations) and points 6 to 8. However, once again, we regret that the latter are satisfied to denounce petit-bourgeois nationalists without offering a precise orientation, that is, you cannot by reading them understand precisely what concrete line, what transitional slogans and what

tactical agreements the signatory organizations conceive of to advance the class struggle practically today in these countries.

Further, point 5 testifies to great confusion. The absolute necessity of defending the program of permanent revolution against revisionist liquidation in no case implies that it's necessary to forbid recourse to the policy of an anti-imperialist united front in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. Affirmations that "all the bourgeoisies of the semi-colonial countries are necessarily pro-imperialist" and that "bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalism, secular or clerical, capitulates in a permanent manner to imperialism" are perfectly correct (points 6 to 8 are correct overall); but this does not signify that revolutionary communists cannot carry out an anti-imperialist united front with the mass organizations of the rural and urban petty bourgeoisie; because when the latter is ruined or impoverished by imperialism, its organizations or at least certain sectors often tend to radicalize and turn against imperialism, albeit with illusions and within narrow limits; when in many colonial and semi-colonial countries the peasantry, the petty-bourgeois masses and often even a significant part of the proletariat have confidence in these petty-bourgeois nationalist organizations exactly because they present themselves, more or less fraudulently, as nationalist and anti-imperialist. In other words, the anti-imperialist united front tactic is as useful and necessary in those colonial and semi-colonial countries where mass petty-bourgeois or peasant organizations exist as that of the workers' united front in the imperialist countries and in all countries where mass bourgeois workers' organizations exist.

As such, this tactic never calls the program of permanent revolution into question, from the moment when it is inscribed in the framework of an overall strategy which seeks to place the proletariat at the head of the angered popular masses. Only the proletariat can go all the way in the anti-imperialist fight, breaking with the IMF, refusing to pay the debt, driving out imperialist military bases, breaking trade agreements with imperialism and expropriating the big bourgeoisie, which is necessarily compradore -- in brief, installing its dictatorship.

However, to arrive at this goal, the proletariat, which is a minority in the colonial countries and in most of the semi-colonial countries, absolutely needs to ally with other forces and peasant and petty-bourgeois mass organizations, which are unavoidable even if they are only partially, even very partially "anti-imperialist" to the extent that they don't accept the hegemony of the proletariat and its revolutionary communist party.

Quite obviously, like the workers' united front tactic, the anti-imperialist united front tactic is only legitimate if the revolutionary party of the proletariat (in contrast to the Chinese Communist Party led by the Bukharinist-Stalinist International in the 1920's, but consistent with what Lenin and then Trotsky and the United Opposition stood for) remains completely independent in its programmatic, organizational and military point of view from the other organizations in the front and continues to put forward its own slogans, its own perspectives and its own program, while openly criticizing and denouncing the program and double-talk of its temporary allies.

4. On the countries which the text calls "deformed workers' states"

Contrary to the text of the International Conference Call (point 9), the Groupe CRI (even if its internal discussion on this point was not completed) does not characterize the states of Cuba, Vietnam, North Korea and China as "Deformed Workers' States" (and even less as outright "Workers' States," as

the preamble does...). In reality, the fact that these are "countries where capital was expropriated" (preamble) is not enough so to characterize them, even if you make an abstraction of all the measures of more or less advanced restoration which have been taken by the bureaucracy. The establishment of a workers' state presupposes a proletarian revolution; while there has been no proletarian revolution in these countries, but rather a national anti-imperialist revolution which was victorious in the particular context of the post-World War II decolonization process and the "Cold War," and which, in the case in question, went as far as the expropriation of capitalism in order to hinder to the maximum the risks of de facto progressive recolonization by imperialism (such as took place notably in Africa, in Indonesia and to a large degree, in the Indian sub-continent).

On the contrary, the state character of the principal means of production, or again, the state monopoly of foreign trade is not enough to define a state as a "workers' state," as this presupposes the dictatorship of the proletariat. Some therefore talk, for example, of "Bureaucratic collectivism," which has in common with socialism only this formal aspect of the stratification of the principal means of production; in other words, this is a necessary but not a sufficient condition to define a state as a "Workers' State." Therefore, the concept of a "workers' state deformed at birth" is a contradiction in terms, an absurdity: a workers' state can degenerate, as in the USSR (and this degeneration then leads, sooner or later, to a qualitative leap which results, in the absence of a real dictatorship of the proletariat, in the state finally ceasing to be a "workers' state"); but it cannot be born degenerated, which is absurd.

However, it doesn't seem necessary to consider as a priority the discussion on the nature of the states in question, and of the USSR in particular ... unless the organizations taking part in the conference wish to do so. In fact, with regard to practical orientation, the CRI Group agrees in declaring itself unconditionally for the defeat of imperialism in case of attack against these states; because, on the one hand, every defeat of imperialism can only strengthen the international struggle of the proletariat and the oppressed peoples, and, on the other hand, real national independence, nationalization of the means of production, monopoly of foreign trade, full employment, etc. are in themselves, to the extent to which they still exist (that is, less and less) gains for the working class and the peoples. It is thus necessary to declare against capitalist restoration, against imperialist penetration, for the defense of nationalization, for the preservation or re-establishment of the monopoly of foreign trade and for the defense of all the gains which the masses have grabbed through the national revolution -- which evidently included a certain number of social aspects, if only to insure popular support and stability for the new, partially and temporarily anti-imperialist bureaucratic regimes.

As for the rest, with regard to precisely which demands to put forward in these countries, the International Conference Call suffers from the same abstract and propagandistic character as on other questions of orientation. In fact, to say that "we fight for workers' and peasants' soviets and for the overthrow of the restorationist bureaucrats who are setting out to achieve the restoration of capitalism," (point 9) is only to repeat a purely propagandistic commonplace; here as elsewhere, it would be helpful, on the contrary, to elaborate a platform of transitional demands to define a practical orientation for intervention in the class struggle which could be capable of helping the real fight of the workers of these countries.

5. On the 4th International: affirming the heritage while avoiding formalism

The CRI Group considers it abusive to characterize as an "important divergence" among the

signatory organizations what it calls the "current characterization of the revolutionary international," namely the question of the name: Fifth International, Revolutionary Workers International, or Fourth International regenerated and refounded (preamble of the Call). In fact, what counts above all is the program, which is the revolutionary Marxist program as it was enriched by the texts and actions of the three first Internationals, and as it was incarnated in the combat of Trotsky and others for the Left Opposition and the Fourth International. Now, on this point the agreement among the signatory organizations seems solid, since, beyond their denunciation of the revisionists and liquidators of the program of the Fourth International, they declare: "We reaffirm Trotskyism, the program of Fourth International, as the continuity of that school of revolutionary strategy founded by the Third International of Lenin." (point 16.) This is certainly the reason, after all, that they do not consider their divergence so "important" that it prevents advancing this discussion "in a joint international Center, because the program unites us." This position seems to be of good sense, given the size of their convergences overall. ...

For the CRI Group, the question of the name of the International that we want can only be dealt through an agreement on the interpretation of the history of the 4th International, from its birth in the 1930's until its liquidation as a revolutionary organization by revisionist Pabloism, without overlooking the history of the different tendencies which fought Pabloism at one time or another, in a more or less resolute and correct way. Any other perspective than that precise and rigorous historical analysis on the basis of texts and facts will necessarily give the discussion a purely scholastic character.

From this viewpoint, it is useful to recall first of all that the Fourth International was never really constructed, since, in contrast to the first three, it was not able to become a mass organization acting in a leading way in the international class struggle. Of course, it was founded at Trotsky's initiative in 1938, by a handful of militants representing minuscule "sections" but conscious of assuring the continuity of internationalist revolutionary communism on the eve of the 2nd World War which they knew was imminent. But it was from its birth in a state of total weakness, several of its sections (above all its Soviet sections, but also its German, Austrian, Spanish etc. sections) having been liquidated and several of its chief leaders (Sedov, Klement, etc.) assassinated by the Stalinists. The political decapitation of the fragile organization was achieved by the assassination of Trotsky in 1940 and its organizational dislocation by the war; the sections were cut off from one another and only subsisted in a parceled out way, notably in the U.S., in Britain, in Argentina, Bolivia, as well as China and Vietnam; for their part, the French sections, divided before the war, had to submit as well, from 1939 on, to their abandonment pure and simple by their principal leaders, notably Naville and Rosenthal, the capitulation of several to fascism, the rallying of yet others to social patriotism, etc.

In Europe, a real international organization was partially reconstituted at the end of the war, but by militants who had not been leaders, who were young, inexperienced and little trained in Marxism. In the context of the betrayal of the revolutionary rising by triumphant Stalinism, programmatic revisionism, organizational bureaucratism and petty-bourgeois self-proclamation tended from the start to take over the official leadership, all the more easily since the surviving sections on other continents did not wish (the British and above all the U.S. section, themselves in retreat under the pressure of the state of war, then the cold war ...) or could not (the Vietnamese section, decapitated by the Stalinists in 1945 ...) play the leading role incumbent upon them given their size, their implementation in the class and their experience. That allowed the European leadership, led by Pablo, to develop its petty-bourgeois practices, a casual attitude towards the historical record -- the lessons of the past and the errors committed by the Trotskyists during the war (notably in France) -- and above all a paralysis in the class struggle, due to a fascination for the power of triumphant Stalinism and its successes in

Europe and Asia. This led rapidly to liquidationist revisionism, then to the organizational shattering of this tiny structure that still called itself the Fourth International. Afterwards, the forces which resisted Pabloism in one way or another (Healyism, Lambertism, Cannonism, Morenoism, etc.) ended up capitulating to the Stalinist, reformist and/or petty-bourgeois nationalist apparatuses and finally became in their turn revisionists and liquidators.

Now, if the Fourth International has never been constructed, it is clear that our historical task remains, today as since the 1930's, the construction of the revolutionary communist International, on the basis of the gains of the three first Internationals, the Left Opposition and the Fourth founded by Trotsky. It is therefore necessary simultaneously to avoid formalism or fetishism towards an organization which never really existed (that is, as a really international organization having social weight in historical events), and to openly affirm our historic heritage (even if, once again, this is and will be above all a practical reality, only when incarnated in the behavior of revolutionary organizations intervening in the class struggle).

From this, to say with the LOI and the COTP-CI that the 4th International has to be "regenerated" is to forget that it no longer exists at all as an organization, and that it has not "degenerated" but was liquidated by Pabloism; and to say that it has to be "refounded" is ambiguous, for it is not a question of repeating the past or of repeating mechanically the Transitional Program of 1938, but on the contrary of integrating the lessons of 65 years of immensely rich class struggle in an actualized transitional program. On the other hand, to speak, as do the GB and LM, of a "revolutionary workers' international" has the problem, for one thing, of not denoting the organization we want as "communist" -- and, for another, of letting it be believed (and this is obviously in no way the intent of the GB and LM) that the program of the International would not include the fight for the 4th International and its Trotskyist program; Given that we could form a common organization with, for example, anarchists, so-called "Luxemburgists" and all the true or false "Bordigists" (the many militants and tendencies that have identified with a non-Trotskyist anti-Stalinism since the 1920's), and given also the more or less faithful "Maoists" or certain old Stalinists, who also identify themselves formally with the fight for a "revolutionary workers' international" and whose forces are not negligible in certain countries (notably the Maoists), it is useful to distinguish ourselves clearly from the start in the eyes of the masses. Finally, the proposition of speaking, with the CWG, of a "5th International" is much too vague and falls also into the difficulties expressed against the preceding proposition.

In a word, and since it is necessary to make concrete proposals, the CRI Group for its part will stand for a formula of the type: "International committee for the construction of the revolutionary communist International (a new 4th International)."

Paris, Sept. 27, 2003.