

July 4, 1978

To the Political Committee, National Field Organizers

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed is an English translation of a report to the United Secretariat on Colombia by Galois and Riel, along with the translation of two of the documents referred to in this report: a petition form "for a single candidate against the system," and a statement by the PST (Bolshevik Tendency) explaining why it was supporting this petition campaign.

The Galois-Riel report, dated May, covers only the period up through the latter part of April. Since then, two developments updating the report should be noted:

1. The petition campaign for 500,000 signatures resulted, according to the organizers of the campaign in the collection of more than 400,000 signatures, but no candidate was presented. In the final stage of the campaign, the PST-BT called for a vote for Socorro Ramirez, while criticizing her campaign.

2. The fusion process between the LCR and the PST (Proletarian Democracy Tendency) has deepened considerably, and has succeeded in drawing in the Socialist Tendency of the Organizacion Comunista Ruptura and also in involving a sector of the Trotskyist movement that had earlier split from the LCR. This has been announced in the Trotskyist press in Colombia.

According to a phone conversation with Comrade Riel a few days ago, the four groups are now functioning in a united way on all levels under the name Partido Socialista Revolucionaria (PSR). They claim to have more than 800 members and candidates, and plan an official congress in August.

Comradely,


Gus Horowitz

May 1978

The convention of the Proletarian Democracy Tendency of the Colombian PST (PST-PDT) was held in Bogotá on April 15-16, 1978. There were a total of 185 delegates, delegate-observers, and guests present. In the final week of preconvention discussion, the full members elected 52 delegates on the basis of one delegate for every five full members according to the following geographic distribution established on the basis of documents of the mandates commission that were given to us by the comrades:

Baranquilla	7 delegates	
Bogota	8 delegates	
Cali	11 delegates	
Palmira	4 delegates	(Cali and Palmira constitute a single region.)
Ibague	8 delegates	
Medellin	4 delegates	
Neiva	2 delegates	
Pasto	6 delegates	
Pereira	2 delegates	

The four delegates from the city of Palmira, however, were not seated because this branch was not in financial good standing. Of the six delegates elected in Pasto, only four participated in the congress; the two others were not able to arrive in Bogotá in time. Thus there was a total of 46 delegates with voice and vote participating in this convention.

In addition to these 46 delegates, there were also 122 "delegate-observers" present who had no voice or vote; a good portion of them came from Bogotá (around 50).

In addition to these figures, it should be added that there were 17 guests, among them the representatives of the LCR, PST-Bolshevik Tendency, Organizacion Comunista Ruptura, and the United Secretariat.

A few remarks about these figures are called for.

1) At the end of January a little over 300 "full" and "candidate" members of the PST signed a memorandum addressed to the United Secretariat calling for a special convention of their organization and stating their adherence to the Proletarian Democracy Tendency of the PST. The fact that the delegates to this convention were elected by around 260 "full" members (candidates didn't vote and weren't represented) tends to indicate significant advances in membership in the PST-PDT. While we don't have exact figures for the number of "candidate" members on the national level, the exact figures for "candidates" in three important cities is a significant indication of their proportion in relation to the number of "full" members:

Bogotá	38 full members and 16 candidates
Cali-Palmire	79 full members and 44 candidates
Medellin	21 full members and 16 candidates

2) While the presence of approximately 50 "delegate-observers" from Bogotá reflects a consolidation of the PST-PDT in that city,

the fact that only around 1/6 of the elected delegates (8) came from Bogotá nevertheless reflects a weakness of the PST-PDT in the capital in relation to its presence in the provinces. Unlike other important centers of the country, Bogotá was the only city where a minority of the members signed the January memorandum to the United Secretariat; an important majority supported the "Bolshevik Tendency" there. This situation continues to be reflected in the current reality.

3) Even though no statistic was computed on this, an important percentage of the delegates were worker militants, trade-union leaders, or cadres of the mass movement. This was clearly apparent from the interventions, which were often based on the practice and concrete experience of the comrades.

The following agenda points were discussed by the congress:

- national political situation
- policy in regard to the elections for a "mini constituent assembly"
- the presidential election campaign, its political axes and campaign plans, as well as what initiatives to take for united preparations for May 1
- greetings from the United Secretariat
- internal situation of the PST and organizational situation of the PDT
- the press
- unification of Colombian Trotskyists
- financial report

Finally, the congress ended with the election of the national leadership of the PST-PDT.

The text of the political report, the discussion of which was prepared by several written contributions, and the other resolutions we are sending with this report are sufficiently clear. So we're limiting ourselves to the following remarks.

All the questions submitted to discussion and the resolutions to which they gave rise confirm and deepen the earlier political convergence between the LCR and the PST-PDT.

a) On the analysis of the conjuncture and in particular on the balance sheet of the February elections. It should be noted that this balance sheet enabled a clarification and precision of the tactic in relation to the candidates of the UNO and FUP, a tactic which had initially been complicated by the local agreements with candidates of these coalitions concluded in four cities by a minority sector of the URS (Union Revolucion Socialista). (This sector has now broken with both the URS and UNIOS.) In particular, the discussion on this point at the PST-PDT convention enabled precision and clarification on the character of the appeal to be made to the candidates of the UNO and FUP -- a call for a single candidate of the working class, explicitly defending the necessity for class political independence and independence from any agreements with bourgeois sectors or personalities. Both the political report and the article on this question that appeared in Poder Obrero-Revolucion Socialista (combined journal of the LCR-PST-PDT; see the article by Ciro Roldan, "A Left Candidate or a Class Candidate in the April 24 issue, page 9) did away with the weaknesses noted in the earlier call for a "single candidate of the left." These weaknesses had already largely been rectified before the congress (see, for example, the balance sheet of the February

elections in Revolucion Socialista, no. 87, and published in Inter-continental Press, the general line of which was approved by the congress at the same time as the report by Ricardo Sánchez).

b) On how to proceed with the presidential campaign, its political axes, and the immediate tasks of UNIOS (campaign for freedom of expression and the right to television time).

c) On the political framework of preparations for May 1 and the initiatives to take vis-à-vis other political and trade-union forces.

d) On the principles and political bases for participation in the elections for the "mini constituent assembly."

This deepening of political convergence had already been underscored during the preparation of the congress and at the LCR Central Committee meeting, held in Bogotá on April 8-9, starting with the discussion on a text entitled "Our Fundamental Political Convergences," jointly prepared for discussion by the National Executive Committee of the LCR and the provisional leadership of the PST-PDT. This text was adopted by the PST-PDT convention. This political reality can be seen on the organizational level in the adoption of resolutions which were jointly prepared with the leadership of the LCR on:

a) a common press. From now on the publications of the two organizations are merged and the first issue of the common journal, Poder Obrero-Revolucion Socialista, was published by the joint editorial board a few days after the congress.

b) a common financial campaign. The goal is 400,000 pesos in order to finance the presidential campaign.

c) The PST-PDT convention mandated the leadership to prepare a joint plan of work with the leadership of the LCR in order to organize the process of unification between the PST-PDT and the LCR in accordance with the resolutions on the unity of Colombian Trotskyists adopted by the United Secretariat. This plan should lead to the organization of a LCR/PST-PDT unification congress several weeks after the close of the election campaign.

By contrast, the congress reflected growing differences with the other sector of the PST, the PST-Bolshevik Tendency (PST-BT). These growing differences turned in particular around:

a) Balance sheet of the first stage of the elections and the orientation for the presidential campaign. The positions of the PST-BT on these questions were expressed in El Socialista, in internal bulletins numbers 50, 51, and 52, as well as in the "special" bulletin dated April 14. It is important to underline that the PST-BT's break with UNIOS as well as the bases for this break were confirmed by the PST-BT congress held in Bogotá on April 1-2. (We'll come back to this question in another section of this report.)

This break has recently led the PST-BT leadership to sign a call "for a single candidate against the system," which has a confused political content. Among the initial signers are a certain number of bourgeois politicians linked to Liberalism, such as Gerardo Molina, Luis Carlos Perez, and a few others. The signature of the writer Gabriel Garcia Marquez, a prestigious figure, is used in order to propagandize for the appeal.

This appeal is said to be a "unitary" one, but it is in no way an appeal for unity and political independence of the working class. It does not define the class character of the unitary candidacy it seeks. This appeal is de facto counterposed to the three left candidacies -- the one animated by the Communist Party, the one inspired by the MOIR, and our own.

It should be noted that, while the PST-BT has signed this call, it published a declaration in its press (El Socialista, no. 11) specifically reaffirming the necessity for a unitary candidate of the working class. The PST-BT's participation in such an initiative has not only led it to participate in an electoral project with elements that are alien to the workers movement but also to demand along with these sectors that the Trotskyist candidacy, the only one with a program posing the necessity for political independence of the working class, be withdrawn.

The electoral tactics of the PST-BT and those of the LCR and the PST-PDT are thus divergent and, in the present context, even counterposed.

b) On the "mini constituent assembly." While the political bases for criticizing the project of the constituent assembly proposed by outgoing President Lopez Michelsen are the same, the tactics are now different. The PST-BT proposes nonparticipation in the elections for this constituent assembly, while the PST-PDT and the LCR are going to present candidates in order to defend their positions.

These are new differences that appeared since the comrades of the PST-PDT were forced into independent practice, which in the final analysis is the product of the disciplinary measures of which they have been the victims. These disagreements did not exist at the time of their expulsion from the PST.

These are important tactical disagreements that can only slow down the tempo of collaboration between the two sectors of the PST, collaboration which, as the April 1-2 United Secretariat resolution states, is a necessary element for any process of discussion leading to reunification of the PST.

The modalities of such a process must take into account the current reality: the PST is de facto divided into two public factions. The reunification of these two public factions must take place through the organization of a democratic discussion on the points of disagreement, a debate that should conclude with a democratic convention, the rules and organization of which should be decided on the basis of common agreement.

In this spirit and within this perspective, approving the terms of the United Secretariat resolution of April 1-2, the PST-PDT convention ratified the setting up of a "tripartite" commission involving the PST-BT, the PST-PDT, and the LCR and aimed at creating the conditions for such a discussion. At the same time, the PST-PDT will move forward on its course of unification with the LCR, for which the political bases have already been clearly established. We were present at a meeting of this "tripartite" commission, held on the eve of the opening of the PST-PDT convention. Other meetings were planned in agreement with the three organizations.

In conclusion, the congress seems to us to have fully accomplished three important functions:

a) Reaffirm and spell out more clearly the political bases and orientations of the PST-PDT after these comrades had been forced to act separately from the rest of the PST.

b) Make a balance sheet and draw the lessons of the PST crisis; analyze the practices which were at the source of this crisis and draw the lessons from them for their own practice.

c) Beginning from agreement with the United Secretariat positions on the unity of Colombian Trotskyists and the reunification of the PST, determine the modalities for applying these positions in their relations with both the LCR and the PST-BT.

In this regard, an additional indication of the possibilities opened for unity of Colombian Trotskyists was provided by the intervention at the convention by the delegate from the Organizacion Comunista Ruptura (Socialist Tendency), which demonstrated the growing agreement of this sector with the program of the Fourth International and, on this basis, the desire to open discussions on their integration into the process of unification between the PST-PDT and the LCR. As well, a sector of the "LCR Fraction-Bogotá Congress," a small group which had refused to participate in the founding congress of the LCR in Baranquilla in September 1977, demonstrated the same willingness at the PST-PDT convention.

In this sense, despite the dramatic and negative conditions in which and against which the PST-PDT was born, this convention represented an important step forward for political clarification among Colombian Trotskyists and in the struggle for their unity.

ON OUR DISCUSSIONS WITH THE LEADERSHIP OF THE PST-BOLSHEVIK TENDENCY

Following the PST-PDT convention, on April 18 and 19 we had two long meetings with the Secretariat of the PST-BT. Present on the first day were Kemel George, Eduardo Barragan, Julio Rojas, and Marcella Rodriguez, whom we were told were elected members of the Secretariat and the Executive Committee of the PST-BT. In the course of this meeting, Comrade Nahuel Moreno came into the discussion in an individual capacity at the request of the PST Secretariat. The second day the only comrades present were Eduardo Barragan, Julio Rojas, and Marcella Rodriguez.

The discussions were organized around two general themes:

-- at the first meeting, the electoral policy of the PST-BT;
-- at the second meeting, the organizational situation of the PST and the reunification of its two public factions.

The first point was introduced by a long report by Comrade Julio Rojas, which basically repeated the electoral balance sheet published in number 50 of the PST-BT's internal bulletin. However, the discussion enabled clarification of several points:

a) The PST-BT comrades acknowledge and assume full responsibility for the initiative of the split in UNIOS. They explain that even though the program of UNIOS hadn't changed, especially on the question of class political independence, a new situation had been created by the fact that a minority sector of the centrist organi-

zation URS (which has since broken with that organization) had passed local agreements in three or four places with the coalition led by the CP in which bourgeois politicians were participating. According to them, the fact that the national leadership of URS had not publicly denounced these agreements signified a change in the character of UNIOS and as a result their withdrawal was necessary.

It seems necessary for us to make a few remarks on this subject, particularly on the chain of events that led to the PST-BT's break with UNIOS as they appear in El Socialista and in the documents published in the internal bulletin entitled "Unity and Crisis in the Party" published by the PST-PDT.

1) On January 31 the leadership of UNIOS reached agreement on how to deal with these breaches of discipline inspired by a minority in the URS. A declaration was signed by representatives of the four organizations regrouped in UNIOS, among them Kemel George, Camillo Gonzalez, and Socorro Ramirez for the PST, clearly specifying that these agreements concluded locally by a sector of the URS constituted a violation of the basis on which UNIOS had been formed and that they had been explicitly rejected by the national leadership of URS. This declaration was a public one, although it was not widely diffused. However, beyond the declaration, this de facto rupture inspired by a minority of the URS was not made the object of big public denunciations on the part of the UNIOS leadership. Under the circumstances, the UNIOS spokespeople preferred to positively reaffirm the validity of the political platform of UNIOS and their support to all candidates who agreed with it.

2) On February 3 the PST-BT published an open letter (El Socialista, No. 104) disassociating themselves from the Proletarian Democracy Tendency and the presidential candidacy of Socorro Ramirez and demanding that the national leadership of URS publicly denounce the local agreements concluded by its minority.

3) On February 11, without consulting the other groups in UNIOS, particularly the Trotskyists of the LCR and the PST-PDT, the PST-BT tried to reach a bilateral agreement with the URS leadership, of which one of the modalities proposed by the PST-BT itself was the withdrawal of Socorro Ramirez as head of the list for the Bogotá municipal elections and her replacement by a leader of the URS. The presidential candidacy of Socorro Ramirez was not called into question. The bases for agreement proposed to the URS by the PST-BT were to have included the national leadership of URS taking a position condemning the local breaks instigated by its minority, a position that would repeat the terms of the common declaration of January 31; but it was not implied that the URS leadership would have to make this the object of a big public pronouncement. (The text of the agreement proposed by the PST-BT is published on page 9 of the internal bulletin entitled "Unity and Crisis in the Party," which has already been mentioned.)

4) This attempted agreement initiated by the PST-BT misfired after the leadership of URS decided to respect its initial commitment to UNIOS. It was then that the PST-BT withdrew from UNIOS and fielded its own candidates. This decision was announced in El Socialista, No. 105, dated February 13.

5) Number 106 (February 20) of El Socialista, published on the eve of the elections, carried a new disassociation from the PST-PDT. In this issue of El Socialista, the call to vote for the lists of the PST-BT is presented as "the only vote that guarantees the political independence of the workers," even though in numerous places UNIOS was presenting lists on which there were no PST-BT candidates.

6) The issue of El Socialista dated March 14, that is, after the local elections, spells out the new electoral policy of the PST-BT for the June presidential elections. In this issue, the PST-BT proposes a campaign for a single workers candidate and calls for the withdrawal of the candidacies of Socorro Ramirez, de Pierna, and Piedrahita (the last two are the candidates of the FUP and UNO respectively).

On the basis of this series of stated positions, it seems to us difficult to accept the theses put forward by the PST-BT, according to which the split with UNIOS was motivated solely by the local agreements with UNO concluded by a sector of URS. Indeed, it can be seen through the succession of facts listed above that the PST-BT tried to employ different means to disassociate itself from UNIOS and the candidacy of Socorro Ramirez.

In our opinion, a public and official disassociation by UNIOS from the attitude of the URS minority would have been correct and sufficient. But the attitude of this minority of URS, explicitly condemned by all the groups in UNIOS in a context where the programmatic bases of UNIOS remained unchanged, can in no way seriously justify the PST-BT's break with UNIOS.

The fact that it was precisely the adherence of the URS to UNIOS that precipitated this crisis with its minority, a crisis that brought about a political clarification; the fact that the relationship of forces guaranteed the Trotskyists the political and practical leadership of UNIOS; the fact that the PST-BT had every opportunity to make its own positions known in the framework of UNIOS wasn't enough for the leadership of the PST-BT. According to these comrades, the break was necessary even if it would mean weakening and discrediting the Trotskyist campaign.

b) Retrospectively, just after the elections, a different justification for the PST-BT's break with UNIOS appeared in the eyes of the leadership of that organization. The setting up of UNIOS had been a serious political error. According to these comrades, even before the "vacillation in the face of popular frontism" (the problem of the URS minority), UNIOS had been "the expression of a vanguardist deviation." The original conception of the campaign was that of "workers and socialist candidates" defending a class struggle program. The entry of other forces transformed the campaign into a front of organizations (called UNIOS) and in this way created a new situation that justified the break. Again according to the PST-BT leadership, it had been an error to sanction the adherence to the Trotskyist campaign of "Ruptura" and later the URS through a front of organizations. The PST-BT comrades say that the alternative should have been to accept the support of these organizations without setting up such a front, even de facto. This concept seems wrong to us. If the original program constituted an adequate response on the part of Trotskyists to the problems posed by the objective situation in Colombia -- and the comrades have never questioned this to our knowledge -- how could the inte-

gration into the campaign of other groups that agreed with this program be refused? In making this type of critical balance sheet of UNIOS, it seems to us that the PST-BT comrades are implicitly basing themselves on the following conception: it was correct to wage a campaign on a program that enabled the support of other forces, but this support could in no way call into question the organizational control of the campaign by first the PST and later, after the expulsion of the PDT, by the PST-BT. This is an extremely manipulative conception of relations within the mass movement or with organizations that have manifested their agreement with the program we proposed.

c) On the present tactic of the PST-BT. The question is a new one and deserves to be examined.

For the PST-BT leadership, the call "for a single candidate against the system" that we spoke about earlier is a mass movement in which it is appropriate to participate. During the discussion, Comrade Nahuel Moreno even drew a parallel between this call and the antiwar movement in the United States, saying that in the same way that it was correct for the SWP-USA to agree to work in the antiwar movement with bourgeois liberals it is correct for the PST-BT leadership to sign such an appeal along with bourgeois politicians with ties to Liberalism. The PST-BT comrades insist very strongly on the fact that this appeal was signed by the leaderships of several significant trade unions and that, as a result, the only way to reach and possibly win the workers affiliated to these unions is to sign the appeal with them. That's why they've mobilized all their forces in order to obtain the maximum number of signatures of this type. They told us that as far as possible they're getting signatures on both the central call and their own declaration (see El Socialista, No. 111), even though this is against the rules established by the committee.

However -- and this rather contradicts the first affirmation -- they have very little hope that a single candidacy will be concretized and feel that the break up of the committee that initiated the signature campaign is inevitable. They think that they can organize an important current in the framework of such a falling out. Nevertheless, they don't think that this current would be able to provide the possibility for a candidacy and in that event they don't exclude calling for a vote to Socorro Ramirez.

Meanwhile, the committee is being denounced from various points of view. Especially for the Communist Party, this is a "confused and demobilizing" initiative inspired by Liberal sectors which, because they are opposed to Julio Cesar Turbay, the official candidate of the Liberal Party, therefore favor abstention. The CSTC, the only one of the four Colombian trade-union federations not linked to a bourgeois party, has denounced the initiative in roughly the same terms.

During the discussion with the PST-BT leadership, we raised the following problems:

1) The politically confused character of the text of the call. Nowhere does the text clearly pose the necessity for a candidate representing and defending the political independence of the working class. This is recognized by the PST-BT leadership itself, since in their clarification they spell out:

-- that the single candidate must be a single candidate of the workers;

-- the committee must be led by workers and their political and trade-union organizations, and not by bourgeois politicians seeking to transform themselves into political representatives of the workers;

-- the struggle "against the system" must mean a struggle against the capitalist system.

The PST-BT signed this call even though none of these points had been clarified. In our opinion, for Trotskyist militants to sign this call was an inadmissible error. The declaration of "clarification" by the PST-BT in no way counterbalances the official call, which is the only one that is widely known in Colombia and is the basis on which signatures are being gathered.

2) The contradictory interests and political projects that are covered up by the political confusion of the text:

-- the projects of the Liberal politicians, who are using this to manifest their opposition to Turbay, the official candidate of Liberalism;

-- the projects of the sectors grouped around the editorial board of the magazine Alternativa, aimed at occupying the ground left open by the collapse of the populist current represented by ANAPO.

It must thus be stressed that behind this signature campaign are the outlines of overall political projects which are alien to the working class. It is unacceptable for Trotskyists to participate in such overall political projects with forces of this type. Since the comparison has been made, this is quite different from the antiwar movement in the United States, which was a conjunctural movement around a specific theme in the framework of which it was perfectly correct to accept the participation of bourgeois figures in the demonstrations against the war on the basis of clear and specific demands decided by the antiwar movement itself. But it should be recalled that during election campaigns the American Trotskyists always refused to participate in the electoral projects of bourgeois or petty-bourgeois sectors that were involved in the antiwar movement.

3) The real relationship of forces within the organizing committee of this campaign "for a single candidate against the system" results in the spokespeople for this initiative being Alternativa and the Liberal politicians. Thus, at the press conference that officially announced the launching of the signature campaign the PST was indeed on the platform, but two Liberal figures clearly appeared as the main spokespeople for the initiative, Gerardo Molina and Luis Carlos Perez. Their declarations clearly reflected their projects and implicated the entire committee. And they say (see El Espectador of April 17, pg. 13a) that the initiative aims "at bringing out a half million or more Colombians who want unity, an end to division and sectarianism and the absurd subordination of internationally aligned groups, pro-Soviet, pro-Chinese, or pro-Fourth International."

Equally significant is the editorial in the magazine Alternativa, which concludes the call for signatures by remarking that in Colombia "the majority of people speak Spanish, and not Marxist." (See Alternativa, No. 159.)

It should be recalled that these declarations are made in the name of the committee. Given the existing relationship of forces within the committee, it's impossible for the PST-BT to develop its own positions in the framework of declarations made in the committee's name.

4) The very logic of the call is a means of pressuring to get the withdrawal of three left candidates, in particular Socorro Ramirez, the Trotskyist candidate and the only one clearly in favor of political independence of the working class. This objectively leads the PST-BT to wage a campaign for the withdrawal of the Trotskyist candidacy on the basis of a confused appeal that in no way guarantees the essential aspect of class independence.

The response of the PST-BT comrades to these objections was to reaffirm that their participation in the committee had the character of a maneuver, a "big maneuver" through which they were going to strengthen their organization, and that, independently of the positions taken by the majority of the committee, they had published their clarification in El Socialista reaffirming that for them it was necessary that any unique candidate be a unique candidate of the workers.

For our part, we reaffirmed that the comrades are committing a serious and inadmissible political error by participating in this initiative.

At the second meeting with the PST-BT leadership, we discussed the divisions in the PST and Colombian Trotskyism. The comrades of the PST-BT reaffirmed their belief that the PDT was responsible for the divisions in the PST and that up to then it had been impossible to overcome these divisions. They told us that they had accepted the United Secretariat recommendations while the PST-PDT had rejected them.

After having discussed these points along the same lines as the discussion at the United Secretariat, we talked about the present situation and the means to remedy it. In this framework, the comrades gave us a report on their convention, which was held in Bogotá on March 31-April 2. While we weren't able to get precise figures, they told us that the convention brought together a little over one hundred participants, among which were 60 delegates elected on the basis of one delegate for every 10 members of the organization and representing a total of some 550 militants.

According to the comrades, the congress reflected a growth equivalent to a doubling of the membership as well as its rapid proletarianization -- this since the expulsion of the comrades now regrouped in the PST-PDT, that is, since the end of January, beginning of February.

Despite our requests, we weren't able to obtain any of the elements that could confirm or deny the comrades' affirmations.

However, we should note that the LCR and the PST-PDT observers present at the convention formally contest the representativity of the 60 delegates elected on the basis of one to 10, particularly in relation to the representation from the provincial cities. According to these comrades, certain cities where the PST-BT carries out no activity were represented by four or five delegates, leading to the implication that the PST-BT had between 40 and 50 militants in these places.

While it was impossible to verify these facts, it seemed surprising to us that a congress held in Bogotá, where the majority of the members of the PST-BT are located, didn't bring together more than a hundred participants, delegates and observers together.

The convention ratified the positions taken by the PST-BT during the election campaign and adopted a resolution concerning the comrades who are now organized in the PST-PDT. We made our point of view clear on this, saying that the fact that the PST-BT agreed to lift the sanctions taken against the comrades of the PDT represented a positive step forward and opened the door to discussions that can hopefully lead to a reunification of the PST.

Beyond the positions of the PST-BT leadership which are already known to the United Secretariat (memorandum, report by Camilo Gonzalez), the discussion enabled clarification of several points related to the new situation existing in Colombia.

1) The comrades recognized that the convention of the PST-PDT represented a development and a greater cohesion of this sector. However, for them, this growth and political cohesiveness can only be conjunctural, given the "petty-bourgeois character" of the PST-PDT comrades, especially their leadership.

2) The comrades recognized that the recent LCR Central Committee meeting (March 7-8) and the PST-PDT convention had established a broad base of agreement between these two groups, which enabled the process of unification that has begun. However, these agreements signify that growing differences exist between the PST-BT on the one hand and the LCR and PST-PDT on the other hand. Again according to the PST-BT leadership, even though the unification of the PST-PDT and the LCR would mean a definitive break with the PST, the basis of political agreement between the PST-PDT and the LCR allows them to consider that their unification would not simply be a factional maneuver against the PST-BT, but would be the product of a real political process based on considerable political agreement.

3) These increasing differences, the product of the separate practice of the PST-PDT, force them to consider reunification between the PST-BT and the PST-PDT -- with which the comrades expressed their agreement in principle -- in a different framework from the one that existed at the time of the rupture in January. In the present situation there exist de facto two public factions of the PST. To be sure, the comrades of the PST-BT faction lay claim to the organizational continuity and political legitimacy of the PST before the break. But this new situation implies a new framework in order to successfully conduct a reunification process. Now that the sanctions against the PST-PDT comrades have formally been lifted, a process of political discussion is necessary, especially around the new points of disagreement. If these discussions and experiences on the level of activity lead to a convergence or a compatibility, they should then lead to a democratically organized unification congress conducted according to commonly established and accepted rules.

During the discussion, the comrades seemed to be in agreement with the fact that such a process shouldn't be considered contradictory to the one now going on between the PST-PDT and the LCR and with the fact that the discussion process should include a

debate on democratic centralism and the organizational norms of the party that democratic centralism implies.

All of these points of agreement seemed to us to be a realistic and positive basis for going forward toward unification in accordance with the United Secretariat resolutions. The "tripartite" commission is the place and the instrument for concretizing and putting these agreements into practice; the positions taken by the LCR and the PST-PDT reported above go exactly in this direction.

The day after these meetings, on April 20, a meeting of the "tripartite" commission was held with the participation of the United Secretariat delegates in order to concretize these bases of agreement. The meeting was suddenly disrupted by PST-BT representative Julio Rojas, who demanded as a precondition for any discussion the condemnation of Umberto Valverde, Jorge Posada, and the PST-PDT leadership for their alleged responsibility for the recent arrest of four non-Colombian militants of the PST-BT, which was said to have resulted from the "chauvinist campaign of denunciation" they were to have developed against Argentine exiles in Colombia.

Our initial response was to suggest the organizing of an international solidarity campaign on behalf of the imprisoned comrades and more generally on behalf of political exiles in Colombia, while the PST-PDT and LCR comrades proposed the broadest possible solidarity campaign in Colombia itself. The comrades of the PST-BT neglected to mention the possibility and necessity for such a campaign; fortunately, a little while later they took up our proposal.

As for the demand that we denounce Valverde, Posada, and the leadership of the PST-PDT as being responsible for the arrests, we refused to discuss this since the charges on which the police booked these four comrades were and still are unknown to us. Comrade Julio Rojas then left the meeting before any of the points on the agenda had been dealt with.

There followed an exchange of letters in which the PST-BT leadership demonstrated its refusal to meet with the United Secretariat delegates as long as we didn't accept the accusations being levelled by the PST-BT.

Under the circumstances, it was only indirectly and completely by accident that we found out four days later that the arrested comrades had been released, whereas we had begun the process of opening an international campaign in their defense. The PST-BT leadership had already sent a letter to the representatives of the LCR and the PST-PDT in the tripartite commission, copies of which were sent to all the sections of the International, in which it appeared clearly that the PST-BT leadership was preparing to launch a "worldwide" campaign around these accusations against U. Valverde, J. Posada, the leadership of the PST-PDT, and the United Secretariat.

Given these circumstances and insofar as we left Colombia shortly thereafter, it's not possible for us to give an opinion on the real possibilities -- and the real willingness of the PST-BT leadership -- to put into practice in the short term the agreements to which the discussions with the PST-BT Secretariat seemed to have led.

Galois
Riel
May 1978

[Translation of a petition form being circulated in Colombia, among the signers of which are representatives of the Colombian PST-BT.]

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HALF A MILLION COLOMBIANS FOR A SINGLE CANDIDATE AGAINST THE SYSTEM

"I am signing this declaration calling for a single candidate of the Colombian people to run against all the candidates of the oligarchy. I am sure that this appeal will be signed, not by half a million Colombians, but by a million. And if even more do not sign, it will only be because they have not been given a chance to learn to sign their names."

--Gabriel Garcia Marquez (a famous writer)

A sentiment for unity has been an increasingly strong element in the struggles of the Colombian workers and people. The militancy shown by all the various sectors of the masses in the National Citizens Strike of September 14, and the celebration -- for the first time ever -- of a united May Day, headed up by the four workers trade-union federations, are but two significant examples of the trend toward unity that the masses are demonstrating in their daily struggles. But this trend has not been reflected or represented in a united political alternative.

Aware of this fact, and considering that the particular interests of the different left-wing parties cannot be counterposed to the people's steps towards unity, a broad group of workers and trade-union leaders, intellectuals, artists, journalists, and representatives of various mass organizations, have decided to join forces to struggle for a united presidential candidate to represent the political interests of the exploited millions of Colombia. This united candidate would take on the system of hunger, want and repression, the system that restricts political and trade-union rights -- for it is exactly this that characterizes the sorry years of the National Front governments.

We are proposing a major petition campaign in which half a million Colombians will call for a single candidate for president of the republic. Towards this end we are calling upon the four workers trade-union federations and the independent unions, on the people's organizations and the parties of the working class to take the lead in this national plebiscite for a single candidate. As part of this campaign, we demand that the three presidential candidates of the left immediately give up their candidacies in order to pave the way for unity. [Translator's note: The three left candidates are: Julio César Pernia of UNO (a CP-controlled popular-front type formation), Jaime Piedrahíta Cardona of FUP (a Maoist-controlled popular-front type formation) and Socorro Ramírez, the Trotskyist candidate running on the UNIOS slate.]

We do not intend to put up a fourth presidential candidate. We are making a last-ditch effort to obtain unity against the system in these elections. Even if we do not succeed, we would in any case leave behind us the historic example of 500,000 Colombians demanding unity. This would set a precedent and create a current of opinion, which since it would express the unmistakable feelings of the people, would surely have an impact going beyond these elections.

We appeal to you, workers in the plants, women, students, the workers in offices, intellectuals, or peasants, all who feel the overriding need for unity in order to put an end to hunger and want, unemployment, and the selling out of our country to imperialism. We appeal to those of you who have abstained from voting, but are for the unity of the working people in struggle. We appeal to those of you who may disagree with some of the ideas in this appeal, but who agree with the central aim, to support us in this campaign. Sign this declaration and, along with us, call on the three left candidates to withdraw in favor of a Single Candidate Against the System.

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[Translator's Note: The petition then lists about 70 names and says that there are about 5,000 additional signers. Of the 70 names listed about 25% are trade unionists or from mass organizations; about 70% are figures from sports, entertainment, literature, or the arts, as well as journalists, professors, lawyers and doctors. The first three names on the list are Gabriel García Márquez, the writer, and Luis Carlos Pérez and Gerardo Molina, both listed as lawyers, but well known for their connections with bourgeois liberalism. Eduardo Barragan's name appears, and he is identified as the general secretary of the PST--(PST-BT); also appearing is the name of Kemel George, a prominent PST (PST-BT) candidate in the February elections, but here is listed only as a trade unionist.]

[The following statement by the PST-BT appeared in El Socialista, No. 111, April 17, 1978. It was published along with the text of the petition appealing for 500,000 signatures for a single candidate against the system.]

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(TRANSLATION)

A Clarification Concerning Our Signature on the Appeal of the National Committee (for 500,000 signatures)

We endorsed the declaration because we agree with the basic proposal of the National Committee and with its appeal to join forces to struggle for a single candidate against the system and its demand that the three candidates of the left withdraw in order to facilitate unity. At the same time we want to clarify the position that we hold and that we will continue to present in the National Committee and to the working masses.

1. We of the PST consider that the basic objective of the struggle that we are undertaking is to bring about a broad mobilization for the political independence of the workers. This means that the working class has to keep doing what it did in the National Citizens Strike -- unite against the bosses, stand in the forefront of all the oppressed, and to say to the entire country that the workers have no confidence in those who exploit them every day in the factory. This is what we did on September 14 all through the country. So we have to make it clear that the single candidate for which our movement is struggling has to be a polit-

ical representative of the workers, a proven defender of their interests. The slogan that expresses this struggle in a clear and precise manner is A Single Candidate of the Workers. The working class is not going to keep on voting for candidates handed down by the Liberals and Conservatives who disguise themselves as revolutionaries.

2. We have to say the same thing about the kind of movement that we are advocating as we said about the candidate. This movement can and must include broad sectors of the oppressed; but it has to be led by the workers, and their trade-union, political and mass organizations. This clearly means the four trade-union federations, the independent unions, and the workers parties like the Communist Party, the MOIR, and the socialist parties. We cannot accept, as leaders of this struggle, the kind of Liberal and Conservative bourgeois figures who disguise themselves as revolutionaries and are trying to become political representatives of the workers. Insofar as the declaration does not emphasize this point, it may encourage illusions that there are "good" liberals or conservative sectors who could play a leading role in our movement for a single candidate of the workers.

3. For us, it is the capitalist system that is responsible for hunger, misery and want. for the repression against the workers and exploited, for restricting democratic rights; it is the capitalist system, dominated by imperialism in our country, that is responsible for all the evils of society. The most prominent defenders of this capitalist system are the Liberal and Conservative parties. So, when the declaration says that we have to struggle for a single candidate against the system, we understand this to be the capitalist system, dominated by imperialism, which is responsible for the misery and oppression suffered by the working class and the people of Colombia.

4. Finally, we agree that everyone, without exception, can sign the national petition. But we are especially orienting to the workers, since they are the majority of the population and the most reliable militant base of support for our movement. Consequently, the appropriate slogan is: Half a Million Workers for Unity Against the Capitalist System. This slogan, we insist, while it in no way excludes those who are not workers, indicates those who constitute, and must constitute, the axis of leadership of our movement.

We want to reiterate that despite these differences we support the basic proposal in the Appeal. We agree with it, and we will do everything in our power to encourage the struggle that has begun -- understanding it as a struggle for the political independence of the class.

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