

December 29, 1977

TO THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE AND FIELD ORGANIZERS

The attached is a tendency declaration of a group in the PST (Colombia), (formerly the Socialist Bloc), who have broken with the Bolshevik Tendency.

The signers include some of the central leaders who founded the Socialist Bloc, the past PST (Colombia) representative in Europe, the current PST (Colombia) representative in Europe and the presidential candidate of the PST (Colombia).

Gus

Declaration of the Proletarian Democracy Tendency
and Counterreport on the Party Regime

Very important developments have just occurred in our international, in the Bolshevik Tendency, and in various national parties, especially in the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores in Colombia (former Socialist Bloc). In assessing the attitude of all the members and leaders of the international, these events are *crucial*. In the case of the PST, they are influencing its development in a *decisive* way.

The first outstanding item is the decision of the Leninist Trotskyist Faction and the International Majority Tendency to dissolve and accept a common framework of discussion in preparation for the Eleventh Congress of the Fourth International. This decision is a consequence, in our opinion, of a number of factors, the most important being a rise in the world revolution, mainly in Europe, and the resulting growth on an international scale of our world organization by hundreds and thousands of new members. This rise and growth poses an objective need to struggle unitedly to provide the Fourth with policies and a leadership conducive to centralizing the action of our movement on all levels. No one is under any illusion concerning the fact that the present leadership of the international, as well as that of the minorities, such as the dissolved LTF, are too limited politically to lead the Fourth. Likewise no one is under any illusion about the dissolution of factions necessarily implying unity of the forces in an automatic way, still less the disappearance of ideological-political differences, including *indecisive* matters. And we are aware *that entering into* the decision of the factions to dissolve ^{was} an attempt to seek political and organizational readjustments in face of defeats in the execution of *certain* policies. # ^

But what is decisive, what we must assess as Marxists and Trotskyists is the *vital* important aspect of creating the best possible conditions--through collective discussion, democracy and common action--^{*To promote*} the greatest unity and centralization; ^{*(This must be done)*} all _{C =} without impairing the necessary discussion,

criticism, and formation of ideological groups or tendencies within the framework of the Fourth International. More favorable conditions are being created for developing a policy and an international leadership better fitted to deal with the necessities and possibilities demanded by the present course of the world revolution.

The second outstanding item is the contrast between this positive fact and the deep crisis that has struck the up-until-recently dynamic Bolshevik Tendency. The tendency was formed with the correct claim of offering political alternatives and a leadership in face of the picture of crisis presented by our world movement, especially with regard to orientation for *building* Trotskyist parties with mass influence in those countries experiencing revolutionary upsurges. The Bolshevik Tendency formulated criticisms of the initial drafts of the document on Europe approved by the United Secretariat that were, in our opinion, correct as a whole. It proceeded in an equally correct way in its criticism of the ambiguous formulations of the LTF on the course of the Portuguese revolution and its political attitude in face of the Black revolution in Angola. As a whole these differences, so burning in themselves, justified the proposal to form a new tendency within the existing framework of the international.

Nonetheless, the Bolshevik Tendency exaggerated the class character of the differences not only polemically but in practical conclusions. It forgot to emphatically underline that the differences fell within the framework of Trotskyism and the Fourth International and it evaded a frank discussion in the leading bodies of the international, failing to present positive alternatives or to open the discussion in a collective way. It acted in a way that was not only factional but extremely sectarian, constantly alluding to the incurable or almost incurable character of the majority of the leaders of the international, including the present leadership of the SWP which it considered to be "*living on its* prestige" and compromised by involvement in morally condemnable affairs. It made Revista de América not only the organ of a public faction but a sectarian instrument of political combat. The necessity for a

principled and vigorous discussion was unfortunately equated with McCarthyism, the IMT was branded as Poumist, positions were misrepresented as in the case of the French LCR and the Spanish LCR (see the articles in Revista de América).

Comrade Moreno announced that a decision had been made to reply after the IEC meeting to the proposal to dissolve tendencies; the BT was transformed into a faction, which was equivalent to deepening still further the sectarian course that had been taken. In line with this, an image has been *projected* in the most demagogic way of the BT preparing to take over the leadership of the international; this was *done* at the last meeting of the tendency attended by delegates from the parties in Argentina, Peru, Panamá, Venezuela, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Ecuador (October 1977). In addition the thesis was offered that these tendencies had dissolved with the objective of forming an unprincipled united front against the BT and that the dissolution was a consequence of the pressure of bourgeois public opinion, mainly in Europe. We consider such a step to be most unfortunate and we hope that it will not be *carried through* in view of the new political *situation that has developed* in which the leaders of the BT can contribute to the discussions for the Eleventh Congress.

Proceeding further, the BT laid out tactical orientations, including some of the most *detailed* nature--reflecting a paternalistic approach to national leaderships of certain parties (Spain, Venezuela, Colombia) that resulted in the withdrawal of one of the groups of the BT in Spain, the one led by Lucas, and the withdrawal of Antonio and Yarak from both the BT and the international. The case of Antonio merits special attention, since he was the main leader of the Venezuelan party and the main person in charge of work for the BT in Spain. Antonio was presented by Comrade Moreno as a model Bolshevik leader and the prototype of a genuine ^erevolutionist. As shown by the documentation we have seen, Antonio was subjected to a process designed to destroy his good name and accused of setting up a faction against his own party. We lament Antonio's decision to leave

the Fourth and we will try to get him to return to its ranks; but this does not prevent us ^{from pointing out} -- on the contrary it ^{makes it} obligatory --

that the causes of the situation in which Antonio found himself were rooted in the deep deformations in method employed by Comrade Moreno in relation to the construction of a party and the treatment of national leaderships. Antonio states in his letter of resignation: "By means of the present note I want to record my break with the BT. The fundamental reason for this decision is the liquidationist work carried out by N. Moreno in the Venezuelan section of the Fourth International."

The leadership of the BT has not been guided by an effective collective leadership but has been exercised ^{by Comrade Moreno} in a personal way and with a paternalistic character.

Changes in decisions, orientation of line, disposition of resources--all of this is done outside of the leadership bodies, or with merely formal consultation. This dynamic leads to a practice of splitting national sections and an ultrafactionalist and sectarian conception of constructing the world party.

The third important event concerns the Colombian Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores which has undergone a significant growth. In addition a process of fusion has been opened on the basis of a political agreement that makes the fusion possible within the framework of a united electoral campaign. Despite this, the intervention of Comrade Moreno and a sector of the leadership of the Argentine PST in the Colombian PST by means of bureaucratic and administrative methods has created a situation that has come close to splitting the party and in fact threatens to liquidate the party. A systematic campaign has been opened designed to destroy leaders of the party through mechanically transposing the class struggle ^o into the party and by administrative means artificially suppressing the ideological differences, characterizing these leaders permanently as petty-bourgeois, making them appear to be ingrained factionalists, and promoting a campaign of monstrous personal slanders against them. On this aspect we would like to point out at least two

scandalous cases: the effort to destroy the political *character* of Comrade Socorro Ramirez, promoted personally by Comrade Moreno as was amply demonstrated before hundreds of participants (more than 300) at the recent congress of the PST. Comrade Moreno publicly branded the most important ^{Trotskyist} leader

in our country and the indisputable symbol of the mass movement as a petty-bourgeois student type; he resorted in addition to threats and blackmail of all kinds and accused her of forming part of a secret faction against which he had organized a "pro-Bolshevization" faction. In addition he resorted desperately to trying to promote alternatives for the presidential candidate by means of flattering other figures. This attempt was roundly defeated by the spectacular reply of thousands of workers who came to hear Comrade Socorro and to speak with her as the presidential candidate, and by the adherence of the LCR [Liga Comunista Revolucionaria], the OCR [Organización Comunista Ruptura], and the URS [Unión Revolucionaria Socialista] to the campaign. Moreno even carried on this campaign of detraction internationally as has been confirmed by all the Colombian comrades who are members of our party in Europe. At this Central Committee meeting an attempt is being made to prolong the penalty imposed on Socorro which if successful would amount to a genuine expulsion. The same goes for the attempt, personally promoted by Comrade Moreno, to politically destroy Comrade Ricardo Sanchez. In his immense mountain of slanders, Moreno has gone so far as to *portray* Ricardo as a racist. Behind the back of the party, Moreno promoted the actual expulsion of Comrade Ricardo from his duties in the leadership of the PST. Moreno even barred him from attending the party Congress to reply to the "new" charges mounted with respect to the secret faction led by Ricardo. Moreno's letter of "accusations" and slanders against Ricardo, which was shown to a limited number of members, its ~~wide~~ *restricted* circulation being ~~restricted~~, *reduced to excerpts*; but we are going to ~~circulate~~ *bring it to the attention not only of the whole party and of Colombian Trotskyism but of our world movement.* In the letter the singular method is employed of calling the slanders "pro-

visional," part of a "first draft." Comrade Ricardo is ready to have his conduct judged by a tribunal named by the bodies of the international and to accept the verdict pronounced by it. The political and moral vindication of our leaders is for us a matter of principle, as the tradition of the Trotskyist movement teaches.

A conception of deformed democratic centralism is being advanced that comes close to bureaucratic centralism, a conception similar to the one held by Zinoviev, bordering on the worst justifications advanced by the Stalinists. The metaphor "the party acts like an army" has been made the guide line of this conception. It is forgotten that the party acts like an army but in relation to the class struggle in an absolutely energetic and centralized way. And nothing is more foreign to a Leninist and Trotskyist party than the use of army language within it, or the concept of a camarilla implicit in the military. The notions of hierarchy and authority residing in the leading bodies are based on the political reality of recognition by the party ranks. The authority emanating from these bodies is that given by a commonly respected policy. The recognition of Lenin's revolutionary leadership was based on his capacity, knowledge, energy, and experience and not on the fact that he belonged to a directing apparatus.

Moreno proceeded then to eliminate political discussion, branding it as swamp-like and studentist in character. Necessary information on the contradictions among the leaders was hidden from the party. Centralism was carried to unheard of lengths. The step was clearly taken of constituting a faction against the party. To this is to be added the fact that the Argentine members responded to their own leadership and in actuality constituted a parallel leadership above the leadership bodies and appearing as superimposed on the party. The party congress itself lost all political authenticity when it was declared to be "sui generis" (???), that is, abnormal. Abnormal because it was not proceeded by a normal democratic debate--three months--and because the documents themselves were presented, as in the

case of the statutes and the Political Report, a week before the congress, and even on the opening day of the deliberations. Democracy was cut down still further when the congress was prevented from acting as a sovereign body and priority was given to the interests of a group that demanded absolute loyalty to these interests. With this objective, the phantasm of a secret faction was created and various comrades were manipulated, being fed all kinds of false information that converted them into secretarians. A political and organizational crisis was thus precipitated, and in fact of a new avalanche of persecution against worker leaders and cadres of the leadership of the party the crisis acquired mounting dimensions.

It was forgotten that democratic centralism is defined as a dynamic reality dependent on the relation of the party to the class struggle. Likewise forgotten was the excellent teaching of Trotsky:

"The regime of a party does not fall ready-made from the sky but is formed gradually in the struggle. A political line predominates over the regime. First of all, it is necessary to define strategic problems and tactical methods correctly in order to solve them. The organizational forms should correspond to the strategy and tactic. Only a correct policy can guarantee a healthy party regime. This, it is understood, does not mean that the development of the party does not raise organizational problems as such. But it means that the formula for democratic centralism must inevitably find a different expression in the parties of different countries and in different stages of development of one and the same party.

"Democracy and centralism do not at all find themselves at an invariable ratio to one another. Everything depends on the concrete circumstances, on the political situation in the country, on the strength of the party and its experience, on the general level of its members, on the authority the leadership has succeeded in winning. Before a conference, when the problem is one of formulating a political line for the next period, democracy triumphs over centralism. When the problem is political action, centralism subordinates democracy to itself. Democracy again

asserts its rights when the party feels the need to examine critically its own actions." ("On Democratic Centralism--A Few Words About the Party Regime." Writings of Leon Trotsky [1937-38], page 90. Emphasis added.)

The concept of party practice fostered by Comrade Moreno deviates far from this precise methodological orientation. Hence a regime of administrative penalties and political persecution has become primary today in the PST.

But in addition a propagandistic and apparatus concept of the party has been fostered. Under pretext of "Bolshevizing it" the apparatus has been placed above the party. The party has been converted practically into a *business* agency, having been subjected to three financial campaigns in one year, an unusual occurrence in a political party. One of Moreno's favorite phrases is "Finances are the thermometer of the situation in the party." Not the political line as Trotsky said, ^{the party's} nor ^{the party's} rooting itself in the working class, nor recruiting new cadres... But finances: such a conception of centralism, such apparatus deformations have also brought deformations in the application of the party's policies and the erroneous formulation of new policies for the mass movement. Today it is perfectly clear that vacillation and inconsistency were shown in the struggle against the reactionary politics of López, especially against the little constituent assembly which required, as it still does, systematic denunciation in the working-class movement. Today it is perfectly clear how totally mistaken was the characterization of the Civil Strike of September 14 as superstructural, and how mistaken was the failure to mobilize the party for broad and audacious engagement in the strike. Today it is perfectly clear that the dynamics of the mass movement was underestimated and opportunities like the national mobilization of November 18 were not grasped. If a balance sheet is drawn of the main strike struggles in the past six months, we find ourselves facing the very unfortunate fact of the party's failure to participate in them. The case of the oil workers strike constitutes a direct accusation, since *this strike represented a unique opportunity* in the workers movement in recent years.

In face of these facts of political reality we have

presented alternatives that have been rejected and hidden from the party or misrepresented. The regime has even reached the point of censoring from the press political positions on national policies in the mass movement.

There is an extremely grave fact that involves the moral standing of Trotskyism itself. A campaign was launched in the name of the party to collect funds to aid in setting up the Pluma publishing house in Bogotá. In the leading bodies of the PST, Comrade Moreno held the ambiguous and contradictory position of saying that the publishing house was a party institution when it was a matter of collecting funds and saying that it was a commercial outfit when financial reports were demanded. At the moment Pluma has been subjected to various financial and juridical actions in which the management of the enterprise, irresponsible to say the least, has come under scrutiny. In face of a recent action freezing operations, the Executive Committee of the party has been called on to support the publishing house unconditionally. Such a demand is completely unacceptable. What corresponds to Trotsky's method is the total independence of the party *from* any kind of financial apparatus, since the party cannot run the risk of engaging in financial enterprises. The party can only intervene indirectly through agents. The identification of Pluma with the PST has been converted into a dead weight *on* the prestige of the party; it is obvious that we *do not approve* either morally or politically ^{*of*} the adventurous management of Comrade Moreno in financial questions. On this, in addition, we are asking that detailed accounts be made available to the party in relation to the funds of the PST both as to what was turned over to the publishing house and what the funds were used for.

We consider ourselves to be main promoters of the effort to make our party a detachment of the international--without this implying any demerit to other comrades ^{*who were*} radically opposed to this--we make this declaration after having consciously thought out all the implications, of having waited for a change and a rectification of the positions that we have criticized.

The struggle for the unity of our party, placed in danger by the divisionism of Comrade Moreno, is an objective to which we have committed ourselves. The method that we propose to overcome the contradictions is the one that makes our tradition Trotskyist. We seek a democratic discussion leading up to a special congress of the PST in the first week of March. We ask for the immediate repeal of all penalties and the *reinstatement* of Comrades Ricardo, Gustavo, Gladys, and Socorro in their posts on the Executive Committee.

For this we appeal for the formation of the Tendencia Democracia Proletaria (Proletarian Democracy Tendency), which *will* undertake the obligation of struggling for the following points as an alternative to the present crisis within the party:

1. We resign from participating in the Bolshevik Tendency.
2. We greet the process of dissolving the factions and tendencies within the international.
3. We support the process of fusion between the PST-C and the LCR and call for a fusion congress to be held in the last week of March.
4. We assert the right of our party to *enter into and maintain relations independently* with the world bodies in accordance with the statutes of the international. Within the framework of a general policy on an international level, we assert the right of our party to apply national tactics and forge its own leadership on the basis of its own direct experience and without a substitute of any kind. Internationalism ^{does} _^ not mean substituting *for* national leaderships and *liquidating them*.
5. We hold that the method of resolving the contradictions in the PST-C and guaranteeing unity lies in calling a special congress with the following agenda: a. Internal Party Regime. b. Relations between the PST-C and the BT.
6. To struggle for the lifting of the *sanctions*.

Bogotá, December 9, 1977.

Signed: Gustavo-Gladys-Ricardo-Socorro-Jaime-Ciro.