

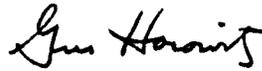
14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 1001

February 14, 1978

Dear Comrades,

The attached letter dated January 25, 1978, from the Executive Committee of the Colombian PST to the United Secretariat, is included as part of the informational materials related to the plenum discussion on the situation in the world movement. The translation was not available earlier to be included in the other mailing enclosed and this article is not listed on the cover letter.

Comradely,


Gus Horowitz

(Translation)

Bogotá, January 25, 1978

Comrades
United Secretariat of the Fourth International
Brussels

Dear Comrades,

On the basis of the telephone call we received, it seemed to us that you had taken a definitive decision concerning our request to postpone discussion on the internal situation of the Colombian PST to the March United Secretariat meeting. Our request is based on the absolute impossibility of a delegation of our Executive Committee making a trip to Europe at the present time because of the heavy tasks we have in relation to the municipal elections, which will take place in less than a month, and due to financial difficulties we're undergoing after six months of an electoral campaign for which our party has shouldered 95% of the expenses. From the conversation with Comrade Robs, however, we had the impression that our request was being rejected. At a meeting with the secretariat of our party today, Comrade Riel informed us that the discussion on the internal situation of the Colombian PST would not be postponed, even if our party could not be present. Faced with this situation, we are communicating our position in written form.

1. In our opinion, the refusal to postpone the discussion on Colombian means the possibility of new maneuvers by the United Secretariat majority against our party. We learned from Jean Pierre that you intend to launch terrible accusations against us. You know that it will be impossible for us to answer, but you are going ahead on the basis of factional, antidemocratic criteria. For us, the urgent problems of the Colombian situation are those of the class struggle and within this the problem of the electoral campaign. Our party, supported by the Bolshevik Tendency, adopted the line of "workers and socialist candidates," which has been accepted by all the Colombian Trotskyists; but the United Secretariat does not seem to be in a hurry to discuss this and to draw the necessary lessons for the Fourth International. The aim of such a discussion, which according to the Bureau cannot be postponed, cannot be to help us overcome our problems, but to justify the already-announced propa-

ganda campaign against our party and the Bolshevik Tendency, with which the United Secretariat delegation to our December CC attempted to threaten, intimidate, and blackmail us.

2. This factional attitude on the part of the United Secretariat majority is nothing but a further step in your political activity in Colombia. It can be said that the entire policy of the IMT was aimed at dividing and weakening Colombian Trotskyism, instead of unifying and strengthening it. You began with the visit of Comrade Mandel, who supported a line of unification "in two stages," which was completely sectarian and discriminated against our party. This line, along with hopes for building a pro-IMT section stronger than our party through an unprincipled unification, completely failed, since the LCR was paralyzed by internal battles. The disaster was so clear that Comrade Mandel did not come back to Colombia again, and he was replaced by Comrade Riel.

Comrade Riel made a very progressive step -- although not self-critical : he recognized the political and organizational failure of the IMT's line in Colombia and recognized the political and organizational victory of our party and the Bolshevik Tendency. Therefore, his orientation was to try to save what remained of this sector. For this purpose, he was obliged to help split it and rid it of the dead weight of the most ultraleft wing (the ex-LOC) and to help line these forces up with our electoral policy and with a project of unification of Colombian Trotskyists which recognized the PST as its political and organizational backbone. Unfortunately, it is now clear that these positive steps by Comrade Riel had been determined by the conjunctural situation; as soon as he thought that a situation favorable to factionalism existed once again, he returned to his old practices and methods. In this, he enjoyed the support and collaboration of the ex-LTF, represented by Comrade Hansen. It is already possible to make an initial balance sheet of the activity of this unprincipled bloc which today is the majority of the leadership of the International. They have provoked and achieved a split in our party, which is one of the most dynamic and promising in the Fourth International; the first practical task of the bloc which now leads our International has been to try to liquidate the PST. From these first steps, we can foresee the future dynamic of this bloc.

3. The United Secretariat delegation to our December Central Committee meeting was perfectly well aware of the characteristics of the group of comrades who split from our party. Its internal and public factionalism had been sufficiently proven. However, the United Secretariat delegation did not come to Colombia to call on the factional group to accept the political and organizational resolutions which had been unanimously approved two months earlier at the founding congress of the PST (resolutions which were so correct that Comrade Riel himself defended them in the LCR). Neither did the delegation come to push the factional group to respect one of the basic rules of democratic centralism, the acceptance by the minority of the decisions of the majority. For Hansen and Riel, the public distribution of PST and Fourth International internal material at the theater where the national electoral convention took place did not deserve to be condemned. None of the three United Secretariat delegates defended Comrade Moreno, who was charged in a slanderous and irresponsible way by the factional group with using money to buy leaders of our party. Neither did they defend our leaders charged with having sold out. No one defended the Trotskyist publishing house, attacked with bourgeois methods by the bourgeois Jorge Posada Lalinde, who "happens to be" a friend of the factional group and the companion of one of its members, Socorro Ramirez.

The United Secretariat delegates went so far as to theoretically justify the anti-Argentine reaction which is peculiar to the factional group of Ricardo Sánchez and Socorro Ramírez. The hackneyed theses of the destruction of cadres, the annihilation of "thinking" leaders, of repression and substitution in the national leadership by Argentine "Morenists" were clearly supported by Hansen, who was the first defender of the factionalists. The comrades of the Argentine PST were the main target of the United Secretariat delegates; the attacks against them were launched in such a way as to endorse the chauvinist campaign that has recently developed. The new morality which seems to inspire the United Secretariat majority is not to unambiguously condemn the irresponsible and wild charges against experienced comrades who have proven themselves if not once a thousand times in the most acute class struggle under the bloodiest repression. On the contrary, their morality is to refrain from taking a position, to insinuate doubts, to ask for an inquiry commission -- for which the slanderers themselves don't dare to ask, since they know very well that they cannot prove their charges -- and, in fact, become accusers themselves. All this conforms to the theory of "Argentine colonization," a theory which only proves their political inability to lead our International and their even greater inability to answer the criticisms and political alternatives presented by the Bolshevik Tendency more than a year ago.

4. As was inevitable, the desperate factionalism of people who for reasons of prestige want to keep the leadership of the International at any price despite their proven inability to play this role in the case of such key events in the class struggle as Argentina and Bolivia earlier, and later Portugal, Angola, and Spain, led not only to an unprincipled front among Trotskyists but also to complicity and collaboration with bourgeois and lumpen elements. Comrade Riel took the personal responsibility of inviting the bourgeois Jorge Posada to attend the plenum of the Mexican PRT, while knowing that this man had attempted to rob Editorial Pluma (as is clear from his own declaration, which is attached), legally froze its operation, and attempted to provoke its collapse; he was also aware that the December Central Committee of the PST had declared him an enemy of the PST and the Fourth International. Adopting an openly factional attitude and endorsing this bourgeois element, Comrade Jean Pierre didn't take into consideration the position taken by an organization which claims allegiance to the Fourth International; he supported an individual challenged by this organization, one who had not been defended by any Trotskyist in Colombia or anywhere else in the world.

Even worse is the campaign launched in the bourgeois press by a lumpen element like Umberto Valverde, a campaign against the comrades of the Argentine PST who were forced by the Videla coup to come to Colombia, and in particular against Comrade Moreno (we attach clippings on this). This journalist, who is a personal friend of Ricardo Sánchez and other members of the factional group, presents himself, with the help of this group, as a member of the Colombian PST, which he never was. He has launched a real police-style crusade against the Argentine comrades. The sharply chauvinist character of this campaign is obvious. The allusions to robbery, "mafia-like" conduct, use of arms, etc. are not only an appeal to the nationalist backwardness of the Colombian masses, but also to a direct intervention by the repressive state apparatus. In a meeting held on the 25th with Comrade Riel (a tape recording of which is available to the United Secretariat), we asked that as a United Secretariat member he intervene with the LCR and the factional group to get them to make a statement denouncing Valverde's police-style and chauvinist

campaign. Comrade Riel refused to make such an intervention, demonstrating his complicity with this element and the lumpen and police-style methodology he uses, which are useful for Riel's basic aim: to liquidate the PST.

Finally, a third element related to the moral decomposition of the United Secretariat delegation and more particularly of Comrade Riel is the failure to answer the charges against Comrade Moreno. Riel's answer, according to which it was necessary to make an inquiry, only results in encouraging the slanderers to carry on with their slanders. Until now, nobody has dared make formal charges against Comrade Moreno; the factionalists limited themselves to private and public gossip. They themselves didn't dare ask for an inquiry commission on Comrade Moreno to prove the alleged maneuver of buying leaders and other types of things. They know that in the last six months Comrade Moreno has spent barely a month in Colombia, given the tasks he had to carry out for the Argentine PST and the Bolshevik Tendency, which compelled him to travel constantly. They know that the result of any inquiry commission would be to unmask these slanderers and to place them outside of the International. Comrade Jean Pierre, assuming an attitude that appeared neutral but was de facto absolutely factional, stated that he would ask the United Secretariat to send an inquiry commission to Colombia, in spite of the fact that there are no formal charges. This attitude is completely inadmissible. We cannot accept a commission which investigates rumors. If Comrade Jean Pierre asks for a commission of inquiry, it's because he agrees with the charges. Thus, he has to present them and prove them. If he doesn't do so, Comrade Riel himself is a slanderer and deserves to be treated as such in the International.

5. For all these reasons: for developing a factional policy aimed at liquidating our party; for having been complicit by their silence with slanders against the Argentine comrades, against Comrade Moreno, and against the leaders of the Colombian PST; for having made an alliance with a bourgeois who tried to destroy a Trotskyist publishing house; for having been de facto accomplices of a lumpen who is conducting a public chauvinist and police-style campaign in the bourgeois press; for having encouraged a petty-bourgeois and factional current to break with the party -- for all these reasons, we consider the United Secretariat delegation composed of comrades Riel, Hansen, and Galarza morally impeached and thus unable to give any kind of report to the United Secretariat on the situation of our party. For the same reason, we would have liked to be present at the United Secretariat to expose the political and moral decomposition of these comrades before the entire Fourth International. If the United Secretariat does not want to sink as low as comrades Riel, Hansen, and Galarza have sunk; if the United Secretariat wants to prove to the International that its present majority is not an unprincipled front against the Bolshevik Tendency and against our party; if it wants to make clear that it does not support the alliance which its representatives made with lumpens and bourgeois; if it wants to take its distance from chauvinist, police-style methods which the factional group and the United Secretariat delegates employed, the United Secretariat must accept the proposals made by the PST Executive Committee, which we repeat here:

a) postpone the discussion on Colombia until the next meeting of the United Secretariat, at which a delegation from the Colombian PST will be present;

b) publicly repudiate and declare an enemy of the Fourth International the lumpen Umberto Valverde and his chauvinist, police-

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style campaign against the exiles of the Argentine PST in Colombia;

c) publicly repudiate and declare an enemy of the Fourth International the bourgeois Jorge Posada and his attempt to liquidate a Trotskyist publishing house;

d) demand that the LCR and the self-proclaimed "Proletarian Democracy Tendency" make a public statement along the same lines indicated in points b and c, as well as call an immediate halt to the chauvinist campaign they are carrying out, which is endangering the security of the Argentine comrades in Colombia (see Internal Bulletin #1 of the Proletarian Democracy Tendency, attached);

e) demand that all those who, at the founding congress of the PST, at the December CC, and at various meetings launched moral charges against Comrade Moreno and the leadership of the Colombian PST make their charges in writing within one month's time. If they don't do so, to sanction as slanderers all the comrades who made them, on the basis of tape recordings that the PST leadership can provide which show that such charges have been made;

f) call upon the self-proclaimed "Proletarian Democracy Tendency" to accept the discipline of the majority of the leadership and the vast majority of the rank and file of the Colombian PST, verified at the founding congress, at the December CC, and at regional assemblies organized later;

g) ask the Executive Committee of the LCR to stop its factional orientation and to return to the unification agreement, which had previously been reached and which was approved by Comrade Riel;

h) support the electoral campaign and condemn all public attacks and sabotage of the PST's activities.

Fraternally,
Executive Committee
Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores