

May 9, 1978

To the Political Committee

Dear Comrades,

As background material for the world movement report at the PC meeting of May 11, attached are two items from Colombia:

1. The text of a petition appealing for 500,000 signatures in favor of a single presidential candidate against the system.
2. A statement by the PST(BT) explaining why it has signed and is campaigning in favor of this petition campaign.

Comradely,



Gus

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

\* \* \*

## HALF A MILLION COLOMBIANS FOR A SINGLE CANDIDATE AGAINST THE SYSTEM

"I am signing this declaration calling for a single candidates 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 candidates of the oligarchy and the bosses, who stand for continuing 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.

\* \* \*

[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 he 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.]

\* \* \*

[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 political 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 restructuring 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.

\* \* \*