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OCT 17 1979

Destinataires : Sections et organisations sympathisantes;  
- membres du CEI et du SU

Expéditeur : Bureau du Secrétariat unifié

Objet : Informations sur la Brigade Simon Bolivar

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Le 9.10.1979

Chers camarades,

Lors de sa dernière réunion, le SU a adopté une motion décidant de la publication d'un bulletin international spécial d'informations sur la Brigade Simon Bolivar.

Pour donner dans l'immédiat de premiers éléments sur cette question, nous vous envoyons ci-joint un "Memorandum sur la Brigade Simon Bolivar".

Salutations révolutionnaires,

Le Bureau du SU

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To: Sections and sympathizing organizations; IEC and USec members  
From: United Secretariat Bureau  
Re: Information on the Simon Bolivar Brigade

October 9, 1979

Dear Comrades:

At its last meeting, the USec adopted a motion to publish a special international information bulletin on the Simon Bolivar Brigade.

To provide the initial facts on this question as soon as possible, we are sending you enclosed herewith a "Memorandum on the Simon Bolivar Brigade."

Revolutionary greetings,  
The United Secretariat Bureau

Memorandum on the Simon Bolivar Brigade (SBB)

Given the importance that the question of the SBB has taken on in the discussion within the Fourth International, and the one-sided information being spread by the Bolshevik Faction (BF), we felt it was necessary to explain a number of facts underlying the decision taken in this matter at the last meeting of the United Secretariat (see motion to be published shortly in IP/I.).

1. The SBB was formed on June 12, 1979, on the initiative of the Bolshevik Faction and the PST (Colombia). The call for a general strike had been issued on June 4 by the FSLN; on June 10 a spontaneous uprising broke out in Managua.

2. The PST presented this proposal to form the brigade to the Nicaragua solidarity committee in Colombia. The FSLN representative in the committee stated his disagreement with the proposal. He asked that political solidarity continue and be stepped up, and that material aid be stepped up (including a doctors' brigade). For tactical reasons, the FSLN did not want to integrate non-Nicaraguan units, which it did not control, into the fighting, especially since these units did not have adequate technical training. This was also the answer given to the Salvador Allende Brigade formed by the Chilean SP (CNR) in exile.

3. The SBB's declared objective was "military support to the FSLN." In fact, the operation by the brigade stemmed from a sectarian conception whose goal was first and foremost to build up the PST's prestige, as confirmed by the July 13, 1979 issue of El Socialista, and to provide grist for the BF's mill. Proof of this is provided by a PST internal bulletin, which contains the following: "Calling for the formation of the SBB helped activate nationwide and continentwide solidarity in the development of the Nicaraguan revolution. This was a big political success for the leadership of the BF, legitimizing it as a real leadership alternative for the FI in face of the disastrous policy of the majority. We have an opportunity to strike very hard at all sectors of the left that have a policy of betrayal ... in this sense, we should use the present situation to the fullest to strike at the CP, FIRMES, Maoism, and the PSR." (Emphasis added.) The PSR is the other sympathizing organization of the Fourth International in Colombia.

4. The BF took the initiative of forming the SBB and throwing itself into an international public factional operation outside of all the elected leading bodies of the Fourth International.

5. The formation of the SBB was done in the name of the FSLN, despite the position of the latter. The PST collected funds, using "Sandinist coupons" with the Front's colors. Thus, well before it used the same method in Nicaragua, the PST wrapped itself in the FSLN flag to collect funds.

So-called "Commander" Kemel George, a member of the PST and leader of the SBB, spoke in Mexico in the name of the FSLN. This prompted a public disclaimer by the FSLN.

6. To give itself cover, the SBB used a letter from Eden Pastora ("Commander Zero"), dated June 27. This letter in no way represented recognition by the FSLN. What's more, the SBB used the services of Plutarco Hernandez, a former FSLN representative. The latter made provocative statements which implied that once the FSLN forces had finished their job in Nicaragua, they would go to El Salvador. These statements made necessary a denial by Tomas Borge, who stressed that the FSLN no longer had anything to do with Plutarco Hernandez.

7. In its bulletin dated August 1, 1979, the BF admitted that it was after July 26 that the SBB entered into official contact with the FSLN: "As a result of these incidents (of Thursday the 26th), the SBB's relations with the provisional government and the FSLN became official and legitimate."

Nevertheless, Comrade Medina, from the PST leadership, stated in the presence of P. Camejo, on June 14, in the PST headquarters in Cartagena (Colombia), that the formation of the SBB, the fundraising campaign, etc., had been carried out with the agreement of the FSLN.

8. According to a report by a leader of the Chilean SP (CNR), a member of the Salvador Allende Brigade (a brigade that was in Costa Rica at the

same time as the SBB, and that had official contacts with it), the SBB arrived in Costa Rica with about 45 members. According to this report, it seems that the FSLN was opposed to the SBB entering Nicaragua as an independent unit; only a few members were integrated into the southern front, with Pastora's consent, but against the judgment of Borge, Ortega, etc. Among them were militants who were killed in the fighting. Thus, after having waited in Costa Rica, the SBB as a unit arrived in Managua two days after the July 19 victory.

However, on June 20, in front of 260 persons, in the PST headquarters in Bogota, a PST leader, Eduardo Baragan, stated that the SBB was fighting in Nicaragua.

9. In the June 29, 1979 issue of El Socialista, the PST weekly, a photograph showed the "first comrade of the Colombian PST who was incorporated into the fighting in Nicaragua." This "comrade of the PST," named Miguel Angel Palomino, not only does not seem to be a member of the PST, but had many wrangles with the FSLN (before the SBB business) because he took part in the kidnapping of an FSLN political educator, Ramen. Palomino, at Pastora's order, was then forced to leave Nicaraguan territory.

10. On July 26, in a meeting with leaders of the BF in Costa Rica, it was reported to P. Camejo that the SBB was working "clandestinely" in Nicaragua, and that to do so, it was acting in the name of the FSLN. The SBB always presented itself as a military unit and never openly claimed to be Trotskyist, even though many leaders of the FSLN knew exactly what the story was. During this meeting, the BF leaders also stated that the SBB had fought, but could not name either the date, the place, or who had taken part in the combat!

11. Once installed in Nicaragua after the victory, the SBB used a headquarters in Managua that the FSLN did not object to their using (according to the FSLN leaders themselves, and even though they were aware of the SBB's activities). The SBB used every means to identify itself with the FSLN. On August 1, Camilo (a leader of the PST and SBB), wearing an FSLN uniform, explained to a representative of the Fourth International that their policy was to outflank the FSLN and to organize trade unions, but that the Sandinists were hostile to their policy.

In the name of the FSLN, the SBB tried to build up its own organization, using a multitude of outflanking tactics to do so, which were made that much easier by the fact that it covered itself with the prestige of the FSLN.

The SBB went into the factories as a military unit of the FSLN and organized trade unions, "electing" trade-union officers in a manipulative way.

According to a report by a member of the leadership of the LCR (Spain), some of these trade unions were affiliated not only to the Sandinist Workers Federation (CST), but also to the SBB. That is perhaps what explains why the BF's internal bulletin of August claims that the SBB has 1,000 to 1,500 members in Nicaragua. Manipulation and deception of the workers in all forms--that indeed is the SBB's method of operation.

Using similar methods, presenting themselves as the FSLN and claiming to act on behalf of its national leadership, a group of SBB members established itself in Bluefields, a small remote city on the Atlantic coast.

Having installed several of their members at the head of the CDSs and the local militia that was being formed, they systematically tried to outflank the national policy of the FSLN on the basis of this masquerade, which ended when the FSLN sent a special column to Bluefields, and the "brigadistas," discredited in the eyes of the inhabitants, left town.

12. According to information given to a member of the United Secretariat by a leader of the FSLN, the SBB, in the course of the few contacts it had with members of the FSLN, declared its "discipline" and "respect for the FSLN's revolutionary leadership," while in the factories it said that the FSLN was against the workers' interests. Furthermore, doubts about the SBB soon began to be expressed within the FSLN because of the SBB's rela-

tions with Plutarco Hernandez, the fundraising campaign carried out in the name of the FSLN in Latin America, but of which the FSLN never saw the results, the fact that the SBB used an FSLN seal (the initials "FSLN" were in big letters, with "Simon Bolivar International Brigade" written underneath), and because of the methods used to organize workers into trade unions.

13. The SBB was summoned by way of the newspapers, radio and television to a meeting with the FSLN national leadership. According to the report by the member of the Chilean SP ((CNR) who was present, and according to reports by members of the Fourth International, the following facts emerge from that meeting. The SBB mobilized workers to "put pressure" on the FSLN at the time it went to the "bunker" to meet with the Joint National Directorate of the Front (except for Borge, who was in Havana). The SBB had told the workers involved that they were going to discuss their wage demands with the Front, not the question of the SBB. This was a crude type of manipulation.

At the meeting itself, a USec delegate was prevented from attending, even though the FSLN leadership had agreed that he should attend. The SBB leadership violently and publicly opposed this.

During the meeting, the FSLN leaders complained about the SBB's activities and stated that they wanted to clear up the facts concerning the SBB. Members of the SBB who were not members of the PST said that they agreed with criticisms made by the FSLN leaders.

The FSLN leadership stressed, on the one hand, the necessity for the SBB, as an international brigade, not to include Nicaraguans in its ranks, and on the other hand, for it to place itself under the command of the Joint National Directorate of the FSLN, inasmuch as it openly claimed to belong to the FSLN and passed itself off as a military unit of the FSLN.

In addition, the FSLN explained its political orientation and plans along the general lines of its public statements.

According to the report by the member of the Chilean SP ((CNR), a leader of the PST spoke shortly afterward on the question of the foreign debt. He proposed that Russian, Chinese, and Cuban workers and those from all the workers states donate a day's wages to Nicaragua, which would make it possible to pay a big part of the foreign debt.

This was taken as a provocation by the leaders of the FSLN, who raised their voices. The meeting was suspended, and it was announced that another meeting would take place later.

14. After this meeting with the FSLN, the members of the Chilean SP ((CNR)--which included Trotskyists--let the leaders of the SBB know that they favored dissolution of the SBB, in view of the problems that might arise from its continued existence. They pointed out that the FSLN might attack them as "provocateurs."

After this, the members of the Chilean SP (CNR)--who were collaborating with the SBB--broke with it and left Nicaragua so as not to provoke clashes with the FSLN.

At the beginning of August, Comrade Moreno, during a telephone conversation with Comrade Duret, in the presence of a member of the BF leadership, indicated that the SBB would take a similar position in the event that confrontations arose between it and the FSLN leadership.

15. On August 16, a second meeting took place between members of the SBB and FSLN. The SBB members waited several hours at the place where they had been told to appear, and were then transported by bus to the Managua airport and transferred to Panama.

According to various reports, it appears that Panamanian police (who are helping to instruct the new police force in Nicaragua) collaborated with the FSLN forces to carry out the transfer of the SBB members to Panama. In Panama, some of them were detained and beaten. The FSLN, in a short communique, denied having beaten members of the SBB, which is confirmed by the report by the member of the Chilean SP (CNR)). This report explicitly states: "without being mistreated, they were put on the bus."

16. In the August 24, August 31 and September 7 issues of El Socialista, there is no article denouncing the "tortures" that the Sandinist

in the United Secretariat meeting that no campaign had been undertaken by the organization adhering to the BF (the PRT in Costa Rica) against the "imprisonment" (in their words) of members of the SBB who wound up there after being deported.

The SBB was dissolved at a public meeting in Colombia. In its internal bulletin No. 87, the PST continues its ultrasectarian course. It states: "We must launch a big political offensive around the SBB, against our eternal enemies (CP, FIRMES, PSR, MOIR), who are now supporting the bourgeoisie and imperialism." (Emphasis added.) The PST is going to have some problems in Colombia, since some trade-union organizations that had contributed to the SBB are demanding an accounting of its finances, charging that the money was raised under false pretenses.

This initial summary of the facts of the BF's entryism into a revolution outlines a policy that has dealt a severe blow to Trotskyism and to the Fourth International in the region, and in Latin America in general. This factional and sectarian initiative on the part of the SBB also makes the development of the Fourth International's campaign in solidarity with the Nicaraguan revolution more difficult.

Nevertheless, it is by developing our activities to the fullest in this campaign that we can counteract the negative effects of the initiatives of the BF and SBB.