

# **Report Submitted to the Confederal Committee of the CNT**

**by Delegate Angel Pestaña regarding his Conduct at the Second Congress of  
the Third International**

Angel Pestaña

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# I

A series of news reports, each more confusing and contradictory than the previous one, began to arrive from Russia and circulated throughout Europe during the last days of 1917.

No one was unaware of the fact that czarism had fallen in March of the same year, but this only made the news reports more shocking, as they spoke of a new revolutionary movement, and there was no way to be sure whether this heralded a step forward or a step backward for the Russian people.

How could one deliver oneself from the doubts and the worries that such news had sown in the minds of those of us who had breathed easy knowing that czarism had 'gone to a better place'? Shocked, we all asked ourselves: "What is now taking place in the great country of the czars, land of injustice and tyranny, but also of gallant and sublime gestures?" The people, tired of suffering under a new tyranny, had overthrown the regime that was attempting to impose that tyranny.

From that moment on our curiosity about what was going on in the country of the endless steppes was insatiable. Soon, unofficial reports attributed to government agencies from all over the world assumed the responsibility for telling us what had happened there.

In Russia, they said, a new revolutionary movement without any historical precedents has emerged. The capitalist regime has been definitively overthrown, and has been replaced by communism.

We did not need to know more than that. The official and unofficial reports were enough for us to declare that we were unconditional defenders of the Russian Revolution. At the same time, the bourgeoisie, realizing the impending danger, declared that it was the inveterate enemy of the Russian Revolution and fought against it with fire and sword.

The battle was on between the defenders and the opponents of the Russian Revolution. Friends and enemies lectured us about the good and the true.

Some said they were appalled and horrified by such a spectacle. In their view, the Russians were not revolutionaries, but just murderers. Crime, murder, robbery, arson, looting, pillage; everything that a horde of savages could imagine in order to satisfy their odious instincts, had been put into practice by those who seized the government and deposed the mandarins of the Kerensky regime.

According to the other side, nothing could be more beautiful. The people, tired of suffering under a hateful, age-old tyranny, had taken up arms and, like a tornado whipping up a dust storm, had swept away what had seemed so strongly entrenched that it almost made one believe that it had roots that reached the center of the earth.

The wealth that had previously belonged to the caste of the privileged was declared to be common property.

The palaces, once their former residents had been evicted, were occupied by people who had until then lived in disgusting pigsties.

In the factories, the engineers and managers were treated just like ordinary workers. The tyranny they had exercised until then became a matter of history. Instead of being the representatives of a master who amassed wealth without thinking about anything else except to enjoy the fruits of the labor of others, they were now the representatives of the common interest, the interest of the people.

The land, so often irrigated with the sweat of the brow of the peasant, and often not just with his sweat but with his blood, too, was no longer anyone's property; it had become the property of all.

The privileges of caste and class, which had grown so hateful and so insulting in that country, were totally abolished. In what had once been a vast empire, ruled by a privileged caste, there were now only citizens of a free country.

We were therefore faced with an event of the greatest importance, but we were unable to discern its scope, since we had to contend with not only the distance separating us from Russia, but also with the fratricidal war that was raging on the battlefields of Europe, which prevented us from knowing the precise extent of what had taken place in Russia.

Despite these difficulties, as a result of our revolutionary principles, from the very first moment, without shameful vacillations, without knowing the precise extent of the revolution, and not knowing whether its tendencies were close to our own views, but convinced that every revolution destroys one link in the chain of the past, bringing us one step closer to the future, we placed ourselves unconditionally on the side of the revolution, and in the streets, in the press, with word and with pen we alerted our class brothers concerning the ferocious attacks of the bourgeoisie targeting the revolution.

It was while we were engaged in this blind struggle, since neither those who rejected the revolution knew why they rejected it, nor did those who supported the revolution know why they supported it, that the first Congress of the *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo* since the 1916 reorganization was held.

The occasion could not have been more favorable. Besides the sympathy shown towards the Russian Revolution by all the trade union organizations that were part of the Confederation, we were also confronted by the creation of the Third International, a bright torch flaring in the calm and misty days at the end of July that would take the place of August 1914.

The Third International, which had just been organized, called upon the revolutionary proletariat of the entire world to join it.

Could the Spanish confederation remain deaf to the beautiful appeal of its Russian brothers?

We would soon find out.

The question was posed at the Congress, which was held at the *Teatro de la Comedia* in Madrid from December 10 to December 20, 1919, as to whether we would remain undecided regarding the appeal of the Russians, although assisting them with our sympathy for the revolution, or whether we should definitively incorporate our organization into the Third International.

The answer was not long in coming; one could have even predicted the result.

Without a single dissenting vote, absolutely unanimously, the assembled delegates, interpreting the feelings of the Spanish working class, agreed to join the Third International of Moscow. Our sympathy for the revolution was delivered in that vote, without any reticence at all, the way a lover gives herself to the man she loves.

At the same Congress, however, we proclaimed our principles, in the form of a unanimously approved declaration, and we called ourselves: libertarian communists.

A proposal was also discussed at the Congress regarding the need to send duly authorized comrades to Russia to study the situation in that country, to officially present our application to join the Third International and then to inform the Spanish workers concerning their observations.

Once the Congress had come to an end, and the Confederal Committee had returned to Barcelona, we set to work on implementing the resolutions approved at the Congress.

The most pressing issue was to designate the members of the delegation, even though it would be hard to find comrades who could take part in such an enterprise.

Among the well-known comrade militants there were two who, due to their special qualifications with regard to their abilities and their education, and, above all, their equanimity and maturity, were called upon to fully satisfy the will of the Congress. Their designation by the Confederal Committee was approved with hardly any further debate. All that remained was to inform them of their appointments and see if they would accept the mission. But the comrades, Pedro Vallina, of Seville, and Eleuterio Quintanilla, of Gijón, who were the appointees, due to understandable circumstances, declined the offer and they requested that substitutes be found, since it was impossible for them to comply with the mission that was to be entrusted to them. This was an annoying setback that had to be resolved.

The Committee met again and sent notices to the comrades Eusebio Carbó, of Valencia, and Salvador Quemades, of Barcelona, offering them the positions as delegates to Russia. These comrades, after various consultations, accepted the appointment. All that remained was to make the preparations for the journey, and these were immediately begun.

These proceedings had taken place at a critical moment when repression was once again being visited upon the Barcelona trade union organization; this was not an obstacle to our plans, which could go forward without interruption, but we had to proceed more slowly, since the comrades appointed to go to Russia and those who were members of the Committee were under surveillance, and we had to be careful to prevent them from falling into the hands of the police.

Since it appeared that the repression would be bloody and of indefinite duration, and since we also had to deal with the lockout by the employers association, and foreseeing that the Government was looking for a showdown, the Confederal Committee met and agreed, perhaps in anticipation of future events, to stage a solidarity action, and issued an appeal to the organized workers of Portugal, Italy and France, to boycott any Spanish commodities that arrive at their ports and their borders. The Committee also agreed that, since carrying out such negotiations by letter was too slow, it was preferable to appoint three comrades to travel to the aforementioned countries and to directly solicit the assistance of their organizations.

The critical situation led the Committee to attempt to find delegates for this mission who, without abandoning the mission to Russia, would focus their attention on carrying out the proposed negotiations with the workers organizations of the neighboring countries.

In order to simplify the problem, the Committee agreed that comrade Carbó, appointed to go to Russia, should depart for Italy, obtain interviews with the *Unione Sindacale* and the other organizations, and once this mission was fulfilled, Quemades would leave to join him in Italy and then they would continue on their journey to Russia.

One comrade who was slated to go to Portugal was just getting ready to leave, and I, who was appointed to go to France, began preparations for my journey.

While the necessary preparations were underway for the departure of the delegates, the Committee received a letter from a comrade working in Le Havre, who said that he had a good chance of being able to get to Russia, and if the Committee had no objections it could authorize him so that in the name of the Committee he could have an even better chance of successfully making the trip to Russia, and he would promise, in exchange, to make the attempt to get to Russia, and if he managed to get there, to inform the Confederation concerning what was going on in that country.

Since the chances of reaching Russia were not very good, considering that the delegates of the Confederation would not be traveling legally, and since I had to leave at any moment for the French capital, the Committee replied to the comrade in France and told him of my journey to France, and also told him that I was informed concerning his request, and the Committee proposed to me that if the opportunity the comrade in Le Havre mentioned was feasible, then I would go to Russia with him if I had no objections. They thought, most wisely, that it was preferable to send three delegates to Moscow instead of two, rather than send none at all.

I responded that I had no objections, and however slim the chances of success were, I would make every effort to make the journey he would propose.

In order to be prepared for all eventualities, the Committee gave me credentials for the Soviet Government, explaining to them the purpose of my journey, and another for the Committee of the Third International, notifying them of our intention to join the International and recommending that they provide me with the means that would allow me to complete my mission.

Thus prepared, I left for Paris.

Once I had arrived at the French capital, I began the negotiations that I had been authorized to carry out. At the same time, in order not to waste even one minute, I wrote to the comrade in Le Havre, requesting more details and informing him of the Committee's proposal. His answer was neither definite nor precise, and was by no means satisfactory as far as my mission was concerned.

In Paris I had to schedule an interview with the Committee of the General Confederation of Labor, as well as with the minority faction of the CGT. The first person I contacted was Pierre Monatte, who edited the syndicalist weekly, *La Vie Ouvriere*, the journal of the left wing syndicalists.

I explained to him the purpose of my journey to Paris, and also my desire to go to Russia, and asked him if there was any way he could help me get to Russia. I mentioned the comrade from Le Havre and the negative results I obtained from him. Comrade Monatte told me that there was little he could do to help me.

Two days later I spoke with a person who told me that, "if you want to go to Russia, and you have a firm resolve to do so, there is a chance that you may succeed".

When I communicated the results of the negotiations I had carried out with regard to the proposed boycott of Spanish goods to the Confederal Committee, I also brought it up to date regarding the journey to Russia.

In view of the likelihood that I would be able to get to Russia, as suggested by the person mentioned above, I wrote to the Committee requesting precise orders as to how to proceed, since my business with the French organizations was nearly concluded and I wanted to know whether I should return to Spain or continue on the next leg of my journey.

The Committee's response was swift. And not only did the Committee recommend that I continue on my journey to Moscow, but I was also informed as follows: due to the failure of comrade Carbó's attempt to go to Russia, through no fault of his own, I should wait a few days in Paris and expect the arrival of Quemades, so that the two of us could make the journey together.

I took advantage of the delay to get a passport, which would allow me to travel a little more legally.

In the midst of these preparations, I was surprised by the Police, who held me for six hours at police headquarters.

By a fortuitous circumstance I avoided imprisonment; but, as a precautionary measure, the police gave me four days to leave France.

That same afternoon Quemades arrived in Paris. I told him what had happened and that I already had the papers I would need to depart as soon as possible; but it turned out that he had no papers and it was not possible, within the four days I had been given to leave France, to obtain them.

We agreed that I should leave for Switzerland on the day before my police deadline, where he would join me if he managed to obtain a passport, and if he could not obtain one, that I should continue my journey in any event.

I left for Basel on the appointed day; I wrote to Quemades to discover his status, and since he was unable to obtain the requisite papers, I continued my journey, alone, to Moscow.

I managed to get into Germany only thanks to certain improvised stratagems, since, as a result of the recent Kapp Putsch, it was extremely difficult to get a visa.

Once in Berlin, I was informed that the Second Congress of the Third International was scheduled to open on July 15.

I then wrote to the Committee, notifying them of the opening date of the Congress and expressing my opinion that a delegation from the Confederation should attend. I requested that they reply as soon as possible to let me know if they wanted to authorize me to take part in the Congress as a delegate, or if they wanted to send other comrades. In the latter case my journey would have no purpose since the comrades appointed as delegates would have the same mission, and I would return to Spain as soon as I received their response. The Committee responded that I was authorized to attend the Congress as the delegate of the Confederation.

I will refrain from giving an account of the vicissitudes I encountered in my attempt to get out of Germany. In particular, the constant delays that hindered my preparations almost made me decide to give up and return to Spain. But reflecting on the expenses incurred by the Confederation in order to obtain knowledge of what was going on in Russia and on the shame I would feel if I was to admit defeat, I decided to persist in my mission. Finally, after a month of waiting, I left Berlin for Russia; but my plans were subject to any contingencies that might arise on my journey, and nothing was certain.

I embarked on a ship from Stettin for Reval, without knowing whether the authorities of the Estonian capital would permit me to enter their country.

On June 24 we arrived at Reval, and thanks to the efforts of the Russian Embassy in Estonia, I was allowed to disembark.

The next day we left for Petrograd, and—finally!—on the 26th, at two in the afternoon, our train entered Bolshevik territory.

Our tenacity had triumphed over the obstacles that had constantly blocked our every step.

On the 27th, at eight in the morning, we arrived in Petrograd; on the following day we left for Moscow, and on the 28th, at eleven in the morning, we were travelling along the streets of the capital, the residence of the Government of the Soviets.

I have thought it necessary to relate, although in a very summary fashion, the circumstances of my journey to Russia, providing a step by step explanation of the reasons why I assumed the role of delegate to the Congress of the Third International, because many comrades have asked how it was possible for me to leave Spain before anything definite was known about the Congress, and yet represent the National Confederation at its proceedings. Some even believed that, on my own account and at my own risk, without consulting anyone, and operating in accordance with

my own personal views, I had usurped such representation. Those who know me well, know that I would never do such a thing, but those who do not know me well enough, might entertain such an idea, and this is why, if possible, I have sought to dispel such notions, by means of a brief account of the details that will make the truth stand out.

And since this Report is destined for general circulation, it seemed that this is the most appropriate place to insert these clarifications, since they will dispel any suspicions, if anyone has any, and reestablish things in their true light and standing.

## II

Comrades:

Upon my return from Russia, where I represented, with your consent and agreement, the *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo* at the Second Congress convened by the Third International in Moscow for 20 days in July and August of 1920, it is my honor to tell you of the welcome reception that our organization received in the sessions of the Congress, as well as to render to you an account of my activities and my conduct as a delegate, so that you may say, after having read this Report, whether or not I have fulfilled the duties incumbent upon the mission with which I had been entrusted in representing our confederal organization.

As clearly as possible, accompanied by as much documentation as is necessary, testimonies that confirm my words, I shall explain my activities and participation in the debates of the Congress; the commitments I contracted in the name of our organization; the scope and significance of these commitments; documents that I signed; the causes and reasons that obliged me to sign them, without ever forgetting the degree to which the Confederation is affected by my activity; all of this will be set forth with the strictest impartiality, so that the judgment you will make of this account will be in the closest conformance possible with the reality of the facts themselves.

I must warn you that I shall not set forth any personal judgment or criticism, provided that it is not required for the purpose of clarifying a point, because I believe that you will more easily penetrate into the inner workings of the Congress's proceedings if the ideas that were actually presented at the Congress occupy the central place in my narrative.

Nor shall my Report deal with anything that relates to the prevailing political, social and economic conditions in Russia, as this would not be the appropriate place for a discussion of such matters.

What was discussed at the Congress, and my participation in the Congress as a delegate: such is the purview of this Report.

Assessments of how ideas were expressed there; the views of each of the delegations; the scope and significance of each resolution approved; my position with regard to the former; such will be the principle basis for my account, since from these aspects all the other conclusions logically follow.

I recognize the difficulty of the task that I must accomplish, but our organization's need for information requires that I make the attempt, and to this requirement we must sacrifice any other conveniences.

I also recognize the fact that my activity as a delegate at the Congress was imperfect with regard to certain questions of detail, and that I lacked the discernment that I needed as a delegate



to understand the scope of some of the questions submitted for my examination, but I entrust myself to your benevolence, certain that you will be able to excuse these trifles in view of the delicate circumstances in which I found myself.

It is possible that I shall relate some inconsequential points, or at least points that could be so judged by an intransigent judge; if this is so, I once again appeal to your benevolence, convinced that the intention that can guide me to proceed in this way is healthy and noble, and only special and delicate circumstances could compel me to reveal what I consider irrelevant.

All my activities in the Congress; the stance that I adopted there from the first moments; the ideas I expressed, and the discussions that I engaged in with respect to the ideas expressed by the other delegates, were all inspired by the resolutions approved at our Congress at the *Teatro de la Comedia* in Madrid, and if there is any contradiction between what I said and did at Moscow and the resolutions of our Congress, it is by no means the result of evil intentions; it is because my understanding did not penetrate to the core of the problem, and no one is obliged to do more than what they know how to do and what they are capable of doing.

These gaps, these empty spaces, if such exist, all deserve to be excused, since, in addition to the fact that I am not highly educated, the contact with reality, with the revolution, produced in me, as it would have produced in any one of you, something like a momentary disequilibrium, until the force of reason was imposed and the river could once again flow in its old channel.

Of course, I do not aspire to obtain an absolutely unanimous approval of my conduct at the Congress; this would be exceedingly difficult, for the very essence of our organization is alien to such unanimity; but I do aspire to majority approval, as long as my activity at the Congress in Moscow is compared with the resolutions approved in Madrid.

It would be very painful to me if one of my comrades were to prove to me that I had not respected the Madrid resolutions, for in such a case, even if an overwhelming majority should approve of my conduct, I would consider it altogether in vain. On the other hand, if I acted in accordance with the Madrid resolutions, even if the majority of the Confederation should express its disapproval of my conduct, I should be satisfied. It was not as the instrument of a majority that I acted and worked, since majorities are vulnerable to the influence of time and of men; it is as the instrument of ideas that I acted and worked, because ideas are eternal and yield intelligence and the knowledge of what is possible.

I request of you, comrades of the Committee, serene and reasoned study of what I wrote, because I have the deeply rooted conviction that, if in your examination and criticism, reason is not imposed on the passions of the moment, the judgment you render will be unjust and arbitrary. Do not believe that with these words I intend to offend you or to wound your pride, but I do want you, as far as you are able, to rise above those unreasonable passions that have for some time agitated our camp, where the supporters and the opponents of the Third International debate and polemicize without knowledge of the matter at hand, for if you do not remove yourselves from this impetuous current of passion, I have the painful conviction that you will not appreciate the depth and serenity hidden behind my words. Passion is a bad advisor, when you must reason on the slippery terrain of more or less crystallized ideas.

That each of you should attentively read my Report; that each of you should express your sincere opinion; that each of you should say what you think about the way I carried out the mandate you entrusted to me, and when all of the members of the Committee have expressed the opinion that you think my Report deserves, then let us go to the public, and speak to our comrades, and whether or not we agree on everything, it will be our comrades who will have the last word.

You entrusted me with the mandate in your name, you granted this trust in consideration of this condition; and they will say if you were correct to appoint me and if I fulfilled the desire that they hold dear.

We are all working for the same cause; we all cherish the same ideal: our emancipation; we shall see if in the way of achieving and attaining this sought-after emancipation whether we are also in agreement with one another.

But, I repeat, and now this is directed at everyone, let us judge calmly.

I must remind you, comrades of the Committee, before I begin my review of the Congress, of the way that my mandate was granted. This is an extremely important question, for in view of the fact that I departed from Spain before the opening date of the Congress had been announced, the organization might think that I took part in the Congress without an express mandate from the Confederal Committee. Even the slightest doubts that any comrade might entertain regarding this question would be very harmful for you, for me and for the matter that we are going to debate.

I do not think this is the appropriate forum for telling you about the incidents that took place during my journey, and for that reason I shall refrain from doing so; but I do think that it would be appropriate to tell you that it took me about three months to get to Russia; that will give you an idea of the great number of difficulties that were constantly hindering my progress.

You will recall that, once it has departed from Barcelona, the mission to Russia, should it manage to get to Russia, was limited to a study of the political, social and economic organization established in that country by the Soviet Government, and, in addition, to personally offer our request to join the Third International.

When I arrived in Berlin and found out that the Congress was scheduled to open on July 15 (although the sessions would not begin until the 20th, the opening ceremony was to take place on the 15th) in Moscow, I wrote to you setting forth my opinion that the Confederation should be represented at the Congress.

I said that you could appoint other comrades to the delegation, if you thought it would be advisable, or I could fulfill this role myself, as long as you authorize it.

Your response was in the affirmative for me to carry out the mission and I thank you for your confidence in me.

There is no point in talking about the position we should have taken at the Congress, since it is tacitly accepted, at least by me, that this position can only be the one set forth by and approved at the Madrid Congress of the Confederation. If this had not been the case, I would not have accepted the appointment as delegate. It would be repugnant to my human conscience to advocate ideas that I do not share, and since the Madrid resolutions are consonant with my beliefs, if I were to be given instructions of any other kind this would have implied that there were two factions in our organization, when I was inclined to think that the resolutions were unanimously approved in Madrid.

With this understanding I continued my journey to Russia, and if I was content because I felt the proximity of the truth, a sense of sorrow overwhelmed my spirit; for this truth might be beyond my assimilative capacity and I would not understand it in all its greatness.

As I neared my destination, my fears grew; I was too small to understand the events that would unfold before my eyes! I needed an eagle's eye to penetrate into all the recondite mysteries and then relate to my anxious comrades how much I had seen and how much I had appreciated it! It was not to be: I am sorry. My will, that powerful lever, despite the fact that I had a fulcrum,

was not enough to move the world; I am referring to the world of ideas. I needed more than will, however powerful my will may be; this other thing is intelligence. However....

I reached the Russian border on June 26; I arrived in Petrograd on the 27th, and then left for Moscow, and arrived in Moscow the next morning.

In the same train in which I was traveling, but in a special car, Zinoviev was traveling and, once he was informed of my presence on the train, invited me to his car, and we spoke at length about the situation in Spain, concerning which, to speak frankly, he was almost completely uninformed.

He had only a few vague memories of Spain, and the name of Barcelona was one of them.

From the station, by automobile, we went to the official headquarters of the Third International, where a meeting of the Committee was scheduled in order to provide an answer to the request of Cachin and Frossard, delegates of the French Socialist Party, for admission to the Third International.

In my conversation with Zinoviev I had revealed the nature of my mission to Russia, and he invited me to attend this meeting, which I happily accepted.

### III

The meeting began, and after Zinoviev, who was presiding, announced that the Spanish Confederation was joining the International, he read the response of the Executive Committee of the Third International to the French delegates. The response was somewhat harsh and unsparing in its acrimony, as it was directed at individuals, to whom, even if we take into account the mistakes and the blunders they committed, and even admitting the possibility that their trip to Moscow may be the ultimate act of consummate opportunism, it should have been a little more conciliatory, since it does no good, I think, to display harshness and acrimony towards those who confess that they are defeated.

The Committee voted in favor of the response that the Executive had composed and then went on to discuss the second part of the petition of the French delegates: their attendance at the Congress in the capacity of consultative delegates.

Before the deliberations on this matter began, Zinoviev proposed that the Spanish Confederation should be admitted as a component of the Committee of the Third International, and the proposal was approved.

The points of view expressed concerning the petition of the French delegates proved to be clearly demarcated between two opposed positions, and the debate became bitter and insistent, for some thought that they had treated the French delegates with the belligerence they deserved just for having had to listen to them and respond to them, without any guarantees of what attitude they would adopt in the future, since their past did not give any reasons for optimism; others held that they had been treated too harshly, for even if their past conduct was no good augury for their future conduct, one must also take into consideration the fact that their coming to Moscow was not the result of their own personal will, and even if it was, there always would have been room for doubts; it was instead the will of the French proletariat to move towards the revolution, and it was upon the French proletariat that this harsh treatment fell. It is true that the delegates that the French Socialist Party had sent to Moscow were by no means be individuals of very great reliability, but, in any event, we must facilitate the movement of the proletariat towards the revolution, since it has explicitly demonstrated its desire to do so in good faith.

I was among the delegates who supported the second view, and that was how I explained my position, with the reasons that appeared to be most reasonable to us.

In the end the majority came to be in favor of the second view, and the delegates of the French Socialist Party were allowed to participate in the Congress in a consultative capacity.

Since it was still early and we had some time to spare, and since, in addition to our Confederation, several other trade unions had sent delegations to the Congress, their representatives having just arrived in Moscow, comrade Lozovsky, in the name of the Russian General Confederation of Labor, proposed the organization of a revolutionary trade union international. And, with that purpose in mind, as a first positive act that would demonstrate the will of the trade union organizations represented in Russia to carry out the organization of such an international, he read a document that had already been approved by several foreign trade union organizations. But since new delegations were constantly arriving and they were as yet unaware of this document, and could hardly object to it, he read it, warning that the approval of this document in no way constituted a commitment to any particular positions in the future on the part of any of the organizations that had already joined the Third International, because the document contained a proposal to convoke an international conference of revolutionary trade union organizations in order to definitively constitute the "Revolutionary Trade Union International", where the final basis of that institution would be established.

Lozovsky read the following document:

"To the Trade Unions of all countries:

"The signatories below, representing the trade union organizations of Russia, Italy, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Georgia, convoked by the Executive Committee of the Third International,

"Whereas: The situation of all the workers after the imperialist war requires ever more energetic and unambiguous action on the terrain of class struggle in order to destroy the capitalist system and establish communism;

"Whereas this activity must be carried out on an international scale with the most closely coordinated activity of all organized workers, organized not by trade, as before, but by industry;

"Whereas so-called social reforms, such as the reduction of the length of the working day, wage increases, labor legislation, etc., although under certain circumstances facilitating the class struggle, are useless for resolving the social question;

"Whereas, in most of the belligerent countries, where most of the Trade Unions were supporters of neutralism (apoliticism) before the war, these Trade Unions became the slaves of imperialist capitalism during the dolorous war years, and played the most disastrous role, delaying the emancipation of the workers;

"Whereas the working class has to organize itself in a trade union structure that is a powerful revolutionary class organization, which, alongside the political organization of the international communist proletariat, and in close relation with it, can exercise all its efforts for the victory of the social revolution and the worldwide Soviet Republic;

"Whereas the possessing classes are striving with all their might to crush the emancipatory movement of the repressed by any means;

"Whereas dictatorship must be opposed, as a decisive transitory means, by the dictatorship of the proletariat, the only means capable of crushing the resistance of the exploiters and to assure and consolidate the conquest of Power by the proletariat;

“Whereas the Amsterdam International Federation of Trade Unions is incapable, due to its program and its activity, to implement the principles mentioned above and to ensure the victory of the proletarian masses in every country;

“It is Resolved: to condemn all tactics whose purpose is to separate the vanguard elements from the existing trade union organizations. We must, to the contrary, act energetically to eliminate from the leadership of the trade union movement those opportunists who collaborated and are still collaborating with the bourgeoisie, who supported the war, and who continue to serve the interests of imperialist capitalism, by participating in the League of Nations;

“To carry out within the trade union organizations of the entire world a methodical propaganda, creating in every trade union a communist cell, whose incessant efforts will finally result in imposing our point of view;

“To create a Committee for international actions and struggle for the transformation of the trade union movement in this sense. This Committee will function as a provisional international Council of the workers Trade Unions, in accordance with the Executive Committee of the Third International, under conditions that will be established by the Congress. The Council will be composed of representatives of all the member national trade unions. A representative of the international trade union Council will be admitted to the Executive Committee of the Third International, and a representative of the latter will also sit on the provisional international Council of the workers Trade Unions.”

Lozovsky continued: “This document has been signed, so far, by the Russian organized workers; by D’Aragona, for the *Confederazione Generale del Lavoro*, of Italy; by Chabline, for the Bulgarian trade unions; by Milkitch, for the Yugoslavs; by Mikadze, for the Georgians; and, as you all know, a delegation of English workers has just left to return to their country, who came to study conditions in Russia; I spoke with them about the proposal I just read, and they gave me their approval to constitute this international Committee. I did not want to do so, however, in order to avoid future complications.”

At this point, the newly arrived delegations representing trade union organizations could express their views concerning the proposal, which had already been approved by the representatives of the signatory countries.

Various delegates spoke, explaining their positions. It should be noted that many of the delegates who had come to Russia to take part in the Congress, if not the majority of them, represented not only trade union organizations, but were also members of communist parties. As for those who exclusively represented trade union organizations, they hardly numbered half a dozen.

Among the first who spoke concerning the document read by Lozovsky, and who actually expressed dissenting opinions, we shall only mention two: Tanner, of the Shop Stewards of England, and Souchy, of the German federalist syndicalists.

The first maintained that the categorical denunciation, as it was expressed in the document, of any attempt by the advocates of revolutionary class struggle in any nation to split an existing trade union organization when they are convinced that it is impossible to modify it, was to him a completely arbitrary and incomprehensible injunction, and he could not understand how the members of the Third International, who knew England, having lived there at one time, and the Trade Unions, for having been members of them, could have proposed such a resolution to the Congress. He, too, was in favor of trying every imaginable means before opting for a split, as was demonstrated by the activity carried out by him and his friends, who created the Shop

Stewards, whose mission was to stir up the rank and file of the English trade union organizations, to make them follow different paths than they had followed until then, but the experience they had obtained so far was on the verge of proving the impossibility of success in pursuing this tactic.

With these antecedents, he said, which very much merit being taken into account, due to fact that they are the fruit of practice, to accept that part of the document without any modifications would amount to condemning to perpetual sterility the self-sacrificing efforts of thousands of comrade activists.

And that was not the only part of the document that was unacceptable to him; he also disagreed with that part of the document that contained the proposal, although in a veiled form, to accept the principle of the dictatorship of the labor organizations, but confiding the exercise of this dictatorship, when the time comes, to the Communist Party. He felt that should a dictatorship be necessary, it could be exercised by the labor organizations. And what he said regarding the dictatorship also applied to the seizure of power and all other matters.

The rest of the document seemed acceptable to him, although he thought some of the language should be revised.

Souchy, representing the German syndicalists, said that he agreed with what Tanner had said, with regard to the question of splitting the existing trade union organizations; but with respect to the question of dictatorship and the seizure of power, the organization he was representing did not accept these principles. It accepted communism, but not dictatorship or dictators.

When these comrades were done speaking, it was my turn to take the floor.

"I shall subject three of the points addressed in the document," I said, "to an examination as specific as it is brief, since the organization that I represent here has already approved specific resolutions that set it far apart from the point of view maintained in the document. They are: 'apoliticism', the seizure of power and the dictatorship of the proletariat."

"As if it was looking at events with its back turned towards history, the document condemns the apoliticism practiced by some trade union organizations. And it is to turn one's back on history, when you do not see, or do not want to see, that almost all the trade union organizations that collaborated in the war, supporting capitalist imperialism in its great work of destruction, were political trade unions, that is, just the opposite of the what the document is saying. A quick enumeration will prove that what I am saying is true."

"In Germany, Austria-Hungary, Serbia, Romania, Belgium, England, the trade union organizations were political; they tailored their policies to be in accord with the socialist parties; can you deny that they collaborated in the war?"

"In France, Portugal, the United States and the South American republics, the trade union organizations were apolitical; how many of them collaborated in the war? France is the only one where such a reproach is warranted. And if we want to make a concession in this extreme case, we might include, among all the apolitical organizations that participated in the catastrophe, the 'American Federation of Labor' [the original Spanish text has '*American Labour Party*' in English—translator's note], whose leader, Gompers, is hobnobbing with the statesmen of Europe, although we must point out that the apoliticism of the 'American Federation of Labor' is totally Platonic."

"As for the others: neither Portugal, nor the South American republics, nor Italy, if we except the *Confederazione del Lavoro*, which although political did not participate, as far as I know, in the propaganda for the catastrophe, but did not oppose it either; the countries with apolitical labor

organizations, not only did not support war capitalism, they fought against it to the fullest of their capacities. And to complete the picture I will mention that some South American political trade union organizations, and others in Europe, although in neutral countries, and let us not forget Spain, demonstrated their warlike enthusiasm by cheering for the victory of one or another group of belligerents.”

“Where, then, is the logic that informed the composition of this paragraph of the document?”

“The other two points are those that refer to the seizure of power and the dictatorship of the proletariat. It will only take a few words to explain what the Confederation that I represent thinks about these two questions.”

“In December of last year the Confederation held its first Congress in Madrid, and, by the absolutely unanimous vote of the 500 delegates present, agreed that its goal was the establishment of libertarian communism.”

“What would be the purpose of further examination of the opposition between what I have just told you and what the document proposes? It would be a waste of time, and I do not think that is why we are here.”

“I will say two more things about the paragraph that advocates the strictest cooperation with the political communist proletariat.”

“The Confederation assents to cooperation with organizations that are revolutionary and that are opposed to the capitalist regime, but reserves the right to do so when and in the manner that it deems advisable. Therefore, with regard to particular issues, it will accept nothing that would foreclose its freedom of action.”

Various other speakers intervened in the debate, and since the discussion went on for a long time and there did not appear to be any emerging consensus, it was proposed and approved that given the different perspectives that were expressed concerning the document read by Lozovsky, and since the requirements involved with preparing for the Congress did not allow a lot of time for preliminary discussions, all of the delegates who represented trade union organizations would meet with Lozovsky, later that same day, in one of the rooms of the hotel where we were staying and attempt to revise the original document or write a new one, which, upon meeting with the agreement of all would be presented to the Congress for its approval. In addition, it was proposed to adjourn the meeting, and it was adjourned.

The meeting of the trade union delegates at the hotel was set for seven in the evening.

The meeting was attended by delegates from Germany, Italy, Yugoslavia, France, Holland, Sweden, England, Spain, Georgia, Bulgaria, the United States (I.W.W.) and possibly other countries, along with Russia, represented by Lozovsky.

Since the memory of the discussions that took place earlier in the day was so vivid in the minds of all the delegates, the discussion became interesting immediately.

The differences were highlighted even more, and the delegates aligned themselves according to the positions they adopted in the meeting that morning.

The delegate of the German syndicalists and the delegate of the Shop Stewards of England, comrades Souchy and Tanner, had written a document in opposition to Lozovsky’s document, and I was in agreement with what they wrote.

The meeting had hardly begun when they requested permission to read their document, but the majority voted against it.

Their document represented the views which they had advocated that morning, except with regard to the dictatorship and the conquest of power, which were not mentioned at all, and,

instead, addressed the advisability of convoking an International Conference of all the revolutionary trade union organizations, in order to found the trade union international, and to discuss at this conference the line of conduct that the trade unions should adopt in the future.

The discussion, as I said, was immediately turned to general issues, and once the proposal of the German and English comrades was rejected, Lozovsky proposed to discuss his document paragraph by paragraph and for each one to allow the proposal of emendations and revisions that were thought to be advisable, and where no unanimity could be achieved the matter would be referred to a vote and the majority's vote would be accepted.

At this point I requested the right to speak in order to clearly define my situation, since it was an extremely delicate one, and I thought I could predict the outcome of the vote, and I was right.

I said that my situation was extremely delicate, and I did not exaggerate. The positions of the other delegates who also were not in agreement with Lozovsky's document were not the same as mine. Their organizations had not joined the Third International and, therefore, they could refuse to endorse the document. For me this was not possible. From the moment when the Confederation had voted for the resolution to join the International and our membership was registered, I was obliged to endorse any resolutions approved by the majority, since not to do so would be equivalent to revoking the Madrid resolution, and this, logically, I could not do. Who was I, to presume to revoke a resolution of a Confederal Congress?

Thus, having found myself between a membership that bound me to abide by what the organization we had joined should resolve upon, and a document approved by the majority of the members of this organization, I had only one solution: to preserve my responsibility, and *to defer all final decisions regarding the document to the decision of the Confederation, after my return to Spain and after the publication of the text so that the members could become acquainted with it.*

By following this procedure, comrades of the Committee, I believe that I did my duty without prejudice to the principles of the Confederation.

And seeking to make use of every possible resource, even the most innocent, when I signed the document, instead of writing, "For the *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo*, Angel Pestaña", I wrote, "From the" *Confederación*, etc. It seemed to me that by writing "From the" instead of "For the" *Confederación* I diminished the compromise that was represented by my signing the document.

I acted like the ostrich, which, when faced with danger, hides his head in the sand, as if this would mitigate the impact of the threat.

Thus, when it was my turn to speak I said the following: "The delegates are already acquainted with the positions I defended at the meeting this morning, in opposition to the seizure of political power and the dictatorship of the proletariat, with the proviso about cooperation with the political communist proletariat. These positions were not the expression of a personal opinion, even though I was actually in agreement with them, but the views of the Spanish National Confederation, unanimously approved at our Congress. So, if the majority of those present accept the document as it has been composed by Lozovsky, I find myself faced with a completely anomalous situation that does not easily admit of a solution, since by a resolution of the same Confederal Congress that advocated principles contrary to the seizure of power and dictatorship, I am nonetheless obliged to endorse this document, for if I do not I would revoke, on my own account and at my own risk, without the consent of the organization that gave me my mandate, the resolution to join the Third International. For by joining an organization one is bound by the resolutions that the majority approves or else one must resign one's membership."



“As a result, my position is as follows: if the majority imposes upon me the necessary endorsement of this document without any modifications at all, I will sign it, but only under the following conditions: everything that refers to the seizure of political power, the dictatorship of the proletariat and cooperation with the political communist proletariat, will be left to the subsequent decisions taken by the Confederation, once I have returned to Spain, and once the Confederal Committee has been informed concerning what has been approved here. By saying this I do not mean to say that I intend to refuse to participate in the discussion of Lozovsky’s document, or that I refuse to cooperate in the organization of the Revolutionary Trade Union International; my reservations only affect those two points.” After having made this declaration the discussion proceeded as Lozovsky had proposed: paragraph by paragraph.

The first and second paragraphs passed without debate, but not the third.

Regarding this paragraph, in addition to the observations that the other delegates had made, I reiterated and amplified the positions I held that morning. I said that we were apolitical and, even so, we had opposed the war with all the means at our disposal. And it would be paradoxical for us to sign a document that condemned our action and our principles.

Lozovsky responded that I was partly correct, but only partly. He offered to revise the document’s language to say, “in most of the belligerent countries”. I replied that it would still be unacceptable, because of the cases of Portugal and South America, and besides, these words referred to the past, and only past experience was taken into account in them, but as for action they referred to the future and that was where the problem arose.

It was finally agreed to change the language in the third paragraph.<sup>1</sup>

The fourth paragraph gave rise to a long and embittered debate, since several of the other delegates besides me advocated the principle of complete trade union autonomy.

Before the debate was concluded on this paragraph, the meeting was adjourned, as it was now quite late.

I must point out that the debates were endless because of the number of translations that had to be made. We agreed to meet on the following day to see if we could reach an agreement.

At eleven the next morning we opened the meeting, and the discussion continued until the middle of the afternoon; we adjourned for dinner and met again that evening; the meeting was again adjourned until the next day, and the next day we still could not reach an agreement. We debated not only paragraph four; we also debated the dictatorship, power, splits in the trade union organizations, etc.

To summarize: we spent three days in meetings and at each meeting our differences merely became greater. Then Lozovsky proposed suspending the meetings and to wait until later to see if something could be arranged, since it was not possible to reach an agreement.

Wanting the delegates to get acquainted with Russia, the Third International organized an excursion on the Volga; and since the opening session of the Congress would not take place for several days and it was also rumored that there would be a delay to allow some of the delegates more time to arrive, and, since some of those who represented the trade union organizations

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<sup>1</sup> As I was later to discover, Lozovsky, committing an unpardonable breach of faith, to use the most euphemistic expression for what he did, published the document as he had originally written it, without the revisions made at this meeting. I had the revised version in my possession, however, when I was arrested in Italy, and I was “relieved” of this and many other documents by the police. Since there are still a few copies of this revised version circulating in Italy, if I can obtain one of these copies I will publish it here to confirm my account.

expressed their wish to join the excursion, and the excursion was offered so that we might get to know something about Russia, which we had never seen, I decided to join them.

Upon our return we met again to resolve the questions posed by Lozovsky's document.

Lozovsky maintained that, since he could not understand us, as he had fully proven, only those delegates of trade union organizations that had already joined the Third International should participate in the debate in the new round of deliberations.

Once the meetings began again under these conditions, the result was a foregone conclusion. The majority was composed of the first signatories of the document.

In this second round of discussions, the delegates from Russia, Italy, Yugoslavia, Georgia, Bulgaria, France and Spain attended. A total of seven delegates; of them, five were the original signatories of the document.

I asked Lozovsky if the revision of the third paragraph introduced during the previous round of meetings would be maintained or subjected to further debate. He replied that the revision had been approved and that the new copies that had been made of the document incorporated these revisions. With regard to this issue, at least, I could rest assured.

The meetings continued, and with the exception of the revision referred to above, no further revisions were made.

I explained how problematical this document is for our organization, since to maintain it as it stands now, as they wished, would lead to our resignation from the Third International, something that would be unfortunate and not at all beneficial for the cause of the revolution.

Lozovsky replied to me that, with regard to the dictatorship of the proletariat and the seizure of political power, they would make no concessions. He convinced me that it was useless to persist in my objections.

I then once again insisted on the reservations that I had with regard to the three points, which I have already mentioned.

I asked him for copies of the document and that minutes of the meetings should be provided, too.

Lozovsky replied that he had no objections to complying with my request if I did not trust his word, and he did not think that it was necessary, and besides, this document along with all the others that were being prepared for the founding of the international Confederation of revolutionary trade unions would have a provisional character; the definitive declarations would emerge from the Conference itself. And for the purpose of salvaging my honor in this affair, if any members of the Confederation have their suspicions concerning whether or not I had reservations regarding these three questions, the delegates who were present could testify in my favor.<sup>2</sup>

It seemed inappropriate to persist and I told him that I was content with his word.

Lozovsky also submitted for our discussion and approval the rules of order for the next international Conference, the text officially announcing the Conference, its date and where it would be held.

With respect to the rules of order and the date of the Conference, the discussion was brief, but not for the location and the official text announcing the Conference.

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<sup>2</sup> The individuals who were present at these meetings were comrades Lozovsky, Rosmer, D'Aragona, Chabline, Milkitch, representing Russia, France, Italy, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, respectively. And comrades Souchy, of Germany, and Tanner, of England, can also testify on my behalf.

The rules of order, since this matter was of minor importance, were immediately approved. As for the date, Lozovsky proposed November 15, but since that date seemed too soon it was agreed to schedule the opening day of the Conference for January 1, 1921. As for the location of the Conference, Lozovsky proposed Russia, but I proposed Italy or Sweden. I argued that a Conference held in Russia would be ineffective, since the overwhelming influence of the Russian Communist Party would be as prejudicial to the Conference as the olive tree is for the person who sleeps in its shade.

Lozovsky averred that it was too difficult for the Russian delegates to leave Russia, since the Governments of the other countries would not give them passports. He also mentioned that there was a possibility that the Governments of the other countries might not allow the Conference to be held at all. At this point the discussion was suspended for later consideration.

The same thing took place with regard to the official text announcing the Conference that was to be sent to trade union organizations all over the world.

The text stated, after various other preliminaries of minor importance, that an invitation to attend the Conference was extended to the national trade union organizations, the national and international trade Federations, and local and regional associations that endorse the revolutionary class struggle, the seizure of political power and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

I objected and said that this text was a second version of the previous document, revised and expanded.

I pointed out that this text shut the door on many organizations that would wish to join, but who do not agree at all with dictatorship and the seizure of power, and therefore the latter conditions were a mistake.

It seemed to me that an announcement of this kind should be more broad-based so that it would be a case of the more that come the better, and then we should see later how many remain.

We were in the middle of these discussions when the pressure to begin the preparations for the Congress, whose opening day was approaching, forced us to suspend them and defer them until after the Congress.

Our discussions regarding the organization of the international trade union Conference did not prevent us from attending the meetings of the Committee of the Third International, but now these meetings were more impressive and more frequent, and we were obliged to neglect one question if we did not want to neglect two others.

After the first meeting of the Committee of the Third International, where we discussed the issue of what kind of response to give the French delegates and the trade union question, we continued to discuss other controversial issues. Some of them were of great importance.

One of the first issues we discussed was that of the two German communist parties.

It is known that after the split, recommended and supported by Moscow, in the Independent Socialist Party, the dissidents formed the German Communist Party, and then the latter split in turn, and those who split from the German Communist Party formed the German Communist Workers Party. They are distinguished by the fact that the former advocates trade union and political action, while the latter party rejects them. The latter party also has some taint of nationalism. The importance of this second split was made clear immediately after Lenin wrote a book (*Left-wing Communism—an Infantile Disorder*) to combat it.

Nonetheless, due to its significance, some contacts were maintained with the German Communist Workers Party, and if the official Communist Party, recognized by Russia, was the recipient of all those acts and measures that have an official character, unofficial relations were main-

tained with the Communist Workers Party, and this two edged policy led to serious conflicts in Germany.

At that time, Otto Rühle was in Russia, who was the leader of the German Communist Workers Party and was attempting to secure his party's admission to the Congress on the same terms as the German Communist Party, whose leaders at that time were Paul Levi and Clara Zetkin.

Rühle's request led to serious arguments among the members of the Executive Committee of the Third International, since most of them were in favor of admitting Rühle's party, while Radek, the Secretary of the Third International, and a few others were opposed. But the issue was not resolved and remained on the agenda for debate within the Executive Committee. I will speak of the solution that was found for this dispute later in my report.

At one of the first meetings colonial policies were discussed, and a manifesto was read which all the delegates present at the Congress of the Third International were required to sign, directed at the peoples of the Orient, inviting them to attend a Congress in Baku on September 1. The theme of the manifesto was approved, after minor formal revisions. But this would not be the case with regard to the Theses that were presented and which also had to be debated at the Congress, on the colonial question.

You must be acquainted with the position of Lenin and the Russian Communist Party on this question, a position supported and proclaimed by the Third International.

This position holds that the Communist Parties in the colonies must form alliances, regardless of the circumstances, with nationalist parties, in order to throw off the yoke of the metropolis.

The Italian delegation, in particular, was opposed to this position. And the meeting had to be adjourned without resolving this conflict.

At subsequent meetings we addressed, besides questions of detail, how the votes would be conducted and how many votes would be accorded to each delegation. It was proposed, and the proposal was approved, that the countries of the first category should be granted ten votes; those of the second, seven; those of the third, five; those of the fourth, three; those of the fifth, two; and the rest, one. Spain, or rather the Confederation, was included in the second category, and we were granted seven votes.

We finally discussed the issue of the German political parties. Paul Levi had arrived, and the time had come for the two camps to be clearly defined.

The Executive Committee of the Third International had, for its part, already made a final decision on the matter, and as a result Otto Rühle was admitted, as a representative of the German Communist Workers Party, to the deliberations of the Congress on the same footing as the other German party.

Levi expressed his disagreement with this decision of the Executive Committee and threatened to return to Berlin if the Plenum of the Committee were to ratify the resolution. The debate over this controversy showed that neither side intended to yield an inch, and, despite Levi's efforts, the Plenum ratified the resolution of the Executive Committee. Only Levi, Radek, Serrati and one other delegate voted against the resolution.

And Levi, who had threatened to leave, did not do so, for some unknown reason; instead, Otto Rühle, who had been admitted to the Congress, returned to Germany before the Congress even began.

Then came the deliberations concerning the official languages of the Conference. German and French were approved. The English, whose delegation was quite numerous, although they only

represented small splinter groups, proposed that English should also be considered as an official language. The proposal was rejected.

At this same meeting the “Presidium” was named, that is, the superior committee of the Congress.

The “Presidium” is a very significant office with regard to the question of what kind of Congress can be held that has named a “Presidium”. I did not know anything about it. And since I knew nothing about it, it seemed puerile to me that the English delegation should make such strenuous efforts to form part of the “Presidium”, since they were rebuffed, despite the support for their proposal expressed by the Dutch and other delegations. Since I was accustomed to our Congresses, where the president is named for each session, and his prerogatives are limited to keeping order in the debates, opening the floor to the speakers, administering the voting, etc., and, thinking that this “Presidium” would be the same thing, I did not think that the anxieties of the English were justified. But later I saw that they were right.

I shall briefly describe what this “Presidium” represents at a Congress, because otherwise it will be hard for you to understand certain things. First of all you need to know that the “Presidium” is the Congress; everything else is just its caricature, of the Congress, I mean.

The “Presidium” or superior committee (we shall call it the superior committee to make it easier for us to understand), can be composed of three, five, or seven individuals, or more, although a larger number than this is unwieldy.

The powers vested in this superior committee are quite varied and unlike those exercised by the presidents of our Congresses. The superior committee conducts the affairs of the Congress, it presides over it, as one would expect; each new proposal that is made, apart from the Theses or matters proposed by the Committee of the organization holding the Congress, must be presented in writing to the superior committee, which determines whether or not the proposal should be discussed. If the superior committee accepts a proposal for debate it can introduce modifications, even if they contradict the view of the author of the proposal, and if a proposal is not accepted for debate, the author may appeal to the Congress; but since the superior committee is appointed in such a way that it represents the majority, he might as well try to get blood from a stone.

The superior committee can alter the order of the day and the topics for the agenda; it can present proposals for the deliberation of the Congress and respond to questions and take the floor whenever it believes it is necessary. In short, the superior committee possesses all the initiative of the Congress, it can make proposals and control the proceedings at its whim, and the delegates can do nothing but debate the superior committee’s proposals....

A more precise comparison would be with our Parliament, but without our Blue Bench, since the Blue Bench is the superior committee itself. We omit the superior committee of the Congress in our Parliament, and in its place we put the occupants of the Blue Bench; now you have organized a Congress with its “Presidium”. You know that in our Parliament the Government possesses the right to propose the order of the debates and to determine whether or not proposals are to be subject to debate, and in addition can indicate when a deputy may speak during debate, that is, the initiative with regard to the terms and conditions of debate is in the hands of the Government; so, in a Congress of this kind, the initiative resides in the supreme committee.

This is why the appointment of the supreme committee is of the utmost importance, and if a faction obtains the majority on the supreme committee, it is the master of the Congress and can impose its views.

In all Congresses there is always, as an implicit result of the course of debate, a right, a left and a center, if the Congresses were to be conducted according to our methods; for us, this is not of great importance, because, as a result of the fact that the presidency does not have extraordinary powers, a majority must be won by means of reasoned argument, or by means of sophisms that have the appearance of reasoned arguments, but are clearly exposed to the light of day in the Congress sessions; but with a superior committee of the kind I have just described, the status of each group and the question of whether or not its views are accepted, is not in the hands of the majority of the delegates, it is the superior committee that controls the outcome. This situation gives rise to intrigue and the exceptional circumstance where a particular group or fraction, or one that is thought to be decisive with regard to the voting, is the one that obtains the seats on the supreme committee.

Now do you understand why I said that the supreme committee is the Congress and that everything else is just its caricature?

The following persons were elected to the supreme committee by a majority of the votes cast: Lenin, for the Russian Communist Party; Zinoviev, for the Third International; Paul Levi, for the German Communist Party; Serrati, for the Italian Socialist Party; and Rosmer, for the Committee for the Third International of France.

Some other questions of minor importance and the issue of the credentials committee, which had yet to be appointed, were postponed until the last meeting to be held on the following day; and two days later the Congress began.

#### *The Congress*

The opening session took place in Petrograd, where the delegates were transported in two special trains.

It was held in the old Tauride Palace (the *Duma* during the time of Czarism), and it was a truly impressive spectacle.

Zinoviev opened the session, delivering a speech welcoming the delegates present who represented parties and labor organizations, and he also saluted those who were persecuted and imprisoned for agitating for their ideas in the countries under capitalist regimes. He concluded by announcing his desire that the next Congress of the Third International should be held in another country, but under a soviet regime. He also said that at this session only previously designated speakers would be allowed the floor and that the session would end with a speech by Lenin.

Capitalizing on the presence of so many delegates in Petrograd to attend the Congress, various public events were staged, including a huge rally at the Winter Square, upon which the main door of the Winter Palace opens, the former residence in Petrograd of the Czar.

It was to this square that, in 1905, the famous Father Gapon led that demonstration of starving people, who were attacked by the Palace Guards, shooting into the crowd from point-blank range, at women, children and old people.

Various stages had been set up, the main one being just in front of the main door of the Palace, and the others spread around different parts of the Square. I addressed the crowd from one of these stages and promised the Russian people that our organization would do everything in its power to support them in their struggle against world capitalism that was arrayed against the revolution.

On the following day we returned to Moscow, where the rest of the sessions of the Congress were scheduled to take place.

The sessions were held in one of the buildings of the Kremlin, in the one that contains the throne rooms. We were seated in the hall of Saint Andrew.

Once the session was opened, Zinoviev made a speech in which he called upon all the delegates to be as dispassionate as possible while examining the topics of debate, as this would be most advantageous for the world working class.

“Do not forget,” he said, “the desperate demands that are harbored in the hearts of millions of proletarians; we should strive to satisfy their desperation for redemption and for struggle, giving, in the resolutions we shall approve, practical forms to this yearning that is expressed everywhere.”

“Our mission is to seek harmonic extremes which, attracting the revolutionary spirit that pulses and lives in the world proletariat, will lead the latter to the final defeat of the capitalist world, establishing communism and the dictatorship of the proletariat.”

After a few explanatory statements about the Congress rules of order, which the supreme committee had elaborated, and which, among its articles, contained one that limited the time that each speaker had the floor to ten minutes, except for the sponsor of the proposal, who had no time limits, Zinoviev went on to support the Thesis, of which he was the sponsor: “The Role of the Communist Party”, which we must translate as: “The Necessity of the Communist Party”.

For an hour and a half he expounded his point of view on this subject, and we shall focus on three of his arguments: communist parties are needed to carry out the revolution; to seize power; and to organize the red army in order to defend the conquests of the revolution and to impose the dictatorship of the proletariat so as to destroy the bourgeoisie.

Numerous delegates requested an opportunity to speak on this topic; I was one of them.

Many who spoke before me expressed their basic agreement with Zinoviev; they only disagreed on matters of detail. They all proclaimed, although from different points of view, that without solidly organized and disciplined communist parties, without red armies, and without the seizure of power and without dictatorship, the revolution was impossible, and it would be impossible to preserve the conquests of the revolution if it were to take place; nor could communism be organized; nor could the bourgeoisie be destroyed.

Then it was my turn to speak and I mounted the stage.

I said that the situation of the delegates who did not agree with the perspective set forth by the Thesis presented by Zinoviev was very difficult and very delicate, since any criticism directed at the views advocated by the Third International would be interpreted by our enemies as an obvious sign of a split within the working class, with regard to the nature of the revolution, and they would not refrain from exploiting these differences concerning the nature of the revolution in order to spread the opinion among the workers that the revolution was a failure, since not everyone evaluated its results the same way.

“These are the considerations”, I continued, “that we must all keep in mind in the discussion that will follow, since to forget them would amount to sowing the seeds of discord that will not do any good for the cause that we support: the emancipation of the working class.”

“The revolution has cast a powerful net of sympathy among the workers of the entire world, and it would be most unfortunate if we were to deliver ourselves over to debates that are more or less partisan and biased and thus destroy the achievements to which this sympathy has given rise.”

“That is why our criticisms must be limited to those viewpoints that are not in accord with our principles and, even in that case, they must be as restrained as possible.”

“For my part this is the line of conduct that I intend to follow and I shall not deviate from it, unless an involuntary moment of forgetfulness should lead me astray.”

Having said these things, I then began to address the topic of debate.

“If you are to believe the speakers who preceded me, the revolution in Europe and in the entire world depends on the organization of the Communist Parties in every country.”

“It has been claimed, but without proffering any convincing proofs, at least not to me, and without proofs, much less reasonable hypotheses, that without Communist Parties there can be no revolution, capitalism cannot be destroyed, and the working classes will never win the right to be free.”

“This is a gratuitous assertion and even somewhat impertinent due to its pretensions, since it manifests a desire to deny the history and the genesis of all the revolutionary movements that humanity has participated in during the slow and painful road towards happiness.”

“We were told: Behold Russia—contemplate this beautiful spectacle; the example, you must admire this example and discover in it the practical confirmation of our arguments.”

“And I said: What are we supposed to behold? What is the object of contemplation that you propose for us? We see nothing here but a revolution that has been carried out and the attempt to create a system of social organization, whose results are not yet sufficiently clear for us to make any deductions.”

“You make us stand before the accomplished act and you tell us: This is the example! This is not the right way, by putting us in such an extreme situation, to get us to judge the claims of the Third International.”

“You have forgotten something very essential; the most essential thing for your arguments to possess the force that you seek to impart to them.”

“You have forgotten to prove to us that it was the Communist Party that carried out the revolution in Russia.”

“Show me that it was you, that it was your party that carried out the revolution, and then I will believe what you said and I will work to implement your proposals.”

“The revolution, in my opinion, comrade delegates, is not, and cannot be, the work of a party. A party does not carry out a revolution; a party cannot do more than organize a coup d’état and a coup d’état is not a revolution.”

“The revolution is the outcome of many causes whose origin we situate in a higher level of culture of the people, in the discrepancy between their aspirations and the organization that rules and governs the people.”

“The revolution is the more or less violent expression of a spiritual condition that favors this change in the norms that rule the life of a people, and which, by way of a constant labor on the part of various generations who have followed one another in the struggle for the application of this desire, emerges from the shadows at a certain moment and pitilessly sweeps away any obstacles that stand between it and its goal.”

“The revolution is the idea formed by the masses of an improved social condition, and which, not finding legal channels for its expression, from its opposition to the capitalist classes, it rises and imposes its will by violence.”

“The revolution is the consequence of an evolutionary process that is manifested in all the classes of a country, but particularly in the dispossessed, since they are the ones who suffer most in the capitalist regime, and there is no single party that can claim the privilege of being the exclusive agent of this process.”



“The revolution is a natural product, which germinates after many ideas have been sown; the countryside must be irrigated with the blood of many martyrs; the weeds must be uprooted at the cost of great sacrifices; and what party, if it does not want to be the object of ridicule, could vaingloriously claim that it was the one that sowed the ideas in the countryside, irrigated it and hoed the weeds? No party can do so; that is, in my opinion, no party can do so; but you do not share my opinion.”

“We are told that without a Communist Party the revolution is impossible, and that without a red army the conquests of the revolution cannot be preserved, and that without the seizure of power emancipation is impossible, and that without dictatorship the bourgeois cannot be destroyed; these are just assertions, whose proofs are nowhere forthcoming. For if we dispassionately examine what occurred in Russia, we shall discover no proof at all for these assertions.”

“You did not carry out the revolution singlehandedly in Russia; you went along with what was being done and you were most opportunely placed to seize power.”

At this point, since my ten minutes were up, the president signaled to me, and I withdrew from the podium.

After a few more speakers, who spoke in opposition to some of the views I expressed, Trotsky mounted the stage and spoke for more than 45 minutes, arguing against ... what I had just said.

I requested an opportunity to speak again; I was told that the list of speakers was closed.

The session ended before this debate was concluded.

You should not get the idea that little was discussed, or at least you should not get the idea that little was discussed compared to what could have been said; recall that each speech had to be translated into at least four languages and so did the rejoinder.

During the next session, the next morning, since there were three sessions each day, the debate on the question of the party continued. Zinoviev, who was the last speaker, took more than a half hour to refute what I had said the night before; once again I insisted on submitting a request to speak; I was told that the debate was closed. With a few maneuvers on the part of the supreme committee, the debate was declared terminated and the session adjourned, leaving until the next session the selection of a Committee charged with studying some formal revisions that had been proposed and approved with regard to Zinoviev's Theses on the Party.

During the afternoon session an incident took place, for which I was responsible, which sheds light on what I said about the role played by the “Presidium”.

Serrati was presiding, who opened the session by notifying us that the supreme committee had met and agreed to modify the order of debate.

Previously, as was the case with the topic of “The Necessity of the Communist Party”, after the sponsor read his proposed resolution, a general debate was held to discover the views of the delegates, and then a Committee was appointed which drew up a list of the revisions approved by the majority, rewrote the Theses and read it to the delegates one more time to find out if the desire of the proponents of the revisions had been correctly interpreted, before submitting the Theses to a final vote; from now on, since the Theses had been distributed in the form of a printed pamphlet and all the delegates were familiarized with them, in order to save time, committees of eleven, fifteen and seventeen individuals would be appointed, who would meet to draw up a report, after hearing the sponsor's proposed resolution, whether or not the sponsor and the Committee agreed, the Committee was to read its report in the Congress for final approval, and to see if any other revisions might be proposed.

He also said that each national delegation had the right to *nominate* an individual from their delegation to serve on each of the Report Committees; there were seven such committees, and once these individuals were nominated, the supreme committee *would accept* those whom it believed to be most likely to approve the Theses in question.... I asked for permission to speak and objected to the supreme committee's proposal to establish these Report Committees, because this would be tantamount to removing the debates regarding the Theses from the purview of the Congress. But what I found most incredible and considered to be a comedy, was that we, the delegates, had the right to propose, and the supreme committee the right to accept, those who seemed most capable. For I understood that we, the delegates, were the ones who were supposed to do the proposing and the accepting, since to accept the proposal of the supreme committee would amount, in total disregard of the individuals we nominate, to allowing the supreme committee to directly appoint their own choices.

"We cannot do that," Serrati replied, somewhat annoyed, "because we do not know them."

"The supreme committee knew them well enough to choose from among them when we proposed them," I insistently replied. "Because what you are proposing amounts to a majority factory."

"This debate is closed", Serrati declared.

I should also mention that my attitude caused a certain amount of confusion among the delegates, since we may state with a high degree of certainty that these practices are old and habitual customs in most of their home countries and in their political organizations.

Something else that caught my attention was that no one was transcribing the minutes of the meetings; there were six or seven secretaries, but they said that they were taking notes for later publication.

Therefore, it did not seem like a Congress at all, but more like an academic symposium, where someone makes a speech and some other academic responds to it.

Everything is limited to the proposal of the Committee; an individual designated by the Committee drafts the proposal; then there is a general discussion of the proposal; the proposal is revised, and then the Theses are published for the members of the party to read.

The spirit that animates a Congress—the various perspectives and views expressed by the delegates—has been entirely destroyed, and falls into the void.

I have two points to make about the votes. I told you that a certain number of votes were given to each delegation based on an assessment of their representative strength. I thought that the votes in the Congress would proceed according to this formula. That is not what happened. Each delegate had one vote. They voted as individuals, and not in accordance with representative mandates. They named the Report Committees, and I was appointed to sit on the Committee that was responsible for the report on the Trade Unions. Since the Committees met in order to prepare reports and there was no report, we went to the meeting hall, but we hardly carried on a few minutes of discussion and most of that was about trivial issues.

Furthermore, once the Committees were appointed, I thought that the Congress lost all its interest in debating the issues and instead concentrated on making sure that the Committee Reports were approved.

Then something happened that awakened us from this slumber that threatened to engulf us, something whose explanation I cannot provide, because I do not know what it is.

On the third and fourth days, when opening the sessions, Zinoviev, who was presiding, announced that the comrades Cachin and Frossard would make a declaration. [Cachin read the declaration at the Sixth Session of the Congress, on July 29—Translator's note.]

Cachin mounted the podium, and after admitting that they had made some mistakes in their previous political life and that they were not always equal to the what events required of them, they were proposing to make amends, and that, with the agreement of the Executive Committee of the Third International, they accepted all the conditions imposed by the latter for the admission of the French Socialist Party in the International, and on the following day they would return to France, in order to comply with the terms of their agreement with the International.

Frossard, when he spoke, confirmed what Cachin had said, adding that, from now on, they would work alongside the revolutionary proletariat in good faith.

The shock produced by these declarations can hardly be described. No one, or very few people, expected this. It took the Congress by surprise like a siren in the night. By what right had this occult agreement been made with Cachin and Frossard, when there were other delegates from France at the Congress?

The other French delegates asked permission to speak; they objected to the agreement, but Cachin and Frossard returned to France, and it was a *fait accompli*.

The sessions lost all interest. The many translations that had to be made caused the least significant debate to last forever.

Furthermore, when a speech was being translated to one language, those who did not understand that language left the hall; when the translation was finished and another one was begun, it was necessary to make sure that the delegates who spoke that language would return to the hall, which led to an incalculable loss of time. And with each translation the same thing happened. And there was only one woman who was responsible for translating everything into all four official languages of the Congress: Angelica Balabanoff.

One of the topics that stirred up the Congress a little, retarding its decline somewhat, was the topic of the electoral activity of the Communist Parties. The supporters of abstention were numerous, and only a general sense of discipline, as well as the discipline that Lenin was able to impose, was capable of defeating the anti-electoral current. One of the delegations that proved to be most intransigent with respect to this issue was the Dutch delegation. It did not want to surrender, and it was only defeated by greater numbers, despite its logical arguments.

Souchy, the delegate of the German syndicalists, intervened in the debate on this topic, which was of such great importance, and delivered an extremely important speech regarding the basis of and the way to approach the anti-electoral question being posed by the Committee; but as rigorous as his reasoning was, since his ten minutes were up, he had to yield the floor; his opponents, however, were allowed to speak for as long as they wished. The ten minutes was a trap, but depending on which mice came by, some could walk all over the trap without being caught.

Another topic that broke the monotony a little, and which, due to the earlier proceedings, was sure to arouse the interest of the delegates, was Colonialism.

Lenin, who was the sponsor of the Theses on the Colonial Question, argued for his Theses and Serrati argued against them. Serrati said that the Italian delegation would abstain from taking part in the vote on this topic, since he, Serrati, as the editor in chief of the Milan socialist newspaper, *Avanti*, had led a six year campaign against these same views advocated by certain Italian socialists and many nationalists, and he did not want to use his vote, in a Congress in Moscow, to destroy what he had spent so much time and effort to build.

But Lenin did not yield, and the majority of the Congress approved Lenin's proposal.

The proceedings of the Congress were therefore agonizing, unless Lenin or Trotsky happened to be speaking, and the debates took place amidst a general indifference, while the Report Committees arranged everything. We must also mention that Balabanoff grew more exhausted with each passing day, and the translations became more and more cursory, so that one hardly could understand what the speaker was talking about.

In consideration of this language problem, and thinking that it would be most advantageous if a solution could be found that would simplify the problem, and recalling a resolution approved by the Confederation at Madrid, I sent a letter to the supreme committee proposing that it submit to the Congress for discussion a proposal that in the future all debates of the Congress be carried out in "Esperanto", as an auxiliary language. When I presented the proposal, they told me they would discuss it and that they would notify me regarding their decision.

After fourteen or fifteen days of sessions, the English delegation became more numerous with the arrival of new delegates and then the supreme committee proposed that, given the number of English delegates who were taking part in the Congress, English would replace French as an official language of the Congress.

The proposal was approved.

From then on, it was much more difficult for me to attend a whole day of the Congress, as I had done until then; for, always taking into consideration the exhaustion of the translator, which was increasing daily, there were whole evenings and entire sessions where not even one French translation was issued.

At one of these sessions the conditions of admission of the Socialist Parties to the Third International was being debated. The conditions set forth in the pamphlet that was distributed to the delegates, mentioned above, numbered fourteen.

The Report Committee increased the number of conditions to sixteen. And since, after the Report was read, some delegates offered objections to some points, it was agreed that the Committee, which accepted some of the proposed revisions, should withdraw the Report in order to rewrite it, and once the new Report was written it was to be read again for final approval.

I know for a fact that this Report was not read again to the Congress, and I doubt very much that anything could have been slipped past me without my knowledge, since I did not miss even one session; you will understand, for that reason, how surprised I was upon being notified, almost as soon as I had arrived in Berlin during my return to Spain, that the number of conditions imposed on the Socialist Parties for admission to the Third International had risen to twenty one.

I swear to you that the Congress did not discuss these extra conditions. Whether they were discussed by the Report Committee, I cannot say, but I can say that at the Plenum of the Congress nothing was said about twenty one conditions, I can state this without any fear of being mistaken.

Another one of the sessions that witnessed some lively debate was the one that was scheduled to address the petition of the German Independent Socialist Party for admission to the Third International.

At the last Congress held by this German Independent Socialist Party, prior to the Congress of the Third International, two tendencies had emerged, although at bottom they were really the same: they both wanted to ally with Moscow; but some wanted to make their alliance depend on certain conditions, and others wanted the alliance to be unconditional. The supporters of imposing conditions on their entry into the International had won a majority at the German Congress, but a very slim one, and this majority, in order to avoid splitting the party, agreed

to send a delegation to Moscow composed of two individuals from each tendency in order to determine whether it was possible to conciliate the two tendencies with the agreement of the Third International.

The session at which the four delegates of the German party were scheduled to speak promised to be an interesting one, and this interest was compounded by the fact that Levi, the delegate of the German Communist Party, was not one to waste an opportunity to attack his old party comrades.

Our expectations were not disappointed.

Dittmann and Stoecker, who represented the tendency that supported the unconditional adherence of the Independent Socialist Party to the International, unleashed a harsh attack on their party comrades, Crispian and Ledebour, who represented the tendency that sought to impose conditions. And Paul Levi, from the vantage point of the "Presidium", was carefully observing all four of them. I say 'carefully observing', as in noting his enemies' weak spots in order to reap the rewards when they are defeated.

The session was turbulent and hectic and this led me to believe that the split in the German Socialist Party would take place as soon as the delegates returned to Berlin. This belief was based on the backstage machinations that were taking place independently of the ongoing debate in the Congress. The hall of the Congress was merely the stage where previously decided roles were performed.

In the various votes that were held, whenever Spain was called, I always answered by abstaining, which caught the attention of some of the delegates, who expressed their astonishment.

Then I rose and made the following declaration: "I represent an anti-political trade union organization, and since so many of the debates that have been held up until now only refer to political parties, I abstained from voting, for I did not want, with my vote, to tip the scales of the debate either way, since I had no intention of assisting in the execution of the resolutions pertaining to these matters. My abstention was by no means an expression of my not wanting to vote; it was for the purpose of preventing me from getting involved in affairs that do not involve me, considering the nature of the organization that I represent at the Congress. I will vote when the topic for debate is the Trade Unions, or some other question of detail, but in the others I will always abstain."

I already told you that I was appointed to be a member of the Report Committee on the Trade Unions question. I do not think it is idle to tell you that I was the only delegate on that Committee who represented a trade union organization, without simultaneously representing a political party.

The sponsor of the Theses on the Trade Unions was Radek, and I will hardly be telling you anything new if I say that Radek is a rabid anti-syndicalist.

For him the Trade Unions, if they do not serve the Communist Parties, have no reason to exist.

His opinion of the Trade Unions is the same as the one expressed in his proposed resolution, and can be summarized in a few words.

Absolute centralization; discipline by and cooperation with the Communist Party. In addition, the Party was to have all the responsibility for treasuries, permanent offices, secretaries, propaganda sections, and committees of all kinds. The National Committees of Trade Federations and all other labor organizations must be in the hands of tried and true communists in order to prevent the leaders of these organizations from placing the organizations at the service of the

imperialist bourgeoisie of all countries, as happened in 1914. A new betrayal by the leaders of the trade union movement must be avoided.

I opposed this resolution at the meeting of the Report Committee. I said that the fault for what happened in 1914 to the trade union organizations of all the belligerent countries did not exactly lie with the men who were the figureheads of the organizations, but in the internal constitutions of these organizations, which allowed, due to an all-embracing centralism and bureaucracy, the destruction of all individual initiative; the fault lies in the fact that large crowds accepted what someone told them without thought or rational consideration on their part.

I said it is true, as science and numerous studies are proving every day, that function creates the organ, and that if the systems of organization are not modified, however many communists may be installed as their new leaders, after a certain time they will fall into the same vices that they sought to combat.

As a result, I proposed that our Report not be limited to changing the men while leaving the organizations as they were before, but that we should change the men and also change the methods of organizing.

They listened to me like men who hear the rain beating down on the roof of the building they are in, and paid no more attention to my words than they would have to the verses of a popular song.

There was nothing to modify or reform; they would take over the secretariats and offices, in order to issue orders; nothing else matters. I understood that I was wasting my time and ceased to attend the meetings of the Committee.

The day finally came for debating this topic, and since the English, the delegate of the German syndicalists and others wanted to speak, the debate promised to be turbulent.

The Report of the Committee was opposed, in part, to that of the sponsor of the resolution, since, although it was not much, the Committee demanded a certain degree of autonomy for the trade unions, and Radek did not want to yield.

When the sponsor's Report was brought up for debate, Radek spent more than an hour in its defense.

The Committee had also written its own Report and appointed a sponsor to propose it, and this sponsor spoke for almost an hour in defense of his views. It should be said that the difference between the Committee and Radek was a matter of form, and not of substance; but since neither appeared to be willing to compromise, there were two Reports on this topic.

When the two opposing sponsors had yielded the floor, a considerable number of comrades requested the opportunity to speak.

Since the debate threatened to be a long one, the President said that, in view of the fact that twenty two comrades have signed up to speak on this topic, even after the two sponsors have spoken, the proposal has been made that three comrades should be appointed by each of the two tendencies that have emerged and when they have finished speaking we should submit the Reports of the original sponsor and the Committee to a vote.

I must also point out that in this same proposal to appoint the individuals who would speak in the debate and which was accepted by the supreme committee, and was brought up for the Congress's approval, lo and behold!, neither I, nor Souchy, nor the German syndicalists, who were really the only true opposition on the terrain of the trade union organizations, were mentioned in the proposal and we were implacably excluded.

The speakers having finished, the proposals were put to the vote and the majority accepted the Radek's Theses. I did not even want to vote. Why bother!

The Congress was nearing its end.

The relations of the socialist youth organizations with the Third International were discussed. So was the topic of women's organizations. And at the last session the statutes of the Third International were also debated. Article 14 of these statutes certainly aroused the energetic opposition of the English delegation.

Article 14 says the following, which was what roused the ire of the English delegates, with the support of others present, including mine: "At the next world Congresses of the Third International, the national trade union organizations that have joined the International will be represented at the Congresses *by the delegates of the Communist Parties of their countries.*"

The italics are mine, since I would like to call your attention to what this clause means for our Confederation in the future.

The English delegation sought the deletion of this clause of Article 14, since, they said, it deprives the large national organizations of any representation. But neither their protest, nor mine, nor those of other comrades were heeded.

The proposal of the Committee was accepted by a majority vote.

Since I knew that this was the last session of the Congress and my proposal about "Esperanto" was undoubtedly forgotten, since I never received a reply to my inquiry, I insisted to Zinoviev that my proposal be read and that the views of the delegates be sounded on the topic.

He responded that it was not possible to debate my proposal. He said I could read my proposal before the Congress, and then invite the Executive Committee of the Third International to write a Report or assume responsibility for composing a proposal to be discussed at the next Congress.

I did so and the Executive Committee told me that they would study the issue.

That was the last session of the Congress, which took place on a Thursday, and on the following Saturday the end of the Congress would be celebrated at the Bolshoi Theater in Moscow. Before leaving the hall, Lozovsky invited those of us whose deliberations regarding the organization of the "Revolutionary Trade Union International" was interrupted, to meet with him on the next day, Friday, in the same meeting hall, in order to continue our discussion.

At this new stage of the deliberations the delegates from Russia, France, Spain, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia met; the delegates from Georgia and Italy had already departed.

Lozovsky made the opening speech of the meeting, explaining the necessity for getting the preparations underway, so as to immediately issue a proclamation to the organized proletariat of the whole world, and to get the latter to prepare to attend the trade union conference.

When my turn to speak came, I expressed my opinion that after the approval of Article 14 of the statutes of the Third International, it seemed idle and useless to even debate the organization of the Conference, since, either one accepts the principle of the absolute autonomy of the Revolutionary Trade Union International, or else one accepts Article 14, as set forth in the paragraph quoted above, and this brings about a situation of incompatibility which the other organizations represented here may or may not accept, but I knew for certain, without the least doubt, that the Confederation that I represented would not endorse it. The reasons for this were many, but the most important could be narrowed down to two: our independence vis-à-vis all political parties, even the communists, that might be formed in Spain, and the exclusively anti-political basis of our activity.

I said that I wanted to make the principle and most salient characteristics of our organization known to the delegates, and in this way convince them how estranged we are from the purposes of Article 14.

I pointed out that our struggles against political parties are legendary and that this is one of the most glorious hallmarks of our activity, since in this way we have managed to destroy the power of the political parties whose influence among the working classes of Spain was undeniable. And I said that if we were to accept the implications of such a resolution, we would by that means have destroyed one political influence only in order to create another, whose advantages are nowhere to be seen. After the resolution was adopted, I gave up, for it seemed to me to be pointless to continue the debate.

Lozovsky replied that I was exaggerating, since, while some of my arguments were indeed just, the ones that referred to the futility of continuing to assist in the preparations for the organization of a Revolutionary Trade Union International were not entirely logical.

“We shall carry out this work,” he continued, “we shall convoke the Conference, we shall pose all these questions there, we shall find answers for them, and having done so we shall proceed from there.”

I told Lozovsky that it was not my intention, by opposing and debating the resolution, to express my categorical rejection of the entire project, and that I accepted the general perspective; I would continue to assist in the labors of organizing the trade union conference; that I would do everything in my power to assure that the Confederation would send as many delegates as possible and with views that were deliberated in advance and with which the delegates would have to abide, thus defining and establishing our position with the requisite firmness and certainty. But I could not foster illusions, for, unless the views held by the Confederation were to change, it would be very difficult for it to accept what was required of it.

In the next stage of this debate, Lozovsky presented comrade Tomsky<sup>3</sup>, one of the members of the Executive Committee of the Russian General Confederation of Labor, who had to replace Lozovsky at the meeting, since Lozovsky had to leave for Sweden, Germany and other countries, if the Governments of these countries would allow him entry, as a delegate of his organization.

Since Tomsky had attended our meetings from the beginning, it was not necessary for me to recapitulate my views, as he was already acquainted with them. After reading the order of the day for our next meeting on Monday, since the closing meeting of the Congress was scheduled for Saturday, and on Sunday we were to rest, he adjourned the meeting.

At the meeting on Monday we spent our time discussing the location for the Conference and the text of the appeal. From the very first, Tomsky proved to be much more conciliatory than Lozovsky.

He, too, advocated holding the Conference in Moscow, and I reiterated the opinions that I had previously expressed regarding this issue and proposed that it should be held in Sweden or Italy. I also proposed that the text of the appeal to attend the conference should not contain any specific reference to where it would be held; and that the organizations of Sweden and Italy should be consulted, and if assurances could be provided that the governments of these countries would have no objections, then, one month before the opening of the Conference, at least, a country could be selected and the month's time for preparation would be enough for the delegates to

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<sup>3</sup> Not to be confused with Trotsky.



make their travel arrangements. And only in the case that neither of these countries could host the Conference should it be held in Moscow. This proposal was accepted.

The text of the call to attend the Conference, which, as I pointed out above, was limited to inviting only those organizations that accepted the seizure of power and dictatorship, and which Lozovsky refused to revise, an intransigent position that marked the final parting of ways, with regard the participation in the preparations for the Conference, of the German syndicalists, the Shop Stewards of England and the North American I.W.W., was revised to read as follows: "All those national trade union organizations, international and national trade federations, regional and local unions are invited to attend the Conference, which accept the seizure of political power by the working class and the dictatorship of the proletariat, and we also invite those that, without having made an express commitment to this effect, practice the revolutionary class struggle."

This revision of the call to attend the Conference was approved, and Tomskey once again proposed revisions to allow those delegates of the organizations mentioned above who did not participate in the meeting to be invited. This proposal was also approved and I was appointed to carry out the required measures immediately, with the authorization of the Committee.

When I explained to these comrades the nature of the revision of the call to attend the Conference and the new conciliatory trend, as represented by Tomskey, they agreed to return to take part in the preparations for the Conference.

We were in the midst of drawing up the plans for the Conference when I was notified of the arrival in Moscow of comrade Armando Borghi, the secretary of the *Unione Sindacale Italiana*.

Borghi spoke with me shortly after his arrival and explained the reason for his journey to Moscow. He told me that the *Unione Sindacale* had also joined the Third International; it had done so by sending a letter to Moscow months before, indicating its willingness to join. He was puzzled by the fact that none of the reports or documents of the Third International had mentioned his organization, neither in the original roster of members nor in the preliminary proceedings that we had undertaken for the Congress. The *Unione Sindacale* had even been excluded from the text of the appeal to attend the Congress.

I told him that I knew nothing about his organization's membership in the Third International, and, having inquired of the Executive Committee of the Third International if it had maintained any relations with or knew anything about the *Unione Sindacale*, I was always told that they knew nothing about it. As for including the *Unione Sindacale* in the preparatory work for holding the Conference, this was not possible, because the Third International had always denied that the organization Borghi represented had joined Moscow.

I later discovered that they did indeed know about the *Unione Sindacale*, but, for reasons unknown to me, they had concealed this knowledge.

Borghi presented himself to the Executive Committee of the Third International and then, later, to the chairman of the organizational committee of the trade union conference.

He requested that the trade union conference preparations exclude the *Confederazione Generale del Lavoro*, represented by D'Aragona, and that the *Unione Sindacale* replace it in the appeal to attend the Conference.

He alleged the reformist and class-collaborationist nature of D'Aragona's organization and the preponderant influence within it of right wing Italian Socialists, and submitted in defense of his request to replace it with the *Unione Sindacale* the claim that the latter was infused with a real class spirit, that it collaborated with no representative institutions of the bourgeoisie, and that it had supported the Russian Revolution from the very beginning.

Tomsky, and with him the majority of the Committee, refused to approve Borghi's request. This comrade then energetically and resolutely pressed me to help him, and asked me to break with the Congress if necessary.

I placed myself at his disposal, since I had some knowledge, admittedly vague, concerning what his organization had done, and a sense of duty to reciprocate obliged me to offer him my help forthwith, which I would have offered anyway regardless of what they had done for us.

I beseeched him to agree to let us test every possible solution that he could accept before proceeding to a definitive break. "The greatest concession I could make," he said, "is to be admitted to the Conference organizational committee on an equal footing with the *Confederazione del Lavoro*."

I voted in favor of his petition to exclude the *Confederazione* and replace it with his organization, and so did the Germans, the North American I.W.W. and the Shop Stewards of England, while Russia, France, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Georgia voted against it.

The question of replacing the *Confederazione* with the *Unione Sindacale* was once again debated, and I elaborated the question in precise terms, and Tomsky, and along with him the majority of the Committee, rejected our petition.

In order to avoid a break, Borghi proposed that his organization be admitted to the Conference on an equal footing with the *Confederazione*, and his proposal was approved. A showdown had been averted, so far.

At the same meeting I proposed, in order to give encouragement and satisfaction to the comrade members of the *Unione Sindacale*, that the organizing committee of the Revolutionary Trade Union International should issue the following declaration: "The Organizing Committee of the Revolutionary Trade Union International views with the greatest sympathy the revolutionary spirit of the Italian *Unione Sindacale*, and its energetic struggle waged against the exploiters."

This proposal triggered a heated debate, and the meeting ended without reaching any definitive agreement.

At the next meeting we continued the debate and Tomsky repeatedly begged me to withdraw my proposal. And because I would not agree to do so he got up and solemnly declared: "In the name of the Russian Communist Party, and for reasons of political expediency, we cannot accept this proposal."

I consulted with Borghi, and this comrade, in order to avoid further frustration, advised me to withdraw my proposal, which I did, but not before I told Tomsky that the political opportunism of his party was most inopportunistly applied on this occasion, since the proposal that I had sponsored was even more opportunist and that I would prove it to him.

I told Tomsky that my proposal was only an attempt to address the proletarians who were members of the *Confederazione del Lavoro*. "Comrade Borghi has demonstrated to us that the *Confederazione* is a reformist organization, and since it cannot be presumed that my proposal would cause the workers to abandon the *Confederazione* in droves, if they see that the Committee has expressed its sympathies for the *Unione Sindacale*, it is only logical to assume that they would attempt to emulate the latter. This is why my proposal undeniably partook of opportunism, but of a revolutionary opportunism. If the Russian Communist Party practices a different kind of opportunism," I told him, "then your opposition is justified".

At that meeting, and at others that followed, we discussed how we could most rapidly bring the announcement of the convocation of the international trade union conference to the attention of all the trade union organizations and also how to achieve the maximum impact.

As for the first question, it was resolved that all the Russian radio stations should broadcast the announcement to every country, and as for the second, it was proposed that each delegate present should assume responsibility for calling a meeting of all the organizations of the countries with which they were most familiar and those nearest his home country.

The Confederation was given the mandate to hold a meeting for the organizations of Portugal and the South American countries, due to the fact that the first country borders on Spain and due to the language it shares with most of the South American countries.

All these countries, with regard to the preparations for the journey to the Conference, should any experience any difficulties, and with respect to the text announcing the Conference, would form a single whole with our organization.

It was also agreed that each one of the delegates present should write a letter about the marvels we witnessed in Russia to the workers of the countries we were responsible for organizing, inviting them to be present at the Conference and thus to show their sympathy for the Russian Revolution and their desire to join the Revolutionary Trade Union International.

I was instructed to write a letter to the organized workers of Portugal and South America. These letters, once written and translated into Russian so that the Committee could be apprised of their contents, would be broadcast by radio, signed by the Committee.

The first such letter that was written and read to us was the one directed at the English workers. Its contents were debated and it was agreed to introduce some modifications.

We all worked hard to finish as soon as possible and we were more or less satisfied with the results, because after so many vicissitudes we had reached the end, and we had preserved a certain degree of cordiality and harmony. But.... There is always a "but", for the whole business fell apart and ended in such a bad way that it did not seem to be destined to bear fruit.

As I said, it was agreed to introduce some modifications to the letter directed at the English workers. We also agreed that, once the letter was completed with the agreed-upon revisions, a copy would be submitted to each delegation and each delegate would sign the copies of the other delegations' letters, and thus each one of us would have a copy with all the signatures of the delegates.

At one of the last meetings the English letter was read for the last time and approved. Because there was only one copy of the letter we were told that copies would be prepared for all of us and would be sent to our hotel so we could sign them.

My letter was scheduled to be read at the next meeting.

As it turned out, on the following day, we were given copies to sign, but instead of the letter to the English, we found the following document:

Translated, it says:

"Note from the Provisional Executive Committee of the Red Trade Union International, concerning the organization of propaganda:

1. A Special Committee must be organized in each country by the Communist Party, or by an industrial organization in cooperation with the Communist Party.
2. The Committee will be responsible for distributing all the publications of the Red Trade Union International to all the workers organizations, Trade Unions as well as Industrial Unions, along with trade Federations and organizations.

3. The Committee will appoint comrades who are specially trained to publish new professional magazines or to utilize already existing professional revolutionary periodicals, adding supplements to these magazines that express the point of view of the Red Trade Union International, and carrying out energetic propaganda against the Amsterdam Trade Union International.
4. The Committee will also carry out a separate propaganda program in the newspapers of the Trade Unions and will publish polemics in the daily press.
5. The Committee will work in strict cooperation with the Communist Party, but will nonetheless be a totally different organization, distinct from the Communist Party.
6. The Committee will help convoke national and local conferences, where questions of international organization will be discussed and it will select speakers to carry out the propaganda of our organization and our politics.
7. The Committee will be composed of comrades who are preferably communists, who belong to industrial organizations or who are in close contact with the latter. The members of the Committee will be chosen by an industrial organization, with the approval of the Communist Party and its Executive Committee.
8. In those countries where these procedures cannot be pursued, the Committee will send, or help to send, comrades *designated* by the Communist Party, to these countries for the purpose of creating such an organization; 'considering as such'<sup>4</sup>, all the countries of South America, Mexico, Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, where there are considerable trade union movements but no communist organizations, which will be the recipients of what assistance we can give them."

I read this document two or three times, very carefully, and after a moment's reflection, told the messenger:

"Tell Tomskey that, in the name of maintaining harmonious relations between the Third International and our Confederation I have made concessions that could involve me in serious disputes when I return to my country, but that there is a limit to my good faith, just as there is a limit to the concessions I can make, and I have already reached my limit with the concessions I have made up to this point."

"Tell him that for me to sign this document, even without considering the way it was presented to me, which I consider to be indecent, not to use a more pejorative expression, would represent a scandal that my comrades will never forgive me for committing, and for which I could never forgive myself."

By chance, just as we were being presented with the copies of this document, comrade Borghi happened to be in my hotel room; I asked him, when the comrade who delivered the document had left, what he thought about the document and what he was going to do about it.

He stroked his beard, and giving me a sidelong glance, he said: "The other day I asked them to grant me a passport so I could return to Italy; I will be going shortly to see if they have my passport ready and, if so, I will leave by train tomorrow morning."

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<sup>4</sup> I added these words in order to make the intentions of the authors clear. [Author's note.]

On the next day he left for Petrograd on his way to Milan.

I have provided an account of my activities as a delegate and some of my impressions of the Congress; it is up to you, comrades of the Confederal Committee, and the members of the organization, to say whether or not I have done my duty.

At this point, I would like to provide you with a summary of what I did outside the sessions of the Congress that was complementary to my mission. I wrote three or four articles that were published in *Pravda*, dealing with the combative spirit of our organization, its characteristics and the persecutions it has undergone. In one of the articles I also addressed the issue of the participation of women in our social struggles.

I submitted a report to the Third International, in which I requested that the Third International should discuss, as concretely as possible, the turbulent situation of the social forces in Spain, their methods of struggle, supporters, publications, etc.

I will summarize my report in order to submit to your judgment whether or not I was correct.

After a brief review of the intense social struggles of the last few years and the increasingly violent persecution to which we have been subject, and after a brief depiction of the economic and political conditions of the Spanish worker, I described the situation of the various social forces in the following manner:

“The Socialist Party: founded about thirty five years ago by its current leader, Pablo Iglesias. Its official headquarters is in Madrid. Its tendencies are frankly reformist, as it remained faithful to the Second International right up to the last minute.”

“Since 1910 it has been represented in Parliament; its current minority faction is composed of four deputies.”

“It has a daily newspaper called *El Socialista*, which is read almost exclusively by the working class. Besides this newspaper, which is published in Madrid, they have various weekly periodicals in the provinces.”

“The party has about fifty thousand members.”

“Its influence is mostly concentrated among the proletariat of the capital of Spain, as well as in the North and the Northwest, Bilbao and its mining district, and Asturias with its coal fields, respectively.”

“It is also influential in part of Extremadura, and it also has cells of supporters, although they are not very numerous, in all the regions of Spain.”

“While, as I said at the beginning, the party exhibits markedly reformist tendencies, it does contain a significant minority that is more sympathetic than the other factions with the Russian Revolution and would like to join the Third International.”

“The *Unión General de Trabajadores*: This organization, as its name indicates, is a trade union organization, but it tends to support the Socialist Party. The members of the Central Committee of the *Unión General de Trabajadores* and the members of the Party’s central committee are the same persons. They could not be more closely interwoven.”

“It is also markedly reformist. It joined the Amsterdam International of Trade Unions; it participated in the Washington Conference and the meetings of the Labor Committee of the League of Nations.”

“It is centrally organized by trades, and does not have official newspapers. But given the interpenetration of the two organizations I mentioned above, both *El Socialista*, which is supported by the voluntary contributions and mandatory dues of the Trade Unions that compose the UGT, as well as the socialist weeklies in the provinces, which the UGT also subsidizes, serve as outlets for

its propaganda. Its only official publication is a Bulletin that is published once every four months, for all levels of the trade union movement.”

“It exercises influence in the same regions where the Socialist Party and its supporters are strong, and according to its last Congress, it has about two hundred fifty thousand members.”

“It undergoes, like every trade union organization, moments of increase and decrease and, although fleetingly, it has in the past counted even more members than it has now, but at other times it has also had fewer members; it is presently undergoing a tendency to increase.”

“The *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo*: Reorganized in 1916, its national headquarters are in Barcelona.”

“This organization represents the revolutionary spirit in Spain, in its most extreme combative form, and anarchist elements comprise the most predominant force among its guiding spirits.”

“Its organizational principle is federalist, and the proletariat of the Confederation has obtained such positive results from federalism that it will never let anybody or anything deprive it of it.”

“Its influence is most manifest in Catalonia and Andalusia, the latter being a predominantly peasant region.”

“Next in the order of regions where the CNT has significant influence, we find Valencia and Aragón, and we would be remiss if we were to forget Galician region, which, although not hosting a great many members of the CNT is nonetheless a hotbed of older revolutionary traditions.”

“It also has important centers of support in Asturias and Vizcaya. The CNT of Asturias is particularly distinguished by its culture and that of Vizcaya by its combative spirit.”

“It is organized according to regions and industries, without national trade Federations, which were abolished at its last Congress; instead, in accordance with its federalist principles, it has local Federations in each industrial center and then regional Confederations that unite the local Federations of each region.”

“Its press consists of two daily newspapers (currently suspended by Government persecution), one in Barcelona and the other in Valencia, both of which are called *Solidaridad Obrera*, and four weeklies in Zaragoza, Bilbao, La Coruña and Seville, respectively, which have also suspended publication by order of the Government.”

“After its reorganization, it held a Congress in the capital of Spain, Madrid, which was attended by five hundred delegates, representing one million workers.”

“At the Madrid Congress the delegates of the CNT unanimously agreed to join the Third International, but remained faithful to the principles of the First International.”

“I said above that the number of workers represented at the Congress was as many as one million, but taking into considerations fluctuations in membership, the Confederation joins the Third International with an effective membership of eight hundred thousand members.”

“The Communist Party: before my departure from Spain the Communist Party did not exist. While I was in Paris I discovered that the Young Socialists had split from the Socialist Party and formed the Communist Party.”

“I am unaware of how many members it has, although I suppose that it cannot be more than a few thousand. Very few.”

“As its press organ, it has begun to publish a weekly called *El Comunista*.”

“We must not forget the anarchists. For, apart from the influence they exercise in the *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo*, they have their affinity groups and their own journal, *Tierra y Libertad*, the oldest weekly in Spain, which has also suspended publication due to its refusal to submit to censorship, and the persecution suffered by the comrades who publish it.”

I suppose you would like, comrades of the Confederal Committee, for me to set forth my opinion concerning the attitude we should adopt towards the Third International; I have not wanted to do so here so as to confuse my responsibilities as a delegate to the Third International and the judgment that the results of my activities as a delegate might deserve. What I think about the Third International will be set forth in a separate work.

Angel Pestaña  
Barcelona, and in Prison  
November 1921

Translated from the Spanish.

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Angel Pestaña  
Report Submitted to the Confederal Committee of the CNT  
by Delegate Angel Pestaña regarding his Conduct at the Second Congress of the Third  
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November 1921

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