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STRUCTURE OF THE NATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF LABOUR (THE C.N.T.)

S P A I N

Issued By
The LONDON BUREAU C.N.T.-F.A.I.
21, FRITH STREET,
SHAFTESBURY AVE., LONDON, W.1

NOTES ON THE STRUCTURE OF THE NATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF LABOUR (C.N.T.) OF SPAIN

The London Bureau of the CNT (National Confederation of Labour of Spain), having received numerous enquiries for particulars respecting this organisation from British workers, has asked the Secretary of the National Committee in Valencia to furnish us with the required information. We have now received the following brief outline which we submit for your consideration.

For many years, prior to the Spanish Revolution of July 19th, 1936, our organisation has been engaged in an incessant struggle against Capitalism and the State. By means of direct action; strikes, boycotts, etc., we succeeded in wresting some concessions, thus improving the economic conditions of the Spanish Proletariat. The continuous repressions on the part of the Government—no less ruthless under the Republic than under the Monarchy and the Dictatorship—the frequent raids on our headquarters, the confiscation of our press with the repeated arrests and imprisonments rendered our task extremely difficult. However, all this was changed after the 19th of July. The National Confederation of Labour in Spain was infused with new life and determination, as were the workers in general.

Formerly, the Capitalist class with the ready help of the Government were well able to protect their ill-gotten wealth. But the Spanish Revolution caused them to "run for cover"; they fled the country, abandoning their estates and industries. It therefore became imperative for the workers to take charge of the factories, the shops and the land, so as to prevent the complete collapse of the economic life of the country, and to ensure the possibility of continuing the Anti-Fascist war, imposed upon the Spanish people by the military and Fascist conspiracy.

The newly created situation produced new problems that could never have been foreseen in theory. The CNT, being among the most ardent and determined to conquer Fascism, was necessarily forced to adapt itself to the new situations. Not for a moment, however, did it forget its federalistic principles. Thus, the various local committees of the Organisation retained, more or less, the same rights and duties that were theirs before the 19th of July. These local committees continued faithfully to execute and abide by the resolutions adopted by the Organisation at its Plenary Sessions.

The National Confederation of Labour is based on very progressive lines: there is no President, but the Secretary carries out the combined functions. He has charge of all the correspondence which is signed under seal. But neither the Secretary, nor the Committee hold executive powers of their own.

Each Committee of the CNT, has a Secretariat (or Council), consisting of:—(a) Secretary, appointed by a referendum of the Regional Syndicates; (b) Treasurer and Accountant, chosen by the Syndicates of the locality where the Regional Committee resides, and of one representative of each territorial committee of the region.

The National Committee is composed of:—

- 1) A SECRETARY, elected by all the Syndicates of the country;
- 2) A TREASURER; and
- 3) An ACCOUNTANT.

These are appointed by the Syndicates of the locality where the National Committee resides; and of TWO DELEGATES from each Regional Committee. These Committees are at present sub-divided into Sections.

The National Committee is divided into:—

1) The DEFENCE SECTION. This Section only deals with matters of military and strategic importance, such as the maintenance of contact with the Fronts, the upkeep of the fighting strength and aims at encouraging and fostering the enthusiasm of all those fighting in the trenches. This Section has some sub-sections, each in charge of a responsible member of the organisation.

2) The SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SECTION. This Section has to tackle the various problems connected with Public Order, including the protection of those charged with political offences.

3) The PROPAGANDA SECTION; and,

4) The SECTION FOR ECONOMY. This Section looks after the production and distribution. It consists of two members of the National Committee, one acting Secretary, and in addition to these there is one delegate representing each National Federation of Industry in the country. In other words, the Section for Economy is actually the National Committee in the economic sphere of production and distribution of the CNT.

As will be seen, the CNT has a twofold task: one economic, the other political.

The Syndicates are formed by the sections and groups of the various industrial workers. Each section has the right to deal with its own trade problems, provided its decisions do not encroach upon the interests of another section or syndicate.

The Syndicates have a Central Administrative Council, consisting of a Secretary, Treasurer, Accountant and one Joint Secretary, appointed by the General Meeting of the workers; also of one Councillor, appointed by each section of the industrial Syndicate.

Those problems that can be discussed in public are dealt with at the General Sessions of the Syndicates, the findings of which are conveyed to the Plenary session of Local Syndicates. These make decisions which are adopted by majority. They are then submitted to a full Regional Assembly of Local and Territorial Committees. The latter form resolutions adopted by the majority, which then become operative by the National Committee.

When special problems arise, due to the emergency of the moment owing to the War, which cannot be openly discussed at the general meetings, the National Committee transmits these by sending responsible members to the various localities for private discussion, among old and trusted members. The findings of these are conveyed to a Session of the Regional Committee, and finally to a National Meeting of the various Regional Committees, who decide upon what steps are to be taken by the National Committee.

These majority decisions constitute the rules by which each member of the CNT abides.

Should you desire any further information on this subject, please write to, or call at the London Office of the CNT, when every endeavour will be made to furnish you with the desired information.

Address:—21 Frith Street, (Shaftesbury Avenue), London, W.1.