



ELA-STV

1976

**DECLARATION OF THE  
EXTRAORDINARY TRADE UNION  
CONGRESS**

Ladies and gentlemen,

The idea of efficiency and work that from the beginning we have wanted to give this Congress, would not reconcile with the rethoric development that is frequently hoped for on such occasions. We prefer to devote the time, necessarily limited, of this declaration, to the brief but important consideration of the problems that we have to face.

Throughout the tough conditions of the totalitarian regime, the Basque trade union movement has struggled to survive adapting itself, in spite of everything, to the needs of the accelerated change in every aspect that characterises our age. The moment has arrived to give a wider range, actuality, and development to our movement.

We must, therefore, settle the general lines of a trade union movement that responds to the necessities of the workers of Euskalerrria (Basque Country), of a small nation of creative, original people, in the difficult, fully transforming world in which we have to find our proper place. We shall also touch on other problems, not all more important than others, which for practical reasons is advisable to deal with in depth.

#### *General questions*

Without a possible progressive alternative, the present mode of production implicates the development of the productive forces on a basis of revolutionary technology, it needs new solutions in accumulation, innovation, the factory, trade, public function and qualification of the workers. It demands formulas of control, participation and democratic equilibrium in a new context, capable of assuring the full participation of all sort of producers, the integration of their resources both spiritual and material. It requires unavoidable ecological imperatives, the incorporation of the values and aims of a more liberal, diverse, original and complex society and, necessarily, economic, social, political and cultural structures of world dimension.

This system, that we describe too succinctly, is already the basic reality of the rising mode of production, and, as such, inevitable and progressive.

It is in this context, and not in pure ethic and aesthetic considerations, that we place the objectives and perspectives of our trade union movement.

#### *Oppression and underdevelopment*

The struggle for an advanced democratic society means the liquidation of the plagues that still afflict the world today, and to which our people is paying an excessive tribute.

We reject, therefore, the fundamental alienation of the relations of production, the privation of all popular control over productive factors and forces, over economic, social and cultural policies in general.

We denounce the neglect and persecution of social and cultural values, generic or specific, that must serve human activity in general, the exploitation and alienation of the workers for ends that are not, nor will be their own.

We answer the aims and criterions that have been the drivers and the responsables for the so-called economic progress of our country, the material and ecological deterioration, the decapitalization and obsolescence of productive machinery, the technological and infrastructural underdevelopment, the social and cultural degradation that is their necessary context.

We would like to put on record, without ceasing the struggle to accelerate it, the failure of the totalitarian formulas of one or other idea, their incapability to offer valid solutions to the important questions of our times.

We would like to point out, in particular, the insurmountable crisis of autarchy, isolationism, colonialism; the rigidity, narrowness and incapacity of the imperialist state and system, too big and yet too small for the world-wide mode of production. Today, its historical function is the limitation of the productive forces, of world cooperation at all levels, the development of a national-popularism at the service of the most retarded national-monopolistic reaction.

The resistance of nationalist capitalism and its allies has forced the workers to weaken their international positions, leaving to other social classes the responsibility, and frequently the merit, of international progress.

### *A new democratic structure*

One economy, one society, one culture of the people, by the people, and for the people. Here is a general formula that shows the present possibilities of an advanced democracy. A new society of workers is constructed today by the effective penetration of democracy at all levels, by the attainment of guarantees, formulas of participation and control that every human group experiences each day.

The claiming marginalism, the pseudo-revolutionary catastrophism does not correspond to the present relations of production, to the present potentiality of the working classes nor to the solutions they can wait. The aims, measures and structures of our trade unionism will have to be adapted to this reality.

Today our social structures are built on a multinational system that is rapidly developing. This process facilitates the development of productive forces, favours cooperation of nations and cultures in respect to every human group, overthrows the last colonial reserves, breaks down the frontiers that separate nations or, like ours, divides them in half. For a country of our dimension, situation and condition, in the short term, there is no other progressive and realistic way but the rapid, complete incorporation into the economic and social system of the Western democracies, the opening up to the multinational system of capitalization, competition, production and change, to conditions of social and cultural life, and trade union and political organization that such a system demands and constitutes.

The immediate planetary character of our social system, does not convey the existence of models immediately applicable to our country. We have to remember, in particular, that the so-called "national question" is an integral part of the social question, of the class-struggle, of the democratic question in general. Our class struggle is not, therefore, a local prolongation of other nations, nor reproduction of a system relatively autochthonic and complete, both thesis founded on the dualistic mistification and integral part of the ideological imperialistic apparatus. The alien character of the dominant classes, the national basis of the popular classes determines, thus, the different, specific criterions and objectives of our social strategy.

Our present social reality determines the necessity of maintaining, from within and without, the complete independence of objectives and organization of the workers of Euzkadi (Basque Nation) and, therefore, our trade union movement.

The progressive alliance of the democratic classes demands guarantees, multiplicity of control and counterbalance, among which trade union independence plays a role of great dimension.

There does not exist another road to establish the material and ideological basis of an internationalism other than the well-known cover of nationalistic domination. On the other hand, only in this way can be achieved a more united and advanced popular community of Euzkadi.

We the Basque trade unionists have, equally, a sad experience of bureaucracy, the abandonment of internal democracy every day more inseparable from theoretic and practical incompetence, from the organic disarticulation and from strategic submission and abandonment. We shall only achieve a united and strong trade unionism by means of an organization not formally but really democratic.

Qualities that are implicated mutually and extended to the whole social system, the Basque character, independence, democracy are, for all that, consubstantial to the aims and structures of our trade union organization. These qualities are not, and never will be, prescriptible, renounceable or negotiable.

### *Trade unionism and ideology*

With the surpassing of old methods of industrial production, the dogmatic and totalitarian character of the ideological systems of the 19th century becomes obvious every day.

The liberal tradition of our culture, the realistic and pragmatic sense of our trade unionism, the effective opening of all the cultural contributions has permitted us to elaborate an ideology with a base closely linked to the necessary practices of trade union action. Outside this matter, its philosophic and doctrinal connection is not, as such, our concern. The positions that in this respect adopt the various currents of our trade union movement, are expressed, by others, in a well-established attitude of liberty and mutual tolerance.

### *Ways and means of action*

As we have said many times, E.L.A. serves the ends exemplified in all those means that theory and experience of trade union movements show as adequate and sufficient. The basis of its action is the organized and cohesive struggle of the labouring masses. E.L.A. proposes to endow the workers with the ideological and technical preparation, the economic and organized base, that are prior and unavoidable conditions of efficiency.

The Basque trade unionists have always been willing: to exchange ideas and opinions with our friends and negotiate with our enemies. Only the relation of forces on both sides dictates the necessary limitations in this.

### *Function and evolution of the spanish nationalist front*

Naturally, the development of an authentic Basque trade unionism has always encountered the bitter and preferential criticism of the national-monopolistic oligarchy and its allies. It cannot be otherwise, when it tries to reduce the workers of Euzkadi to the condition of a mass of complementary, local and branch manoeuvres. In fact, a working class without organization, without strategy, and without its own democracy is at the mercy of its enemies. In recent times, tight opposition to the democratic demand of immediate autonomy for Euzkadi, the formation of a puppet bureaucracy, the recuperation and diversion of the struggle of the masses of workers, the subordination of the democratic objectives to the nationalist priority, the attack, by all means available on E.L.A. has been an expression of the same struggle.

At the present moment, the general failure of the totalitarian trade union and state, leads the same forces to find the trade union and political formulas capable of maintaining in spite of, and throughout the change, the fundamental values and resources of the system.

The complementary function that corresponds to social-imperialism in the total task of domination tries to fulfill, provisionally, in the establishment of a black-legged trade union founded not on occasional or superficial relations with the feudal and monopolistic national-totalitarianism, but on the fundamental structures by this implanted in Euzkadi. Attained or not the form that is hoped will be adopted of a new, absolute and strong trade union, its cardinal mission consists in the continuation and reinforcement of the conquests of monopolistic capital of the state, of the most reactionary sectors of the Spanish nationalist bourgeoisie in general. The words and the form change, but not the objects: to expand the monopoly in politics and society as a whole, consolidate the unitary structure of the state, undermine every attempt of the people to overcome the insufferable totalitarian inheritance in order to build a dynamic new society, free and advanced. Such is the undertaking that the pseudo-revolutionary verbosity tries to lead us to. The road chosen is direct: it hastens the ruin of productive forces, instigates discord among workers and people in general, and the social and cultural reversal at all levels.

## *Employers and negotiation*

It is not rare to hear from native or foreign employers a curious question: "Why haven't we got in Euzkadi a trade union of workers like the English ones, with which to begin negotiations?" A curious question, indeed, that seems to ignore the most evident data of parallel history. So much the better if, today, the most capable and progressive sectors of national and multinational entrepreneurship understand that the simple repression of the movements and aspirations of the working masses cannot but lead us to underdevelopment and disaster.

It is our turn to ask: Why haven't we got in Euzkadi employers associations like the English ones, with to begin effective negotiations? Or is it supposed that we shall set them up ourselves, too?

We have to consider here, as well, that in present day world conditions, only the countries capable of giving valid answers to international productivity and competition, will prosper. The people, the workers of Euzkadi, cannot escape this imperative.

From attitudes of obliged realism, modes, modifications, experiences, changes will not be lacking: from the liberal socialism of the Nordic countries to the private "concertation" or the joint-management going Oil in Germany. We would like to know if employers study, as we do, such systems and their possible application, or if the workers will have to pass -how much longer?- from the gag to the monologue.

## *The enterprise question*

Situated in the first rank of modern factors of productivity is that of enterprise organization in our country. Now, our enterprises lack a sufficient public and administrative sector, substituted by the monopolistic-state organization. The cooperative scope is limited. The private company presents more serious deficiencies in dimension, financing, technology, organic composition of capital. management... Why go on?

In such conditions, our economic system gave ground without ceasing to the state monopolistic sector.

If, on the contrary, we try to establish an economic system acceptable to the people and the workers of Euzkadi, the future of enterprise modalities in our country is going to be decided on the fringe of dogmas and prejudices.

Public, private or cooperative, the practical capacity of the company only counts, to serve the needs and general development of the country in which it is introduced.

Basque trade unionism will have to guarantee the contribution, participation and control of workers at all management levels, an indispensable condition of efficiency and stability on the road towards an advanced industrial society.

## *Demographic problems*

In recent times migratory movements of exceptional proportions have occurred in our country with the consequences and difficulties that they bring forth.

Goodwill, popular realism have facilitated the reduction on a large scale of such problems, they have opened ways to the full incorporation in the country of anyone who has wanted to do so. It is of little value here, anyway, the rhetoric or demagogic declarations. Only with ample social and cultural measures will we be able to resolve the serious problems already posed to us.

## *The spanish state and the transitional phase*

The realities of the present social system inside and, even more, outside the spanish state have determined an evolutionary process of this system which is virtually irreversible.

The present policy defined by the government of the monarchy does not imply the acknowledgement of the rights and institutions constituting a democratic stage, but the guarantee of certain conditions to prepare for it. Efficient and progressive trade unionism, like other essential factors of a democratic regime, will not appear overnight. Its base must be built during the period of transition if one wants to avoid the opening of a state of desintegration liable to all risks.

Everything that is done in the sense of effective democratization is of maximum interest for Basque workers. But the conditions of development of trade unionism, cannot, without grave folly, be separated from everything else in which democratic opening and change is based. We thereby understand that, under pain of contradiction between the government programme and practical measures, our trade unionism must have immediately guaranteed:

The possibility of assembly and information with the idea of creating the basis of a future trade union organization with full rights and the economic, legal and cultural instruments that make it effective;

The certainty that the activities practised to the limits and with the aims so defined will not be qualified as "subversive" nor repressed as such, taking into account that Basque trade unionism has demonstrated over its long years of opposition a feeling of responsibility and repudiation of adventurism in general that cannot be put in doubt;

Access to information in any aspect estimated to be of interest within the institutional transformation of the regime and in particular, in the measures that are adopted in relation to the official system of trade union organization.



### *The new monarchy*

The monarchical institution is an element of undisputed importance in the present evolution of the Spanish regime. It has contributed a sense of reform that weighs decisively in the present phase of transition.

The monarchical reality can revalue our historical experience of national freedom towards a negotiated solution before the irresistible necessities of a next democratic stage. On the other hand it can induce a more pragmatic and realistic sense of politics in the sectors of our country weakened by the formalistic and idealistic propaganda aimed at them. It is not an insignificant advantage when we remember the capacity of formalism, so-called democratic, to resist indefinitely the most deep-rooted autonomistic resolution.

Apart from this, the future of the monarchical institution seems inseparable from the general viability of a democratic stage.

### *Basis of a stage democratic*

In spite of the limited democracy that the relation of political forces in the Spanish state allows to hope for, the new structure will have to incorporate minimum possibilities and guarantees capable of assuring stability and efficiency in the whole social system.

Only the effective restoration of fundamental liberties and rights will allow E.L.A. to consider a historic stage of compromise, legality and pacific development initiated. As we have already affirmed, the immediate autonomy for the south of Euzkadi (the part of the Basque nation now included in the Spanish state) is an integral part of the minimum democratic institutions without which there cannot be stability or progress. Not only in our Basque country but also in the rest of the Spanish state.

Many thanks to everybody.