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**Spanish State**

# **“The feminists are here”**

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**The fact that this March 8th was going to surpass all our expectations was clear when we looked back on the weeks that preceded it. No one, however, seemed capable of anticipating the scale of the mobilization that we finally witnessed. Fortunately, the wave swept over us all.**

**Beginning on November 7th, 2015, there have been more and more analyses of the women's movement in Spain. In the international context marked by the rise of the far right and the reflux of social mobilization, many people have sought to interpret the why and the how of a movement that is capable of drawing in more and more young women, getting them to mobilize in the streets and to question the traditional logics of struggle and conflict. In addition, the feminist movement seems to possess a global dimension and a strategic horizon, building itself as an expression of generalized contestation of the capitalist system. With time it will be possible to grasp to what extent this potential will develop. For the moment, here are some elements of analysis to try and arrive at a collective understanding of what has happened this week.**

1. The call for a feminist strike signified a qualitative leap in the conception of March 8th as a day of struggle. The massive demonstrations, with a million participants in Madrid, 600,000 in Barcelona, 300,000 in Saragossa and 100,000 in Seville, were not, as in previous years, isolated acts of protest. They were the culmination of many hours of meetings, strike pickets and all sorts of activities. Over and above the demonstrations, the strike was in evidence throughout the day in the neighbourhoods, the schools, the universities and workplaces. Faced with the ineffectiveness of purely symbolic actions, the feminist movement has provided a demonstration of force that gives a new dimension to the classical slogan "The feminists are here".
2. The dimension of unemployment became a multiplier of the impact attributed to the strike. The reference point of the strike broke with the ritual aspect of celebration and made ridiculous any attempt to reduce the day to fashion, to the consumption of cosmetics and to compliments to the feminine mystique. It is true that for months we listened to the repetition of the idea that feminism was in fashion and that everybody wanted to get in on it. Nevertheless, it is not possible to take part in a strike in an abstract way. So there is a point of rupture. The last minute recruits (something which provoked a polemic, among others between the journalist Ana Rosa Quintana and the Vice-Secretary of Studies and Programmes of the PP, Andrea Levy) and the drop in the audience for most television programmes rendered impossible any attempt to interpret this day in terms of normal demands.
3. The incapacity of the traditional political actors to understand what was going on was manifest. The role played by the two main trade-union confederations (the CC OO and the UGT), oscillating between incomprehension and boycott, reinforces the image they have acquired in recent years of being stupefied mastodons that look in perplexity at what is happening around them. The refusal to call for a 24-hour strike and the call for partial strikes not only sowed confusion among many women workers, but constituted a real factor of demobilization. To reflect on the way we will conduct from now on necessary trade-union activity and on how we will manage to respond to the aspirations of many women who, after March 8th, are talking about labour disputes and organization in the workplace: these are tasks that lie before anti-capitalist feminism.
4. If we have learned anything from the preparation of the strike, it is above all the establishment of networks of women. The construction of political complicities and affectionate alliances between neighbours, mothers, girls, grandparents and hitherto unknown women has been the basis of an ambitious and necessary programme of struggle (the content of the manifesto read in unison in the different cities is a good example), but also the building of collective bastions in our concrete lives. Tens of thousands of women stopped to applaud, during the demonstration

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in Zaragoza, a cleaning woman who waved a rag from a window on the third floor of a building. The refrain "You are not alone" in Madrid for a woman who was watching from a balcony with her head in her hands, crying. The popular canteens in Barcelona, places to meet in the neighbourhoods, the children's crèches in Valencia. The feminist strike is the end of isolation, the rediscovery of collective action, the conquest of the right to exist. Of course, much remains to be done. But starting from today, we march together, and whoever is in the street rarely spends time at home. "The feminists are here."

This article was first posted on March 10, 2018 on the site of *Viento Sur*.