

RESEARCH PROFILE NO.9  
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## **Sketches of Feminist Antimilitarism in Spain**

As I travelled from Barcelona to Zaragoza, and thence to Madrid and Bilbao, I met a succession of women in a variety of groups who helped me piece together a very provisional outline of aspects of feminist antimilitarism in Spain. The picture is inevitably incomplete. It certainly places disproportionate emphasis on the activities and perspectives of the particular groups I encountered. But for me it was a valuable learning activity in which I came to understand better some issues that are significant in other places than here:

- the relationship of 'antimilitarism' to 'nationalism';
- the relationship of 'feminism' to the 'left';
- and the relationship of 'solidarity' to 'antiwar'.

I'll tell about the groups one by one, through the accounts they gave me in interviews and conversations. But I'll also try and draw out these three themes as I go along. Some interjections on history will be needed too. As you may see, I've not found the sequence easy to put together!

The theme of nationalism/antinationalism emerged most strongly in three interviews I had in the Basque Country (Euskadi). All three of the women I spoke with there were related in different ways to Women in Black. Because of the complexity of the issues we were dealing with and the depth of feeling involved, I found it very difficult later to write it up in a form that was meaningful and acceptable to all of us. So I reluctantly decided to go ahead with this Profile without a section on Euskadi. All the same, what I learned from the interviews really enriched my understanding of feminism in relation to nationalism and antinationalism, and I shall go on thinking and working on the theme.

### **A: CONTEXT**

#### **A.1 Political history**

It may be best to start with a bit of history. In Spain almost every conversation you have about the present makes reference to the past – and specifically to the dictatorship. The short-lived Second Republic, founded in 1931, was an extraordinary interlude of civil and political culture and democratic rule in Spain. It was overthrown, in the course of the bitter war of 1936-39, by the reactionary right under the ideological leadership of the fascist Falange movement. For three and a half decades, under the rule of General Francisco Franco, Spain experienced the annihilation of democracy, of party politics and workers' organizations. All who opposed the regime or expressed difference, such as Basques and Catalans, were silenced.

Democracy did not return immediately on Franco's death in 1975. But a new Constitution adopted in 1978 promised significant change – enough to prompt a rightwing *coup* four years later. The latter did not succeed, but it was a reminder that right and left were still in combat in Spain. Indeed, even government by the Spanish Socialist Worker Party (*Partido Socialista Obrero Español, PSOE*) (1982 – 1996) under Felipe Gonzalez disappointed the left, particularly for the decision to join NATO.

Antimilitarist feeling has contributed directly to the present political situation in Spain. President José Maria Aznar and the rightwing Popular Party (*Partido Popular*), which replaced PSOE in power in 1996, fervently supported George W. Bush's campaign in Iraq. This exposed Spain to the hostility of Al-Qaeda and associated groups. A multiple bomb attack on railway trains in Madrid on March 11, 2004 (Spain's "11/M"), caused many deaths and shook Spanish opinion deeply. In national elections a few days later, on March 14, the *Partido Popular* fell and *PSOE* was returned to power, under the presidency of the relatively young José Luís Rodríguez Zapatero. His manifesto included withdrawing Spanish troops from Iraq.

During the days I was in Spain, Zapatero was in New York, where he made a public statement that the struggle against terrorism should be pursued not by military means but under international law (*Vanguardia* 21.9.04:1) The following day he addressed the UN General Assembly with a proposal for an Alliance of Civilizations – referring specifically to 'the Western world' and 'the Arab and Muslim world'. His plan involved a high level group of personalities and experts to debate the challenges of security, multiculturalism, immigration, cultural identities, education and the role of the media (*El País* 22.09.04:1). Antimilitarists therefore were at this moment somewhat relieved in terms of their opposition to the 'war on terror' - though they still had to contest the state's undiminished militarisation. For instance, Zapatero increased the military budget and voted 'yes' to the militarist and patriarchal European constitution.

The new government is proving more progressive in internal policy than that of Aznar. It appears more open to changes in the state's relation with the *autonomias*. Legislation is also in the pipeline that will legalize divorce by mutual consent and recognize gay marriage.

## **A.2 Feminism and feminist antimilitarism in Spain today**

### *Feminism*

Feminism and feminist antimilitarism in Spain and its *autonomias* also have to be understood against the background of this history. During the ill-fated Second Republic of the 1930s, equality for women was a live issue. Women obtained the vote and equal status in law, and divorce was permitted (Kaplan 1992:193). Women were also active on their own account. Not only were women highly represented in left-wing party activity but they formed their own radical, anarchist, syndicalist and feminist organizations (Kaplan 1997:19).

But during the dictatorship 'women' was reinterpreted in fascist mode by the Falange, and family law was conservatively administered by the Catholic church.

Feminists were clandestinely active, and some were imprisoned, in the years of the dictatorship. In the 1960s an illegal women's movement was founded in Madrid (*Movimiento Democrático de Mujeres* – Women's Democratic Movement) which spread to Zaragoza, Valencia, the Basque Country (Euskadi) and Galicia. Feminists were also active in the banned trade unions and underground left.

After Franco's death in 1975, along with the resurgence of social-democratic and left-wing parties there emerged a new movement for women's liberation. There was a big women's conference in Madrid, and a year later one in Cataluña. The movement had expression both within and outside the party structures. The Communist Party established a Popular Union of Women (*Unión Popular de Mujeres*). In 1977 an anarchist feminist group and journal emerged, called Free Women (*Mujeres Libres*) (Kaplan 1992:207).

Though politically diverse, the women's movement made some demands that were reflected in the new constitution of 1978, re-establishing rights women had lost under the dictatorship, and gaining more. There were fierce struggles for divorce, abortion and contraception. Under the centre-left *PSOE* government the state set up women's structures (*Institutos de la Mujer*) at national and regional level (Threlfall 1985:325). Autonomous women's conferences drawing between three and five thousand women were an annual event from 1985, organized by coordinating groups (*co-ordinadoras*) in Madrid and other regions.

#### *The issue of autonomy*

It's not surprising, given this history, that there's been a consistent and significant dynamic around 'autonomy' within Spanish feminism. It was already a live issue at a mass meeting of women in Granada in December 1979. One facet of the autonomy question is the relationship of the women's movement to the state. Are the Women's Institutes (*Institutos de la Mujer*) a help or a hindrance to feminism? On the one hand, some of 'us' are on the inside, having won seats or taken paid posts in the institutions. On the other hand, accepting grants from local councils (*ayuntamientos*) or provincial authorities (*diputaciones*) could mean you've been co-opted.

But the more disputed facet of the 'autonomy' question is feminism's relationship to political parties, and their alleged manipulation of the movement via their feminist members (Threlfall 1996:121). The left parties were attractive to a lot of women for their radicalism, especially after the years of repression, but often women's issues were subordinated to the party line. The memory of the fascist past, writes Gisela Kaplan,

made the question of single and double militancy of feminism perhaps more virulent than in other countries. The issue was not just whether

one should devote one's energies to party ideology and to specifically feminist issues (double militancy) or whether one had to concentrate purely on women-specific fights (single militancy), but whether or not a political party was at all the kind of organisation that could be trusted to take women's issues seriously... For those feminists who argued that even anti-clerical parties were still patriarchal, little could be gained by joining such parties. Yet an autonomous, non-aligned status carried with it a self-imposed segregation that, because of past experience, feminists wanted to avoid (Kaplan 1992:208).

### *Antimilitarism and feminist antimilitarism*

Objection to military service on grounds of conscience has been a significant factor in Spain. It was in 1971 that the first political conscientious objector declared his refusal to serve, soon followed by others. The movement emerged from clandestinity after Franco's death. In 1977 it took the name Conscientious Objection Movement (*Movimiento de Objeción de Conciencia* - MOC) and became a presence throughout the country, coordinated by a national assembly. It adopts a radical position of '*insumisión*', i.e. refusal not only of military service but of any civil alternative to it.

Although only men were liable for conscription, many women joined MOC because it was a movement not just against military service but against militarization itself and the tangible effects it had on everyone's lives, including, in gender-specific ways, those of women. For a period there were women's sections within MOC, stronger in some regions than others.

An autonomous antimilitarist women's movement was also emerging at this time. For example in 1982 in Cataluña a group DOAN (Antimilitarist Women) became active, often cooperating with the women within MOC, for example in campaigns for *insumisión* and against women joining the army. Thus some groups of Women in Black (*Mujeres de Negro*) were formed, outside MOC, by MOC women together with other feminist pacifist women. And the 'autonomy' of feminist antimilitarist activists in relation to the male-led movement of military refusal is disputed in very much the same way as the autonomy of feminism as a whole in relation to the left as a whole.

As to Women in Black, there were groups, I was told, in Cantabria, Castellon, Palma de Mallorca, Madrid, Sevilla, Valencia and Zaragoza.<sup>1</sup> Also, the very active group *Dones per Dones* in Barcelona, though it chose not to adopt the name Women in Black, is effectively WiB and closely involved with the international network. National meetings of *Mujeres de Negro*, attended by

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<sup>1</sup> The information I gathered on the different groups is not comparable. I got a better understanding of those in Barcelona and Madrid, cities where I had interviews with women of *Dones per Dones* in the former, *Mujeres de Negro* in the latter. In Zaragoza I learned a little about Women in Black from Carmen Magallón Portolés, although my interview with her centred mainly on *En Pie de Paz*. The information presented here on Castellón, Palma, Sevilla and Valencia was directly contributed in writing by women of those cities - the translation into English is mine. I am really sorry not to have been able to travel more widely and do a more thorough job!

these various groups, have been held annually from 1997. The latest was in Vitoria, Euskadi, in November 2003.

## **B: WOMEN IN BLACK (*MUJERES DE NEGRO*)**

### **B.1 Madrid**

#### *Origins*

In 1991 war broke out in Yugoslavia. In 1992 a group of men from the *Movimiento de Objeción de Conciencia (MOC)* travelled to the region to make contact with war resisters. They were warmly received in Belgrade by Women in Black (*Žene u Crnom*) who greatly impressed them by their analysis and their activism. The following year, in collaboration with *Dones per Dones* in Barcelona and feminist groups in other cities, *MOC* invited *Žuc's* Staša Zajović (who speaks fluent Spanish) to Spain, for a speaking tour. Later that year a women's antimilitarist encounter was held in Merida, also attended by women of *Žene u Crnom*, for whom by now an extensive support project was being organized in Spain. Concha explained

[At this stage] we were a diffusion group primarily, distributing their output. Our aim was to give voice to women in a war situation who were offering alternatives to war, to make people here aware... The [financial] help we gave them was not seen as humanitarian. It was an exchange, because we were learning from them -- working against war and militarism at both local and global level. They contributed to our thinking by what they told us of the 'social militarization' of the Balkans. They enabled us to see the Yugoslav wars from a particular perspective, differently from the way the media and the international community were representing things.

Several speaking tours and these solidarity actions built a considerable awareness throughout Spain of the work of Women in Black (*Žuc*) Belgrade. By 1995 several groups existed in different cities calling themselves by this name. As mentioned above, some of the *MOC* women in Madrid were among those who formed such a group. One of them, Maria del Mar Rodríguez Gimena, told me it was, and would remain, 'a double militancy, as it usually is'. They remained active within the mixed group while developing a feminist perspective. But, as Almudena Izquierdo put it, 'there was not enough space in *MOC* to explore our ideology... We needed a specific space to discuss women, nationalism and militarism'. Soon afterwards, several of them, as mentioned above, created a group independent of *MOC*, although some of them continued to be active in both simultaneously. The following year they attended a *WiB* international encounter at Novi Sad, now calling themselves '*Mujeres de Negro Madrid*'.

Members of this *MdN* group in Madrid were individually involved in various other projects simultaneously. Some of them took up and used *Žene u*

*Crnom's* thinking in these too. For instance, their focus on 'how society is militarized' had been very relevant to Maria José Sanz Municio, working in a *Colectivo No Violencia y Educación*. And Encarna Garrido Montero, told me how she was able to build an inspiring solidarity between illiterate Spanish women with whom she was working in a literacy project (*Red de Alfabetización de Mujeres Progresistas en Extremadura*), and the women experiencing war in Yugoslavia.<sup>2</sup>

### Organization

Today, Women in Black in Madrid comprises ten or twelve individuals, aged between 27 and 55. In Concha Martin's flat I met Concha herself and Encarna Garrido Montero, Maria José Sanz Municio, Antonietta Russo and Michelle (who does not use a surname).<sup>3</sup> Yolanda Rouiller, who handles the international e-mail lists in Spanish and English for Women in Black, and lives in Cantabria, joined us later. Separately, I interviewed Almudena Izquierdo and Maria de Mar Rodríguez Gimena, also members of *Mujeres de Negro* in Madrid.

*Mujeres de Negro* in Madrid are linked by an e-mail address list. They have a website, <mujeresdenegrodemadrid>. Most of them (like Maria José and Encarna, mentioned above) are also involved in other activist groups - and in this they support each other. They hold fortnightly coordination meetings, usually attended by six or seven women. Decisions taken by those who attend such meetings are respected by those who can't make it. From time to time a sub-group will take on the organization of a given action. Once a month they hold a more analytical meeting, for instance to prepare a collective response on certain questions, reflecting MdN thinking.

The Madrid WiB group have a clear view of appropriate process. Several have learned this the hard way: *MOC* 'had a theory of process but in practice it didn't work out', Almudena said. In Women in Black they work 'horizontally', avoiding hierarchy. They believe in sharing skills and learning from each

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<sup>2</sup> In 1993, Encarna recounts, she was working in this women's adult literacy program operating in various locations in Extremadura, including Mérida. It participated in the Citizens' Platform (*Plataforma Ciudadana*) set up to prepare for a meeting (*encuentro*) with the women of Belgrade. This progressive women's Platform additionally included women of the Extremadura Feminist Coordination (*Coordinadora Feminista*), and anarchist, socialist and communist (male and female) citizens' groups. The Platform's activities included solidarity and fundraising events mounted by the women's literacy project. They generated a million pesetas, covering the costs of the *encuentro* itself and a donation to *Žuc* Belgrade. The link-person of this solidarity network was Celestina Perez of the Extremadura *Coordinadora Feminista*, who had personal contact with the Belgrade women.

<sup>3</sup> Michelle belongs to the project *Mujer Palabra* (Woman Word), a Web portal (URL below), 'dedicated to creativity, thought and activism' and 'altruistic and creative, rebellious and critical in spirit'. On this website you can find her very informative article on the history of the complex relationship between antimilitarism and feminism in Spain. Michelle says, 'this can be my contribution as an activist to your Profile on Spanish women's antimilitarism!' ([http://www.mujerpalabra.net/activismo/pacifismo/pacifismo\\_feminista\\_2000.htm](http://www.mujerpalabra.net/activismo/pacifismo/pacifismo_feminista_2000.htm))

other. For instance they've prepared a talk for women's groups on antimilitarism that in principle any one of them is able to deliver.

### *Action and Analysis*

Currently, *Mujeres de Negro Madrid* hold monthly vigils, on the last Sunday of the month. On each occasion they prioritize a particular theme, which may be national or international in character, and prepare a specific leaflet on it. Their aim is to get out an informative paper on whatever additional activities they engage in, and they address letters to the authorities on issues of concern. To draw attention to war and oppression, they occasionally do non-violent direct action in the form of street theatre at significant sites in the city. For example, to protest against the NATO bombing of Belgrade some women stripped naked and covered their bodies in red paint to simulate blood. On another occasion they put red dye in a public fountain. They have mounted a drama involving a symbolic woman figure who is first gagged, then bound and suppressed by 'authorities', subsequently unbound and released by women. On another occasion they used a cut-out figure of a woman, trampled it on the ground and subsequently adorned it with flowers.

The group co-operate with wider networks, including *MOC*. For several years they held a joint meetings with *MIR*, the International Reconciliation Movement, and other non-violent antimilitarist groups, on militarism, women, non-violence and similar themes. On March 8 they usually join a bigger grouping of various social groupings of feminists and of the left in Madrid. But *Mujeres de Negro* is 'politically desirable' at the moment. This leads them to wonder sometimes whether they are in danger of being used by groups with whom they don't really share an analysis. During 2004 a focus of their meetings has therefore been 'gaining coherence' and being clearer on the issue of autonomy and alliances. So I understood Mar when she commented in our interview:

I think *MdN* is more supported by antimilitarists [*MOC*] than feminists... So we debate – who can we work with? There are different points of view, different objectives...

### *Solidarity work*

However, the main thrust of *MdN Madrid* is solidarity work with groups in other countries – as for instance with *WiB* Belgrade and with women opposing the Occupation in Israel and Palestine. Today they do a lot of work with Colombian women (see my Research Profile No.7). The connection between the Spanish left and that of the Spanish-speaking countries of America has always been strong, particularly in revolutionary moments.

The solidarity/co-operation phenomenon as a whole hasn't always been what antimilitarist feminists would hope for. The government's expressed policy of cooperation has often been motivated by opening up opportunities for Spanish business, even for arms exports. But now the Zapatero government is introducing a more radical interpretation of *co-operación*. They have

upgraded the function by transferring it to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which will now be called the 'Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Co-operation'. But there are also many inter-personal and inter-organizational exchanges between Spain and Latin America. Some of the help is humanitarian. But some is more political: for instance there are trans-national NGOs that practice '*acompañamiento*', in which individuals go to give personal protection to Colombian activists who are in danger.

In Colombia, *Mujeres de Negro* work closely with *Ruta Pacifica* and the *Organización Feminina Popular (OFP)*. These two networks combine to do vigils under the name Women in Black (see my Research Profile No.7) but are better known and greatly respected in Colombia under their own names. The women in Madrid protested against the European Union for its invitation to the (rightwing and militaristic) Colombian President Uribe to visit Brussels, and against the Spanish government's support for this. In connection with their solidarity work, *Mujeres de Negro* Madrid do lobbying, especially of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the embassies. Their most intensive lobbying has been about Colombia and Israel/Palestine. 'We call for political support for our friends and their demands. We'll argue the case for giving them economic aid. We'll denounce any Spanish government policies we feel are harmful in regard to particular regions.' But *Mujeres de Negro* of Madrid, since they are not registered as an NGO, cannot and do not wish to seek money on their own account for the support of overseas groups. In fact, no *MdN* group in Spain is officially registered, and none receive formal funding.

## B.2 Castellon

Vita Arrufat writes:

The group began with some journeys we made in 1999 to the former Yugoslavia. At that time we were: Isabel, Elena, Loles, Alicia and I. By 2003 we had grown: we were Isabel (a translator), Marilyn (a house-person), Elena (a lawyer), Loles (an economist), Marta and Rozio (both social workers), another Marta (translator), Rosa (a nurse), Ana (a student), Sofia (a teacher) and myself, Vita (a doctor).

Our main activity is demonstrating once a month, at eight in the evening on the Wednesday nearest to the 25th. Then we have a meeting to review the incidents. Besides this, we've been active in peace education in schools. The children enjoyed hearing about Women in Black and our work for peace. We endorse and distribute information coming from the international network and we support the South American women of *Ruta Pacifica* and other groups.

Every year we organise at least one public activity in Castellón concerning the international network of Women in Black. In this connection, Staša Zajović of Women in Black Belgrade, for instance, and Vera [surname?] from Women in Black Jerusalem and Corinne Kumar from Women in Black in Bangalore, India, have all visited Castellón.

### B.3 Palma de Mallorca

Leonor Taboada writes:

We women in Palma dressed in black and lit candles for the first time in 1995, when we invited Staša Zajović to visit us and she spoke at a demonstration for peace in Bosnia and the Balkans. At least 2000 people came.

A couple of months later Francisca Más and I went to the fourth international encounter of Women in Black in Novi Sad. When we came back, we started to do workshops and then to demonstrate weekly in the street. Since then we've been out on the street intermittently, at certain historic moments.

As to numbers, at different times we've been a dozen, or thirty, or a hundred. There are women of various nationalities in the group. Probably the most notable and sustained activity we've carried on was between 2001 and 2004 when we came out every Saturday: for Bosnia, Kosovo, Palestine, Afghanistan, Colombia... At our vigils in the Plaza Mayor we often put across messages on placards, hung from cords with clothes pegs. They would be like live and immediate 'newspapers', sometimes contributed by the passers-by. We joined in all the big collective demonstrations that took place at this time. In 2003 we won a prize from the Women's Lobby of Mallorca. So -- our action is basically street action. But street-work can be exhausting. Now we're collaborating with ASDHA, a Catalan Association working for the rights of Afghan women which does awareness-raising as well as projects on the ground.

In all this time, I've written frequently in my weekly column, and other articles too, whenever I've been able to place them. In 2001, working with another journalist friend (a great actress), together we created a poetry/theatre event called 'Feminine Plural', which had the structure of a piece of theatre but was based on poems and texts written by women, recognisably in the vein of Women in Black. We included leaflets and placards which made our activism visible - a way of disseminating the ideas of Women in Black. We chose venues first of all in the Balearic Islands, then carried the production to the mainland, where it has been a big success with the public. For example (as I write) last night we came back from presenting it in Córdoba -- where the provincial authority (*diputación*) and the faculty of gender at the University had organised the event for us. The venue wasn't big enough. It held 250 people -- but 90 had to stay outside!

### B.4 Sevilla

Sofía Segura writes:

The start of Women in Black in Seville was in 1993 when we came back from the second international encounter of Women in Black against War in the Balkans and were acutely aware of the war in that region. What we set up at that time was something called 'the Network of Women against the

Aggression: Women in Black'. It wasn't until 1996 that we established our own collective, independent of that local network, in order to be able to participate more fully in the international movement of Women in Black. We are antimilitarist feminist women motivated by the following things.

- Confidence in tenderness and solidarity between women.
- Respect for the plurality of concerns and ideas; and a constant desire to rid ourselves of the toxic patriarchal values that damage our relationships, ideas and imagination.
- A spirit that is independent of any kind of political and institutional conditioning.

We are a collective that refuses every kind of violence and exclusion, because we learn about, and from, our mothers, grandmothers and friends for whom the experience of war sharpened all the values and attitudes normalized and inculcated in everyday life in peacetime.

We make our demands as a collective of antimilitarist feminist women, because we see in our societies a ubiquitous patriarchal power which develops values and structures that favour:

- Discrimination and violence against women in many forms: silence about crimes committed against women and women's circumstances in time of war; xenophobia; deprivation of sexual choice; inequality and social marginalization, conditioning...
- Socioeconomic development based on the exploitation of the majority and the destruction of the planet, the feminization of poverty, social militarization instead of civil defence, the growth of a science and technology designed for conquest, intervention and control of 'the world' (instead of one which has well-being and peace between peoples and cultures as its aim).
- The double standard, the manipulation of information, the politics of fear, punishment and ignorance, the fostering of a spirit of individualism, competition, aggression... tactical alliances and the use of force and destruction in order to resist values like difference, plurality and equality, values which are threatening to those set on maintaining privilege and hierarchy, devaluing life and sustaining an endless cycle of violence.

Against this whole system based on violence we dress ourselves in black and carry out our public acts, making our grief visible. We do it because we believe our politics of active resistance is a concrete alternative when it responds to the feelings of people living the day-to-day realities of our world.

In rebellion against violence, we commit ourselves to active non-violent resistance against executive authorities and armed forces at local, state and international level. Thus we call for disobedience: the refusal to pay the costs

of the military (*objeción fiscal*)<sup>4</sup> and withholding support from our governments' wars and military interventions.

Wherever we participate, in public places, in socials, workshops and conferences, we carry the words of those who experience the terrors of war or xenophobic exclusion. Specifically, we speak with our own voices, as women, normally relegated to silence. We raise cries and voices of resistance that contradict the silence with which the patriarchy attempts to impede us. This is our women's politics of counterinformation, reflection and transformation.

We want to establish effective communication and reflection between women in different places, of different ages, weaving webs between neighbourhoods, between cities, and from shore to shore around the world. We want to share our everyday experiences with many other women, building self-confidence, increasing our capacity for resistance, and our disobedient rejection of violence, exclusion and fear.

Our group finds its identity in this network of resistance in which we are linked with friends in various other collectives at state and international level. Our foundations are still growing stronger, we are consolidating. But at the same time we are developing and widening our scope as we are joined by others who, like us, long to rid our lives of war.

Our base in Seville is the House of Peace (*Casa de la Paz*), an open, shared facility which also houses two other collectives, the Peace Network (*Red Paz*) and the Conscientious Objection Movement (*MOC - Movimiento de Objeción de Conciencia*). This is where we have been meeting and organising our various activities these last three years.

## **B.5 Valencia**

Concha Moreno writes:

We are a group of pacifist feminists -- therefore antimilitarists too -- working against violence and in defence of human rights, particularly women's rights. We've belonged to Women in Black since 1992.

We work on themes such as: patriarchy as a basic source of structural violence, leading to many different kinds of violence - from wars and global destruction to individual violence against women or against those manifesting any kind of difference. We think of relations between women as a motor for

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<sup>4</sup> '*Objeción Fiscal*', conscientious objection against military spending, has been a coordinated and countrywide antimilitarist campaign in Spain since 1983. The women of *Mujeres de Negro* in Madrid, in their comments on the first draft of this Profile, wrote: 'We want everybody to be aware that militarism is paid for with our money. The objectors refuse to pay, in their annual taxation returns, the sum of money destined for the Ministry of Defence, and instead direct it towards an alternative project. On two occasions the alternative chosen by the movement has been Women in Black Belgrade. Note that we don't consider these sums to be 'donations'. We really see it as state money re-routed to projects that we consider deserve support and protection.'

changing patriarchal structures and for constructing an alternative peace politics.

On the first Sunday of each month we hold a vigil in the *Plaza de la Virgen* in Valencia. We join in all the citizens' movements against war, and against violence against women. We are a reference group in Valencia, at critical moments, for raising awareness against war. We join with other Women in Black groups in counterinformation work, publishing materials, international encounters, support for deserters and other things.

## **B.6 Zaragoza**

Drafted by Cynthia with additions by Carmen Magallón Portolés:

Women's activism against war in Zaragoza had its origins way back in 1982 in the *Colectivo por la Paz y el Desarme*, a group of both women and men coming together in an individual capacity, although they belonged simultaneously to various other groups such as *MOC* and the anti-NATO Committee. The *Colectivo* mounted campaigns against the presence of the US military base 15 kms from Zaragoza. They also joined actions as part of the European peace movement, protesting the installation of 'Euro-missiles'.

In 1984 some of the collective went to a meeting of European Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (END) in Perugia. On return, responding to a proposal launched there for 'ten days of women acting for peace' on the Greenham model, a hundred women from the *Colectivo* and the city set up a women's peace camp in a Zaragoza city park. There they held debates and workshops, on non-violence, feminism and militarism. The campers were visited by women from other sites in Spain, including two busloads of Basque women, and they wound up the camp with a march to the gates of the base.

Some of these women then worked together during the '80s on the journal *En Pie de Paz* (see below). In 1982 Staša Zajović came to Zaragoza, and immediately after her visit a Women in Black group formed. In August '93 four of the women (Montse Reclusa, Maruxa Paz, Amparo Bella and Marian Royo) travelled to the second International Encounter of Women against War, organized by the Belgrade women at Novi Sad in ex-Yugoslavia. Between 1993 and 1995 they held weekly vigils, silent, wearing black, on the steps of the *Diputación* and of the old university in Zaragoza. For years the group took part in all the country-wide meetings of *MdN* in Spain, including November '93 in Merida and February '94 in Villaverde Bajo (Madrid). They wrote articles about *MdN* in *En Pie de Paz* and *Papeles para la Paz*.

Even now, though they only organize actions now and then on particular occasions, the women of this group still feel themselves to be Women in Black. Today they comprise a group of nine or ten women, linked by telephone and getting together from time to time. They are women of different ages, sharing the *MdN* philosophy, with a focus more on action than on analytical discussion. Their latest actions were in 2003, when they

demonstrated against the invasion of Iraq, both on their own and with other women's groups in the city.

## C: CATALUÑA

### C.1 Dones per Dones, Barcelona

#### *Origins*

*Dones per Dones (DpD)*, Catalan for 'Women for Women', began in 1993 as a commission from the women's movement in support of women of the former Yugoslavia, calling for an end to the war and the recognition of rape as a war crime. Some of the activists went to Zagreb in February 1993, where they made contact with the Centre for Women War Victims, a project of mainly Croatian women working with refugees from Bosnia. On returning home they began to get in touch with women refugees from Bosnia scattered in various reception areas in Catalunya. They visited them, offered support and provided a context in which they could meet each other.

The women also joined in the general (M/F) campaign 'Barcelona for Bosnia', which attracted a variety of groups and achieved massive mobilisations in which *DpD* participated within a contingent of women's groups.

#### *Dones per Dones* write:

'From the time the Belgrade women of *Žuc* visited us, our group realized that groups called *Mujeres de Negro* had begun to form in some Spanish cities. We in Barcelona got in touch with them through the medium of *MOC* and Staša Zajović. We joined the network and participated in the first Women in Black all-Spain *encuentro*. But we wanted to keep our own name and identity, even though we sometimes went out wearing black in acknowledgement of the authority of the women of the Balkans and Palestine, and our support for them.

'In various *MdN* groups there are members who have come to them from the antimilitarist movement rather than the women's movement, and the confidence and authority of the network is something that's built up slowly, given there hadn't been any earlier immersion in the women's movement.

'One of the misunderstandings and 'non-convergences' has been on nationalism -- the way each one of us feels our national identity. It's a theme that had been debated in some of the WiB international encounters. On those occasions *DpD* had always felt better understood by Women in Black in Israel, Palestine and Croatia, women who'd had to fight for the right to existence and the use of their language, than by women (for instance of Serbia and Spain) who had only experienced nationalism as something fundamentalist, aggressive and patriarchal. (Though no way were we endorsing the legitimacy of

governments, whose militaristic and patriarchal premisses we generally totally disagreed with.)

'We define ourselves as feminists, antimilitarists and *antifundamentalists*. We feel these are the words that describe us best - plus our denunciation of the militarist and patriarchal postures of our own governments - whether of the Spanish state or the *autonomia*. Our group besides has never been linked to a political party. Most of us feel ourselves to be independent of left tendencies - above all we're feminists and antimilitarists.'

### *Organization*

I met with four of the current *Dones per Dones* group at the apartment of Gloria Roig. They were: Montse Cervera, Carolina Costa, Maria Eugenia Blandon and Gloria herself. The *Dones per Dones* group today is ten women, in their thirties, forties and fifties. They share a small office with *Tamaia*, a group opposing domestic violence, within the welcoming space of the Barcelona Women's House (*Ca la Dona*). They meet weekly on a Thursday and every six months have a day-long meeting for analysis and strategy. They say, 'We are all different women but what's nice in our group is that we try to respect each other and learn from each other, taking account of our different rhythms and peculiarities.'

*Dones per Dones* are 'not very into technology', but communicate casually by phone and e-mail, with Montse Cervera often acting as a link person. Gloria Roig is building up a CD library for the group, with material from the different conflictual areas of the world with whose women they are involved. *DpD* 'are' Women in Black in Barcelona, in the sense that they are connected to the international Women in Black network in much the same way as any group bearing the name *Mujeres de Negro*.

### *Action and analysis*

Cataluña is noted for its vibrant feminist movement and having a lot of women's projects. I learned something of this from Carme Alemany. She is one of a group of women who, along with other Catalan groups, campaigned for and eventually managed to establish a cultural centre, the *Centre de Cultura de Dones Francesca Bonnemaison*, in a fine old building belonging to the Catalan *Diputació*.

The government of Cataluña has the mandatory women's structure, with an *Instituto de la Mujer*, in which women of the women's movement are currently well integrated and able to shape new forms of political practice. There was also, for a long time, a *Coordinadora Feminista* born of the 1980s campaigns for reproductive rights, sexual identity etc.

But Cataluña is also notable for a fresh new initiative. In 1996 there was an *encuentro feminista* in Barcelona in celebration of the twenty-year anniversary of the 'First Feminist Days' (*Primeras Jornadas Feministas*), which had occurred soon after the fall of fascism in Spain. The *encuentro* drew 3000

women. Out of that moment came a network, the *Xarxa Feminista* (Feminist Network, in Catalan) which involves 60 women's groups and many individual members.<sup>5</sup> They aim to practice a politics based on relations between women, in both formal and informal networks that increase the visibility of all women and their projects. Even the planning meetings for a proposed *Xarxa* encounter in 2006 are drawing an attendance of 600 women! *Dones per Dones* is part of this network, in which they are a respected reference point on issues of militarism and war. In turn, *DpD* can rely on many women from this wider movement participating in the activities they organize.

*DpD* do not mount weekly or monthly silent vigils, WiB-style, but do hold vigils occasionally to support concrete actions and in response to calls from the international network. They also turn out on demos organized by others – and the anti-war movement is very strong in Catalunya with not only *MOC* but also the *Red Catalan*, the *Asamblea Antimilitarista*, a group called *Justicia y Paz*, and a *Fundacion por la Paz*, all active in a 'Stop the War' coalition (*Plataforma Aturem la Guerra*), which brought out a million demonstrators against the invasion of Iraq.

Where *DpD* focus their energies is specifically on direct contact with women in selected war zones. 'This is our principle.' In calling themselves *Dones per Dones* they mean 'women here for women there'. When I asked them, in our meeting, to define their mission in a word, they answered: 'To work for peace as antimilitarist feminists. To give visibility to women living in conflict areas, as war victims and war resisters. And to exchange our experience and our feelings'.

The solidarity work of *DpD* has involved them with the former Yugoslavia, as described above, but also with:

Colombia: They supported a speaking tour organized by *MOC* for Gloria Amparo of the *Organización Feminina Popular*. One year on May 24 they organized a big rally for Colombia in front of the town hall. They worked for a year with some women from Colombia then living in Barcelona.

Afghanistan: *DpD* work closely with the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan. They have helped to bring women from RAWA to speak in Spain, and Gloria Roig and Viqui Moreno have visited Afghan women in Pakistan.

Palestine and Israel: *DpD* have made two visits to the region and invited speakers from Bat Shalom, for public meetings, media interviews and a visit to the Catalan parliament.

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<sup>5</sup> I learned from Carme something that was repeated by women in Euskadi and elsewhere in Spain: that there is a distinct divergence between young and older women in the feminist movement here. Young women are less attracted than the older generation by issues of militarism and war; more inspired by queer theory and Butlerian politics of gender and the body; and less inclined to women-only organizing - preferring not to arbitrarily separate themselves from men.

Chechenya and Russia: They work with two women's groups concerned with the war between Chechenya and the Russian state: the Chechen group 'Memorial', and the 'Soldiers' Mothers' of St.Petersburg who seek to change Russian attitudes towards Chechens. *Dones per Dones* organized a visit to Spain by women from both groups.

## **D: FROM THE PAST: *EN PIE DE PAZ***

### **Publishing collective '*En Pie de Paz*' 1986-2001**

I had interesting interviews with two women in Barcelona, Elena Grau and Isabel Ribera, and two in Zaragoza, Carmen Magallón Portolés and Montse Reclusa, who had been part of a country-wide group that for fifteen years published a well-respected antimilitarist journal *En Pie de Paz* (roughly translatable as 'On Foot for Peace').

#### *Origins*

In the middle eighties there were mass demonstrations in Spain against NATO and Cold War politics. The first edition of *En Pie de Paz* was an intervention at the time of a referendum held in 1986 to decide whether Spain should join NATO. (The result was 'yes'.) A print-run of 36,000 copies was funded by a benefactor in the peace movement. The sales revenue from this first edition and the subscriptions it generated enabled the paper to become self-supporting. From the second to the twentieth edition 5000 copies were produced every two months, in a tabloid newspaper format. Thereafter, for a further 30 issues it became an A4 magazine with a colour cover. By the time it ceased publication, with issue No.54 in 2001, the number of subscribers had fallen to 1000 and *En Pie de Paz* had acquired a journal-style format.

The reason for the eventual closure of the publication was simply that the group became weary, not of the conceptual but of the practical work, and individuals shifted their allegiance to other things. The experience of the *En Pie de Paz* collective was an important part of the learning process, over two decades, for some of today's feminist antimilitarists, just as the content of the paper was an important contribution to the peace movement as a whole.

#### *Organization*

*En Pie de Paz* is specially interesting to me for the interaction of women and men in the project, and the connections between gender and organizational process. The paper was produced by a 'collective of collectives'. There were groups, ranging in size from two to twelve people, in Zaragoza, Barcelona, Madrid, Sevilla, Alicante, Bilbao, Guardalajara and Burgos. All this began some years before e-mail, so they worked by post and phone. Yet they managed to do the editorial work in one city, design in a second, production in a third, distribution from somewhere else again.

Individuals came together from these groups in two meetings for each issue of the journal. Usually they met for a weekend in some country place, in a youth hostel or an *albergue*. Elena said

The meetings were really important, talking and working, a space to know each other, to form relationships. We weren't journalists. We were just ordinary, active people. Educated, yes, some of us from universities, but not professional journalists - the men neither.

There would usually be fifteen or more at these production meetings, and usually more than half would be women. And sometimes there were babies. Elena and Isabel both gave birth to daughters during the *En Pie de Paz* years. They would be breastfeeding, discussing, writing, all at once. The women, Isabel said, 'were hegemonic' in the journal. They shaped both the process and the product. The women, after all, had learned something in their years of working in the left. Carmen said

We believed that any project of transformation must be reflected in the social relations. This wasn't just theoretical. We'd been in the left parties in the hard years of the dictatorship! Now we knew we wanted '*medios y fines coherentes*' - the means must be compatible with the ends.

The women continually interrogated the structure and the process in which the journal was created. Some of the men wanted a hierarchy, with a director and an editorial board. Others, and certainly the women, wanted a horizontal organization, with no specialization, all co-producers, working by consensus. 'Some men simply didn't know *how* to do this.'

Women insisted on a peace culture in the group itself (Greenham Common had been influential on them). At one moment there was a struggle, a fierce and bitter fight between two groups of men over Basque nationalism. 'At that moment,' said Carmen, 'we women put our foot down. Without having agreed it in advance we said clearly and trenchantly, "we don't want to work like this".' The point was not, they insisted, winning or losing a debate. Any thought should be thinkable in this group. It's OK to not to be certain, not to have an answer. The men were giving priority to efficiency, speed, order. Women were prioritizing relationships.

We wanted to do everything differently. Elena wrote one article in which she said 'We produce the journal because we love one another'. This was too much for some of the men. They thought it was sissy! They simply didn't understand what we wanted to say: that the strength of the project derived from the love and friendship there was between us (Carmen).

Eventually some of the men left the project. Those who stayed joined fully in the childcare and the cooking. At first they said, 'we can't think and look after babies at the same time'. But they learned to do their share. The childcare

had to be shared because the women were so central to the work of the journal.

They were very different from us. They doubted our choices at first. But they liked the way we were and acted, and were very respectful. We were able to build bridges between women and men, and warm friendships. In the end we could discuss difficult issues between us (Elena).

Women's cultural hegemony was visible in the journal itself, too. 'From the start we wanted the publication to look beautiful,' Carmen said. 'We were the ones who cared very much about the form. We were careful in choosing words and images. We thought *everything* communicates'.

### *Analysis*

They had analysed the failure to win a 'No' vote at the referendum on NATO membership as due to the lack of a peace culture in Spain. So the journal started clearly as pacifist, for non-violence. But both the men and the women brought with them to *En Pie de Paz* differences already present in the anti-NATO movement. Were we 'against NATO' or were 'for peace'? Some of them had been frustrated by the negativity of the left, 'anti-everything'. But some leftists deemed pacifists 'light', 'softies'. The struggle acted itself out in choices concerning the aesthetics of the journal: 'do we want photos of the police all over the front page?' Some men wanted such 'tough' images, but the women thought 'surely they just accord the status of a significant social actor to precisely the people you wouldn't want to have it'.

The women had had a gender-specific experience in the left. They'd come out of the clandestine parties sensitised to their 'difference'. Isabel said,

We feel alien to war, distanced (*ajenas*) as women... We don't say women are naturally peaceful. But we know what life is worth, because we're close to it, through birthing and nurturing children. We value relationship... But we don't want to be the only ones to be responsible for peace. We don't want to carry the whole burden, that's why we work with men. We want to transmit our perceptions to the men who are near us. Men have to think about themselves, to speak to each other. If they don't know how to resolve their emotional conflicts they'll go on being violent to women.

The tenor of 'pacifism', for the women, was that it meant non-violence in private life and in collective groups as well as in international politics. Montse said, 'In political history there are two currents. One is about life, the other is about power'. Putting together what she and Carmen subsequently said, I get the following sense of where the women's politics of prefigurative struggle was coming from:

We started in our own lives, in our own *entorno* (circle), our relationship with our parents and families. We didn't want to be like our mothers,

traditional, subordinated. In Spain in the 1960s everything was prohibited. To be free, we had to struggle against Franco. We were up against the whole social order - political relations, personal relations. 'We wanted everything, the lot!' But we discovered the left parties didn't share these aims. They were obsessed with power, but they disdained everyday life. And women always came second! We discovered the parties prohibited everything, just as the state and family did. Did we really have to sacrifice everyday life and personal relationships now to win a revolutionary future? We wanted freedom *now* -- and we wanted no inconsistency between where we wanted to get and the way we would use to get there (*coherencia entre fines y medios* – prefigurative practices).

In pacifism we found a more holistic answer. It differed entirely from the left's instrumental approach to peace, peace as a mere tactic for revolution. 'Peace is betrayed by that!'

As they editorialized one issue after another of *En Pie de Paz*, these analytical discussions went deeper. The collective began to conceptualize the paper as being about not one thing but four. They invented for themselves the connection between pacifism, socialism, feminism and ecology, forging one coherent discourse from all of these. They talked about 'the colours of emancipation, white, red, green and violet'.

Today, three years after *En Pie de Paz* folded, many of the members are still in touch. They miss that formative time, so rich in theoretical debate and practical relationships. It had changed them. But the analytical and writing skills they developed aren't wasted. Some of the men have shifted their energies to the ecology movement, while the women continue to focus on 'peace culture'. In Barcelona, some of the *En Pie de Paz* women continue their connection. Elena Grau, Isabel Ribera and Violeta Ibáñez are still together in a reading and writing group. (At the start Anna Bosch and Montse Pi were also part of it). They call themselves the *Grupo Julia Adinolfi*, after an Italian thinker and writer they admire.

In Zaragoza, Carmen Magallón Magallón Portolés is vice-chair of the Spanish *Asociación de Investigación para la Paz* (Research Association for Peace Research), and director of the *Seminario de Investigación para la Paz*, with which Montse is also involved. It is concerned with peace issues broadly interpreted -- conflicts, human rights, development and disarmament. Montse has made several visits to Colombia and has done *acompañamiento* work there among displaced and threatened communities. They meet occasionally with other women formerly of *En Pie de Paz* such as Maruxa Paz, María Jesús Díez, Marian Cao, Carmen Sacristán, Teresa Agustín and Rosi Merino, who want to keep up the practice of thinking and growing together.

## **E: CONTACTS**

This profile is based on a ten-day visit to Spain. While there I had the chance to interview (in alphabetical order) Almudena Izquierdo, Antonietta Russo, Carmen Magallón Portolés, Carolina Costa, Clara Bastardes, Concha Martín Sanchez, Elena Grau, Encarna Garrido Montero, Gloria Roig, Isabel Ribera, Maria del Mar Rodríguez Gimena, Maria Eugenia Blandon, Maria José Sanz Municio, Maria Palomares Arenas, Michelle (no surname), Montse Cervera, Montse Reclusa and Yolanda Rouiller.

I received information in writing from Concha Moreno, Leonor Taboada, Sofía Segura and Vita Arrufat; and I also enjoyed informative conversations with Carme Alemany, Maria Vercher and Verena Stolcke. I had valuable help with interpretation from Michelle (no surname) and Gloria Roig. A very warm thank you to all of you.

In addition, I gained a great deal from conversations I had with three antimilitarist feminists in Bilbao, about feminist antimilitarism in the Basque Country (Euskadi). I am very grateful to them for generously giving me their time and reading and commenting on my draft Profile. Although in the end we decided not to include their names or their words here, I want to thank them warmly, and assure them that what they told me contributed a lot to my understanding.

I returned a first draft of this Profile to everyone I had interviewed, and from many of them I received helpful comments and amendments, which I took account of in producing a second draft. I returned an amended draft to everyone to see whether they would feel comfortable to have the Profile put up on my website. It is with their agreement that I go public with it now. We hope it will interest WiB and other active women in other countries.

### **Useful addresses:**

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This document is one of a series of local and regional profiles that will appear on this website in coming months. They are interim products a two-year research project *Women Opposing War: Organization and Strategy in the International Movement of Women against Violence and Militarism*, being carried out by the author from her base in the Department of Sociology, City University, London, during 2004/5, with the support of several charitable trusts. The profile is not intended for publication in its present form. I would be grateful if you would not quote it in published work without first seeking my agreement.

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