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SOKOA III

EZKERRA EUROAPAN

THE NEED FOR A FEMINIST STRATEGY IN LEFT-WING PROJECTS

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1) This text attempts to find the starting point for dealing with the need for and the current situation AND challenges facing feminism and the feminist struggle on the political left. An issue which requires specific in-depth attention and which cannot be tackled using obsolete ways of thinking which reproduce patriarchal ideology (for instance, that patriarchy is resolved through formal equality between men and women, that the problem is one of male chauvinism inherent in some men, that it is only educational, AND that the feminist struggle is only concerned with women, etc.) and which remain in the attitude maintained by certain sectors on the left. We are also not going to progress by assuming that the left is, by definition, feminist.
- 2) We can state nowadays that there is a deficit in the incorporation of the feminist point of view in left-wing political projects, this being a leading strategic issue which we shall attempt to establish in the course of the speech.
- 3) An ideological-political reflection is put forward which may be used to activate the feminist conscience in the development and updating of left-wing strategies aimed at achieving a society free of social relations of domination (power). We are not referring to a theoretical, abstract, philosophical reflection which focuses on the theories of different feminist trends, but rather that situated in the reality and struggle for the radical (structural) transformation of society.
- 4) On the other hand, the need to deal with the feminist cause is not an alien concept to the left: historically, the left has had to consider the struggle against sexual inequality and the aim of creating a non-patriarchal society through the struggle against inequalities, exploitation and oppression, etc. However, it is necessary to highlight the fact that this need has arisen from an accurate, discursive and increasingly programmatic point of view, rather than as a core strategic theme in transversal systematic work.
- 5) The ideas which have been set out are basic ones and attempt to promote and develop essential political courses of action of ideas; if the left is unable to assume and define its feminist strategy, it is its own project which is called into question. We are referring fundamentally to the fact that it is not possible to fight for change in society by starting to overcome social inequalities while at the same time avoiding the situation of oppression of over half of the society comprising women.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE SITUATION

- 6) To start with, it is essential to give a short description of the patriarchal model and to list its general characteristics, and also to provide a short reflection about the assimilation of the term *equality* by power and the right.

2.1. Characteristics of the patriarchal model

- 7) The patriarchal model establishes a hierarchical division and relationship between people according to gender. It is sustained by domination over women, giving rise to a type of oppression which we can define as structural. Why structural? Because it lies at the foundations of the economic, political and ideological organization of our society. It affects all walks of our life.
- 8) *Structural because the capitalist system takes the form of the patriarchal model.* Social hierarchical division between men and women is perpetuated in the sexual division of work which determines two radically different areas of economic activity and, in turn, a sexual political-social organization which consolidates the survival of patriarchy as a pillar of the development of the capitalist system. Thus, while the workforce - labour – geared towards what is known as production activity, is defined as masculine in the field of work, the main activity for women is reproduction work and caring for the workforce (masculine). However, this non-labour activity may be reconciled with the occupation of a subsidiary place on the job market according to the different phases of capitalist development, its needs and interests.
- 9) The current neo-liberal phase of capitalism, far from reducing gender inequalities, is steadily consolidating a new form of sexual division in terms of work which is aimed at increasing the so-called active female population – the aim of which it attempts to achieve at the expense of strengthening the subordination of female workers within a context of widespread precariousness as regards working conditions and social protection.



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- 10) Subordination imposed on women generates all types of discrimination and loss of rights in terms of access to and participation in the world of work, in social protection and in the sharing and socialization of responsibilities regarding the home and care.
- 11) The model and organization of labour relations in the patriarchal capitalist system is defined according to the conflict which sets the needs and interests of capital against the economic and social rights of "male workers." We use the masculine form because "trabajadores" (male workers) are considered to be subjects whose needs in terms of care are covered thanks to the unrecognised, non-salaried work carried out by women without rights within the family nucleus – a patriarchal institution *par excellence* and supplier of capital.
- 12) Men also "benefit" from the patriarchal system, which has a fundamental economic component (division of work, household and reproduction work, etc.), as a framework of privileges is shaped at the expense of oppression and subordination of women.
- 13) In addition to this widespread precariousness, the steady increase in social units in which women are responsible for children, together with the dismantling and privatization of the limited state social services, are giving rise to an alarming process of impoverishment of women, and make the unequal access to and participation in wealth distribution among women apparent. Today, the feminization of poverty is an undeniable reality.
- 14) *Structural because conventional politics does not take citizens' rights of women into account.* We women are not political subjects with full rights, because we are considered as second-class citizens. Power-sharing in decision-making among men and women is unequal; there exists a differentiation and imposition regarding the capacity to decide which each individual will have according to gender. The development of this capacity does not come about through equal opportunities.
- 15) Unequal sharing in terms of decision-making has the effect of reducing the capacity for decision on the part of women in the private sphere: decisions related to our lifestyle, sexuality and above all reproduction are conditioned by interests of survival of patriarchal institutions such as marriage and the family. We are compelled to take decisions of a personal nature according to the interests of the patriarchal socio-political model imposed.
- 16) Unequal sharing also reduces the capacity for decision-making in the public sphere: the political participation of women is rare and does not ensure the defence of our interests. The high degree of social participation of women, as opposed to that of men, is not reflected in the political sphere (our presence in political parties, trade unions and institutions is very low). We women are not represented in centres of power where decisions are taken which affect society. The feminist movement is not awarded either political-social status or value. Its considerations are not taken into account when taking political decisions.
- 17) *Structural, because the dominant ideology is patriarchal.* The dominant patriarchal discourse is based on the following idea, which endeavours to be hegemonic: "Women have attained their rights; the developed and progressive society in which we live nowadays guarantees that the level of equality needed between the sexes be achieved; the only thing that needs to be corrected are some technical problems when putting women's rights into practice."
- 18) These ideas are reinforced through the instruments which are held unlawfully by ideological agents (the media, education system, church, family and advertising, etc.) which are responsible for legitimizing and reproducing social relations of domination between the sexes. The ideological penetration is huge and there are many women who agree with these approaches.

2.2. The discourse of equality and the neo-liberal model of women

- 19) As the system has steadily institutionalized the false discourse of equality, feminism has to a large extent lost the social meaning or value it had in the past. A lack of critical standpoint is perceived around the situation of women; there is a tendency to praise the changes obtained. The lack of feminist awareness is a general one and is also reflected in left-wing politics. Feminism has been depoliticized; Basque society is not aware of its approaches and, instead of considering it to be a struggle to transform social relationships between men and women, it is merely understood as a struggle in favour of "equality."



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- 20) The advance in the dominant ideology in constructing a false sensation of equality between men and women (*false* because we are neither equal nor do we have the same opportunities), or the fact that it is personal-individual attitudes which may change the situation (such as if male chauvinism were a trait of one's nature or personality), is a discourse transmitted by all ideological agents (education system, the media, family, church, groups of friends, etc.), and which has given rise to a lack of awareness-raising even on the part of women themselves as regards their situation.
- 21) The importance which "gender equality is having worldwide on governmental policies, world congresses, conventions, constitutions and laws, etc. – the institutionalization of "equality" has not brought about the necessary improvement in living conditions of women. Equality is not real, nor is it made by law.
- 22) Although the international political dimension of gender has enabled the discrimination and responsibility of governments and institutions to be shown up, international conventions against the discrimination of women are mere declarations of intent, recommendations without any regulatory capacity for governments. Very far from defending women's interests, the capacity for decision-making regarding our rights is assumed, their being subject to economic and state interests.
- 23) Within this context and together with traditional models, neo-liberalism proposes to us an adapted version of the traditional model of how to be a woman. This adaptation provides a minority of women with economic autonomy with the chance to assume those values which have traditionally been awarded to men and which constitute the essence of neo-liberal thought (competitiveness, rationality, effectiveness, individualism, impetuosity and audacity, etc.).
- 24) Neo-liberal thought admits differences between people with a view to enabling its competitive, unsupportive and individualist model of society to function better. Its objective is to ensure the extension of elites that are willing to guide the advancement of an increasingly perverse system - elites comprising people with "greater capacity" (men or women, white or coloured; religious fundamentalists or atheists), who compete freely with each other.
- 25) Individualism, consumerism and in general all neo-liberal values, influence the level of identity and awareness-raising among women. Neo-liberalism is making great efforts to blur the identities we have - as women, Basques and workers.

2.3. Assimilation of the term *equality* by power and the right

- 26) The right is exploiting women's rights and the concept of equality between the sexes. Historically, the right and the most conservative sectors, together with ecclesiastical power, have been those which have given rise to the most radical ideas of patriarchal ideology. Their reaction today with regard to women's rights to life, work, health and education, etc. is patent in its policy. One of the concepts which is currently having the most influence is the idea of complementarity of the sexes – a complementarity which places women in a secondary, subsidiary and subordinate social position.
- 27) There is a social awareness regarding the discrimination of women. "False equality" which is detected in current patriarchal ideology does not contradict the social perception of inequalities and sexist discrimination. Nowadays, hardly anyone doubts the existence of social injustices whereby women may be victims of all types of abuse, the fact that – despite their being equal to men - they suffer more the consequences of social inequalities (unemployment, poverty, violence, etc.), and the fact that the practice of stoning, sexual mutilation, murder and rape is known. These are realities viewed from the "first world" as being the bloodiest expression of patriarchal oppression, which takes away the importance of discrimination regarding wages, dismissal, lack of welfare, precariousness, poverty which are present in our milieu.
- 28) New realities are also acknowledged which especially affect women such as domestic violence, anorexia and bulimia, etc. There exists social sensibility with regard to this type of situation, but it is very easy to resort to the media discourse put forward as an event, as exceptions, influencing morbid curiosity and affective identification with those "affected" while at the same time as distancing oneself from them, giving rise to the sensation that the situation itself is a privileged one.

2.4. Feminism in Europe and in Euskal Herria, on the nationalist left



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Current feminism in Europe

- 29) Differences in trends form part of the history of feminism and the feminist movement on an international level. Feminists themselves have constructed their differences in approach and struggle throughout history. The social, economic and political contexts of each country, nation and people which make up what will today have to be referred to as Europe makes the feminist struggle specific to each place (Europe, a debatable entity from a feminist point of view, as we cannot speak of European feminism if it does not refer to feminist struggles in the most “developed” countries, which runs the risk of constituting “eurocentrism” when gauging the situation of women using the parameters of neo-liberal capitalism, exporting equality policies and governmental, legal and welfare mechanisms, etc.)
- 30) Yet it is not only the context which has marked these differences; the existence of different feminist trends or approaches is recognised which have formed part of the history of feminism in Europe, although they may be expressed unequally, and these are: liberal feminism, equality, socialist feminism and difference feminism. Each one maintains different stances with regard to the causes of women’s oppression, the liberation project they put forward, the subject of the feminist struggle they shape and the relationship which the feminist struggle must enter into with other struggles for freedom.
- 31) For liberal feminism (the heir to the Enlightenment), the cause of oppression is the non-recognition of women, of civic rights - faults in the system which must be corrected; its project involves reforming “democratic” systems so as to incorporate women as citizens with full rights; its leading players are women who fight for their political presence and financial independence: the feminist struggle is autonomous and within the institutional framework.
- 32) For equality feminism, inequality means the traditional subordination imposed on women; they constitute social relations in terms of power; they demand a society based on equality which does not award a secondary social position to women - it will be women and progressive sectors that demand equal status.
- 33) Socialist feminism situates the cause of patriarchal oppression in capitalism as a system of economic exploitation, political domination and ideology; its project involves a new social system in which there are no social classes, and which is non-imperialist and non-patriarchal; revolutionary feminist subjects are men and women who fight for a structural transformation; the feminist struggle is Inter-related with all revolutionary struggle.
- 34) Difference feminism considers patriarchy as the inferiorization of feminine values in a masculine social order – there is an essential difference between men and women, whereby women’s liberation involves establishing a feminine social order by reassessing the undervaluing of women as universal values; women in terms of carriers of specific liberating values will be the only protagonists, their struggle independent and totally autonomous with regard to other struggles.
- 35) So far, a theoretical analysis to pave the way for a reflection regarding strategies, rather than trends, which are currently being evidenced in the feminist struggle.
- 36) In the last few decades, different feminist practices have emerged which we could identify as follows:
- 37) A theoretical, academic feminism made up of feminist intellectuals and scientists who develop feminist gender theories and research, integrated into the university system in different areas of “scientific-technical” and “humanities” knowledge, by creating subjects, postgraduate courses, professors and lines of research which provide data about the situation regarding women’s discrimination, in addition to seminars, institutes providing studies on gender and documentation centres, etc. outside the academic system. Many feminists from the 1970s found a struggle against androcentrism in all its dimensions in theoretical reflection.
- 38) An institutional, liberal feminism which concentrates its efforts on political and business institutions, sets up women’s alliances and pressure groups and lobbies for increasing levels of power, from the point of view of what is referred to as “peer democracy.” It can be related to empowerment, understood as being an increase in the participation of women in decision-making processes and access to power, and as the realization of the power held both individually and collectively by women.
- 39) A social, welfare feminism focused on meeting the social needs generated by women’s discrimination. Local women’s groups that directly affect specific situations, that help women and constitute a traditional form of feminist struggle which covers many situations: assault, health, contraception, work



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discrimination, legal, training, sexuality and prostitution, etc. (there are many examples of women who organize themselves in view of the consequences of armed conflict and aggression of all types, of injustices, of poverty and precariousness, of the violation of rights as citizens and economic, social and cultural ones). At the present time, mention should be made of the fact that public institutions in the form of the welfare state have played a minimal role in these services – the problem is now in the process of privatization and cutbacks in public expenditure.

- 40) Lastly, a protest, non-conformist feminism comprising organizations, collectives, associations and women's groups who identify with feminist demands, who carry out the still essential task of raising social awareness about women's discrimination, areas of condemnation, reflection and multiple activism. In recent years, new frameworks have opened up (anti-globalization forums of all type, the world march and bill of rights, for example) which may enable development on an international level of strategic alliances with regard to diagnoses of the situation facing women which is considered by all to be of concern and even alarming. Critical stances with regard to the model of Europe put forward by current states – neo-liberalism, the European Constitution, Governments and laws governing equality, etc., are present in this feminist approach.

Feminism in Euskal Herria, on the pro-independence left.

- 41) Until 1975, the feminist movement in Euskal Herria did not have a major organizational structure. It was after that year that small groups started to be created in different provinces which would give rise to assemblies.
- 42) The first "Basque Women's Conference" took place in 1977 in which around 3000 women debated, among other issues, about patriarchy, double militancy and sexuality. This was the first time that such issues were broached publicly.
- 43) The "Second Basque Women's Conference" ("Bigarren Topaketak") took place in 1984, organized by women's assemblies and *Aizan!*, in which the core theme was the situation of the feminist movement in South Euskal Herria. The confrontation between the different organizations became clear when understanding the autonomy of the organization and the feminist movement at that time during which the institutionalization and recognition of some rights had given a false image of the recently-unveiled "democracy."
- 44) The third and last "Basque Women's Conference" was held in 1994, organized by women's assemblies and *Erizan*, in which the different stances with regard to an analysis of the situation were once again on the agenda, together with perspectives of the feminist movement which are totally divergent. There exists great diversity as regard organizational forms. The need to update the feminist movement was made apparent at this conference.

Development on the pro-independence left

- 45) In North Euskal Herria, major theoretical contributions were made by taking the French feminist movement as a reference point. While women from the nationalist left from the North Basque Country studied the theoretical field in depth, those from the South Basque Country developed the practical side more. The group known as *Euskal Emazteak Beren Askatasunaren Alde* (Basque Women for Freedom) emerged in 1976 in order to pursue a non-patriarchal struggle in favour of social and national freedom. Furthermore, EEBA, was the first group to develop the theory of "the triple oppression" – oppression as a people, as a woman and as a class (in any order).
- 46) In 1978, several women from EEBA – a group of women who formed part of *Koordinadora Abertzale Sozialista (KAS)* and other feminists from the milieu, set up *KAS Emakumeak* in order to tackle the new Political Reform and to add the creation of a non-patriarchal Euskal Herria to *KAS* objectives (an independent, socialist and Basque-speaking Euskadi). However, they made it clear that women's freedom would not be a direct consequence of independence and socialism, but rather that it was an issue of a struggle which had to commence immediately and for which an organization with decision-making powers within the nationalist left would have to be set up.
- 47) In 1981, former women activists from *KAS Emakumeak* and many others who had lived through that process set up *Aizan!* In order to relate the feminist struggle to other struggles. These women studied



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the political content in depth which they wished to give to feminist demands. They used the theoretical tools of Marxism to explain the situation of Basque women and created the concept of the Basque female worker in order to explain the triple oppression. They analysed that oppression from the economic, legal, political and ideological standpoint.

- 48) In 1984, *Aizan* and the Assembly organized the Second Basque Women's Conference in which *Aizan* stated the need to join the struggle for women's rights with the national and class struggle. They admitted that the women's struggle could not be put off until such time as the rights of nation and class were attained, but that these latter two were essential rights for the freedom of Basque female workers.
- 49) In 1987, the autonomous feminist organization *Erizan* was set up within *KAS* and *Aizan* became the body responsible for setting up the new organization. On the one hand, the feminist conscience managed to be activated and developed in many women activists from the nationalist left and, on the other, a stance which was more within the Feminist Movement of Euskal Herria was able to be admitted.
- 50) However, during the process of setting up *Egizan*, it became clear that the nationalist left had no feminist conscience, which meant that the need was not shared in many sectors to set up an autonomous feminist organization within the nationalist left. In any event, *Egizan* enjoyed a major social base comprising feminists and women who had experience in other organizations. The work carried out by *Egizan* focused on two areas: on the one hand, on promoting women's conscience and the organization itself via the *KAS* approaches and struggle and, on the other, on increasing the feminist involvement and conscience of the nationalist left.
- 51) In 1989, an Area of Relations with the Women's Liberation Movement was set up (at the same time as was the case with other social movements), within the National Committee of **Herri Batasuna**. However, this first characterization proved to be clearly insufficient in responding to intervention work and feminist awareness-raising which the practice itself demanded both on an internal level and on a public one. This is how in 1992 and following an internal debate, the concept of "enabler" was created on a local level - the one who takes on the task of promoting the feminist conscience on a municipal and neighbourhood level. Over the following years, a very erratic attempt would be made to coordinate the work of these women and the area of women itself in different matters. In the year with the founding of **BATASUNA**, there was talk of assuming a "feminist policy" which would pervade the entire organization within the feminist process of the pro-independence left.
- 52) In 1996, the Area of *LAB Emakumeak* was set up within the management body in order to promote strategic and tactical reflection which would make it possible to transform the trade union into an effective instrument in the struggle against gender oppression. The Area acted as a guarantor of the transversalization of the feminist standpoint in the organization and trade union action. This instrument was the Equal Opportunities Plan.
- 53) In 1999, the Feminist Movement of Euskal Herria set up the first National Platform, in which autonomous groups of women and areas of trade unions and political parties would participate in order to organize the Women's World March in the year 2000 and to articulate the demand for the participation of women participation in the *alardes* (military reviews) of Irun and Hondarribia. *Egizan* proposed drawing up a national plan of action to change the situation regarding women, but it did not obtain the agreement of all the organizations and decided to leave the National Platform.
- 54) *Egizan* considered the need for the Feminist Movement to become a political subject and, at the same time, for the nationalist left to also become a feminist agent, thus setting the feminist process in motion.
- 55) In April 2001, *Egizan* ceased its activity as an organization in order to promote the feminist conscience in women from the nationalist left, in addition to introducing the feminist perspective in the political practice of the latter.
- 56) In 2003, the Second National Assembly of Women from the Pro-Independence Left took place, in which major advances were noted in the level of awareness-raising of militancy on the nationalist left thanks to the sociological studies carried out. Following the design of the feminist process, internal plans were made in the different organizations making up the nationalist left and the feminist ideological fundamentals of the nationalist left were accepted, in which it was affirmed that the oppression of women is a structural one. Women from the nationalist left stressed the need to carry out transversal feminist work which would pervade all areas and to search for common work and coordination among the different nationalist feminist agents.



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- 57) The current feminist movement, which we can situate in the period between 1999 and the present, is characterized by alliances formed around platforms which work on specific subject matters: 8th March, 25th November, sexist violence and the world women's march, etc. Something which should be highlighted in these alliances is the fact that they have steadily acquired a national character. Participants in these alliances, together with autonomous organizations, include trade unions and party secretaries.
- 58) The setting-up in 2002 of the autonomous feminist organization *Euskal Herriko Bilgune Feminista* is a determining factor in defining and taking on the aforementioned national character.
- 59) *Bilgune Feminista* was set in motion following the first feminist and nationalist women's conference held in Leitza in 2001. A diagnosis of women in Euskal Herria was worked on at this conference, together with the need to create structural and sectorial feminist proposals - and by way of a conclusion, the creation of a network of feminist and nationalist women to put these proposals into practice. *Bilgune Feminista* was set up to set this network in motion and to work on the aforementioned proposals. Over the last few years, a further two feminist and nationalist conferences have been held in order to study the definition of the proposals in depth.

3. REASONS FOR THE LEFT TO ASSUME FEMINISM AND THE COMMITMENT TO THE FEMINIST STRUGGLE

3.1. Feminism and the feminist struggle contribute towards critical analysis and the transformation of reality

- 60) In this section are contained the keys to the feminist struggle from the point of view of what its approaches have entailed and entail in achieving a just and egalitarian society. Special mention should be made of contributions on two levels: theoretical-ideological, and political and organizational practice. A review which enables one to identify some current challenges facing the feminist movement in Euskal Herria.

Theoretical contributions

- 61) Feminism has created new terms and concepts, not out of a fondness for lucubration, but rather so as to be able to refer to certain unnamed realities which have been made visible. It has drawn up different theories which have made the androcentric slant of many assumptions apparent, not only of patriarchal ideology but also of those which constituted pillars of critical and revolutionary thought on the left. Despite the diversity of feminist trends which have historically been developed (liberal, socialist, equality and difference feminism, etc.), we can point to some general concepts within which these contributions may be identified.
- 62) Concepts such as patriarchy, sex/gender system, sexism, equality, comparison, positive discrimination, positive action, gender violence, violence against women, work/employment, household and public/private work, the sexed body, sexuality, lesbianism, full health, etc. have had a decisive bearing on the need to review and redefine the concepts and ideas used in social analysis, and this has been done on all levels in which knowledge is produced, in sciences and in political and everyday spheres.
- 63) A new vocabulary which makes social relations of domination between the sexes visible and the possibility of overcoming them. The theoretical contributions of feminism are not something of the past (from the 60s and 70s, when the debate on the left centred on concepts of classical Marxism such as production/reproduction, the revolutionary subject and socialist/feminist society, etc.); very important debates continue to take place nowadays owing to their political repercussions (gender indicators, transversality and sexual identities, etc.)
- 64) Feminism has also shown that social gender relations are influenced or crossed by elements relating to class, race and nation (they do not affect all women in the same way, but they do share certain fundamental aspects).
- 65) As regards the situation of women, the feminist movement of Euskal Herria starts from a general shared diagnosis; women's discrimination continues although new realities emerge:
In terms of work: access, conditions and maintaining a job, wage discrimination, conciliation and harassment, etc.;



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In terms of politics: the incorporation of women into the political class which does not defend women's rights, restrictions in political participation and freedom of expression, etc.;

In terms of ideology, the continued presence and reproduction of patriarchal ideology in all socialization, the education system, the media, the church and groups of friends, etc..

- 66) As regards rights as citizens, they exist in the role but not in reality. The deficit of basic democratic rights ranges from the absolute denial to their restrictive imposition. We have no rights even over our own body, a dignified life, or to take decisions which affect us - although this is a diagnosis which is made permanently clear, the difficulty lies in devising a common strategy from it for the feminist movement.

Contributions to political and

organizational practice

- 67) The fundamental contribution of feminism to political practice can perhaps be reflected in the traditional theme "the personal is the political." Feminism also places politics in daily life, directly in women's living conditions, and to improve them by first hand experience, the needs, the shortcomings and the capacity to put these shortcomings right (of special note is the experience of the feminist movement in organizing planning, direct assistance and welfarism, etc.). This it does in a transversal way in all spheres of reality (economic, work, political, social, cultural, legal, personal, media and health, etc.).

- 68) We find another contribution in the type of political subject which has constructed feminism: women, their self-organization and horizontality, etc.). The diversity of forms of organization which the current feminist movement has been creating (ranging from neighbourhood and municipal women's groups, areas and secretary's offices in mixed organizations, to the feminist party) shows its persistence, topicality and potentiality in the struggle for social liberation.

3.2. Feminism and the feminist struggle contribute towards the development of left-wing struggles

- 69) The structural oppression we women endure demands that the project to change the situation in which we are living is a comprehensive one. A comprehensive project which considers initiatives for transforming the social, economic, political and reality, by basing ourselves on the peer participation of women in social organization and management, and overcoming hierarchical personal and group relations between sexes.

- 70) Albeit theoretically, the left has historically considered the foundations of a feminist strategy in its projects involving transformation, and this includes the notion that left-wing struggles by "another world" must take into account over half of the population - this is a core theme which has not been developed. No priority has been given to it and no strategy has been constructed to articulate women's demands. By way of example of this, we may speak of the nationalist left itself in Euskal Herria which, after arriving at this analysis, sets the process in motion to define the struggle against sex-gender oppression and demands for women's rights within its own political project, so as to introduce a feminist strategy in a practical manner.

- 71) The left has not acknowledged the political nature of the feminist struggle and has not considered the feminist movement as a subject of an essential socio-political nature for transforming society and creating a new model. However, the development of the feminist struggle over the last few decades is a reality which shows the validity of feminist demands and the meaning of this struggle.

- 72) The feminist movement, whether protest, non-conformist or alternative feminism, is not something of the past, from the 70s - it continues to fight and defend the interests and rights of women, consider alternatives for an improvement in women's living conditions and to overcome patriarchal oppression, makes demands of institutions, condemns and raises awareness. Feminist women have developed a conscience which has remained throughout time and the capacity for self-organization of women continues to be a fact (different forms, different objectives, different practices and experiences, etc.). The feminist movement is a real political subject which has a fundamental role within the current socio-political context, in constructing a non-patriarchal society.

- 73) The current struggle of the left has steadily acquired certain characteristics in recent times such as the internationalization of demands (international anti-capitalist movements, anti-globalization,



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international, national and local forums for articulating struggles), the development of the social and civil dimension of freedom (the extension and consolidation of struggles developed around individual and group rights, human rights, self-determination, citizenship, and social, economic and cultural rights, etc.), and the development of organizational capacity (diversity of forms, creation of frameworks for debate and struggle in which popular demands converge).

- 74) These characteristics have steadily become consolidated not only by the work carried out by left-wing organizations but also thanks to the contribution made by women and the feminist movement, present in all the "rupturist" initiatives which have been taken into consideration.
- 75) In conclusion, we consider that the left should take up the struggle against false equality. Power and the right are building a social conscience which recognises the discrimination we women endure, but considers that, thanks to institutional activity and their discourse regarding equality, women's living conditions have ostensibly improved. This discourse and this practice are totally false.
- 76) Although there are aspects which have improved, it is also true that we women continue to be second-class citizens. This conceptual line of thought, which is greatly accepted in society, has also been accepted by the left quite naturally and, although – as has been mentioned previously – progress has been made on a theoretical level, in real terms this acceptance has meant not adopting the design and development of a feminist political strategy and practice.

4. MATTERS PENDING ON THE LEFT

- 77) The most important matter pending for the left is the relocation of feminism in its current project and an appraisal of feminist ideology. It is not possible to speak of a left-wing project without speaking of feminism. It is not possible to define a left-wing project without feminism being integrated in it;
- 78) It is necessary to overcome the ideological confusionism existing around feminism, the struggle and feminist movement. There is ignorance which is not devoid of interests involved in discrediting the feminist movement;
- 79) Feminism is confused with the struggle against men, when all feminist tendencies are fighting for a non-patriarchal society and social relations between the sexes not based on power;
- 80) Feminism is considered as something homogeneous, when the different tendencies existing show that we should speak of "feminisms" (liberal, socialist, radical, equality and difference, and different objectives, struggles and subjects, etc.);
- 81) Women's rights and demands are considered to be women's things (sexuality, maternity, domestic violence, etc.) - a private, personal, domestic or exclusively ideological revolution, as if the only thing that still had to be overcome in patriarchy were the male chauvinism displayed individually by men and some conservative women, when it becomes increasingly clear that discrimination is oppression - a structural issue which patriarchy not only maintains and reproduces, but which is inherent in current capitalist society (patriarchal neo-liberalism and patriarchy are mutually required and perpetuated).
- 82) To fully understand the situation on any level (national and international), it is necessary to introduce social relations between men and women into the analysis, which are closely articulated with the social relations imposed by the prevailing economic situation. The patriarchal system is the key element in the neo-liberal capitalist economic system.
- 83) Within what we may broadly refer to as working people and speaking in global terms, the economic and social situation of women is noticeably worse than that of men (double exploitation, feminization of poverty, etc.), without of course ignoring the spiralling deterioration affecting the situation of the working class – both men and women. The evolution of neo-liberal globalization points to a drastic worsening of this situation. It is essential to incorporate courses of action into programmes so as to slow down this trend.
- 84) The political participation of women both in the public institutional field and in that of left-wing parties and organizations is very insufficient, which is in contrast to the extensive participation of women in social struggles and movements. A situation like this cannot be maintained if one wishes to build a system with certain minimum foundations.



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- 85) The fair and central participation of women in left-wing organizations is an essential guarantee for achieving the objectives of fairness in terms of gender and social justice for women. It is necessary to adopt specific measures in order to facilitate this central participation.
- 86) It is necessary to overcome sexist attitudes which occur in the militant practice of left-wing organizations, and which are apparent in types of behaviour and the sharing of responsibilities and duties, etc.
- 87) Another need is that of developing inter-related lines of intervention. The left cannot remain unfocussed by standing in the way of the feminist movement and the popular demands which it has historically generated. Taking into account where the right places "politics" and "the political" – far away from citizens and civil society by taking away its voice, manipulating it and commercializing the vote, etc. - the left must relocate the political, and make sufficient political capacity and new political subjects emerge which once again give meaning to "political participation" of groups and individuals.
- 88) At a time when they want us to believe that capitalism is the only model of society and that it is the model which ensures equality among the sexes, the left must devise non-patriarchal models of society and paths to turn them into reality. The situation of women cannot wait any longer based on stopgap solutions and partial improvements. The left must define itself as feminist and explicitly demand in its strategic objectives that a model of society constructed on values of feminism be achieved.

5. PROPOSALS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE ON THE LEFT

- 89) To face up to all the aforementioned, we should above all highlight the need to create a practical feminist strategy within the left.
- 90) As a starting point, it is necessary to visualize the fact that at the present time equality is not real and that the struggle for women's rights remains a leading struggle.
- 91) To progress towards that new society, we consider it necessary to work to construct a feminist alliance between women on the left which may promote an analysis of women's participation and working methods in left-wing organizations.
- 92) This alliance must guarantee the incorporation of the struggle for women's rights into the priorities of our political agenda, by developing transversal and comprehensive feminist work.
- 93) The strategic project of the left must take feminist initiatives into consideration in all areas of society.
- 94) Not only women should be an active part of the struggle for their rights, enablers and leaders; it is necessary for men to be involved in this struggle, it is time to construct joint areas of political intervention, because the main objective is the transformation of society and this is a job to be carried out by all men and women.
- 95) The struggle for women's rights is a struggle for the rights of individuals who make up over half of the population; they are not group rights, but rather the rights of civil society to be enjoyed in conditions of fairness.
- 96) Rights must be formulated by women, by the feminist movement, rather than by state or party interests (there is a whole analysis on an international level by the feminist movement of rights which we women do not enjoy).
- 97) Another of the tasks is that of considering the socio-political nature of the feminist subject – in other words, the different expressions of the feminist subject must be considered as a political subject by recognising their validity. Promoting the self-organization of the feminist subject, creating the conditions required for we women to constitute feminist subjects and political subjects and opening up channels for the political participation of feminist groups and organizations, are tasks which must be led by the left.
- 98) Lastly, along the way it is also essential to establish alliances between the feminist movement and the left, taking into account the political context and in order to improve the current living conditions of women, so as to advance towards the construction of a non-patriarchal society.