

The feminist movement and the politics of transition pacts: achievements and compromises

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Received: 10/07/2017

Accepted: 03/11/2017

ABSTRACT

This article analyses the influence the feminist movement had in Spain during the years of the transition while a democratic political culture was being established. It studies the activism of the social movements, feminist participation in the media, splitting of this movement, and its integration into the political parties of the time. It also examines the incorporation of feminists into institutions up until the time that legislation on the equality of the sexes was proclaimed in Spain. This was not without a price because the incorporation of feminists into politics meant renouncing some of their vindications in favour of consensus and the policy of pacts which was characteristic of the Spanish transition. This also meant that the feminist movement, which contributed to the change in the Spanish social and family model more than any other group, was forced to postpone some of its initial proposals for years, or even decades. In exchange, other proposals were recognised as urgent in the unavoidable dynamics of checks and balances during the transition.

Keywords: social movements, feminism, gender, consensus, renunciations, successes.

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Suggested citation: Toboso, P. (2018). The feminist movement and the politics of transition pacts: achievements and compromises. *Debats. Journal on Culture, Power and Society*, 3, 39-48. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.28939/iam.debats-en.2018-4>

INTRODUCTION

The feminist movement contributed more than any other to creating a new culture in Spain; its proposal for transforming the dictatorship's dominant social and family model—which was based on sexist roles—into one of equality, had important consequences for the way we [now] understand personal relationships. Feminist proposals were disruptive, both in their conception of family life and of work activities, and the pressure the movement exerted was fundamental to inclusion of the social and labour rights of women that, until then, had been invisible and down-played, in the transition's political agenda.

From an ideological point of view, the movement in Spain shared the premises and demands also set out in other countries, but the context of this second wave of feminism gave it special characteristics, because it coincided with the change in political regime and so it was inscribed into the framework of [Spain's] political transition from dictatorship to democracy. This coincidence, and the transcendence of this historical moment, meant that the movement could not be isolated from the rest of the changes taking place in the country at the time. It meant that feminists could take advantage of this to change women's positions, [although they were] aware that

making alliances with the political parties of the time—[the ones] with the potential to reach power to lead these changes—would imply relinquishing some of their initial proposals.

Feminism was a radical movement that questioned the socioeconomic structures of power and traditional values, and which burst onto the Spanish political scene in the 1970s in what was then a very polarised political, social, and cultural environment. In this context, those who advocated a total shake up and the establishment of a real democratic system (in which, until then, 50 percent of the population had been marginalised) coexisted with those who would have preferred a limited reform that did not question its social bases—especially the family model—to replace the political system. [On the one hand,] it should be noted that a section of society (which were also represented in its political parties, including those on the left), felt very comfortable with this family model. [They felt] that it was one thing to transform the political system, and quite another [to change] the dominant powers and family structure.

On the other hand, it was a movement to which historiography has paid scant attention. It is rare to see a photograph of the transition in which women appear, similarly, reference to them in the general work about the period (Soto, 1998; Gallego, 2008; Cotarelo, 1992), and in specific work on social movements (Álvarez, 1994; Ibarra and Tejerina, 1998) is also unusual, bar a few exceptions (Martínez, Gutiérrez and González, 2009; Toboso, 2015). This means that, despite the abundant bibliography that one can find about the transition, [our] knowledge of the period's history is only partial. To complete the story we must include the excluded or reinterpret the period from a gender perspective. This article aims to recover the role the feminism movement played during the years of the transition, without forgetting the individual performances of some of the women who contributed to the change and who have [until now] remained anonymous.

FEMINISM AS A SOCIAL MOVEMENT

The first feminists appeared in Spain in the first third of the 20th century. These women, including Concepción Arenal, María de Maeztu, María Lejárraga, Clara Campoamor, and Victoria Kent, to name only the most representative of them, acted in isolation. They demanded rights for women, especially the right to education and suffrage. In the 1960s, in the context of the [Spanish] dictatorial regime's crisis and national Catholicism's distancing from society, what is known as *second-wave feminism* emerged in the form of a movement, after overcoming the lethargy it had suffered in the early years of the dictatorship. This new feminism was part of the so-called new social movements typical of post-industrial societies, which had their roots in the events in May 1968 in France, in which specific [feminist] demands were presented. They are called 'new' (Toboso, 2015) to differentiate them from the traditional workers' movement, based on the class struggle.

Thus, in Spain the feminist consciousness, numbed and silenced for years, was revived in an atmosphere of struggle against the dictatorship. Feminists from different professional groups, neighbourhood associations (which were very active in large cities at the time), and university associations came together, with the younger and more educated generation defending women's presence in public spaces. In the University of Madrid, the University Association for the Study of Women's Problems (AUPEPM; the *Asociación Universitaria para el Estudio de los Problemas de la Mujer*) was formed with the objective, as its name suggests, of highlighting the specific problems women had. These types of associations were also created in many other universities. As in other Western countries, the feminist consciousness developed mainly among less discriminated-against women: those working outside the home, who held socially prestigious positions, with a higher level of education, or who enjoyed more independence because they remained single or had separated, and those that came from liberal or anticlerical families. The more of these characteristics a woman had, the more likely she was to develop a feminist consciousness (Mueller, 1994).

The first groups acted independently in some cases, and in others, were linked to anti-Franco movements: neighbourhood and housewives' associations, university groups, pacifists, etc. In all cases, a feminist culture was promoted as an alternative to the dominant feminine culture built by the authorities and empowered by the church and the *Sección Femenina* (Women's Section [of the Falange political movement in Spain]), and which designated specific functions to women. For many women who left the private sphere and undertook a process of socialisation, feminism represented a platform for political learning. Therefore, it fulfilled one of the functions attributed to social movements: it served as a platform for the formation of political elites, in this case, female ones. In fact, a significant percentage of those who acceded to prominent political posts in the early years of democracy (ministers, deputies [members of parliament], and members of the judiciary) came from the 1960s and 1970s feminist ranks.

During the transition phase, the movement articulated itself well through small groups (which women with a high level of education and with ideological, professional, or simple friendship ties usually joined), or via sections of the political parties on the left who were more sensitive to their demands (e.g., socialists, communists, Trotskyists, Maoists, or left-wing nationalist parties) and in which feminists acted as a kind of lobby or pressure group. Their main objectives were to denounce women's situation, raise societal awareness of the discrimination they suffered, and to claim political, labour, and social rights in a hostile environment—not only because of the reluctance of men (who saw [women as] a threat to the positions of power they had traditionally enjoyed), but also because some women felt that feminist proposals and discourse was an aggression: a criticism and direct attack on the role they had traditionally played. Therefore, as Alberto Melucci indicates, the movement's protagonists lived “the contradiction [...] between the promises of being included in the social order and the social costs of existing as a woman and being destined to the immutable roles of mother, wife and lover” (Melucci, 1994, p. 132).

The main novelty of the feminist associations was that their leaders were women; this was new because, until then, the visible majority in public institutions, unions, and political parties, were men. The sudden appearance of women in the street and in public spaces was the first step on the road towards the normalisation of gender relations. Post-Franco feminism was a minority movement, but was very active during the transition because of the presence and visibility that the communication media offered: some, because they believed in [feminist] proposals, and others because the ground-breaking feminists discourse was a show, stimulated debate, and increased audiences. The consequence was the emergence, especially on television, of women who did not dedicate themselves to presenting entertainment programs, who were not mere decorations as had previously been the case, but who presented proposals and debated them on equal terms with men and women, and from different points of view.

Visibility was fundamental, because the movement could only impose its demands if it obtained social support from men and women alike. Some support had to be earned in the street: not an easy task in a society still conditioned by the education it had received. In fact, some women saw feminists as “incomprehensible and exotic”,¹ as furious, conceited, individualistic, and unsupportive [people] who believed themselves superior and despised the social and family work that women had traditionally performed. They were scandalised by the slogans with which feminists sought to build a new gender identity; for example, the famous ones: “I am also an adulterer”, “I also aborted”, “I also use contraceptives”, or “I am also gay”, were a challenge to the dominant slogans [of the time].

To overcome the prejudices of non-feminist women, a reconciling approach had to be taken to make them understand the situation of subordination in which they lived and why they needed to end it. In this context, in October 1976, the Democratic Association of

¹ As can be read in the pages of *Cambio* 16, 22 January 1978.

Women, with the collaboration of other feminist groups, launched a press and street-level campaign to support a woman from Zaragoza who had been accused of adultery and who therefore, the prosecution was petitioning for five years' imprisonment. The objective was to paralyse the process, but it served as a pretext to relaunch the movement and awaken the conscience of many women who [suddenly] realised the potential consequences of the legal discrimination weighing upon them. The penal code in force in that year contemplated minimum penalties for extramarital relationships committed by men, while, in the case of women, these could reach up to six years' imprisonment (Marcuello, 8 October 1976). The publicity and media pressure of this case favoured the acquittal of women and sensitised many other non-feminist women who, from then on, changed their position, then understanding the importance of the feminist movement in the modification of this type of situation.

Increasing their number of supporters was key at a time when the foundations of the future democracy were being laid, because it would depend to a large extent on whether feminist proposals would become law or be side-lined in a forgotten drawer for decades. To this end, feminists created meeting places: bookstores, coffee shops, publishing houses, or even in magazine [publications] such as *Vindicación*, from which they tried to spread their ideas. They did not miss any opportunities to appear on the television or radio whenever they were invited, or to write articles in the press about issues that directly affected women. In 1976, more than 140 articles and news items related to feminism were published in the *El País* newspaper alone; in 1977, this reached more than 210, and in 1978 it was around 270 (Threlfall, 2009). Thus, women 'came out of the closet' which the national Catholic culture had locked them up in for decades.

The design of education materials was fundamental because some of the proposals defended by feminism, such as the legalisation of divorce and abortion, reproductive and sexual freedom, and same-sex marriage, aroused reticence in many. These were all issues that had traditionally been opposed by the most

conservative sectors [of society] and by the Catholic church, which continued to enjoy a strong influence in the country. For these sectors, feminist discourse was an attack on established values, motherhood, family, traditional gender roles, and the sexual model of the time, because feminism, we must not forget, had an important anticlerical component. Although not all feminists were anticlerical, the church, and by extension, its practitioners, felt that [feminism's] approach was an attack. These sectors passionately fought the discourse and proposals [of feminism], with insults and [attempted] discreditation, to the point of turning feminism into a question of identity for women, forcing them to position themselves either as feminist or anti-feminist. At the time it was common to ask women, both in public and in private, if they were feminists, and those of either position responded with equal force. Carmen Fraga, daughter of the founder of the *Alianza Popular* (People's Alliance) political party and conservative like her father, answered on a TVE television program: "I am not a feminist, not reckless, nor radical". Another woman interviewed on the same program said: "Spain needs women to work and not engage in these sterile struggles" (Jiménez, 5 March 1977). Discourses of this kind tried to frame feminists, not only as irresponsible (reckless, crazy, etc.), but also as unpatriotic.

Therefore, the feminists in these years awoke affiliations and phobias, because both their discourse and their attitudes broke with the stereotype of traditional women: informed, provocative, comfortable when speaking about sexuality, taking decisive actions, and debating with men without complexes. With their activism they managed not to go unnoticed, which meant that political parties finally decided to include some of their proposals, or at least to begin to consider the legalisation of contraceptives, divorce, and abortion. These were all delicate issues in a Catholic country where only a few were willing to confront the all-powerful church. Legislation of these issues may have eventually come, albeit at a much later date because they were strongly opposed (especially the latter two), and therefore posed an electoral risk to any party with possibilities of governing. These parties continually considered the usefulness of including or excluding these measures in their electoral programs.

INSTITUTIONALISATION OF THE MOVEMENT AND ITS INTEGRATION INTO POLITICAL PARTIES

Despite its strength, Spanish feminism lacked a solid theoretical base, which forced the different collectives to simultaneously combine academic and discursive elaboration of the feminist paradigm with political activism. While some groups focused on defining the feminist philosophy, others opted for direct forms of struggle at the street level and in institutions, in the belief that the opportunity—offered by the change in the political system—to transform the foundations of society could not be missed.² This diversity produced confrontations between the different groups, with positions that oscillated between those that—influenced by the theories of Nancy Fraser (1997) or Iris Young (2000)—proposed the creation of a great feminist party, independent from the other parties, and the more pragmatic position that, even recognising that women were discriminated against in all areas, including in [political] parties, participating in them was the fastest way to access institutions and modify legislation to make it more egalitarian. This sector opted for ‘double activism’ [participation both in political parties and in political movements and groups] and integrated into the parties of the political left, because joining the political right, who rejected their demands outright, was unthinkable.

2 Those who dedicated themselves to this theoretical development include the *Asociación Española de Mujeres Universitarias* (Spanish Association of University Women), *Seminario de Estudios Sociológicos de la Mujer* (Seminar on Women’s Sociological Studies), *Asociación Española de Mujeres Juristas* (Spanish Association of Women Jurists), *Asociación para la Promoción y Evolución Cultural* (APEC; the Association for Cultural Promotion and Evolution), *Seminario Colectivo Feminista* (Feminist Collective Seminar), *Colectivo Jurídico Feminista* (Feminist Legal Collective), and *Grupo de Lucha por la Liberación de la Mujer* (Group for the Struggle for the Liberation of Women), or in Catalonia, the *Liga Antipatriarcal de Mujeres Antiautoritarias y Radicales* (LAMAR; the Antipatriarchal Anti-Authoritarian and Radical Women’s League). Among the activists, were the *Movimiento Democrático de Mujeres* (Women’s Democratic Movement), *Asociación de Mujeres Separadas* (Association of Separated Women), later of ‘Divorced Women’, *Asociación Democrática de la Mujer* (Democratic Association for Women), and *Frente de Liberación de la Mujer* (Women’s Liberation Front).

However, the movement’s lack of unity was used by [feminism’s] detractors to discredit it. They argued that if feminists were unable to agree among themselves, how would they contribute to the consensus and the pact-making that dominated the political environment of the transition. Arguments at meetings such as the *Primeras Jornadas por la Liberación de la Mujer* (first days of the liberation of women) that took place in December 1975, or the so-called *Jornades Catalanes de la Dona* (Catalan Conference on Women) in May 1976 were aired and exaggerated by the press to highlight, above all, the feminist collective’s limited capacity for dialogue. But the truth is that, although these meetings made it clear that feminism was plural, in 1978, several groups agreed to establish the *Plataforma de Organizaciones Feministas* (the Platform of Feminist Organisations), which integrated many associations, albeit with some exceptions such as the *Asociación Democrática de la Mujer* (Democratic Association of Women). This platform facilitated direct actions taken to denounce the legal discrimination suffered by women, to [fight for the] release of those imprisoned for making adverts for contraceptives or for performing abortions, and to make proposals to modify institutional laws to make them egalitarian.

The priority for feminists was to achieve legal equality as a framework in which other laws would be established until [equal status] could be achieved. For this parity to be effective, the newly-constituted government not only had to recognise equality as a principle, but also to guarantee measures that would make it effective: equal salaries, access to education, and positions of responsibility for both men and women; women’s rights over their own bodies; equal legislation on matters such as adultery; the legalisation of contraceptives, divorce, and abortion; and the adoption of specific measures to facilitate the sharing of family tasks and to put an end the famous glass ceiling. These measures were very important because some required the church and the state to be separated [before they could be implemented]. Therefore, they assumed a drastic break with the past in a political context in which consensus prevailed. Thus, feminism had to make concessions and, in the short term, got approval for some of their proposals in exchange for postponing others, some, sine die.

The disagreements that these feminist demands supposed meant that the parties with the strongest voices in the consensus that dominated the transition were initially reluctant to incorporate [these ideas]. This position changed over time and this gradually allowed some of the most representative feminists of the time to be integrated into the candidacy posts within these parties. This was a controversial issue, because it was soon proved that, with the exception of almost mythical figures, such as Dolores Ibárruri, they had been systematically placing women at the very end of the electoral lists³. As Carmen Vigil explains:

Feminist politics are not possible from within a non-feminist party. A woman's possibility of making [herself] a career within a party, of being part of its core decision-making leadership, are directly related to her acceptance of the party's projects and priorities, and inversely related to her feminist commitment. This predicament will make her, without a doubt, an uncomfortable person [to deal with], and so logically, [she] will be marginalised from the governing bodies [where she] cannot affect the party's programmatic strategy (Vigil, 2009, p. 232–233).

Thus, just as parties had to concede and put aside many of their initial proposals for the sake of consensus politics, feminists also relinquished and integrated into the parties of the left, despite the subordinate roles imposed upon them—although they did so with the hope of being able to later position themselves in more prominent positions. However, this change meant that they went from demonstrations and [appearances in] the media to [forming part of these] institutions. In the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE; the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party), feminist women formed the group *Mujer y Socialismo* (Women and Socialism), led by Carlota Bustelo. It was a pressure group that, in addition to supporting feminist ideals, demanded that the party

place a minimum number of female candidates on their electoral lists. In the 1977 elections this quota was only 10%, but afterwards the issue became recurrent. In July of that year, in the Congress of Deputies, Felipe González alluded, for the first time, to the inequality suffered by women, to the “significance of the presence of women and men from PSOE in parliamentary life”, and requested that a specific section on “women's rights” then in development be included in the Constitution (CD, 1977, p. 66–67). In the same session, Santiago Carrillo pledged that the *Partido Comunista de España* (PCE; the Communist Party of Spain) would support a Constitution “that safeguards human rights and guarantees legal equality between men and women by repairing scandalous historical injustices” (CD, 1977, p. 15).

But these were only declared intentions, because in reality, between 1977 and 1990, the percentage of female deputies remained very low (at around 6.5%) with respect to their male counterparts; a proportion that slowly began to grow only after the PSOE and *Izquierda Unida* (the United Left) accepted the quota system. In the legislature of 1977, 21 women obtained seats in the Congress of Deputies.⁴ Not all of them were feminists, but some of them, especially those who were part of parties on the left, came from feminist associations and thus, exerted double militancy. They performed outstandingly well in parliamentary debates about the Law for Political Reform and the Constitution and they used their influence so that measures that directly affected women were urgently adopted. During the elaboration of the draft constitution, they defended the proposals contained in the document the Platform of Feminist Organisations had sent to the president of

³ editor's note: in Spain these lists are closed; the party decides, in advance, the order in which any seats they win will be assigned so that candidates in very low positions are least likely to receive a seat. Thus, the voter can only vote for the party and cannot influence which candidate takes a seat.

⁴ For the *Unión de Centro Democrático* (UCD; the Union of the Democratic Centre): Soledad Becerril, Mercedes Moll, Dolores Blanca Morenas, Elena María Moreno, Teresa Revilla, Esther Beatriz Tellado, and Nona Inés Vilariño. For the PCE: Dolores Ibárruri, Pilar Brabo, and María Dolores Calvet. For the PSOE: Carlota Bustelo, Carmen García Bloise, Virtudes Castro, Asunción Cruañes, María Izquierdo, Palmira Pla, Ana María Ruiz Tagle, and Inmaculada Sabater. For *Alianza Popular*: María Victoria Fernández-España. For the *Grupo Socialistes de Catalunya* (the Socialist Group of Catalonia): Rosina Lajo and Marta Ángela Mata.

the *Cortes Generales* (General Courts)⁵: State-guaranteed equality between [all] people; coming of age for all at 18 years; the right to the development of affectivity and sexuality; civil marriage with the possibility of dissolution; equality between spouses; access to means of birth control; free and secular coeducation; and the right to a decent and remunerated job with equal conditions for men and women. All these proposals directly affected the daily life of all citizens and sought to lay the foundations of a truly democratic society in which sexist frontiers disappeared. This meant that the grassroots feminist movement and the performance of its representatives in institutions caused the transition to take a direction different to the one initially proposed.

The approval of the Constitution created a new situation because recognition of the basic principle of equality of the sexes meant that the rest of the laws had to be modified and adapted to make them egalitarian; again, the feminists had to monitor the process to assure its adequate completion. Undoubtedly, the three most controversial demands, and the ones they were unwilling to concede, were the decriminalisation of contraceptives, and approval of a divorce and an abortion law. All measures that were not initially on these parties' agendas. The first did not pose problems, because it had been used as *currency* in the negotiations of the Moncloa Pacts, signed in October 1977. This was an eminently economic agreement, which sought to solve serious problems facing the country, but was also used to agree on a reform of the penal code, specifically, three issues directly related to women: (1) decriminalisation of adultery and cohabitation; (2) decriminalisation of advertising and issuing contraceptives; and (3) modification of the age classifications for women [involved in] crimes of abduction and/or rape. The decriminalisation of contraceptives, in particular, represented a fundamental achievement for women's liberation because many had already been using the pill for many years, but did so

in secret and sometimes pharmacists were reluctant to give them [contraceptives] for reasons of belief. Their legalisation not only ended these practices, but also encouraged the creation of family planning centres, after the Ministry of Health and Culture signed an agreement to provide and promote them. Despite their name, the main objective of these centres was to inform women and provide them with contraceptives.

However, the legalisation of divorce and abortion provoked an intense debate due to the resistance of certain sectors. For feminists these were two inalienable rights in the process of women's liberation, and so they convened congresses and conferences, used the media, and above all, the institutions to which they belonged to defend them. They did not manage to have divorce included in the Constitution, as they had hoped, but they had brought the debate to the street, and the final draft [of the Constitution] left the door open for the approval of divorce shortly afterwards. The church hierarchy accused the president of the government of being pro-divorce and the most reactionary Catholics fought a very hard [anti-divorce] campaign. During the discussion of the bill they defended the indissolubility of both civil and religious marriage, and reminded Catholics of their obligation to comply with these rules. The Episcopal Conference tried to influence the legislators, alluding to their responsibility and obligation to defend the family institution, and insisted that divorce represented an evil because it would cause numerous marital breakdowns. This intransigent stance mobilised many women's organisations and, in September 1979, a group chained themselves to the bars of the windows of the Ecclesiastical Courts, leading to their arrest. These images had a huge impact and favoured participation in the debate by citizens who were mostly in favour of the restoration of the right to divorce, as shown by the studies and surveys carried out during this period.⁶ The debate at the core of the government made some feminist deputies, initially those aligned with the UCD,

5 editor's note: this refers to the bicameral legislature system in Spain, comprising two chambers: the Congress of Deputies, the lower house, and the Senate, the upper house.

6 Different studies on this can be found in the library and archives of the Women's Institute, now also in the *Instituto de la Mujer y para la Igualdad de Oportunidades* (Institute for Women and Equal Opportunities).

understand that proposals that directly affect women would not be supported, and so they defected to more progressive parties, especially the PSOE.

But, undoubtedly, the most controversial bill was that related to abortion, because in this case, prejudice and social rejection were higher. Although many women and some men felt that the approval of this law was a necessity (and even though there were many illegal practices, and many women—especially young people—went to other countries to abort), this issue caused problems of morals and conscience in the social imagination. In this issue, feminists had to carry out a huge amount of educational work to dismantle the false beliefs that criminalised and stigmatised women who aborted. They also had to confront the church and the most conservative [political] parties, such as *Alianza Popular* (People's Alliance), which rejected the law head on. Encouraged by a trial in late 1979 in Burgos against ten women and one man accused of having performed abortions or having aborted, and for which the prosecutor requested a total of more than a hundred years in prison, [feminists] began an awareness campaign that included local talks and media appearances, debates, rallies, round tables, articles in the press, and demonstrations, all with the aim of ending the prejudices surrounding this issue. However, they had to wait for the PSOE to win the elections so that the issue could be debated in Parliament. In 1983, the first law on the decriminalisation of abortion was approved, although it did not come into force until 1985 because the *Coalición Popular* (Popular Coalition; a group in which the Alianza Popular was then integrated), filed an appeal of unconstitutionality; even so, [this law] only contemplated the possibility of abortion in three cases. Years later, this law would be extended by another socialist government.

These were the most socially-important achievements, but not the only ones; the principle of the equality of the sexes recognised in the Constitution also translated into opportunities for women to accede professions they traditionally did not have access to. According to some of the protagonists who participated in the legislative debates at the time, one of [feminism's] most

controversial achievements was the incorporation of women into the Armed Forces, an institution that had been reserved exclusively for men. Feminist deputies such as Eulàlia Vintró, María Dolores Pelayo, and Elena Vázquez also managed to introduce issues such as the regulation of advertising to avoid sexism, options for reducing working hours, distribution of tasks, and extension of social services into the political debate; these were fundamental issues which could allow men and women to reconcile their work, personal, and family lives. These topics were considered to be personal, and therefore, as belonging to the private sphere, and so their introduction was undoubtedly an achievement for feminists, who had shown politicians that these matters needed to be included in their agendas. Thus, the boundaries between the public and private spheres began to blur. But, once the movement became diluted among different political [parties], acceptance by the political consensus was limited to [feminism's] initial demands and forced them to renounce—at least temporarily—their appeals for tests to determine paternity, free-access to abortion, regulation for same-sex marriages, laws on gender violence and parity in every area of life (including in terms of work and domestic care): demands that the [political] parties of the time were not prepared to defend. Years later, and with a stronger democratic culture, [feminists] have resumed their appeals and are now receiving the attention of legislators. But it is also true that we must continue to focus on certain issues, such as gender violence, the division of tasks, sexist discourse, and labour parity at the highest levels, because there is still a lot to be done.

CONCLUSIONS

The feminist movement has contributed more than any other to the creation of a democratic culture and mentality. It was key to ensuring that women's rights and gender-based equality are seen as unquestionable. It obliged political parties to defend [these rights] in their programs and to use a less sexist discourse and language. The principle of equality, enshrined in the 1978 Constitution and subsequently applied to all other laws and changes in family law, were a direct

consequence of the pressure exerted by feminists in the street and in institutions. The high presence of women in public institutions today, especially in political parties and trade unions, is largely due to the work carried out by feminist groups in the 1960s and 1970s, mainly between 1975 and 1978, when a small but energetic feminist movement participated in mobilisations towards democracy (Alberdi, 2009). Its members influenced the formulation of the principle of equality enshrined in the Constitution as well as the transformation of laws, especially those related to the family and the private sphere.

Although Mary Nash maintains that “the women of the late-Francoist era and the Democratic Political Transition set in motion a social movement of great transcendence that transformed their lives modifying traditional social practices” (Nash, 2011, p. 283), perhaps it would be more accurate to say that it was a group of feminists that made women aware of their situation until they [could themselves] manage to transform the dominant power structure. [Feminists] managed to convert the personal into political, by incorporating their demands into public debate. Some, in addition to demanding greater participation and the recognition of women’s rights, also required a profound transformation in daily life. If anything about political culture has changed over the last thirty years, it is the conception of family and the relationships between men and

women. Regarding both issues, feminists have had a lot to do; the transformation of a patriarchal society into a more egalitarian one was the most profound change—or at least one of the most visible changes of the 20th century.

But the premature deactivation of the movement, by its absorption into political parties that were only willing to assume some of their demands, caused some of their early fundamental proposals to remain pending, and so legal equality has not yet been translated into full and real equality. Laws are not enough to change the social model if they are not accompanied by a change in mentality, and that depends on education in schools, within families, and in the media. Undoubtedly, one of the main problems facing today’s society is gender violence because it has tragic consequences for many women. In 2016, 53 women were killed by their partners or ex-partners in Spain; in 2017, this figure was 49, plus 8 minors who were murdered by their mother’s abusers. This intolerable situation has reactivated the movement. For example, throughout February 2017, a group of women, workers, and students held a protest and a hunger strike in Madrid’s Puerta del Sol, and on March 8 (International Women’s Day), thousands of women participated—especially young people—in demonstrations held in Spain’s main cities and universities, bearing feminist slogans reminiscent of those used in the 1970s.

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