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Italy

"Women's strike on March 8th, shows that without us, the world doesn't go round!"

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On this March 8th, a women's strike is being organized in several countries, in particular in Italy where the movement "Non una di meno" ("Not one more") involves thousands of women. This interview with Marta Cotta, a member of Degender, the feminist collective in Rome of Communia (Italian organisation of the Fourth International), was conducted by Pauline Forges.

Pauline Forges: How did the movement "Non una di meno" start?

Marta Cotta: It began a year and a half ago, with three collectives: Io decido, a network of feminist collectives in Rome established three years ago; DIRE, the national network of refuges against violence against women; and UDI, the union of Italian women, a feminist organization that has existed for many years. After an umpteenth femicide that happened in Rome, there was an assembly, and we took the decision to give a stronger response. At the same time, there was the movement "Ni una menos" in Argentina. We launched a call for a national demonstration on November 26th, 2016, followed by a national assembly. It was a mixed demonstration: the organization was non-mixed but it was open to other movements (LGBTQI or those in solidarity with women). At the assembly on November 27th, it was supposed to be mixed but there were practically only women present.

PF: Was it a success?

MC: There were 700 people at the assembly. The objective was to write together a national plan to fight violence against women. There were eight workshops, in order to discuss violence in all aspects of a woman's life, starting from the fact that it is systemic. Among the themes, there was health, refuges against violence against women, sexism in the mixed political movement, work, the media and the means of communication and gender education in schools. After the assembly of November 27th, 2017, there were others, to write the national plan to fight violence against women, but also to prepare for March 8th. From then on, it was understood that it was the assemblies that took decisions (and no longer the organizations that had taken the initiative of launching the movement). Little by little, especially after March 8th last year, assemblies of "Non una di meno" were established in different towns and cities, to participate in the national plan, while at the same time conducting campaigns at the local level.

PF: How did things go on November 25th last year?

MC: We organized a big demonstration with the slogan "We have a plan," because we finished editing our national plan to fight violence against women, in the shape of a little 50-page book that analyses the situation and proposes measures. The movement around #Metoo was also important; we demonstrated with the slogan "From #Metoo to #Wetogether".

PF: What did you organize on March 8th last year?

MC: We launched a call for a general strike which was supported by the minority unions in Italy. There was trade-union work to be done, because the majority union confederation (the CGIL) did not want this strike. It was a strike of productive (paid) and reproductive (unpaid) labour. Every town and city decided how to organize its March 8th. For example, in Rome, we occupied two squares around two themes, education and health, and we organized a big collective demonstration. We gave a lot of thought to women who did not have the possibility of going on strike; we thought of ways in which they could show solidarity by wearing the colours of the strike of the strike (black and

fuchsia-coloured clothes), or by wearing a badge.

PF: What is a strike of "reproductive" labour, unpaid?

MC: The idea was to show that without us, the world stops turning. We stop working, we organize a big public lunch, or collective childcare, we dump dirty washing in the squares... This year, in Milan, there will be a sound system with music that recalls witches' meetings, to accompany the demonstration, but also to be heard by women who cannot take part in the strike.

PF: What is the place of Communia in "Non una di meno"?

MC: Degender, the feminist and LGBTQI collective of Communia-Rome, was involved in *Io decido*, which was involved in the initiative of the movement. In Rome, there is an assembly of "Non una di meno" every Thursday. But we are also active in other cities.

PF: How is March 8th this year shaping up?

MC: The difficulty of this March 8th is that there are parliamentary elections on March 4th. Some sectors cannot go on strike for five days before and five days after the election. Besides, now that we have a national plan to fight violence against women, the question is to decide what we will do. What gives us momentum is that there is a big movement on the international level, in Argentina, in Poland... that gives us strength. There is an international coordinating body of "Non una di meno". This year, there are three themes that will be put in the forefront on March 8th in Rome: sexual harassment in the workplace, health (with the fortieth anniversary of the law on abortion) and women's refuges (there are only four in Rome!).