

Foreword to the Integration

I was familiar with the Archive of the Feminist Struggle that Mariarosa Dalla Costa had donated to the Civic Library of Padua; I had already had the opportunity to appreciate its importance and completeness. For this reason, when I was asked to work on the archiving of materials that were going to be integrated into it, I wondered what else there could be in addition to the enormous amount of contents already acquired. I willingly accepted, however, because the subject interested me. The struggles of women in the 1970s had involved many of my dear friends and acquaintances of that time and, as a result, they led me to discover various, and often surprising, aspects of female thought and practice that I was pleased to rediscover and delve into. Yet from my very first hours of work on the Integration, my surprise was great: before my eyes there opened up an unexpected universe, a very rich deposit of human relationships and political practices, and a heritage that perfectly completed the documentation already present in the Dalla Costa Archive. From the paper documents -- because I was dealing with paper and not the evanescent files of the Internet age -- there emerged, page after page, from sheets of all sizes, white, lined or squared, hand-written or typed, the spontaneous and rebellious will, the irrepressible desire of women to change their condition. Like grass after the rain, awareness grew, the need to say and do, alone or together in groups, collectives, committees that were born, they spread out and set off towards the goal of the new and the more just. The movement of Wages for Housework was irresistible. It united Italians, Germans, French, Swiss, English, Americans and Canadians in a single language. Even Black women were part of it, although they were in a special position to safeguard their autonomy. It was the women of the most important Western countries who got organized, discussed and decided to fight, to clamor for money and health, more adequate health services, more services for their children, more care for the elderly. It was a network that wrapped around the world, made up of documents and especially *letters* that were sent daily to inform, update and clarify. It is precisely these *letters* that are the most precious part of this Integration, because it allows us to get to know the militants, not only their political commitment and their constant search for more advanced theoretical output, but also their experiences. Among the many aspects of the everyday life of these women, what amazed me most was their widespread lack of economic means, which was however, matched by a will of steel, an extreme certainty of the validity of their claims and of the righteousness of the mission that they had given themselves. They were strong and it is evident that they knew this from the tones with which they managed relationships, not only with males but also

with so-called authorities, politicians, academics, clergymen, doctors, intellectuals, publishers or newspaper editors. Evidently, they knew they had the recognition of female public opinion on their side. That was their power and they managed it without awe.

This work went on for ten years and was marked by many victories, first among them the legalization of abortion, and then many others against the ideological waste of fascism, against rape and male violence, against the rules imposed by capitalist command. Women struggle to get money, dignity and security, more efficient healthcare and better public services, and often win their battles. Such wins will be an important legacy for generations to follow. These victories are the result of a history of struggling people. Today, you can read about and study this history in its most articulate and hidden folds thanks to this precious Integration of the Dalla Costa Archive of which I have had the privilege of cutting the keys and delivering them to everyone -- above all to women researchers and scholars -- who wants to unlock unprecedented doors into this extraordinary human, political, social, artistic event.

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Translation by Rafaella Capanna

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