

No nos representan: El manifiesto de los indignados en 25 propuestas

AUTHOR: Pilar Velasco

READER: Thomas Bunstead

This is an unofficial but very interesting 'Manifiesto' written on behalf of the 15-M movement in Spain. **PILAR VELASCO** is a young journalist at Cadena Ser (a national radio station in Spain) who was present at Madrid's Plaza del Sol throughout the time it was being used as a space public protest/ debate, the heart not only of the outcry against the political and economic system in Spain but originator of the Occupy movements that followed in places like New York and London. The book does two things: vividly captures the spirit and enthusiasm of the movement's early days with a sort of timeline from May 15th 2011 onwards, and sets out the demands that have been discussed, voted on in these modern 'agoras' and are now being used as sticks with which to beat politicians. The book's interest to a UK readership would be undeniable, not only for people who want to learn more concretely about this global grassroots movement's demands, but also for those with an interest in what is different about Spain's system and the local factors that provoked and continue to provoke such indignation there.

NO NOS REPRESENTAN is introduced by a short piece by Aida Sánchez, the Speaker of Democracia Real Ya, one of the movement's central players. This lends authority to the piece; well-informed and -situated as Velasco clearly is, given that the 15-M/ indignados movement is explicitly anti-hierarchical, and without leaders as such, some will inevitably question her credentials. She then goes on to set out what happened to begin with in Madrid, which is interesting to see written down in the printed page because it has already begun to take on a mythic air after so much talk and online discussion: a few days before the first round of (regional) elections in Spain there was a march, and the end of which a few tens (estimates vary) of protestors decided to camp out in Madrid's Puerta del Sol. When the police came down and forcibly removed them, the events were captured and uploaded to the internet. Throughout the following day, there were heated discussions, particularly online, of the police's actions, and in the evening thousands arrived in the Puerta del Sol and decided to stay. What follows in the book is an anatomy of the anti-establishment demands that would go on to be discussed in the following months as Madrid's iconic tourist spot became a political encampment.

The original protests grew out of the perception that, though the Eurozone crisis was gathering pace, it would be business as usual come election time; no-one was seen to be addressing Spain's fundamental political and economic problems: 'Corruption, the tyranny of the markets, a lack of internal democracy, the growth of inequalities, the working class taking the main hit in terms of the cuts, severance pay.' (p.23) These might seem like generalized left wing complaints, but the last -- 'severance pay' -- refers to something specific to Spain which goes some way to explaining the outrage there: a politician, once elected, even if he or she then is never re-elected, then has a salary for life. When unemployment in the under-25's was (and remains) at around the 50% mark, it isn't difficult to see people's logic in calling for a redistribution of wealth.

The rest of the book consists of the proposals. In a nice touch, each of the sections is headed up with a slogan from a post-it note on a wall at Sol, or pieces of graffiti, or placards, full of gallows humour and hope: "I've lost my rights, has anyone seen them?"; "The ignorance of the citizen is the tyrant's victory"; "Shut for revolution. Excuse the inconvenience"; "Rebel without a house". It is also interspersed with a large number of Twitter hashtags, when they were thought up and how used as part of the discussion. Both these things lends an air of immediacy to the book, and would be important in an English translation. Given that they are often contractions, plays on words and, in the case of the slogans in particular, highly localised in terms of their association and humour, this would pose a challenge to potential translators. I wouldn't think an insuperable one, though.

The proposals include: Calls for electoral reform, for a separation of politics from the justice system, for changes to mortgage laws (in Spain there is no mechanism to declare bankruptcy, leading to a situation in which your house can be repossessed by the bank with whom you have other loan arrangements but your debt will not be written off; you will be homeless and you will still have to pay the bank back), for local and more representative democracy (of the kind the indignados claim to be enacting anyway), for more efficient use of the internet as a way of involving the electorate (ditto), and against the threat of taxpayers having to bail out the Euro in the way banks were in the US and England, against the privatization of public services, against GM foods... etcetera. This bustling, angry book is also full of 'ilusión' (or hope). As shown by publishers' willingness to bring out books about Occupy Wall Street, St. Paul's, as well as 'analyses' of the Arab Spring, the publishing climate could not be more favourable. It will be

of huge interest to non-Spanish readers for both giving a glimpse of what went on in the streets of Spanish cities, but also, crucially, for specifying, for setting down in coherent language, the panoply of demands that make up the indignados' call for change.

Source URL: <http://www.s352986993.web-inicial.es/node/9272>