SELECTED WRITINGS

OF ALEXANDRA KOLLONTAI

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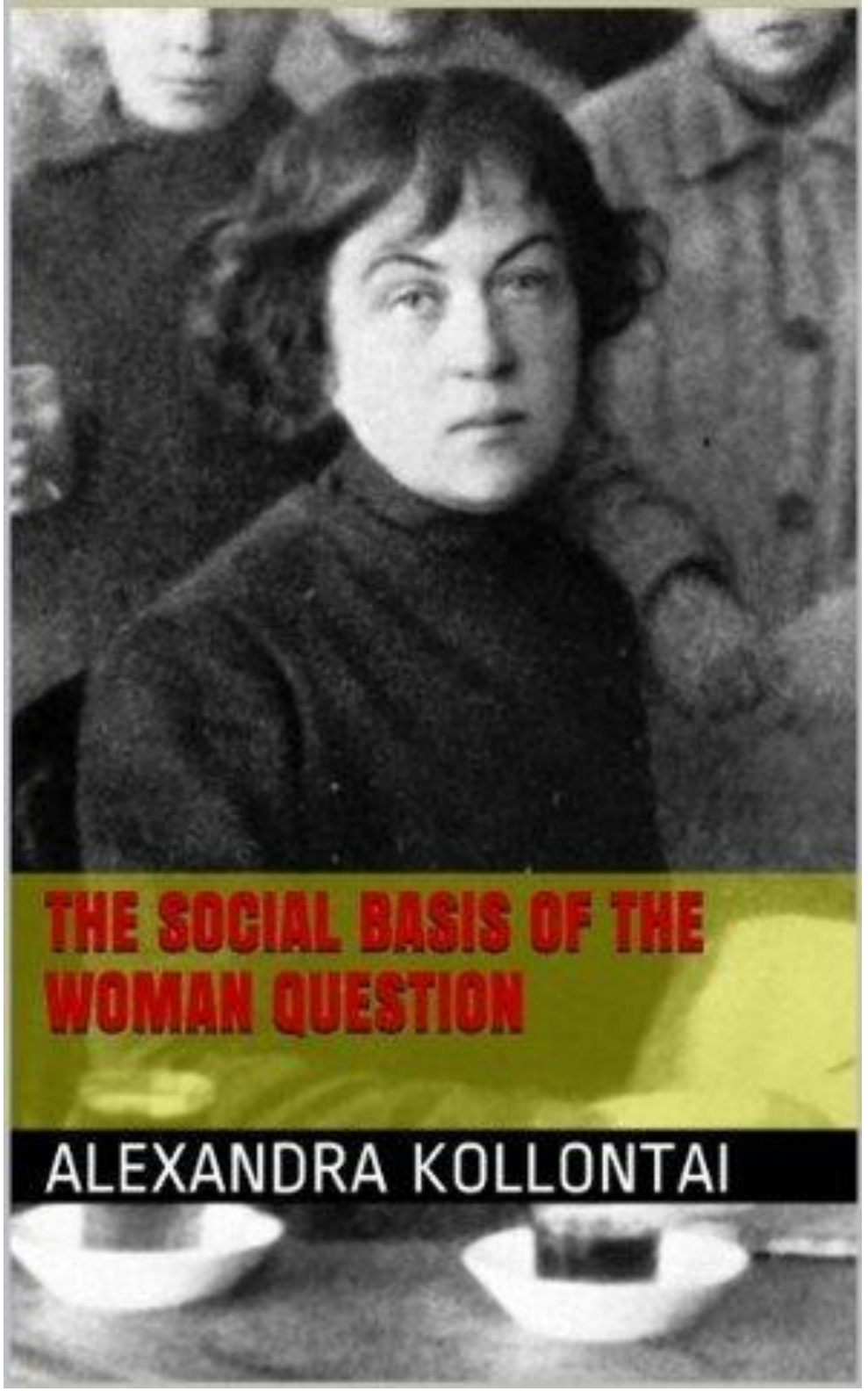
Includes:

- The Social Basis of the Woman Question (1909)
- Women Workers Struggle For Their Rights (1919)
- The Autobiography of a Sexually Emancipated Communist Woman (1926)


THE SOCIAL BASIS OF THE WOMAN QUESTION
ALEXANDRA KOLLONTAI

Alexandra Kollontai
The Social Basis of the Woman Question
1909

The book The Social Basis of the Women's Question was written shortly before the First All-Russia Women's Congress, and published in St Petersburg in 1909. In it, Alexandra Kollontai provides a detailed analysis of this issue from a Marxist point of view. After a general survey of the question in the introduction, the author, basing herself on considerable factual material, examines and proffers a solution to such problems as the struggle for women's economic independence, marriage and the family, protection for expectant and nursing mothers, etc. The author devotes a large part of her book to the issue of the women's struggle for political rights.

Introduction to the Book:
The Social Basis of the Women's Question.

The women's movement in Russia is passing through a decisive moment in its history: in December 1908 it will be reviewing the creative activity carried out by women's organisations over the last few years, and at the All-Russia Women's Congress it must decide upon the 'course of action' to be followed by feminists [2] in the coming years of struggle for women's emancipation. Complex socio-political problems, which until recently still belonged to the realm of abstract 'thorny' issues, are now, as a result of the events that have taken place in Russia, becoming urgent issues demanding energetic practical involvement and solution. These problems include the so-called women's question. With each passing day a growing number of women are drawn into the search for an answer to three disturbing questions: Which way shall we go? What should we do? How can we make sure that the female section of the population of Russia also receives the fruit of the long, stubborn and agonisingly difficult struggle for a new political structure in our homeland?

The Alliance for Equality, together with the section on women's voting rights of the Russian Women's Mutual Aid Society, [3] have decided to convene the First All-Russia Women's Congress [4] in order to give a comprehensive answer to these three questions.

The programme of the forthcoming women's congress is extremely broad: in the first section it is proposed to undertake an evaluation of women's activity in various professions in Russia; in the second section it is proposed to examine the economic position of women and investigate the conditions of work in trade and industry and in the domestic services, and also to look at the question of the protection of female labour, etc.; a special subsection will be set up to

discuss questions relating to the family, marriage and prostitution; the work of the third section will include the present civil and political position of women and measures to be taken in the struggle for women's equality in these areas; finally, section four will study questions related to women's education.

One cannot but welcome this broadened programme of the All-Russia Women's Congress, particularly when one compares it with the draft programme published in the magazine *Soyuz zhenshchin* (The Women's Alliance) No. 3, 1907. This draft programme totally omitted such an important question as the economic position of women in connection with the legal protection of female labour. Was this merely an oversight, an accident? If it was indeed simply an oversight, then it was a characteristic oversight, to forget about the economic aspect of the women's question, about the situation of working women and the protection of female labour, is the kind of 'accident' that would immediately determine the nature of the forthcoming congress and would make the participation of those sections of the female population for whom the women's question is intimately and inextricably bound up with the overall labour issues of our day both impossible and futile. Now this oversight has been corrected; the second section will be given over entirely to the question of female labour and the economic position of women. Therefore it would not have been worthwhile pausing to comment on such a minor incident had it not been typical of our bourgeois 'suffragettes'.

With the caution typical of bourgeois feminists, the organisers of the congress hesitated for a long time: what should the nature of the congress be? The omission from the draft programme of the point dealing with the economic position of women is, in our opinion, closely connected with these hesitations. At one of the meetings on the forthcoming congress, individuals with considerable influence in the

feminist world insisted that the congress should not become involved in 'propaganda work' but should concentrate on concrete issues such as the fight against alcoholism. Thus until quite recently the organisers of the congress still did not know whether it ought to assume the nature of a benevolent 'ladies' conference concerned with moral and charitable activities, or whether an attempt should be made to break through women's indifference to their own fate and draw them into the ranks of those fighting for women's emancipation. However, under the influence of the more clear-thinking supporters of equal rights, the second tendency gradually won the upper hand. The slogan chosen for the forthcoming congress is the traditional feminist rallying cry: the union of all women in the struggle for purely female rights and interests.

The congress has served as a spur to feminist organisations. The female ant-hill has stirred. One after the other such feminists as Pokrovskaya, Kalmanovich, Shchepkina, Vakhtina and others delivered speeches and lectures whose content could be summed up in the same women's rallying call: 'Women from all classes of the population, unite!'

However tempting this 'peaceful' slogan may sound, however much it may appear to promise to the poor younger sister of the bourgeois woman - the working woman - it is precisely this slogan so beloved of the feminists that compels us to pause and examine in greater detail the forthcoming women's congress, and to subject its objectives and fundamental aspirations to a careful appraisal from the point of view of the interests of working-class women.

In concrete terms, the question is whether working-class women should respond to the call of the feminists and participate actively and directly in the struggle for women's equality, or whether, faithful to the traditions of their class, they should go their own way and fight using other means in

order to free not only women but all mankind from the oppression and enslavement of contemporary capitalist forms of social life.

Before going on to answer this question, however, I believe it necessary to state the basic propositions that serve as the starting point for the arguments I am about to present.

Leaving our right honourable friends, the bourgeois scholars, to examine more closely the question of the superiority of one sex over the other, or to weigh the brain and calculate the intellectual make-up of men and women, the supporters of historical materialism fully recognise the naturally existing differences between the sexes and demand only one thing, namely that each individual, man or woman, be given the real possibility of achieving the freest and fullest self-determination, that the widest possible opportunities be provided for the development and application of all natural talents. At the same time, the supporters of historical materialism deny the existence of specifically female issues apart from the overall social issue of our day. Certain economic factors once led to the subordinate position of women, with her natural characteristics playing a purely *secondary* role. Only the total disappearance of those (economic) factors, only the evolution of those economic forms that once caused the enslavement of women, can effect a radical change in their social position. In other words, women can only become truly free and equal in a world that has been transformed and based on new social and economic principles.

This assertion, however, does not rule out the possibility of a partial improvement in the life of women within the framework of the existing system, although a truly radical solution of the labour problem is possible only with the complete restructuring of existing production relations. Nonetheless, such a view of the situation should not act as a brake upon reform work aimed at satisfying the immediate

interests of the proletariat. On the contrary, each new gain by the working class is a rung in the ladder leading mankind to the kingdom of freedom and social equality; each new right won by women brings them closer to their goal - total emancipation.

One further comment: in discussing the question of women's emancipation, one must, as with any other socio-political question, base oneself firmly upon the actually existing relationships. Everything that pertains to the realm of 'moral aspirations' or other ideological structures we willingly leave at the disposal of bourgeois liberalism. For us, the emancipation of women is not a dream, nor even a principle, but a concrete reality, a fact coming into being with every day that passes. Step by step, modern economic relations and the entire future course of development of the productive forces are assisting and will continue to assist the liberation of women from centuries of oppression and enslavement. One need only look around to see that this is so. Everywhere, in almost every sphere of production, women are now working alongside men. In England, France, Germany, Italy and Austria, of the 81 million individuals employed in manufacture, 27 million are women. [5] The number of women leading an independent existence and their proportional relationship to the total female population in civilised countries is shown in the following table; according to the most recent national censuses, the percentage of the male and female population living on its own earnings was as follows: [6]

Country	*Women*	*Men*
Austria	47%	63%
Italy	40%	66%
Switzerland	29%	61%
France	27%	58%

Great Britain and Ireland	27%	58%
Belgium	26%	60%
Germany	25%	61%
United States	13%	59%
Russia	10%	43%

On turning from proportional evaluation to absolute figures we discover that, although the number of women in Russia who live on their own earnings is lower than in other countries, that number is nonetheless fairly large. According to the last census, of the 63 million female population in Russia, more than six million live on their own earnings; in the cities two out of eight million (i.e. 25 per cent) earn their own living; in rural areas four million of the total 55 million female population are independent. If one considers the total gainfully employed population in Russia (i.e. the population living on its own earnings) then of the 33 million gainfully employed individuals, 27 million are men and six million women...

In Russia, female labour is particularly widespread in the textile industry, in every branch of which female labour predominates over male... [7] In addition to the textile industry, female industrial labour in Russia is also widely used in such branches of industry as food processing, and in particular bakeries – 4,391 women and 8,868 men; in the chemical industry, in particular cosmetics – 4,074 women and 4,508 men; in the glass industry - about 5 thousand women; in the china industry - about 4 thousand, in the tile and brick industry about 6 thousand. Only in the metal-processing industry is the number of women small.

The figures quoted above are, in our opinion, sufficient to show that female labour is widely used in

Russian industry. Moreover, it must be remembered that Russia moved to large-scale capitalist production comparatively recently, and that, as the sphere of capitalist economics expands, its industry will draw in an ever greater number of women workers.

Even now, in the bigger towns and cities of Russia that have large-scale capitalist enterprises, female labour, and in particular female proletarian labour, constitutes, taking account of female labour reserves, a fairly considerable proportion of the total work force. In St Petersburg, for example, according to the 1900 census, for every 100 men living by their own labour, there were 40 women...[8]

Women are most numerous among those who earn their living by proletarian labour: for every 269 thousand working men there are 74 thousand working women, and for every 40 thousand 'single' men, there are 30 thousand 'single' women. Who are these 'single' women? Naturally they constitute the most exploited section of the petty handicraft workers: seamstresses, knitters, flowergirls, etc., who work at home as supposedly independent workers for capitalist middlemen and are subjected, as a result of their isolation from each other, to the harshest enslavement by capital. There are considerably fewer women employed in the professions – 13 thousand for every 74 thousand men – while only 13 thousand women for every 31 thousand men come under the heading 'proprietor'.

The proportions within female labour of the various social groups in other countries, and the position of male and female industrial workers among those who earn their living independently, is shown in the following table.

As can be seen from this table, in Austria the number of women workers exceeds the number of men: for 4.4 million men there are more than 5 million women. In Germany, the number of women workers amounts to over half the number of men. The same is true for France and

England. Only in America is this correlation somewhat less favourable to women.

Country	Year of Census	Total Population		Industrial Population		Including Industrial Workers	
		Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Austria	1890	11.7	12.2	7.8	6.2	4.4	5.3
Germany	1895	25.4	26.4	15.5	6.6	9.3	5.3
France	1891	18.9	19.2	11.1	5.2	5.0	3.6
England & Wales	1891	14.1	14.9	8.9	4.0	5.4	3.1
USA	1890	32.1	30.6	18.8	3.9	8.7	2.9
Total	–	102.2	103.3	62.1	25.9	32.8	20.2

...The growth in female labour naturally means a continuing growth in the role of women in national production. Already women produce about 1/3 of the total world production of goods for the world market. This constant growth of female labour arouses fear in many bourgeois economists, forcing them to see in the woman a dangerous rival to the man in the sphere of labour and to react with hostility to the expansion of female labour. Is such an attitude justified, and is the woman always merely a 'threatening' rival to the man?

The number of working women is constantly increasing, but the continuous development of the productive forces also demands a larger and larger work force. Only at certain moments of technological revolution is there either a reduction in the demand for new workers, or a replacement of one category of workers by another: women replace men only to be replaced in their turn by children and juveniles. However, each step forward in technological progress eventually causes the rate of production to intensify, and this new surge in production inevitably brings with it a new demand for workers of every category. Thus, despite

temporary lulls and, at times, sharp fluctuations, the number of workers drawn into industry ultimately grows with the growth of world productive forces. The growth in the number of both categories of workers-men and women – is *absolute,* whereas the more intensive growth of female labour in comparison to male labour is only *relative*...

Viewed overall, what is happening on the labour market is not the replacement of male labour by female labour, but rather the grouping of the labour forces of both these categories according to profession: some professions and branches of industry are employing more and more women (domestic service, the textile industry, the clothing industry), while others rely mainly on male labour (mining, the iron and steel industry, the machine industry, etc.). Moreover, there can be no doubt that the quantitative growth of female labour is also taking place thanks to a drop in child labour, and this is something that one can only welcome. With the promulgation of new laws to protect young children and raise the age at which children may be employed in industrial labour, the regrouping of the labour forces undoubtedly involves an increase in the number of women workers.

Thus the assertion that women are men's most dangerous labour rival can only be accepted with a number of reservations. Leaving aside the question of the competition existing in the professions, we will note only that in the proletarian milieu, the woman worker only constitutes a rival to the man when she is isolated, not involved in the joint proletarian struggle. The woman worker is a rival to the male, a 'threatening' rival who lowers his wages and mercilessly destroys the fruit of his successes in his organised struggle against capital, only when she is not drawn into the general class and professional movement. However, is not every *unorganised*proletarian just such a rival, whether he be a hungry village 'yokel', a 'has-been' pushed out of his

profession, or simply a worker deprived of a permanent job? The woman worker has a detrimental effect upon the conditions of work insofar as she is, as yet, the less organised section of the working class. Capital readily makes use of her to counter the more conscious and united section of the working class. However, the moment she enters the ranks of the organised fighters for working-class liberation, the assertion that she - the woman worker - is the worst rival of the working man - ceases to be categorical. The organised proletariat of whichever sex loses his or her capacity for harming class comrades.

Having made these preliminary reservations and looked very briefly at some statistical examples, we will now seek the answer to the questions posed earlier. We refer those who wish to acquaint themselves more fully with the conditions of female labour, the growth of the female work force and its significance in the economic life of the nations to special works written on this subject. Here we wish merely to stress once again the close link which undoubtedly exists between the desire for emancipation on the part of women and the trends that can be observed in the economic development of society. Keeping these trends constantly in mind will enable us to discover more easily the path that should be followed by the woman who has a broad understanding of what must be done to achieve the full and comprehensive emancipation of women.

In answer to the question, what must be done by women who wish to defend their violated rights and interests, the bourgeois ideologist hastens to reply: 'Unite with another socially weak element, organise and join together in the struggle against the male oppressors'...

Such advice has not fallen on stony ground. Over recent years we have seen feminist organisations spring up one after the other. Feminism in Russia, including feminism as we traditionally understand it, is indisputably a new

phenomenon. The first feminist publication *Zhenskoye dyelo* (The Women's Cause) appeared in 1899. [9] For many years the desire for emancipation on the part of Russian women was limited to calls for equal educational opportunities. From the 1860s, when the women's question was first raised in Russia, up to the present, the women's movement has been nothing other than the history of the struggle to improve and expand the level of female education, and primarily higher education. In the successes obtained in this sphere the women of the bourgeois classes saw, and not without reason, one of the principal methods of extending the sphere of female professional labour, the basis of their economic independence.

With the abolition of serfdom, which radically altered both economic and social relations in Russia [10] and compelled a large section of the population to seek the means of existence, the women's question also arose in Russia. The post-reform system began to toss onto the labour market not only the professional male worker, but also a hitherto unknown type of woman who, like her male colleague, was also seeking work in order to earn her daily bread. The traditional women's slogan 'freedom to work' became, when adopted by Russian women, a demand for the freedom to receive education, without which all the doors of professional employment remained closed. Naturally, having completed their higher education, women then demanded free access to state and private employment, and this demand was satisfied on the basis of purely economic considerations as private enterprise and state institutions began to realise the advantages of employing the cheaper and more amenable female work force.

The sphere of female professional labour gradually expanded, but women still continued to call for 'the freedom of education and choice of profession'. There could be no question of demanding political equality, for at that time even

the men lacked political rights. As regards women's civil rights, the position of Russian women in this regard was fairly tolerable as compared with that of their Western European colleagues, [11] and thus there was little obvious ground here for feminist agitation.

It goes without saying that the women's movement here under discussion was distinctly bourgeois in nature: it involved only a fairly narrow circle of women, mainly from the nobility, with a few representatives of the *raznochintsy,* (the new 'middle classes'). [12] No socialist ideals found expression in the demands put forward by the leading champions of female equality in Russia. It was indeed true that every year Russian industry was employing thousands more proletarian women, but it seemed that an unbridgeable gulf separated the emancipated, educated woman and the woman worker with calloused hands, and that no contact whatsoever was possible between them.

The women from these two opposing social camps were brought into contact only through philanthropic activity. From the very beginning of the women's movement in Russia – as, indeed, everywhere where women's organisations had still not arrived at self-determination – philanthropy was in the forefront. [13] Almost all the women's organisations in Russia over recent years have been essentially philanthropic. Women organised themselves and set up women's societies not in order to win reforms in the sphere of women's rights but in order to carry out individual acts of charity. From the Society to Supply Material Support for Women's Higher Educational Courses - the largest in terms of the scope of its activity to the first women's club founded by the Women's Mutual Aid Society, all such societies, as their names indicate, pursued philanthropic aims.

The above is not meant to accuse Russian women of indifference towards social and political issues. Can any other country boast of such a host of truly noble and charming

nameless heroines' who gave their strength, their youth. their very life to the struggle for the ideals of social justice and the political liberation of their country? What has history to offer that can rival the inner beauty of the 'repentant gentlewoman' of the 1870s who put aside not only her finery but also all the privileges of her 'noble birth' in order to merge with the people and repay at least part of the debt owed them by her class... And later, when, as a result of repression, any protest inevitably turned into a bitter struggle against the old order, there emerged from among the women of Russia innumerable heroines who amazed the world with their selflessness, their inner strength and their limitless dedication to the people... Following upon the 'repentant gentlewoman', with her gentleness and inner beauty, came the fearless *raznochinka,* and thereafter an endless stream of martyr women workers who fought for the emancipation of their class... The list of women martyrs fighting for the ideals of social justice is constantly being replenished by the names of new victims and the future historian writing about our age will only be able to bow his head in respect before these noble examples of women-fighters and women-martyrs...

However, this is not the central issue here. Here we are speaking of those women who are struggling for what is called 'female emancipation'. In this particular area, the objectives and aspirations of our first feminists were extremely narrow and limited. Philanthropy and education constituted, until recently, the sum total of the activity undertaken by women's organisations. Even the first women's congress planned for 1905 was to limit its objectives to these two areas. [14]

The picture changes sharply following the memorable events of January. [15] The revolutionary upsurge which swept through all sections of the population also affected the feminists, hitherto modest in their claims. Women's circles became more active, stirred into life. Bold

speeches and radical demands could be heard. Declarations, resolutions and petitions were dispatched to rural and urban councils and to radical organisations, and this was followed by a series of conferences and meetings which adopted decisive political resolutions. In 1905, it seemed that there was not a corner of Russia where women were not, in one way or another, making themselves heard, reminding society of their existence and demanding that they too be granted new civil rights. The feminists, until recently so modest in their demands, became aware of the fact that the regeneration of Russia and the establishment of a new state system were the essential prerequisites of female emancipation...

The women's movement is abandoning its former, modest course and adopting a new path of social action. This, of course, did not happen without friction. Among the new members who had poured into the women's organisations two tendencies were becoming clearly distinguishable: some, more to the left, insisted upon the need to clearly define the political credo of the women's movement and gave priority to the struggle for *political* equality for women, those to the right, on the other hand, remained faithful to the old traditions, not wishing to bring 'politics' into their narrowly feminist aspirations. In April, 1905, the more left-wing elements formed the Alliance for the Equality of Women – the first women's organisation in Russia to adopt a clear political platform. Meanwhile the right-wingers continued to group themselves around the Women's Mutual Aid Society and the *Zhensky vestnik* (Women's Herald), pursuing the idea of politically neutral feminism. The Alliance for Equality set up a broad network of branches across Russia, and as little as one year later, in May, 1906, its bureau estimated its membership at around 8,000. [16] The Alliance hoped to rally together women from all social classes on the basis of its vague slogans, and just as the Cadets had, in their early days, spoken in the name of the whole people, so the Alliance for

Equality declared that it was voicing the needs of all Russian women.

However, the continuous growth of class self-consciousness and the inevitable differentiation among the various social strata of the population led to a further regrouping within women's social organisations also. The political bloc that fulfilled specific purposes in the heyday of the Union of Unions [17] was becoming increasingly unsatisfactory, particularly as many of the suffragettes had, as a result of their convictions, aligned themselves with certain political parties. Thus, as early as the spring of 1906 the St Petersburg branch of the Alliance split into two parts: the 'left-wing' feminists who aligned themselves, as a result of their political convictions, with the revolutionary parties, and the 'right-wing', who founded the Women's Progressive Party [18] similar in spirit to the Party of Peaceful Renovation, [19] almost as small in number and just as ineffectual. Both of these women's organisations marked the beginning of their activity by establishing political clubs – the first of a more or less democratic nature, [20] the second still preserving its bourgeois nature, with high membership fees, etc.

The process by which women of various social strata gathered around politically and socially diverse banners took place spontaneously, regardless of the will or desires of those who struggled passionately to unite women in one, universal women's organisation. The Women's Progressive Party in fact expressed the demands and requirements of the big bourgeoisie and, while continuing to argue the need to unite all women without any distinction of class and political conviction, elaborated its own political programme corresponding to the desires of that social stratum of which it was, in fact, the mouthpiece. The Alliance for Equality united women representatives of the liberal, 'Cadet-type' opposition; around it there gathered, and continue to gather,

women from the middle bourgeoisie, mainly members of the intelligentsia. The Women's Political Club in St Petersburg won the approval of the more radical elements, but here also the possibility of forming a political bloc led to vagueness in its objectives and, indeed, in the very nature of the organisation. [21] Although they had dissociated themselves from all the more moderate women's organisations, the members of the Women's Political Club were, however, unable to define for themselves or for others whose class interests they expressed or what were their immediate objectives. Should they defend the interests of the proletarian women, of peasant women, or simply of all 'working women'? Should they pursue specific feminist goals, or operate on a general political basis? Hesitation between these basic objectives marked the whole of the short-lived activity of the Women's Political Club. When the club discussed the question of handing in to the first State Duma a petition demanding that voting rights be extended to women – a petition that had been signed mainly by women workers from the city – the members found themselves seriously embarrassed: the club was unable to make up its mind which political party was closest to it in spirit and finally decided to send the petition to the Trudoviks. [22]

As women continued to argue the need for a women's bloc, the actual facts of life were clearly and irrefutably revealing the illusory nature of such a plan. Women's organisations, as men's organisations, underwent a rapid and irresistible process of differentiation. The champions of women's unity could do nothing to prevent the grouping of women into various feminist organisations distinguished by varying degrees of political radicalism as a result of the inevitable growth of class consciousness in the whole of Russian society. The age of the women's political bloc came to an end shortly after the demise of the men's liberal bloc. Yet feminists and suffragettes of every hue

continue to shout about the need for women's unity, the possibility of a broad-based women's party pursuing its own specific goals...

Such a proposition would, however, only have any meaning if *not one* of the existing political parties had contained in its programme the demand for total female emancipation.

When arming themselves against the indifference, or even hostility of men towards the question of female equality, feminists turn their attention only to the representatives of every shade of bourgeois liberalism, ignoring the existence of a large political party which, on the issue of women's equality, goes further than even the most fervent suffragettes. Since the appearance of the *Communist Manifesto* in 1848, Social-Democracy has always defended the interests of women. The *Communist Manifesto* was the first to point to the close link between the overall proletarian problem existing today and the women's question. It traced the process whereby capitalism gradually draws woman into production and makes her a co-participant in the great struggle waged by the proletariat against oppression and exploitation. Social-Democracy was the first to include in its programme the demand for equal rights for women; always and everywhere, by the spoken and written word, it demands the abolition of all limitations restricting women. It is only as a result of this pressure that other parties and governments have been compelled to introduce reforms to the benefit of the female population... In Russia also this party is not merely a theoretical defender of women's interests, but always and everywhere pursues in practice the principle of women's equality.

What, then, is preventing our suffragettes from standing beneath the protective shield of this experienced and powerful party? While the right-wing feminists are frightened by the 'extremism' of Social-Democracy, the

Alliance, which went so far as to speak of Constituent Assembly, should find the political position of the Social-Democrats perfectly to their taste. However here lies the catch! Despite all their political radicalism, our suffragettes continue to base themselves on the aspirations of their own bourgeois class. Political liberty is now an essential prerequisite of the growth and power of the Russian bourgeoisie; without this political liberty, its economic prosperity will prove to be built on sand. Capital requires certain norms and guarantees if it is to grow and flourish; these norms can be ensured only with the participation of bourgeois representatives in the government of the country. Next comes the attainment of political rights equally important for both men and women. The demand for political equality is, for women, a necessity dictated by life itself.

The slogan 'freedom of profession' has ceased to appear all-embracing in the eyes of women; only the direct participation of women in the running of the state promises to help ensure a rise in their economic well-being. Hence the passionate desire of women from the middle bourgeoisie to finally attain access to the ballot box, hence their hostility to the present bureaucratic system...

However, our feminists, as their sisters abroad, go no further than demands for political equality. The broad horizons opened up by the doctrines of Social-Democracy are, for them, alien and incomprehensible. The feminists are striving for equality within the framework of the existing class-based society and without in any way encroaching upon its foundations; they are fighting for their female prerogatives without striving to achieve the abolition of all existing prerogatives and privileges...

We are not blaming the representatives of the bourgeois women's movement for these 'unwitting sins'; they are the inevitable consequence of their class position. Nor do

we wish to minimise the importance of feminist organisations for the success of the purely bourgeois women's movement. However, we would like to caution the female proletariat against enthusiasms for narrowly feminist aims. Insofar as bourgeois women limit their activity to arousing the self-awareness of their own sisters, we can only applaud them. However, as soon as they begin to call into their ranks women workers, Social-Democrats should not, dare not, remain silent. One cannot stand by and watch this futile dissipation of the forces of the proletariat. One must then put the question directly: what benefit could an alliance with their bourgeois 'sisters' bring the women workers, and what, on the other hand, could women workers achieve through their own class organisation?

Is a *united* women's movement possible, and in particular in a society based on class antagonisms?...

The world of women, as the world of men, has divided into two camps: one, in its aims, aspirations and interests, sides with the bourgeois classes, while the other is closely linked to the proletariat, whose aspiration to freedom also involves the solution of the women's question in all its aspects. These two groups of fighting women differ in their aims, interests and methods of struggle, even though they are both acting on the basis of the common slogan 'the emancipation of women'. Each of these militant groups unconsciously proceeds on the basis of the interests of its own class, which gives a specific class colouring to its aspirations and objectives. One individual woman may be capable of standing above the interests of her own class and of disregarding them in the name of the triumph of the aims of another class, but this is impossible for a united women's organisation reflecting all the real needs and interests of the social group that had founded it. However radical the demands of the feminists may appear, it must not be forgotten that, by virtue of their class position, the feminists

cannot struggle to achieve a fundamental restructuring of the present economic-social structure of society, and that without this the emancipation of women cannot be complete.

Whereas in individual instances the immediate objectives of women of all classes coincide, the ultimate objectives determining the direction of the movement and the very tactic to be used differ sharply. For the feminists, the achievement of equal rights with men within the framework of the contemporary capitalist world is a concrete 'end in itself' [23] ; for proletarian women equal rights is merely a means to be used in the continuing struggle against the economic enslavement of the working class. For the feminists, the immediate enemy are men as such, who have arrogated to themselves all rights and privileges and left women only bondage and obligation. Each victory of the feminists means that men must concede their exclusive prerogatives in favour of the 'fair sex'. The proletarian woman, however, has a completely different attitude to her position: in her eyes men are not her enemy and oppressor but, on the contrary, first and foremost a comrade in sharing a common, joyless lot, and a loyal comrade-in-arms in the struggle for a brighter future. The same social relations enslave both the woman and her comrade; one and the same hateful bonds of capitalism oppress their will and deprive them of the happiness and pleasures of life. It is indeed true that certain specific characteristics of the present system weigh doubly upon the woman; it is also true that the conditions of hired labour sometimes transform the woman friend and worker into a menacing rival of the man. However, the working class knows who is to blame for these unfortunate conditions.

The woman worker, no less than her brother in suffering, loathes that insatiable monster with the gilded maw which falls upon man, woman and child with equal voracity in order to suck them dry and grow fat at the cost of millions

of human lives... The woman worker is bound to her male comrade worker by a thousand invisible threads, whereas the aims of the bourgeois woman appear to her to be alien and incomprehensible, can bring no comfort to her suffering proletarian soul and do not offer women that bright future on which the whole of exploited humanity has fixed its hopes and aspirations... While the feminists, arguing the need for women's unity, stretch out their hands to their younger working-class sisters, these 'ungrateful creatures' glance mistrustfully at their distant and alien female comrades and gather more closely around the purely proletarian organisations that are more comprehensible to them, and nearer and dearer to their hearts.

Political rights, access to the election booth and a seat in parliament – this is the real aim of the bourgeois women's movement. But can political equality in the context of the retention of the entire capitalist-exploiter system free the working woman from that abyss of evil and suffering which pursues and oppresses her both as a woman and as a human being?

The more aware among proletarian women realise that neither political nor juridical equality can solve the women's question in all its aspects. While women are compelled to sell their labour force and bear the yoke of capitalism, while the present exploitative system of producing new values continues to exist, they cannot become free and independent persons, wives who choose their husbands exclusively on the dictates of the heart, and mothers who can look without fear to the future of their children... The ultimate objective of the proletarian woman is the destruction of the old antagonistic class-based world and the construction of a new and better world in which the exploitation of man by man will have become impossible.

Naturally, this ultimate objective does not exclude attempts on the part of proletarian women to achieve

emancipation even within the framework of the existing bourgeois order, but the realisation of such demands is constantly blocked by obstacles erected by the capitalist system itself. Women can only be truly free and equal in a world of socialised labour, harmony and justice.

The above is something the feminists cannot and do not wish to understand. It seems to them that if they can attain formal equality as recognised by the letter of the law, they will be perfectly able to make their way, even in the 'old world of oppression and enslavement, groans and tears'. And this is true, to a degree. Whereas for the majority of women workers equality of rights with men would simply mean equality in 'lack of rights', for bourgeois women it would indeed open the doors to new and hitherto unprecedented rights and privileges that until now have been available only to the male members of the bourgeoisie. However, each such success, each new prerogative attained by the bourgeois woman, only puts into her hands yet another instrument with which to oppress her younger sister, and would merely deepen the gulf dividing the women from these two opposing social camps. Their interests would clash more sharply, their aspirations become mutually exclusive.

Where, then, is this universal 'women's question'? Where is that unity of objectives and aspirations of which the feminists talk so much? A sober examination of reality reveals that this unity does not and cannot exist. In vain the feminists seek to convince themselves that 'the women's question is in no way a question of political party' and that 'it can be solved only with the participation of all parties and all women', the argument advanced by the radical German feminist Minna Cauer. The logic of the facts refutes this feminist reassuring self-delusion.

It would be pointless to try to convince all bourgeois women of the fact that the victory of the women's cause depends on the victory of the common proletarian cause.

However, appealing to those among them who are capable of abandoning the narrow objectives of 'short-term politics', who are able to take a broader view of the destiny of all women, we insistently urge you not to summon into your ranks your proletarian sisters alien to you in spirit! Throw off the finery of idealistic phraseology in which you – the women of the bourgeois classes – so love to dress yourselves, and, arming yourselves with the sobering lessons of history, look yourselves to the defence of your own class rights and interests, leaving the working women to follow their own path, struggle by their own methods for the freedom and happiness of women. Whose path is the shorter and whose means the more certain will be shown by life itself...

The Social Basis of the Woman Question

Leaving it to the bourgeois scholars to absorb themselves in discussion of the question of the superiority of one sex over the other, or in the weighing of brains and the comparing of the psychological structure of men and women, the followers of historical materialism fully accept the natural specificities of each sex and demand only that each person, whether man or woman, has a real opportunity for the fullest and freest self-determination, and the widest scope for the development and application of all natural inclinations. The followers of historical materialism reject the existence of a special woman question separate from the general social question of our day. Specific economic factors were behind the subordination of women; natural qualities have been a secondary factor in this process. Only the complete disappearance of these factors, only the evolution of those forces which at some point in the past gave rise to the subjection of women, is able in a fundamental way to influence and change their social position. In other words, women can become truly free and equal only in a world organised along new social and productive lines.

This, however, does not mean that the partial improvement of woman's life within the framework of the modern system is impossible. The radical solution of the workers' question is possible only with the complete reconstruction of modem productive relations; but must this prevent us from working for reforms which would serve to satisfy the most urgent interests of the proletariat? On the contrary, each new gain of the working class represents a step leading mankind towards the kingdom of freedom and social equality: each right that woman wins brings her nearer the defined goal of full emancipation. ...

Social democracy was the first to include in its programme the demand for the equalisation of the rights of women with those of men; in speeches and in print the party demands always and everywhere the withdrawal of limitations affecting women; it is the party's influence alone that has forced other parties and governments to carry out reforms in favour of women. And in Russia this party is not only the defender of women in terms of its theoretical positions but always and everywhere adheres to the principle of women's equality.

What, in this case, hinders our "equal righters" from accepting the support of this strong and experienced party? The fact is that however "radical" the equal righters may be, they are still loyal to their own bourgeois class. Political freedom is at the moment an essential prerequisite for the growth and power of the Russian bourgeoisie, without it, all the economic welfare of the latter will turn out to have been built upon sand. The demand for political equality is for women a necessity that stems from life itself.

The slogan of "access to the professions" has ceased to suffice; only direct participation in the government of the country promises to assist in raising women's economic situation. Hence the passionate desire of women of the middle bourgeoisie to gain the franchise, and hence their hostility to the modern bureaucratic system.

However, in their demands for political equality our feminists are like their foreign sisters; the wide horizons opened by social democratic learning remain alien and incomprehensible to them. The feminists seek equality in the framework of the existing class society, in no way do they attack the basis of this society. They fight for prerogatives for themselves, without challenging the existing prerogatives and privileges. We do not accuse the representatives of the bourgeois women's movement of failure to understand the

matter; their view of things flows inevitably from their class position. ...

The Struggle for Economic Independence

First of all we must ask ourselves whether a single united women's movement is possible in a society based on class contradictions. The fact that the women who take part in the liberation movement do not represent one homogeneous mass is clear, to every unbiased observer.

The women's world is divided, just as is the world of men, into two camps; the interests and aspirations of one group of women bring it close to the bourgeois class, while the other group has close connections with the proletariat, and its claims for liberation encompass a full solution to the woman question. Thus although both camps follow the general slogan of the "liberation of women", their aims and interests are different. Each of the groups unconsciously takes its starting point from the interests of its own class, which gives a specific class colouring to the targets and tasks it sets itself. ...

However apparently radical the demands of the feminists, one must not lose sight of the fact that the feminists cannot, on account of their class position, fight for that fundamental transformation of the contemporary economic and social structure of society without which the liberation of women cannot be complete.

If in certain circumstances the short-term tasks of women of all classes coincide, the final aims of the two camps, which in the long term determine the direction of the movement and the tactics to be used, differ sharply. While for the feminists the achievement of equal rights with men in the framework of the contemporary capitalist world represents a sufficiently concrete end in itself, equal rights at the present time are, for the proletarian women, only a means of advancing the struggle against the economic slavery of the

working class. The feminists see men as the main enemy, for men have unjustly seized all rights and privileges for themselves, leaving women only chains and duties. For them a victory is won when a prerogative previously enjoyed exclusively by the male sex is conceded to the "fair sex". Proletarian women have a different attitude. They do not see men as the enemy and the oppressor; on the contrary, they think of men as their comrades, who share with them the drudgery of the daily round and fight with them for a better future. The woman and her male comrade are enslaved by the same social conditions; the same hated chains of capitalism oppress their will and deprive them of the joys and charms of life. It is true that several specific aspects of the contemporary system lie with double weight upon women, as it is also true that the conditions of hired labour sometimes turn working women into competitors and rivals to men. But in these unfavourable situations, the working class knows who is guilty. ...

The woman worker, no less than her brother in misfortune, hates that insatiable monster with its gilded maw which, concerned only to drain all the sap from its victims and to grow at the expense of millions of human lives, throws itself with equal greed at man, woman and child. Thousands of threads bring the working man close. The aspirations of the bourgeois woman, on the other hand, seem strange and incomprehensible. They are not warming to the proletarian heart; they do not promise the proletarian woman that bright future towards which the eyes of all exploited humanity are turned. ...

The proletarian women's final aim does not, of course, prevent them from desiring to improve their status even within the framework of the current bourgeois system, but the realisation of these desires is constantly hindered by obstacles that derive from the very nature of capitalism. A woman can possess equal rights and be truly free only in a

world of socialised labour, of harmony and justice. The feminists are unwilling and incapable of understanding this; it seems to them that when equality is formally accepted by the letter of the law they will be able to win a comfortable place for themselves in the old world of oppression, enslavement and bondage, of tears and hardship. And this is true up to a certain point. For the majority of women of the proletariat, equal rights with men would mean only an equal share in inequality, but for the "chosen few", for the bourgeois women, it would indeed open doors to new and unprecedented rights and privileges that until now have been enjoyed by men of the bourgeois class alone. But each new concession won by the bourgeois woman would give her yet another weapon for the exploitation of her younger sister and would go on increasing the division between the women of the two opposite social camps. Their interests would be more sharply in conflict, their aspirations more obviously in contradiction.

Where, then, is that general "woman question"? Where is that unity of tasks and aspirations about which the feminists have so much to say? A sober glance at reality shows that such unity does not and cannot exist. In vain the feminists try to assure themselves that the "woman question" has nothing to do with that of the political party and that "its solution is possible only with the participation of all parties and all women"; as one of the radical German feminists has said, the logic of facts forces us to reject this comforting delusion of the feminists. ...

The conditions and forms of production have subjugated women throughout human history, and have gradually relegated them to the position of oppression and dependence in which most of them existed until now.

A colossal upheaval of the entire social and economic structure was required before women could begin to retrieve

the significance and independence they had lost. Problems which at one time seemed too difficult for the most talented thinkers have now been solved by the inanimate but all-powerful conditions of production. The same forces which for thousands of years enslaved women now, at a further stage of development, are leading them along the path to freedom and independence. ...

The woman question assumed importance for woman of the bourgeois classes approximately in the middle of the nineteenth century – a considerable time after the proletarian women had arrived in the labour arena. Under the impact of the monstrous successes of capitalism, the middle classes of the population were hit by waves of need. The economic changes had rendered the financial situation of the petty and middle bourgeoisie unstable, and the bourgeois women were faced with a dilemma of menacing proportions, either accept poverty, or achieve the right to work. Wives and daughters of these social groups began to knock at the doors of the universities, the art salons, the editorial houses, the offices, flooding to the professions that were open to them. The desire of bourgeois women to gain access to science and the higher benefits of culture was not the result of a sudden, maturing need but stemmed from that same question of "daily bread".

The women of the bourgeoisie met, from the very first, with stiff resistance from men. A stubborn battle was waged between the professional men, attached to their "cosy little jobs", and the women who were novices in the matter of earning their daily bread. This struggle gave rise to "feminism" – the attempt of bourgeois women to stand together and pit their common strength against the enemy, against men. As they entered the labour arena these women proudly referred to themselves as the "vanguard of the women's movement". They forgot that in this matter of

winning economic independence they were, as in other fields, travelling in the footsteps of their younger sisters and reaping the fruits of the efforts of their blistered hands.

Is it then really possible to talk of the feminists pioneering the road to women's work, when in every country hundreds of thousands of proletarian women had flooded the factories and workshops, taking over one branch of industry after another, before the bourgeois women's movement was ever born? Only thanks to the fact that the labour of women workers had received recognition on the world market were the bourgeois women able to occupy the independent position in society in which the feminists take so much pride. ...

We find it difficult to point to even one fact in the history of the struggle of the proletarian women to improve their material conditions to which the general feminist movement has contributed significantly. Whatever the proletarian women have achieved in the sphere of raising their own living standards is the result of the efforts of the working class in general and of themselves in particular. The history of the struggle of the working women for better conditions of labour and for a more decent life is the history of the struggle of the proletariat for its liberation.

What, if not the fear of a dangerous explosion of proletarian dissatisfaction, forces the factory owners to raise the price of labour, reduce hours and introduce better working conditions? What, if not the fear of "labour unrest", persuades the government to establish legislation to limit the exploitation of labour by capital? ...

There is not one party in the world that has taken up the defence of women as social democracy has done. The working woman is first and foremost a member of the working class, and the more satisfactory the position and the

general welfare of each member of the proletarian family, the greater the benefit in the long run to the whole of the working class. ...

In face of the growing social difficulties, the sincere fighter for the cause must stop in sad bewilderment. She cannot but see how little the general women's movement has done for proletarian women, how incapable it is of improving the working and living conditions of the working class. The future of humanity must seem grey, drab and uncertain to those women who are fighting for equality but who have not adopted the proletarian world outlook or developed a firm faith in the coming of a more perfect social system. While the contemporary capitalist world remains unchanged, liberation must seem to them incomplete and impartial. What despair must grip the more thoughtful and sensitive of these women. Only the working class is capable of maintaining morale in the modern world with its distorted social relations. With firm and measured step it advances steadily towards its aim. It draws the working women to its ranks. The proletarian woman bravely starts out on the thorny path of labour. Her legs sag; her body is torn. There are dangerous precipices along the way, and cruel beasts of prey are close at hand.

But only by taking this path is the woman able to achieve that distant but alluring aim – her true liberation in a new world of labour. During this difficult march to the bright future the proletarian woman, until recently a humiliated, downtrodden slave with no rights, learns to discard the slave mentality that has clung to her, step by step she transforms herself into an independent worker, an independent personality, free in love. It is she, fighting in the ranks of the proletariat, who wins for women the right to work; it is she, the "younger sister", who prepares the ground for the "free" and "equal" woman of the future.

For what reason, then, should the woman worker seek a union with the bourgeois feminists? Who, in actual fact, would stand to gain in the event of such an alliance? Certainly not the woman worker. She is her own saviour; her future is in her own hands. The working woman guards her class interests and is not deceived by great speeches about the "world all women share". The working woman must not and does not forget that while the aim of bourgeois women is to secure their own welfare in the framework of a society antagonistic to us, our aim is to build, in the place of the old, outdated world, a bright temple of universal labour, comradely solidarity and joyful freedom. ...

Marriage and the Problem of the Family

Let us turn our attention to another aspect of the woman question, the question of the family. The importance that the solution of this urgent and complex question has for the genuine emancipation of women is well known. The struggle for political rights, for the right to receive doctorates and other academic degrees, and for equal pay for equal work, is not the full sum of the fight for equality. To become really free woman has to throw off the heavy chains of the current forms of the family, which are outmoded and oppressive. For women, the solution of the family question is no less important than the achievement of political equality and economic independence.

In the family of today, the structure of which is confirmed by custom and law, woman is oppressed not only as a person but as a wife and mother, in most of the countries of the civilised world the civil code places women in a greater or lesser dependence on her husband, and awards the husband not, only the right to dispose of her property but also the right of moral and physical dominance over her. ...

Where the official and legal servitude of women ends, the force we call "public opinion" begins. This public opinion

is created and supported by the bourgeoisie with the aim of preserving "the sacred institution of property". The hypocrisy of "double morality" is another weapon. Bourgeois society crushes woman with its savage economic vice, paying for her labour at a very low rate. The woman is deprived of the citizen's right to raise her voice in defence of her interests: instead, she is given only the gracious alternative of the bondage of marriage or the embraces of prostitution – a trade despised and persecuted in public but encouraged and supported in secret. Is it necessary to emphasise the dark sides of contemporary married life and the sufferings women experience in connection with their position in the present family structure? So much has already been written and said on this subject. Literature is full of depressing pictures of the snares of married and family life. How many psychological dramas are enacted! How many lives are crippled! Here, it is only important for us to note that the modern family structure, to a lesser or greater extent, oppresses women of all classes and all layers of the population. Customs and traditions persecute the young mother whatever the stratum of the population to which she belongs; the laws place bourgeois women, proletarian women and peasant women all under the guardianship of their husbands.

Have we not discovered at last that aspect of the woman question over which women of all classes can unite? Can they not struggle jointly against the conditions oppressing them? Is it not possible that the grief and suffering which women share in this instance will soften the claws of class antagonism and provide common aspirations and common action for the women of the different camps? Might it not be that on the basis of common desires and aims, co-operation between the bourgeois women and the proletarian women may become a possibility? The feminists are struggling for freer forms of marriage and for the "right to maternity"; they are raising their voices in defence of the

prostitute, the human being persecuted by all. See how rich feminist literature is in the search for new forms of relationships and in enthusiastic demands for the "moral equality" of the sexes. Is it not true that while in the sphere of economic liberation the bourgeois women lag behind the many-million strong army of proletarian women who are pioneering the way for the "new woman", in the fight for the solution, of the family question the laurels go to the feminists?

Here in Russia, women of the middle bourgeoisie – that army of independent wage-earners thrown on to the labour market during the 1860s – have long since settled in practice many of the confused aspects of the marriage question. They have courageously replaced the "consolidated" family of the traditional church marriage with more elastic types of relationship that meet the needs of that social layer. But the subjective solution of this question by individual women does not change the situation and does not relieve the overall gloomy picture of family life. If any force is destroying the modern form of the family, it is not the titanic efforts of separate and stronger individuals but the inanimate and mighty forces of production, which are uncompromisingly budding life, on new foundation's. ...

The heroic struggle of individual young women of the bourgeois world, who fling down the gauntlet and demand of society the right to "dare to love" without orders and without chains, ought to serve as an example for all women languishing in family chains – this is what is preached by the more emancipated feminists abroad and our progressive equal righters at home. The marriage question, in other words, is solved in their view without reference to the external situation; it is solved independently of changes in the economic structure of society. The isolated, heroic efforts of

individuals is enough. Let a woman simply "dare", and the problem of marriage is solved.

But less heroic women shake their heads in distrust. "It is all very well for the heroines of novels blessed by the prudent author with great independence, unselfish friends and extraordinary qualities of charm, to throw down the gauntlet. But what about those who have no capital, insufficient wages, no friends and little charm?" And the question of maternity preys on the mind of the woman who strives for freedom. Is "free love" possible? Can it be realised as a common phenomenon, as the generally accepted norm rather than the individual exception, given the economic structure of our society? Is it possible to ignore the element of private property in contemporary marriage? Is it possible, in an individualistic world, to ignore the formal marriage contract without damaging the interests of women? For the marital contract is the only guarantee that all the difficulties of maternity will not fall on the woman alone. Will not that which once happened to the male worker now happen to the woman? The removal of guild regulations, without the establishment of new rules governing the conduct of the masters, gave capital absolute power over the workers. The tempting slogan "freedom of contract for labour and capital" became a means for the naked exploitation of labour by capital. "Free love", introduced consistently into contemporary class society, instead of freeing woman from the hardships of family life, would surely shoulder her with a new burden – the task of caring, alone and unaided, for her children.

Only a whole number of fundamental reforms in the sphere of social relations – reforms transposing obligations from the family to society and the state – could create a situation where the principle of "free love" might to some extent be fulfilled. But can we seriously expect the modern class state, however democratic it may be, to take upon itself

the duties towards mothers and children which at present are undertaken by that individualistic unit, the modern family? Only the fundamental transformation of all productive relations could create the social prerequisites to protect women from the negative aspects of the "free love" formula. Are we not aware of the depravity and abnormalities that in present conditions are anxious to pass themselves off under this convenient label? Consider all those gentlemen owning and administering industrial enterprises who force women among their workforce and clerical staff to satisfy their sexual whims, using the threat of dismissal to achieve their ends. Are they not, in their own way, practising "free love"? All those "masters of the house" who rape their servants and throw them out pregnant on to the street, are they not adhering to the formula of "free love"?

But we are not talking of that kind of 'freedom' object the advocates of free marriage. On the contrary, we demand the acceptance of a 'single morality' equally binding for both sexes. We oppose the sexual licence that is current, and view as moral only the free union that is based on true love." But, my dear friends, do you not think that your ideal of "free marriage", when practised in the conditions of present society, might produce results that differ little from the distorted practice of sexual freedom? Only when women are relieved of all those material burdens which at the present time create a dual dependence, on capital and on the husband, can the principle of "free love" be implemented without bringing new grief for women in its wake. As women go out to, work and achieve economic independence, certain possibilities for "free love" appear, particularly for the better-paid women of the intelligentsia. But the dependence of women on capital remains, and this dependence increases as more and more proletarian women sell their labour power. Is the slogan "free love" capable of improving the sad existence of these women, who earn only just enough to keep

themselves alive? And anyway, is not "free love" already practised among the working classes and practised so widely that the bourgeoisie has on more than one occasion raised the alarm and campaigned against the "depravity" and "immorality" of the proletariat? It should be noted that when the feminists enthuse about the new forms of cohabitation outside marriage that should be considered by the emancipated bourgeois woman, they speak of "free love", but when the working class is under discussion these relationships are scornfully referred to as "disorderly sexual intercourse". This sums up their attitude.

But for proletarian women at the present time all relationships, whether sanctified by the church or not, are equally harsh in their consequences. The crux of the family and marriage problem lies for the proletarian wife and mother not in the question of the sacred or secular external form, but in the attendant social and economic, conditions which define the complicated obligations of the working-class woman, of course it matters to her too whether her husband has the right to dispose of her earnings, whether he has the right by law to force her to live with him when she does not want to, whether the husband can forcibly take her children away etc. However, it is not such paragraphs of the civic code that determine the position of woman in the family, nor is it these paragraphs which make for the confusion and complexity of the family problem. The question of relationships would cease to be such a painful one for the majority of women only if society, relieved women of all those petty household cares which are at present unavoidable (given the existence of individual, scattered domestic economies), took over responsibility for the younger generation, protected maternity and gave the mother to the child for at least the first months after birth.

In opposing the legal and sacred church marriage contract, the feminists are fighting a fetish. The proletarian

women, on the other hand, are waging war against the factors that are behind the modern form of marriage and family. In striving to change fundamentally the conditions of life, they know that they are also helping to reform relationships between the sexes. Here we have the main difference between the bourgeois and proletarian approach to the difficult problem of the family.

The feminists and the social reformers from the camp of the bourgeoisie, naively believing in the possibility of creating new forms of family and new types of marital relations against the dismal background of the contemporary class society, tie themselves in knots in their search for these new forms. If life itself has not vet produced these forms, it is necessary, they seem to imagine, to think them up whatever the cost. There must, they believe, be modern forms of sexual relationship which are capable of solving the complex family problem under the present social system. And the ideologists of the bourgeois world – the journalists, writers and prominent women fighters for emancipation one after the other put forward their "family panacea", their new "family formula".

How utopian these marriage formulas sound. How feeble these palliatives, when considered in the light of the gloomy reality of our modern family structure. Before these formulas of "free relationships" and "free love" can become practice, it is above all necessary that a fundamental reform of all social relationships between people take place; furthermore, the moral and sexual norms and the whole psychology of mankind would have to undergo a thorough evolution, is the contemporary person psychologically able to cope with "free love"? What about the jealousy that eats into even the best human souls? And that deeply-rooted sense of property that demands the possession not only of the body but also of the soul of another? And the inability to have the proper respect for the individuality of another? The habit of

either subordinating oneself to the loved one, or of subordinating the loved one to oneself? And the bitter and desperate feeling of desertion, of limitless loneliness, which is experienced when the loved ceases to love and leaves? Where can the lonely person, who is an individualist to the very core of his being, find solace? The collective, with its joys and disappointments and aspirations, is the best outlet for the emotional and intellectual energies of the individual. But is modern man capable of working with this collective in such a way as to feel the mutually interacting influences? Is the life of the collective really capable, at present, of replacing the individual's petty personal joys? Without the "unique," "one-and-only" twin soul, even the socialist, the collectivist, is quite alone in the present antagonistic world; only in the working class do we catch the pale glimpse of the future, of more harmonious and more social relations between people. The family problem is as complex and many-faceted as life itself. Our social system is incapable of solving it.

Other marriage formulas have been put forward. Several progressive women and social thinkers regard the marriage union only as a method of producing progeny. Marriage in itself, they hold, does not have any special value for woman – motherhood is her purpose, her sacred aim, her task in life. Thanks to such inspired advocates as Ruth Bray and Ellen Key, the bourgeois ideal that recognises woman as a female rather than a person has acquired a special halo of progressiveness. Foreign literature has seized upon the slogan put forward by these advanced women with enthusiasm. And even here in Russia, in the period before the political storm [of 1905], before social values came in for revision, the question of maternity had attracted the attention of the daily press. The slogan "the right to maternity" cannot help producing lively response in the broadest circles of the female population. Thus, despite the fact that all the suggestions of the feminists in this connection were of the utopian variety,

the problem was too important and topical not to attract women.

The "right to maternity" is the kind of question that touches not only women from the bourgeois class but also, to an even greater extent, proletarian women as well. The right to be a mother – these are golden words that go straight to "any women's heart" and force that heart to beat faster. The right to feed "one's own" child with one's own milk, and to attend the first signs of its awakening consciousness, the right to care for its tiny body and shield its tender soul from the thorns and sufferings of the first steps in life – what mother would not support these demands?

It would seem that we have again stumbled on an issue that could serve as a moment of unity between women of different social layers: it would seem that we have found, at last, the bridge uniting women of the two hostile worlds. Let us look closer, to discover what the progressive bourgeois women understand by "the right to maternity". Then we can see whether, in fact, proletarian women can agree with the solutions to the problem of maternity envisaged by the bourgeois fighters for equal rights. In the eyes of its eager apologists, maternity possesses an almost sacred quality. Striving to smash the false prejudices that brand a woman for engaging in a natural activity – the bearing of a child – because the activity has not been sanctified by the law, the fighters for the right to maternity have bent the stick in the other direction: for them, maternity has become the aim of a woman's life. ...

Ellen Key's devotion to the obligations of maternity and the family forces her to give an assurance that the isolated family unit will continue to exist even in a society transformed along socialist lines. The only change, as she sees it, will be that all the attendant elements of convenience or of material gain will be excluded from the marriage union, which

will be concluded according to mutual inclinations, without rituals or formalities – love and marriage will be truly synonymous. But the isolated family unit is the result of the modern individualistic world, with its rat-race, its pressures, its loneliness; the family is a product of the monstrous capitalist system. And yet Key hopes to bequeath the family to socialist society! Blood and kinship ties at present often serve, it is true, as the only support in life, as the only refuge in times of hardship and misfortune. But will they be morally or socially necessary in the future? Key does not answer this question. She has too loving a regard for the "ideal family", this egoistic unit of the middle bourgeoisie to which the devotees of the bourgeois structure of society look with such reverence.

But it is not only the talented though erratic Ellen Key who loses her way in the social contradictions. There is probably no other question about which socialists themselves are so little in agreement as the question of marriage and the family. Were we to try and organise a survey among socialists, the results would most probably be very curious. Does the family wither away? or are there grounds for believing that the family disorders of the present are only a transitory crisis? Will the present form of the family be preserved in the future society, or will it be buried with the modern capitalist system? These are questions which might well receive very different answers. ...

With the transfer of educative functions from the family to society, the last tie holding together the modern isolated family will be loosened; the process of disintegration will proceed at an even faster pace, and the pale silhouettes of future marital relations will begin to emerge. What can we say about these indistinct silhouettes, hidden as they are by present-day influences?

Does one have to repeat that the present compulsory form of marriage will be replaced by the free union of loving individuals? The ideal of free love drawn by the hungry imagination of women fighting for their emancipation undoubtedly corresponds to some extent to the norm of relationships between the sexes that society will establish. However, the social influences are so complex and their interactions so diverse that it is impossible to foretell what the relationships of the future, when the whole system has fundamentally been changed, will he like. But the slowly maturing evolution of relations between the sexes is clear evidence that ritual marriage and the compulsive isolated family are doomed to disappear.

The Struggle for Political Rights

The feminists answer our criticisms by saying: even if the arguments behind our defence of the political rights of women seem to you mistaken, is the importance of the demand itself, which is equally urgent for feminists and for representatives of the working class, thereby reduced? Cannot the women of the two social camps, for the sake of their common political aspirations, surmount the barriers of class antagonism that divide them? Surely they are capable of waging a common struggle against the hostile forces that surround them? Division between bourgeois and proletarian is inevitable as far as other questions are concerned, but in the case of this particular question, the feminists imagine,, the women of the various social classes have no differences.

Feminists keep returning to these arguments with bitterness and bewilderment, seeing preconceived notions of partisan loyalty in the refusal of representatives of the working class to join forces with them in the struggle for women's political rights. Is this really the case?

Is there a complete identity of political aspirations, or does antagonism hinder the creation of an indivisible, above-class army of women in this instance as in all others? We have

to answer this question before we can outline the tactics that proletarian women will employ in winning political rights for their sex.

The feminists declare themselves to be on the side of social reform, and some of them even say they are in favour of socialism – in the far distant future, of course – but they are not intending to struggle in the ranks of the working class for the realisation of these aims. The best of them believe, with a naive sincerity, that once the deputies' seats are within their reach they will be able to cure the social sores which have in their view developed because men, with their inherent egoism, have been masters of the situation. However good the intentions of individual groups of feminists towards the proletariat, whenever the question of class struggle has been posed they have left the battlefield in a fright. They find that they do not wish to interfere in alien causes, and prefer to retire to their bourgeois liberalism which is so comfortably familiar.

No, however much the bourgeois feminists try to repress the true aim of their political desires, however much they assure their younger sisters that involvement in political life promises immeasurable benefits for the women of the working class, the bourgeois spirit that pervades the whole feminist movement gives a class colouring even to the demand for equal political rights with men, which would seem to be a general women's demand. Different aims and understandings of how political rights are to be used create an unbridgeable gulf between bourgeois and proletarian women. This does not contradict the fact that the immediate tasks of the two groups of women coincide to a certain degree, for the representatives of all classes which have received access to political power strive above all to achieve a review of the civil code, which in every country, to a greater or lesser extent, discriminates against women. Women press for legal changes that create more favourable conditions of

labour for themselves; they stand together against the regulations legalising prostitution etc. However, the coincidence of these immediate tasks is of a purely formal nature. For class interest determines that the attitude of the two groups to these reforms is sharply contradictory. ...

Class instinct – whatever the feminists say – always shows itself to be more powerful than the noble enthusiasms of "above-class" politics. So long as the bourgeois women and their "younger sisters" are equal in their inequality, the former can, with complete sincerity, make great efforts to defend the general interests of women. But once the barrier is down and the bourgeois women have received access to political activity, the recent defenders of the "rights of all women" become enthusiastic defenders of the privileges of their class, content to leave the younger sisters with no rights at all. Thus, when the feminists talk to working women about the need for a common struggle to realise some "general women's" principle, women of the working class are naturally distrustful.

Footnotes

2. Feminism – a bourgeois women's movement which sought equal rights for women within the framework of the bourgeois state. The feminists demanded that women be accorded the right to elect and be elected, the right to engage in commerce and business operations.

3. The Alliance for Female Equality – a feminist organisation formed in Russia at the beginning of the 20th century. The alliance demanded that women be given political equality and the right to enter various professions. The Alliance was dissolved after the defeat of the first Russian revolution of 1905-1907.

The Russian Women's Mutual Aid Society – a bourgeois women's organisation which was founded in 1899 and was exclusively of a charitable-cultural nature. Its members came from the intelligentsia - teachers, physicians, translators, etc., and it disseminated its ideas through such magazines as *Zhenskoye Dyelo* (The Women's Cause) and *Soyuz Zhenshchin* (The Women's Alliance).

4. The First All-Russia Women's Congress, organised by bourgeois societies, took place in St Petersburg from 10 to 16 December, 1908. It was attended by 700 delegates, including a group of 45 women workers. The feminists, who organised the congress, intended to conduct it under the slogan: 'The women's movement should not be either bourgeois or proletarian, but a single movement animated by one spirit.' In their speeches, the women worker delegates exposed the class-opposite nature of the proletarian and the bourgeois women's movements. Despite the fact that they were in the minority, the women worker delegates were able to persuade the congress to adopt resolutions on the protection of female and child labour, on the protection of peasant mothers, and others. The women workers also

introduced a resolution demanding universal, equal, direct and secret voting rights. The presidium refused to put foreward this resolution, and replaced it with another, drawn up in the liberal-bourgeois spirit. The group of women-worker delegates then left the congress in protest.

Kollontai was one of the organisers in charge of preparatory work with the women worker delegates prior to the congress, in which she herself took an active part. A speech which she had prepared was read at the congress by V. I. Volkova, a woman worker, as Kollontai had been forced to flee abroad as a result of police surveillance.

5. Cf.T. Schlesinger-Eckstein, *Women at the Beginning of the 2Oth Century,* P. 38 – in Russian. – A.K.

6. Cf. Prof. Y. Pirstorf, *Women's Labour and the Women's Question,* St Petersburg, 1902, p. 27 (in Russian). – A.K.

7. *Statistical Handbook,* Issue III, 1908 (in Russian). – A.K.

8. In 1881 in St Petersburg there were 27 women living by their own labour for every 100 men; in 1890 there were 34 women, and by 1900 this figure had risen to 40. (Levikson-Lessing, *On the Employment of Women in St Petersburg According to the Censuses of 1881, 1890 and 1900,* pp. 141-147-in Russian.) – A.K.

9. Prior to this, starting from 1898, there existed only the annual *Zhensky kalendur* (Woman's Almanac). The magazine *Zhenskoye dyelo* (The Women's Cause) appeared for only two years and was replaced in 1904 by the feminist *Zhensky vestnik* (Woman's Herald). This was replaced in turn by the magazine *Soyuz zhenshchin* (Women's Alliance). – A.K.

10. This is a reference to the abolition of serfdom in Russia in 1861 by the tsarist government, which was compelled to introduce this reform as a result of economic development within the country, and the increase of large-

scale peasant actions caused by landowner exploitation of peasant serfs. The objective result of the 'Peasant Reform' was, as Lenin wrote, the replacement of one form of exploitation by another, the replacement of serfdom by capitalism.

11. According to Russian legislation a woman, on attaining her majority, is considered fully competent in law: she may undertake civil actions in her own right, become the guardian even of non-relatives, be a witness, etc. The woman disposes of her own property, even if she marries, as the law recognises the independent property rights of each marriage partner. The guardianship of the husband over the wife, as is practised, for example, in France, does not exist in Russia. Only in matters of inheritance is the woman discriminated against in law as compared to the man: in the direct line of descent the daughter inherits only 1/14 of the fixed and 1/7 of the moveable property, while in the collateral line of descent the rights of the women are even fewer. – A.K.

12. Raznochintsy – people from various social strata who, having acquired education, changed their previous social milieu, that of low-ranking civil servants, the petty bourgeoise, merchants, clergy and peasants. With the development of capitalism, the number of raznochintsy increased. Lenin described them as 'the educated representatives of the liberal and democratic bourgeoisie'.

13. Cf the chapter 'Women's Societies and Their Objectives' in the book *The Women's Movement* by Kechedzhi-Shapovalova (in Russian) – A.K.

14. 'The tasks facing the first congress of Russian women include philanthropy and education. Russian women have long been active in both these spheres, and are therefore able to speak on both issues. *(Zhensky vestnik,* No. 1 1905.) – A.K.

15. This is a reference to 9 January, 1905, when tsarist troops fired on a peaceful demonstration by workers who

were taking a petition to the tsar. More than one thousand people were killed, and two thousand were wounded. This marked the beginning of the first bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia of 1905-1907.

16. Cf *Female Equality,* Reports and Minutes, 1906 (in Russian). – A.K.

17. The Union of Unions – a political organisation set up by the liberal-bourgeois intelligentsia in May, 1905, at the first congress of representatives of 14 unions: lawyers, writers, physicians, engineers, teachers and others. The congress demanded that a Constituent Assembly be convened on the basis of universal suffrage. In the spring of 1906, the Women's Progressive Party was formed from among the right wing of the Union of Unions, and became the mouthpiece for the demands and requirements of women from the big bourgeoisie. The party programme was clearly feminist in orientation. The Union of Unions was dissolved at the end of 1906.

18. This party put out the *Zhensky vetsnik* (Woman's Herald), edited by the woman physician M.I. Pokrovskaya. – A.K.

19. The Party of Peaceful Renovation – a moderate-liberal party. Its main aims were: a legal 'solution' to the labour problem, and the resettlement of peasants with insufficient land. In 1907 the Party of Peaceful Renovation merged with the Party of Democratic Reforms.

20. 'A distinctive feature of the Women's Political Club was its genuinely democratic organisation, which was achieved firstly, by the fact that all meetings were open to anyone who wished to attend, and the entry charge was minimal – 2 kopecks; secondly, by the fact that every group of 25 members, organised according to *political party* or profession, could have a representative on the management committee to defend its interests.' (Cf 'The Women's Political

Club', article by M. Margulies, in *Zhensky kalendar* – Woman's Almanac for 1907.) – A.K.

21. It must, however, be noted to its credit that the Women's Political Club attempted to organise in St Petersburg the first political clubs for women industrial workers. In the spring of 1906 there were four such clubs, among which the Vasilyeostrovsky was particularly active. It organised lectures and discussions intended to stimulate the interest of working women in the political life going on around them. Together with the other three clubs, it was closed down by the police after only six weeks, following the dissolution of the First Duma. The Women's Political Club also ceased to exist. – A.K.

22. The Trudoviks – a group of petty-bourgeois democrats formed in April, 1906, from among the peasant delegates to the First State Duma (a representative legislative institution set up by the tsar following the]905-1907 revolution). The Trudoviks demanded the abolition of all estate and national restrictions, the democratisation of the Zemstvo and city self-administration, and the introduction of universal suffrage for elections to the State Duma. The group existed up to 1917.

23. The very principle of equality is viewed by each group of women according to the social stratum to which it belongs. Women of the big bourgeoisie, who are coming to suffer more and more from property inequality in Russia, for example, in the laws of inheritance – are concerned primarily to secure the removal from the civil code of those clauses inimical to women's interests. For women from the middle bourgeoisie, equality hinges on 'freedom to work'. However, both recognise the need to secure the right to have a voice in the running of the country, as without this no achievement, no reform, is secure. Hence the focal point has been shifted to the struggle for political equality. – A.K.

Women Workers Struggle for Their Rights

Kollontai, Alexandra

Women Workers Struggle For Their Rights

Alexandra Kollontai

1919

Introduction by Sheila Rowbotham

Early years

Alexandra Kollontai was born in St. Petersburg in 1872, the daughter of a Russian general. She married an engineer, Vladimir Kollontai, but found herself moving away from him as she became increasingly interested in revolutionary ideas. Her early intellectual impetus towards radicalism was through the study of child psychology and educational theory – an interest which remained with her later. In this period, many young women from landowning and middle class families sought their emancipation through teaching, and Froebel's educational methods and kindergartens became closely allied with radicalism. It seemed a natural and useful way to 'go to the people'.

Terrorism as a strategy was proving increasingly ineffective. The 1896 textile strikes in St. Petersburg marked an important turning point. Organised labour was a more effective force for change than village communes. The Russian Social Democratic Party tried to recruit workers. The Social Democrats, who were at their strongest in Germany, believed that real democracy could not be fully realised without economic equality, and that this would only be possible when the means of production were controlled by society as a whole and not be private employers. Following Marx, they believed that the working class was the crucial agent of socialism. Their attitude to organising was marked by ethical humanitarian ideas which resembled the early Utopian socialists'.

In St. Petersburg, a group of young Social Democrats, including Lenin, was studying Marx. Some working women, like the tailoress Grigorgeva, were involved in the Social Democratic Party already, and women workers were coming into the revolutionary struggle through

industrial action. In 1896 women textile workers downed tools with the men, and women cigar-makers destroyed machinery and resisted the police.

Kollontai was obviously affected by all these developments, for when she went to Zurich in 1898 it was to study political economy, and in her History of the Women's Labour Movement [untranslated], she describes the militancy of the women in St. Petersburg in the mid 1890s.

Abroad, she began to learn about the socialist movement internationally. In Zurich she met Kautsky and Rosa Luxemburg, prominent in the German Social Democratic Movement, and in 1899 visited England and took a dim view of the Webbs. Within the Russian Party she was aligned to the group who were known as Mensheviks, round the old marxist thinker Plekhanov. She remained with the Mensheviks after Lenin and the Bolsheviks split in 1903, wanting a much tighter and more professionally organized party After the first split, new conflicts kept the groups apart. The Mensheviks said Lenin was foisting a harsh barrack room discipline onto socialism, the Bolsheviks saw Plekhanov as a 'soft' academic ready only Propaganda work. However, individuals maintained contact with one another and as events moved faster and faster in Russia, some of the Mensheviks began to drift towards working with the Bolsheviks because the latter appeared to be more decisive.

Preoccupation with these internal splits meant that when in early 1905 a huge crowd of workers carrying religious icons, led by a priest called father Gapon and full of faith in the Czar, tried to present a petition to the Czar and were fired upon, neither Mensheviks nor Bolsheviks could intervene. Strikes in protest followed 'Bloody Sunday', and were followed by peasant revolt and a mutiny on the Battleship Potemkin. The Czar compromised and agreed to call a Consultative Assembly (Duma). Although the workers were not represented, this was an important break with absolute

rule. At the end of the year there was a general rising in Moscow which was defeated, and from then on the revolutionary impetus began to subside. The lesson was not lost It seemed clear to the Bolsheviks that spontaneous revolt led to defeat. The revolution required their conscious direction. By 1907 the Czar's policy of compromise had been replaced by one of severe repression, and the revolutionary movement was once more forced underground.

In 1905, the newly formed Russian feminist movement planned a large meeting. The feminists wanted to bring all women together, but on a basis which obscured the class exploitation of working women. Though the Mensheviks supported this move, Kollontai was sufficiently close to the Bolsheviks to be in opposition. And in 1906, with some other women comrades, she started to organise a club for women workers. The women studied particular questions which would help them secure the reforms they wanted, and practised speaking until a group could speak on various topics. In an account which appeared in the *Woman Worker* [Footnote should read: I am referring here to an article by Georgia Pearce entitled, A Russian Exile, Alexandra Kollontai and the Russian Woman Worker, which appeared in the English newspaper, The Woman Worker, of May 1909. This newspaper is not to be confused with the Bolshevik paper of the same name, to which Kollontai refers in her footnote to p. 26.] in 1908 Kollontai wrote:-

During our preparations for these Congress speeches, and at the Women's Council meetings, our dread of the police was very great We always had to find some quiet little room, and it an alarm was given, the women would throw a handkerchief over the face of the speaker and get her away quickly.

As a result of this organisation, 45 of the 700 women who assembled at the All-Russian Women's Congress in 1908

were socialists. 30 of these 45 factory workers, some still scarcely able to read.

"They were all very frightened, yet did well, holding the field in all cases for at least fifteen to twenty minutes and astonishing the Congress..." -in 1907 she had to flee from Russia. Abroad she continued to take part in the women's movement, attending the Congress at Stuttgart mentioned in this pamphlet. The regular sessions of the Congress were preceded by a convention of women from various countries to debate questions which related particularly to working class women. The most heated debate arose between the Austrian socialists and the rest over women's suffrage. In Austria male workers were still disenfranchised and the Austrian women suggested waiting until the men could vote before pressing for women's suffrage. Clara Zetkin and most of the other women were completely against this compromise. In the general Congress the main debate was over militarism and the war-the issue which was finally to crack the Second International.

In exile Kollontai became friendly with the 'left' social democrat Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. It is possible that some of their ideas influenced her and brought her to a 'left' position within the Communist Party later. She lectured at a Russian marxist school in Italy – a kind of revolutionary free university, and started to study protective maternity provision because she had been asked to send a draft for a law by young social democrats in Russia to present to the Duma. This was finally published in 1915 *as Society and Maternity*. [untranslated]

In March 1911 she helped to organise the first International Women's Day which is still celebrated. She was active in organising strikes in Paris and in the north of France in 1911, including one of housewives over high prices. Meanwhile, she was becoming increasingly critical of the cautious, bureaucratic old guard in German social democracy,

who were more inclined to emphasise the long term inevitability of communism, than the short term need to do something about bringing it about. Her criticisms brought her still closer to the Bolsheviks. In 1913 she went to England again, and learned about women in the trade union movement. In 1916 she was in New York, and at Lenin's request was collecting information about the American Socialist Party and the Socialist Labour Party, in the course of which she introduced Lenin to the writings of the socialist-syndicalist Daniel de Leon, who believed in industrial unionism – the working class organised into one big union to take over and run production.

The Revolution

When a general uprising and the overthrow of the Czarist regime were followed by the formation of the 'Provisional Government' in Russia, in February 1917, Kollontai returned home and became involved in revolutionary activity. She was amongst the people who greeted Lenin when he arrived back in Russia at the Finland Station. Lenin spoke to a meeting of the Bolsheviks the following day, denouncing the Mensheviks because they thought it was too early to speak of a socialist revolution in Russia. (They believed that after the 'bourgeois revolution' of February 1917 Russia would have to pass through a capitalist phase under bourgeois rule before there could be a socialist revolution.) Lenin praised the anti-militarism of Liebknecht, and announced that the "majority of the official Social Democracy have betrayed socialism," [I. Deutscher, Stalin: a Political Biography, p.149] so that the Bolsheviks should henceforth distinguish themselves by the name of Communists. Most of the Bolsheviks were shocked and stunned: only Alexandra Kollontai voted for Lenin's unorthodox 'April Theses'. Some Bolsheviks left the party altogether, others came round to Lenin's position slowly. It

was the radicals, those who wanted to carry through directly socialist measures, who very quickly supported Lenin. Kollontai was on the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party at the time of the Bolshevik revolution of November 1917, and became Minister for Social Welfare; shortly afterwards she became responsible for education.

Kollontai's life reflected the political turns of the revolution, just as her fame since her death has fluctuated. Now honoured, now disgraced, now smothered in silence, now respected as a figurehead. Louise Bryant, an American journalist who wrote of a visit to Russia soon after the revolution in *Six Red Months in Russia*, praised Kollontai's workers' control methods in her Ministry. Kollontai herself moved gradually towards the position of the 'Workers' Opposition' group. Her personal life as well as her political life was stormy. In her forties she fell in love with Dubenko, a man much younger than herself who had been with the Kronstadt sailors when they mutinied against the revolutionary government – a revolt which was harshly repressed by Trotsky. With others she formulated the criticisms of the Bolshevik Party which appeared in the 'Workers' Opposition' pamphlet. [Republished recently as a Solidarity pamphlet.] The 'Workers' Opposition' group criticised centralisation and bureaucracy in general, but criticised particularly Trotsky's scheme for control over the Trade unions. The 'Workers' Opposition' wanted the trade unions to control industrial production, where Trotsky felt that the state should have control. The crux of the issue was the degree of autonomy which could be allowed to specific groups without fragmenting the already shaky revolutionary government, and leading to counter-revolution. In 1922 the supporters of the 'Workers' Opposition' were condemned as a faction but not expelled from the Party. The question raised by the 'Workers' Opposition' of autonomous organisation

was never resolved. By a terrible irony Stalin was able to use Trotsky's own arguments against him later.

Kollontai's influence in domestic politics was negligible from this point. She joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1923, and between 1923 and 1925 was in Norway, then in Mexico, Norway again from 1927 to 1930 and in Sweden from 1930 to 1945. In 1943 she was made an ambassador, and the following year was responsible for negotiating the Soviet-Finnish armistice. Although her photograph was issued by the Trotskyist Fourth International in America, along with the other members of the early Central Committee who had died in Stalin's purges, over the caption 'missing', and it is possible that she was restrained in various ways, her survival was almost certainly due to the fact that she raised no more awkward questions, and because she was safely out of the way in a prestigious diplomatic position. She died at the age of eighty in 1952, two decades before interest in her ideas revived again in Europe.

The relevance of her ideas in the Russian revolution and now

The fortunes of her writings have been most curious. The vast majority have not been translated from the original Russian. Many of them sit dustily in the British Museum. Sylvia Pankhurst produced the 'Workers' Opposition' pamphlet, no doubt to Lenin's intense irritation. (She was one of the people he labelled as 'infantile' leftists.) This pamphlet has recently been reissued by 'Solidarity'. *Communism and the Family* has long been out of print. But it was among the texts recommended by the Czech marxist rebels in 1968, and was republished recently by the somewhat heretical Australian Communist Party and in Britain is being republished by Pluto Press.

Interest in Kollontai has been slowly growing in Women's Liberation in France and Germany as well as

Britain, because her arguments with the left on the need for the separate organisation of women, her stress not only on political emancipation, and work, but also on the family and the pyschological effect of centuries of oppression on women's consciousness, are very much our concerns as well. Her emphasis on control from below, her distrust of the absolute Party, her understanding of the complexities of the creation of a new culture and the connection between personal experience and political consciousness, are particularly relevant within the revolutionary movement as a whole, where we confront these questions now. Kollontai represents a current within marxism in relation to the liberation of women which has been submerged and which we need to rediscover and develop.

Kollontai's influence on the early years of the revolution was crucial. As soon as they were in power, the Bolsheviks introduced very important changes in the position of women, not only at work but in every area of life. The Decree on Insurance in Case of Sickness, of December 1917, meant that an insurance fund was set up without deductions from wages. In January 1918 the Department for the Protection of Motherhood and Infancy was set up as the result of Kollontai's earlier work. Within six months of the revolution, the church's control of marriage was ended and within a year complete legal equality of rights was established. Marriage was simply a mutual agreement between two partners and was easily dissolved. These were very basic reforms, but they were extraordinary in the Russian context of severe oppression.

The First Congress of Peasant and Working Women was held on November 19th 1918. A special committee was set up to help women understand what their new rights were and how to use them. This for Kollontai was a real advance, and a vindication of her agitation for a separate women's section within the Party which she had been advocating since

1906. A year after this pamphlet was published, it became evident that something more was needed because the oppression of women went so deep. The Working and Peasant Women's Department (Genotdel) thus replaced the committee. This new department was not just to educate women in marxism, but to mobilise them for practical political activity. Even this did not mean that masculine attitudes of superiority dissolved easily. Jessica Smith in *Women in Soviet Russia* (1928) describes conflict between men and women workers in factories, and R.Schlesinger in *Changing Attitudes in Soviet Russia* records debates in which peasant women accuse the men in the Party of condescension and patronage. The 'Genotdel' became something of an embarassment, and it was dissolved in 1929 with the official explanation that an independent women's movement was no longer necessary.

It is evident that in 1918, it was hard to envisage Stalinism and the consequences of socialism in one country, and that Kollontai, full of the enthusiasm of the revolution under-estimated the resilience of the old attitudes and culture both within the Party and without. She imagined that the old family and housework were on the point of withering away, because of the dramatic changes in the early years of the revolution. But the old family, which she describes in *Communism and the Family* as the family in which "the man was everything and the woman nothing," showed a capacity to survive the upheavals of revolution, civil war and famine. The family emerged after the crisis and isolation of the Soviet Union and the horrors of the Second World War with a new strength as the symbol of security and retreat. Though women have achieved much greater equality at work and in education, at home the old division of labour continues and with it some of the old subordination.

For us now, the limitations on how far it was possible for Kollontai to go are as clear as the relevance of her ideas

for our dilemmas. Many of her attempts to go beyond the ideas of Engels and Bebel were of necessity theoretical rather than practical. For example, factory women criticised her when she wanted the state to pay a third of the cost of alimony, saying it would encourage men to seduce women and leave. This was a natural enough fear when contraception was still not reliable or widespread. Kollontai's belief in free relationships was inevitably problematic when it was still impossible for most women to control their families. The peasant women knew all too well that, as they put it, if you like tobogganing you have to be ready to pull your sledge up hill. This can still be true of. course, but it's no longer inevitable.

Because ideas in women's liberation come from our own lives, it forces us not to gloss over the complicated questions. It would be inconceivable for anyone now in women's liberation to be as dismissive of the rights of children as Kollontai is in Communism and the Family, or to be so confident that 'the state', socialist or not, is a reliable parent. We are much more involved in the intricacy of particular families, and the specific way in which they contain us. Obviously too, her discussion about the family is in a post revolutionary situation. Our problem is how to organise round the oppression of women in the family in capitalism. Kollontai saw the modern family as a place of consumption and conditioning, as a means of maintaining the old culture within a new society. Following Margaret Benston's *The Political Economy of Women's Liberation*, [Published by New England Free Press.] some people m women s liberation have seen the family also as a form of production.

Kollontai's argument for the separate organisation of women is based on the fact that women as mothers have special demands arising from their biologically distinct material situation. She stresses that the strategy we make has to be based on the actual circumstances, biological and social,

of women in particular societies. She sees this as the crucial distinction between women who are socialists and the feminists. Feminism she defines not only in the straightforward sense of defending the position of women and seeking to improve it, but as the insistence on abstract equal rights without regard for the actual predicament of women. She thus identifies a characteristic of 'equal rights' feminism in the early Twentieth century. She appears not to know about the Feminism which had appeared earlier in the Utopian Socialist movement – though she mentions individual women who took part in the First International. Ironically her criticism of the feminists was to be used against her later in the Soviet Union, because women in the east and peasant women were so remote from her ideas of liberation. It's important to understand that feminism in women's liberation now has assumed a different historical form and whether we are critical of this or not it is wrong to substitute feminism of the early twentieth century which Kollontai talks about for feminism in the 1970s.

However, Kollontai's criticism of an abstract approach is still useful. For example, we have to be careful when thinking about protective legislation or about anti-discrimination bills to take existing class and sex interests into account for these are the context in which legislation operates. The idea of abstract equality when put into practice can often mean that the women in the weakest positions lose out.

Kollontai's implacable hostility to feminism was becoming general among women who were socialists immediately before and after the First World War Rather earlier there had been a much more open and connected relationship between feminism and the left. Undoubtedly it was the recognition of the limitations of the suffrage movement, and the move rightwards of the suffragette leadership towards patriotism and imperialism in Britain,

which produced the hostility. Almost certainly now as people dig below the surface they will find that the women who never became prominent had different sympathies, and an understanding of the need for change which went much wider than the vote. Kollontai reluctantly acknowledges the strength of the suffragettes, and the removal of women who were socialists from the mass of working women. Ironically she shows that it was he suffrage movement, and the possibility that women could vote. which led the men in the socialist movement to see the importance of recruiting and involving women! The parallel with the effect of women's liberation on the left groups is apparent. It is curious that at this stage Kollontai seems not to have known about the East London Federation of Suffragettes in which Sylvia Pankhurst was working. Their co-operative toy factory, the creche in the pub – 'The Mothers Arms' – and their agitation on a wide range of issues, from equal pay, to preventing the arrest of girls walking alone as prostitutes, would have interested her. It looks as though even with the International, and the impressive numbers of women organised, they had our difficulty in circulating information.

When Kollontai was writing this pamphlet the separate women's groups were becoming absorbed within socialist organisations, as separate sections of political parties. She sees this as an advance taking them beyond propaganda work, and does not recognise that without an explicit socialist-feminist theory, and without the bargaining, power of an autonomous organisation, the specific oppression of women would be overlaid by the marxist analysis of the exploitation of the worker, and thus the autonomy of the women's organisation transformed first into token independence and then closed down altogether.

Women's liberation as a movement has raised again the whole question of the relationship of subordinate groups to dominant groups within revolutionary organisations. But

our organisational reality is not hers. For the Bolsheviks, 'the Party' represented the highest organisational creation of the revolutionary movement. It embraced the most developed theory and practice existing at the time, it generalised and extended the particular experience not only of the working class but of every oppressed section of society. The legacy of Stalin, the dissolving of the monolithic Communist Party as the sole arbiter of correct strategy, the growth of numerous small revolutionary nuclei!, has meant that events have turned full circle. While Kollontai was writing the introduction to this pamphlet, negotiations were going on in Britain between various small marxist groups and the Russians to form the Communist Party. It seemed to Kollontai that there was a general movement towards a common position.

For us the situation is much less clear. There are no commonly held organisational ideas which can act as a means of establishing a unified strategy – not only between women's liberation and the socialist groups, but within the left in general. Thus for instance Kollontai was able to assume that her statement that the women's clubs were under the ideological influence of the Party would be generally acceptable. Now in women's liberation it would have sinister and manipulative implications. However, we face the same important problem – how to organise effectively, and how to relate our movement to the specific oppression and exploitation of working class women. Kollontai describes the 'geological shift' which separated the ideas of organising in the Second International from the experience of the Russian Revolution. We are separated from the Communist Third International by a whole series of shifts and tremors, as well as a few earthquakes, and it is absurd to lift the ideas of 1918 in a fundamentalist way onto the dilemmas of 1971.

Nevertheless it is still appropriate that Kollontai's pamphlet on the organisation of women workers should be translated for the Second Women's Liberation Conference in

Britain. We have grown and developed in the one and a half years since the Oxford Conference, not only here in Britain, but internationally. If we are to go further, an essential task will be the rediscovery of our own history – the history which has been obscured and neglected, just as the specific interests of women have been obscured and neglected, within the dominant ideology of capitalism, but also, sadly, within the male dominated revolutionary movement.*

Sheila Rowbotham October 1971

Women Workers Struggle for their Rights

In Place of a Foreword

This pamphlet I am publishing is not new. It is a reprint of my articles which were published before the war. But the question of organisation which was put at the Congress of Women Workers brings onto the agenda of our party work a means of agitation among the mass of working women in order to draw them into the Party and thus prepare new forces for the construction of Communist Russia.

Meanwhile we are suffering from an acute lack of material, which could help our party comrades who are involved now in the organisation of the commission for agitation and propaganda among women workers by giving them access to information about the history of the socialist movement of women workers and about how and what was done in the field of organisation of the women proletariat in other countries. The poverty of our party literature on this particular question obliges me to agree to the reprint in hurried format of my previous articles without being able to rework them. If I were to write again on these same facts I would evaluate many of them differently. The war and world revolution have brought essential changes in the character and form of all workers' communist movements; 'the ideal type' of German party work, adapted exclusively to the period of peaceful parliamentary activity, has ceased to be a model for us.[1] The revolutionary struggle has generated new problems, new fighting methods of work. The war and the revolution have shaken what seemed to be the most stable foundations of life. And also, the position of woman has changed before our eyes.

Up until the war, the process whereby women were drawn into the people's economy was carried out with considerably less speed than it has been for these last four and a half years of feverishly rapid development and the growth of female labour in all fields of industrial life. The old family, too, seemed firm and unshakeable; the Party had to fight against its way of life and traditions every time it wanted to bring the woman worker into the class struggle. The fact that housework was dying out and the transition to the state education of children, were regarded not as mature, living, practical problems of the present day, but as a 'historical tendency', as a lengthy process. The feelings of the women workers were strongest in the economic field – the inequality of men's and women's pay – and in the political field – the absence of voting rights and the inequality in citizenship.

This inequality, on economic and political grounds, together with the enslavement of the woman to her family and the running of the house, created a psychological division between men and women workers, and provided the soil from which grew those independent organisations of women workers which sprang up in all countries alongside the general workers' socialist parties, in the form of societies or unions of women workers, clubs and so on. The more actively the socialist parties became engaged in the business of propaganda amongst women workers, the quicker these specialised organisations for women workers died out. [2]

But only a radical change in the whole existence of the working class woman, in the conditions of her home and family life, as she acquires equal status with men in civil law will wipe out once and for all the barrier which to this day prevents the woman worker letting her forces flow freely into the class struggle.

The war provided an impulse towards a radical break in the social position of women. It remains for the revolution to complete this task. The war drove the 'wet-nurse' to the

front; ninety women out of a hundred were forced to provide for themselves and their children. The problem was becoming acute: what to do with the children of all those millions of women who had to spend the greater part of their day in preparing military supplies – grenades, shrapnel and bullets? It was in this way that the question had to be posed – not as a theoretical problem and not as something desirable in the remote future, but as a practical measure: state security for maternity and childhood. The capitalist class governments were forced to worry about the fate of the 'soldier children' and unwillingly, and half-heartedly, they brought about a situation in which the care of children is the responsibility of the state.

The departure of bridegrooms and fiancés to the war, and the woman's fear for the fate of her loved one, provided a natural reason for the increased number of babies born outside marriage. And once again the bourgeois capitalist state was forced, under the pressure of war, to inflict upon itself a blow, to encroach upon one of its most sacred rights – on the prerogative of legal marriage. It was forced for the sake of the soldiers' well being to make equal under the law both legal and extra-marital mothers and children. Germany, France and England were eventually forced to this revolutionary act.

The war not only disrupted the sanctity and stability of the indissoluble church marriage, but also encroached on yet another of the foundations of the family-housework. Rising prices, queues which exhausted the housewife, the system of delaying stocktaking until supplies had run out-all this led to a situation in which the women themselves hastened to do away with the domestic hearth, preferring to use communal facilities.

The work of destroying the social slavery of women as it was then, was carried through by the great workers' revolution. Women workers and peasants participated in the

great liberating struggle on an equal footing with men. The former specialisations of the female sex collapsed as the social structure rocked on its twin pillars, private property and class government. The great fire of the world uprising of the proletariat called woman from her baking tins into the arena of the barricades, the fight for freedom. Woman ceased to feel secure in her own home, alongside her familiar flagstones, drinking troughs and cradles, when all around bullets were whistling and, amazed, she heard the cry of the worker fighters:- 'To arms, comrades! All of you who cherish your freedom, who have grown to hate the chains of slavery and deprivation of civil rights! To arms, workers, to arms, women workers! ...'

The revolution accustomed women workers to great mass movements, to the struggle for the realisation of communism. The revolution in Russia won full political equality and equality of citizenship for women. The revolution fulfilled the demands of women workers from all countries: equal pay for equal work. The revolution made it impossible for women ever again to be tied to their families.[3] The revolution also abolished the previous forms of workers' movements, which had been shaped by the age of peaceful parliamentary rule. We are cut off from the period of the Second International [4] not only by four years, but a whole geological shift in the field of social and economic relations.

And from this point of view, many of the articles printed here are out of date. But the main issue is not out of date. It is still very much alive. That fundamental theme which I have tried to make the main thread running through these articles-namely, the necessity of special work among the women proletariat, separate within the party framework, and the setting up in the Party of a special party machine – a commission, bureau or group – for this purpose.

However profound are the changes which have been accomplished be-fore our eyes in the life and economic structure of our country, brought about by the war and the revolution, however far Soviet Russia has marched forward along the road to communism, the legacy of the capitalist order has still not been eradicated; the conditions of life, the working class family's way of life, the traditions which hold captive the mind of woman, the servitude of housework – all these have still not died away. And in so far as all the factors which prevented a working class woman from taking an active part in the liberating movement of the proletariat before the war are still operative, in so far as even now the Party still has to take into account both the political backwardness of women, and the bondage of the woman worker to her family, so the necessity of intensive work among the women proletariat, with the help of a party machine set up specifically for this purpose, remains as pressing as ever.

The setting up of a commission for agitation and propaganda among women workers in the centre and in the provinces will undoubtedly speed up this work. There was a time when the thought of specialised work within the Party, which I had been advocating since 1906, met with opposition even among my own comrades. But now, after the decision carried by the All Russian Congress of Women Workers and approved by the Party, it only remains for us to get down to its practical implementation. Our Party does not allow a separate women's movement or any independent unions or societies of women workers, but it has never denied the efficacy of a division of labour within the Party and the setting up of such special party machines as would promise to increase the number of its members or deepen its influence among the masses.

At the moment Soviet Russia is in need of many new fresh forces both for the struggle with the enemy[5] and for

the construction of the communist society. To create, to educate these forces from the many millions of the female working population – such are the tasks of the party commission for agitation and propaganda among women workers.

I would hope that this pamphlet might serve as some guidance for those of my comrades who intend to devote themselves to work among the female proletariat in particular. I hope that they will get from it the certainty that in taking upon themselves this difficult and sometimes thankless work, they are serving not the idea of the 'specialisation' of women, not a narrowly feminine business, but the whole task of building a united, strong, world-wide workers' party which before our very eyes is achieving the bright new world of international communism.

A. Kollontai

Moscow 1st December 1918

1. The Socialist Movement of Women Workers in Different Countries

One might think that there could be no clearer or more well-defined notion than that of a 'women's socialist movement'. But meanwhile it arouses so much indignation and we hear so often the exclamations and questions:- What is a women workers' movement? What are its tasks, its aims? Why can't it merge with the general movement of the working class, why can't it be dissolved in the general movement, since the Social Democrats deny the existence of an independent women's question? Isn't it a hangover from bourgeois feminism?

Questions like these are being asked not only in Russia. They are repeated in almost all countries, they can be heard in all languages. But most curious of all, it is where the women workers' movement is least developed, where organised women workers are least numerous m the Party and in the unions, that one hears loudest and most assured the voices of those who deny the necessity of technically separated work among the women proletariat And in their simplistic way. they cut through the whole tangled knot of the women's problem and the general social question.

The women workers' movement literally grew out of the womb of capitalist reality. But for a long time it advanced tentatively, seeking is way hesitating in its choice of methods. The women workers movement takes extremely motley and varied forms. These forms vary from country to country they are adapted to the conditions of the particular place, and to the character of the workers' movement. But gradually, especially in countries where social democracy has been strong, definite party machines have arisen to serve the women's socialist movement.

To-day it would be difficult to find a socialist who would quarrel with the necessity for widespread organisation

of the female proletariat. Social democrats in all countries pride themselves on the numbers of their 'women's army' and, in weighing up the chances of success in the class struggle, take into account this rapidly growing force. Consequently, if there is disagreement it is not about the essence of the question, but merely about methods and means of agitation and work among the female half of the working class. However in all countries the vital victory in this argument goes to the defenders of the German way of working-the fusion of the male and female halves of the working class in the party organisation, while retaining *the separation and autonomy* of agitation among the women of the working class.

The women's socialist movement is still very young: it has only been in existence for some twenty years.

It is true that before, workers' organisations, unions and parties had counted women among their members. But once they had become members of a party or trade union organisation, the women workers did not defend those areas which affect women most closely of all. This was the situation in Germany up to the middle of the twenties,[7] in England up to the twentieth century and in Russia until the 1905 revolution. The exploration of problems which affected women workers as women, and the defence of their interests as mothers and housewives, was left without any struggle in the hands of the feminists of the bourgeois camp.

The middle of the nineties may be considered a turning-point. At the Congress of the Social Democratic Party at Gotha[8] in 1896, and at the insistence of Clara Zetkin, the foundations were laid for special separate, autonomous agitational work among women. In the same year, at the London International Socialist Congress there took place the first private meeting of thirty socialist women, delegates to the International Congress from England, Germany America, Holland, Belgium and Poland. This conference

marked the beginning of a modest attempt to bring to life a women's socialist movement in other countries as well.[9]

This private meeting was above all concerned to examine the question of the relationship between bourgeois feminism and the socialist women's movement. It acknowledged the necessity of drawing a clear distinction between them, and noted the desirability of special socialist agitation among women workers in order to draw them into the ranks of the general class party.

Two decades have passed since the time of that first international meeting of socialist women. In those years capitalism has managed to subject to its rule not only new branches of industry but also new countries. Female labour in industry has established itself more firmly with every year, acquiring considerable social importance in the life of the people's economy. But since they lacked unity among themselves, were not involved in organisations, and were not linked by obligations to their male colleagues, women workers did indeed appear as dangerous rivals, undermining the progress of the organised struggle of the workers. In those years the organisation of women workers became an urgent and vital question. But in tackling the problem of the organisation of the female half of the proletariat and adapting themselves to the conditions of the surrounding social reality, each country solved the problem in its own way.

This explains the variety of organisational methods. Women workers joined general, mixed unions, organised themselves into separate women's trade unions, founded their clubs, and societies for self-education, or, finally, formed a special women's collective within the party, which undertook the responsibility for agitational and organisational work among women. It is this last type of work which offers the most convenient and efficient way of involving women workers in the class struggle. [One cannot but remark that the trade unions, too, were eventually

convinced of the good sense, even on purely economic grounds, of forming their own 'women's agitational committees' for carrying out work among women workers. Thus, for example, from 1895 onwards the General Commission of German Trade Unions included a central commission for agitational work amongst women.]

By 1907 the women workers' movement had already assumed such dimensions that it became possible to call the first International Women's Conference in Stuttgart in connection with the general International Socialist Congress. The women socialists not only exchanged information on what they had achieved in their own countries, but resolved to continue working along the same lines, to promote by all possible means the future growth and development of the women workers movement. After some disagreement, they accepted a motion introduced by the German women socialists concerning the setting up of a separate International Women's Bureau, which would strengthen the links between women workers' organisations in all countries.

The central organ of the international women workers movement recognised the newspaper *Gleichheit* (*Equality*) published by the German Party.

The Stuttgart Conference consolidated that share of independence which was necessary for further fruitful work among the women proletariat. It emerged quite clearly that although the women proletarian movement is an inseparable part of the general workers' movement, it nevertheless has certain original features of its own, due to the particular conditions of existence of the woman worker and the particular social and political position of woman in modern society. Although the objectives of agitation which is aimed specifically at women correspond to those of the workers' movement at large and although they constitute one part of an overall objective, yet because they are concerned most

immediately with the women's interests they can be best achieved through the initiative of the female representatives of the working class.

Although socialists admit that the question of women forms an integral part of the total social problem of our time, although they maintain that the woman worker is above all a member of a class kept in servitude and deprived of civil rights, and, in striving for her own liberation, must before everything else fight for the liberation of her entire class, they also, alongside this basic principle, concede another, additional proposition. A woman worker is not only a member of the working class, but at the same time she is a representative of one entire half of the human race. As opposed to the feminists, the socialists, demanding equal rights for women in state and society, do not shut their eyes to the fact that the woman's responsibilities towards the social collective society, will always be somewhat different to men's. The woman is not only an independent worker and citizen – at the same time she is a mother, a bearer of the future. This gives rise to a whole series of special demands, in areas such as women's labour protection, security for maternity and early childhood, help with the problems of children's upbringing, reforms in house-keeping and so on. [Although the interests of the working class as a whole are bound up with bringing about political equality for women workers, their actual lack of rights, however, even in countries where male workers possess political rights, imposes on the women particularly unpleasant conditions. Joining together in a special collective gives women workers an opportunity to influence their comrades within the Party, to inspire and urge them on to the struggle for political rights for working class women, gaining for women those rights which they themselves possess.]

In addition to this, in the majority of countries the woman worker finds herself, both in society and in the state,

in an exclusively helpless position. Women workers are pariahs even among the modern slaves of capital, and this outlawing of women gives rise to an inequality in the conditions of living between man and woman even in the working class itself. Whether in politics, in the family, in relations between the sexes (prostitution, double morality), or in the work situation, the woman is always allotted 'second place', her lack of rights is underlined by her life itself.

It is natural that even the psychology of a woman, under the influence of century-long slavery, is different from that of a working class man. The man worker is more independent, more decisive, and has more feeling of solidarity; his horizon is wider because he is not confined within the framework of narrow family relationships; it is easier for him to become aware of his interests and to connect these to class problems. But for a woman worker to reach the maturity of the views of an average male worker – that means a complete break with the tradition, the concepts, the morals, the customs, which have become part of her since the cradle. These traditions and customs, attempting to retain and hold onto a type of woman produced by past stages of economic development, turn into almost insuperable obstacles in the path of the class-consciousness of the woman worker. From this the conclusion is clear, that one can arouse woman's sleeping brain, and bring to life her will, only by means of a special approach to her, only by using specialised methods of work among women.

The peculiarity of these methods consists in the fact that while not breaking off general links between the general workers' and women workers' movement, while welding both wings into one in the process of struggle, bringing them together under the banner of general class tasks and demands, they nevertheless provide for a separate structure for agitation specifically designed to cater for the working class women. Separation has a double aim-on the one hand,

these intra-party collectives (commissions, women workers' bureaux and so on) must carry out special agitational work adapted to the level of the questions women want to have answered; their task is to recruit members among the mass of women who have a low level of consciousness to educate women workers' consciousness, to raise it to the level of the rest of the party members', to move women into the arena of revolutionary struggle. On the other hand these collectives give women workers the possibility of putting forward and defending in practical ways those interests which touch women most of all: motherhood, protection of children the rate set for children's and women's labour, the struggle against prostitution reforms in housekeeping and so on.

It follows that the formation of groups of women workers within the Party on the one hand lightens the task of attracting into the movement the broad masses of less aware women, those with whom one has to speak a different language than with men; and on the other hand, it is an opportunity to concentrate the party's attention on the special requirements of the women proletariat.

This was the conclusion that the western comrades gradually arrived at. This way of working with women has been adopted by almost all parties.[10] In Austria from 1908, in England from 1906. in the United States from 1908 m the Scandinavian countries, in Belgium and Holland from the beginning of the twentieth century, in Switzerland, in Finland and in France-special collectives of women socialists exist everywhere, carrying on agitational work with women workers and focussing the attention of the workers' party on that part of the socialist programme which affects working class women's interests most closely.

Thanks to this way of working, the women workers' movement is growing both in depth and in breadth. The number of organised women workers grows every year, in fact it even grows relatively more quickly than the number of

men who have been drawn back into the movement. In Germany, for example, in 1907 the Party hardly contained 10,500 women workers, in 1908 there were already 29,458 of them, in 1909 – 62,259, in 1910 – 82,846, in 1911 – 107,000 in 1912 – 130,000, in 1913 – 150,000. In other words, in six years the number of women in the Party has increased fifteen times, and the number of men has not even doubled. In 1907 there were about 600,000 in the Party, and in 1913 - 830,000.

A very short time ago, at the first International Conference of Women Socialists at Stuttgart, in 1907, the organised army of women workers was expressed in such modest figures that the majority of countries did not even cite it.

At that time England took first place in organised numbers, with her 15,0000 women workers as members of trade unions. In Germany then, the unions counted 120,000. In Austria the unions contained about 42,000 women workers; m Hungary about 15,000. In the Party[11] the degree of organisation of women was considerably lower. At that tune the country which could pride itself on the greatest number of social democrats was little Finland, who had managed to bring into the movement more than 18,000 women workers.

A different and more cheerful picture was given by the accounts presented by delegates at the Second International Women's Socialist Conference in Copenhagen, in August 1910.

Only three years had passed since the first women's conference, but what growth there had been in the army of women workers now actively taking part in the movement! In England the number of women workers organised into unions had already passed the 200,000 mark; in Germany count 131,000 women workers in unions and 82,645 members of the Party; in Austria the Party already contained

about 7,000 women members. Other countries too showed considerable progress in the movement.

As evidence for the level of organisation of women workers we give the following data for the last years before the war;

England, 1911, in trade unions	292,868
England, 1911, in the Women's Labour League[12]	5,000
Germany, 1910, in trade unions	161,512
Germany, 1913, in the Social Democratic Party	150,000
Austria, 1911, in trade unions	47,901
Austria, 1910, in the Social Democratic Party	19,000
France, 1908, in trade unions	88,906
Italy, 1908, in trade unions	41,000
Italy, 1908, in the Social Democratic Party	10,711

Holland, 1910, in trade unions	44,000
Holland, 1910, in the Party	2,943
Switzerland, 1910, in trade unions	6,000
Switzerland, 1910, in the Social Democratic Party	1,000
Finland, 1910, in the Social Democratic Party	17,000
Norway, 1909, in trade unions	3,000
Norway, 1909, in the Party	1,500

There is no information given here about a number of countries – Belgium, Spain, Denmark, Sweden. Furthermore much of the information given here is out of date, since the women workers' movement began to make particularly quick progress in the most recent years. For this reason one can affirm without exaggeration that in Europe alone the number of organised women workers is over one million.

The basis for these organisational successes is undoubtedly an objective economic factor; the rapid growth of female industrial labour, which is particularly noticeable in countries with a relatively young, intensive, capitalist economy.[13] But, alongside this objective factor, an important

role was also played by the conscious active influence of the party on the masses of women and by the specialised, systematic work which, especially in the years just before the war, was carried on energetically and thoughtfully by the party organisations of all countries.

To get a fuller idea of the agitational methods of the women's socialist movement we should examine the history of this movement in somewhat greater detail. In this instance Germany is the most characteristic country; the others repeat, with small modifications, the experience of the German socialist movement and borrow from them the basic model for their work with the women proletariat.

If England as early as the beginning of the nineteenth century was the cradle of trade union movements of women workers (the women weavers of Lancashire joined the weavers' trade union as early as 1824), if in the seventies, on the initiative of Patterson,[14] a first attempt was made to unite the separate women's trade unions in the 'League for the Protection of Women's Labour' (later the 'League of Women's Trade Unions-Trade Union League') and, in this way, link and concentrate the movement, if the English women workers were the first to go to the defence of their violated economic interests, nevertheless it was German Social Democracy that carried within its womb the party political movement of women workers.

However significant were the successes of the trade union organisation ,of women workers in England, this movement bore a narrowly economic character.[15] On the general social tasks of the liberation of women, on the vital interests of women workers as women, as mothers, there was no discussion in either the mixed, or the separate women's unions. Not only in England, but also in other countries – in Germany, France, America, women workers took part in the trade union movement only for the sake of very immediate practical gains in the field of labour. All general-social

questions, affecting the interests of women, were discussed and brought forward only by the growing feminist movement. The feminists for their part altered the demands of the women workers and presented them to the world in a distorted form, in the guise of bare, lifeless formulae of absolute equality of rights between men and women in all fields of life and in all areas. And even now the women workers' movement in England still bears the imprint of this duality: whereas on economic grounds the woman worker, as a conscious comrade, fights for the interests of her class, in the sphere of social and political ideals the less conscious woman worker still hangs onto the skirts of the Suffragettes and is ready to uphold the principle of the equality of women, albeit to the detriment of her class interests.[16]

The women workers' movement in Germany was of a completely different character. It is true that in the sixties and seventies the organisation of women workers also concentrated, mainly, on unions, but the rapid increase in female labour, with the quickening tempo of capitalist development in Germany, forced the young German Socialist Party to take up a definite position in relation to the question of women.

Two points of view were in conflict within the workers' organisations: some looked upon women's professional labour as an abnormal deviation from the 'natural social order', and hoped to force women back into the house by means of prohibitive laws: others accepted this phenomena as an inevitable stage, leading woman to her final liberation-in her capacity both as a seller of her labour and as a woman.

In this context a decisive role was played by Bebel's book, *Woman and Socialism*, which first came out in 1879. This book cast a bright light on the complicated problem of woman, and opened up new horizons to the Social Democrats. It established a close link between the question

of women and the general class aim of the workers, but at the same time also drew attention to the needs and demands peculiar to women, the distinctive things that characterise woman as a representative of her sex. This acknowledgement of the special position of woman in modern society made it necessary, without sinning against the unity of the Party, to delineate a certain area of work with the women proletariat.

The first attempts to bring to life women socialist organisations in Germany took place towards the middle of the eighties. On the initiative of an ex-feminist, who had gone over to the Social Democrats, Guillaume-Schack, societies for self-education or women workers' clubs were set up in Berlin. But the eighties in Germany were a dark period when a law discriminating against socialists was in force. The police powers mercilessly destroyed these innocent organisations, whose creation had cost so much effort. The special decree of 1887 finally wiped from the face of the earth the first beginnings of women's socialist societies.

With the defeat of the law against socialists, the workers' movement in Germany immediately stood on firm ground; the women workers' movement was also revived. The trade unions not only gave access to women, but chose a woman as their president for the General Commission of Trade Unions. The Social Democratic Party, for its part, at the Erfurt Congress decided to take up a completely definite position with regard to the question of women. [In both previous socialist programmes, those of Erfurt and Gotha, the Party's attitude to the question of women was still ill-defined. The demands affecting women were limited to general desires for the protection of female labour and the recognition of full political rights for adults, without, however, emphasising that this last demand applied to women too.]

The Erfurt programme of 1891 not only emphasises the demand for political rights for all citizens without

distinction according to sex, but in point five expresses a particular demand, in the interests of women: "the abolition of all laws which place women in less favourable conditions of existence than men with regard to political or civil rights." [17] This was an important admission. The Social Democratic Party in this way took upon itself the defence of the interests of the women of the working class, in the widest sense of the word. Already it was not only a question of improving women's working conditions, but also of her liberation as a citizen, as a person.

Consistent with this new aim, it was necessary for the Party to modify the party rules, so as to leave open a place for women in party work. A resolution had already been passed at the Congress at Halle, in 1890, concerning women chairmen at congresses, which allowed these women chairmen to be elected at special women's meetings. [At the Berlin Congress of 1892, however, the socialist women themselves opposed this resolution and, arguing that 'women demand equality, not privilege', insisted that the decision be recalled. A typical case, demonstrating the way in which the 'equal rights' principle of the 'equal rights' feminists influenced even the women socialists in that period of the formation of the women workers' movement. However, as early as the 1894 Congress, at the insistence of Zetkin, Auer, Singer and others the resolution was put forward again. "Experience has shown," said Zetkin, "what an error it was to reject this resolution. The fact of the matter is that women are without rights and with all the will in the world cannot participate in the general party organisation. But apart from that, among the masses, women are considerably more backward than men, in general assemblies they cannot stand up for themselves, and this leads to dissatisfaction and bewilderment." From Proceedings of the Party Congress at Frankfurt am Main, 1894, p.174.]

At the Berlin Congress the Berlin women's organisation introduced an amendment whereby the title, 'Male Confidential Agent', be replaced simply by 'Confidential Agent',(18) which would give women access to this post. [See Proceedings of the Party Congress at Berlin, 1894, p. 145.] Another women's organisation, from Mannheim, asked that agitational work with women should be extended. But the most decisive step, with regard to the method chosen by the Party for work with women workers, was taken at the congress at Gotha in 1896. The question raised by Clara Zetkin about agitation with women workers' set up the basis for specialised, technically separate party work with women. Drawing a boundary line between the conceptions of equality held by the bourgeois camp and by the socialist women, Zetkin nevertheless insisted, in her classically worded resolution, that agitation among women should concentrate, beyond the general aims of the Party, on a whole range of purely 'women's questions': protection at work, insurance for childbirth, security for children, education of children, political education of women, political equality of women, and so on. In the resolution it was suggested that they start publishing literature, pamphlets and leaflets especially for women. In addition to this historic resolution, which shaped the relations of the Party to the women workers' movement and its problems, at the same congress another three resolutions were passed, each supplementing the others; and which undoubtedly defined the Party's new course in the matter of the organisation of women workers.

The Berlin group's resolution suggested intensifying agitational work with women in order to draw them into unions, in view of the fact that the law forbade women to enter the Party openly. The second proposal referred to the organisational sphere: it insisted on the introduction of special posts of 'female confidential agents' in the Party, who

would be responsible for systematic agitational work with women in order to raise their class consciousness and to draw them into the Party. The third resolution proposed that several women's meetings should immediately be held in order to elect female confidential agents.

The Gotha Congress officially inaugurated intra-party work for the organisation of women, and systemised agitation with the female proletariat.

The projected line of work developed steadfastly. Subsequent congresses merely introduced partial modifications to the issue of the organisation of women workers and agitational work among them; in general terms the Party kept to the plan of work as it had been outlined at Gotha. It is true that an insuperable obstacle stood in the way of development of a women's socialist movement in Germany – the law forbidding the open entry of women into the Party. In places where there was no local law preventing women from taking part in general movements, for example in Baden, Wurtenburg, Saxony, Hessen, a few small states and free towns – Bremen, Lubeck, Hamburg – there the women workers openly joined the Party. In other places they joined together beneath the flag of 'societies for the self-education of women workers' or came together round a 'confidential agent' in free, unstructured groups. Nevertheless, thanks to the system of 'confidential agents', the special chairmanship of women at congresses, and the existence of the women's paper *Gleichheit* (*Equality*), the women's socialist movement, while developing partly outside the boundaries of the Party, was closely linked to the general movement and always remained under the influence of the Social Democrats.

The review of the party rules in Mainz in 1900, in which the system of male 'confidential agents' was replaced by local committees, did not lead to any alterations in the system of the organisation of the female proletariat. At the

1902 Congress in Munich a resolution was put forward leaving in force the special 'female confidential agents', to whom was entrusted the work of the organisation of women workers and carrying on socialist agitational work with them. At the Mainz Congress, too, the post of 'central female confidential agent' for the whole of Germany was confirmed. The movement had managed to grow in strength so much since the time of the Gotha Conference that as early as 1900 in Mainz, it became possible to hold the first German Socialist Women's Conference. Since that time these conferences have taken place periodically in Germany every two years: in Mainz 1900, in Munich 1902 in Bremen 1904, in Mannheim 1906, in Nuremburg 1908, and in Jena 1911. The women workers' conferences arose as a natural answer to the growing demands which their lives called for. The question of voting rights for women in the Reichstag and in local Landtags could no longer be put off, nor could the ailing, complicated problem of maternity. Also lined up were the questions of pre-school education for children, of protection for children's and women's labour, reforms of the schools, reforms of housekeeping, organisations for domestic servants, the rates set for the labour of domestic workers, security for nursing mothers and babies, the struggle against infant mortality and so on.

All these questions involved women workers very closely; they grew directly out of their lives, and they gave birth to new demands. The conferences of women socialists examined, discussed, and worked out these demands, and in this way forced the Party, too, to examine with greater care and thought the special needs and aspirations of women workers. In this way, the women's conferences turned into kinds of *special commissions which prepared material for the general workers' congresses on special questions, those which were relevant to women*. The result was some kind of division of labour within

the Party, from which the general movement undoubtedly gained a great deal.

It is usual to consider the separation of the women's socialist movement in Germany as arising exclusively from political tactics, and the existence of the law forbidding women from becoming members of political, organisations. This idea is mistaken. It is true that in its time the law about unions and organisations forced the women's socialist movement to seek refuge in extra-party 'societies for the self-education of women workers'. But later, when the number of politically conscious women workers had in-creased, the Party found a means of getting round the watchful eye of the law and, in so far as the unity of the movement required it, had. women join organisations in the capacity of 'voluntary donors' to the Party, and then these donations were repeated periodically, serving as the membership fee. Yet the system of 'female confidential agents', special women's meetings, a separate women's bureau with its own organ, *Gleichheit*, women's conferences and so on, remained in force.

Finally, when in 1908 the Prussian law about unions and organisations had ceased to function, and the women workers were thus able to take part in the political movement of the Social Democrats, nothing stood in the way of the abolition of the special work among women. But what did the Party do? Did it renounce its previous methods of work with women of the proletariat?

On the contrary. At the Nuremburg Congress of 1908, after a radical review of the party rules, the women's socialist movement was allowed to have as much technical autonomy as was possible without damaging the unity of the class movement.

The Party considered it the duty of women workers to enter the Party as equal members, but settled on a lower membership fee for women since they received a lower rate of pay for their work. And although the system of female

confidential agents was repealed, the party rules demanded that on each committee there should be a special representation of women workers. depending on the number of women members in a given district. In any case there had to be at least one person on the committee elected by women, who was to be responsible for agitational work and the organisation of women workers. On the central committee of the Party there was also a special representation for women workers. The Women's Bureau of the Party was not abolished, the women worker's paper, *Gleichheit*, not only continued to be published, but alongside this central organ of women workers there grew up a whole range of local or trade union publications, devoted to the interests and demands of women workers. The party rules also left in force the separate meetings for women workers (courses, discussion evenings), and also, where they were needed, the 'societies for self education', and, finally, the separate women's conferences.

In this way, the changes in the law about unions and organisations did not change the type and character of party work in Germany. On the contrary, the 'division of labour' in the Party with regard to agitational work among women, in the years immediately before the war, left greater scope for the development and elucidation among the female proletariat of special women's demands. It is sufficient to mention just the 'Women's Day', and the agitational work for women's voting rights which was done around this new method of arousing the interest of women workers in politics, educating them in revolutionary protest on the grounds of women workers' lack of civil rights.

The women's wing of the German workers' party developed each year wider and more many-sided activities. The Party is indebted to women workers and their initiative for a whole range of actions: on the problems of the cost of living, insurance for maternity, extension of voting rights in communal self-government. The women workers took upon

themselves an enormous part of the work at the time of the elections in the Reichstag ii January 1912, they played an active part in the election of members of the Sickness Benefit Fund; they carried out tireless agitation to draw women workers into the Party, they held meetings, they organised so-called discuss ion evenings for women everywhere and specialised educational courses etc. In 1912 the Women's Bureau organised 66 agitation trips across Germany during the year, not counting agitational work carried on by women worker; in the provinces. They held 22 open women's meetings, over and above the regular discussion evenings and courses. In 646 District Committees (out of 4,827) women had their own special representation before the war. *Gleichheit* printed an edition of 107,000 copies. During that year the number of members rose to 22½ thousand!

As well as agitational work at the meetings, there was widespread special agitational work carried out among the 'wives of workers' at home, which produced splendid results. The special 'Commissions for the Care of Children' were replenished with women. There were 125 of these commissions before the war and their activities were being extended all the time.

In this way German social democracy, independently of whatever external reasons may have existed, adhered to the principle of special, separate work among the female proletariat, based on the principle of 'division of labour' within the Party.

Finding itself in the same situation as the German party, and not having the legal right to get women workers to join political organisations, the Austrian Social Democrats found their own way of solving the problem of how to get women into the workers' movement.

They organised a special 'Women's General State Committee', which officially stood outside the Party, but was linked to it ideologically. However, as early as the Second

Conference of Women Workers in 1903 the agenda contained an item on 'women's role in the political struggle'. In spite of the fact that the conference supported the desirability of wider political propaganda among women workers, in spite of the decision taken to form local women's committees for this purpose, women's involvement in politics progressed feebly and with difficulty. In this sense, the grand movement of Austrian workers for the reform of the voting laws in 1905 acted as a spur. Women were drawn into the struggle, and into the general strike. The Women's General State Committee found it necessary after that to introduce, both into the party committee and into the commission of trade unions, the project of organised work among women workers along the lines of the German movement. The Party Congress of 1907 came out in favour of a special agitational section within the Party, and from the third women's conference in 1908 onwards, systematic, separate work was carried on among the female proletariat in Austria on the same lines as in Germany. Even the repeal in 1910 of the law which had hindered the entry of women into political organisations did not bring about any changes in this field.

In England the special task of agitation among women workers was taken up by the Women's Labour League within the Labour Party[19] whilst in the British Social Democratic Party there had existed since 1906 a special Women's Committee for this purpose. In 1908 the American Socialist Party also set up a special, separate women's committee, and from that time on the organisation of women workers in America has achieved considerable success In Switzerland the Union of Women Workers, founded by Clara Zetkin, comprising about fifteen sections, up until the war took upon itself all the work of socialist propaganda among women workers. The same type of intra-party women's collective-committees, bureaux, secretariats can be found in

Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Holland. In France there has also been in recent years an attempt to bring to life a similar women's party organisation. Alongside this method of organising women workers in various countries-the United States, England, Holland, Sweden – there still exist special organisations, whose official status is outside the Party, although they too come under the ideological leadership of the Social Democrats. The clubs, societies for the self-education of women workers, enlightenment unions and so on also belong to this type of organisation. The goal of these societies conies down to either 'preparing the ground', to carrying on propaganda among the most backward, ignorant masses, or to deepening the theoretical knowledge of women workers, preparing young socialist forces for the role of the leadership of the movement.

We, in Russia, from 1905 have also made attempts to create an organisation of this type. The first attempt took place in the spring of 1906 and consisted in opening 'women workers' clubs' without preliminary permission in some parts of Petrograd.[20] The breaking up of the first Duma[21] interrupted the activity of these clubs.

The second attempt took place in the autumn of 1907. The Social Democrats initiated a Society for the Self-Education of Women Workers, which set itself the task of attracting the broad masses of women with a low level of consciousness into the movement, getting them into unions, and involving them in the Party.

The Czarist regime did not give these attempts any chance to put down roots. In 1909 the workers' movement was again forced underground. But the social democratic women workers came to the first All-Russian Women's Congress in 1908, called by the bourgeois equal rights movement. The social democrat women workers were represented by their own separate class group, numbering forty-five women. Having passed their own independent

resolutions on all questions, the women workers finally walked out of this 'ladies' congress.

Later, in 1913, the Social Democratic Party decided to hold a Woman's Day and in Russia this was seen as a symptom of the fact that the Russian working class too was gradually coming to realise the necessity of carrying on special work in the women's proletariat. Simple efficiency dictates this kind of division of labour. The position of women workers in modern society, the special responsibilities, borne by women as mothers and housekeepers, mean that a special type of agitation adapted to the women proletariat is necessary. [The 'Woman's Day' was held by the Party in the following three years: in 1913, in 1914 and in historical 1917 on the 25th of February, the day of the beginning of the great revolution. In the spring of 1917, in Petrograd, the Bolsheviks began to publish the paper. Woman Worker, and the Mensheviks published The Voice of the Woman Worker. The war put a stop to both papers. For more details of the women workers' movement in Russia see my article in the collection: The Communist Party and the Organisation of Women Workers.]

In the final analysis the general class workers' movement stands to gain from such a division, i.e. separate agitation among women workers, since the greater concern for the interests and needs of women increases the popularity of the party among women workers and encourages women to join in general party organisation. In this way the special party machine, working for the female half of the working class, not only does not damage the unity of the movement, but, on the contrary, increases the numbers, strength and significance of the workers' party, extending by this means the framework of its social-creative work even as regards solving the complicated and confused 'women's question'.

2. Forms of Organisation of Women Workers in the West

The forms which have been adopted by the female proletarian movement in various countries are so variegated and idiosyncratic that it is difficult to describe them in a short and cursory outline. The variety of these forms is due, in the main, to the distinctive peculiarities of the social-political and economic conditions of each country; it also depends in part on the *conscious part of the working class and the women workers' movement*. We must not lose sight of the fact that the female proletarian movement in almost all countries is still in its formative period and therefore depends to a considerable degree on the atmosphere of "sympathy" or "indifference" which it meets among its class comrades who have already progressed a lone way along the road of the struggle for the better future.

The female proletarian movement is manifested in the following most typical forms. First of all *trade unions*, which fall into two groups – *mixed*, that is consisting of men and women, and purely *women's unions*. The first type is the older and the most widespread. As early as 1824 the Lancashire women weavers entered the trade union organisation of weavers, and al-though women did not even have equal rights with men (for a long time they could take no part in the direction of the English trade unions, they could not be elected for union posts, and so on), all the same their participation in the economic struggle had an enormous educative significance and prepared the ground for the later socialist women's movement.

The trade union organisations of the second type, that is women only, nourished mainly on the soil of male workers' hostile attitudes towards the rivalry of female labour, and at the same time were nurtured by the

emancipation movement of the women of the bourgeois classes. As early as the seventies Mrs. Patterson organised the League for the Protection of Women's Labour, which for a long time worked in conjunction with the bourgeois equal rights campaign and only later was transformed into a league of women's trade unions; in later years the League joined the general trade union organisation of workers and is gradually freeing itself from the influence of the feminists.

Trade union organisations confined to women are found in almost all countries (United States, France, Sweden, Denmark, Germany and so on) although gradually and inevitably they are forced out by trade unions of the mixed type. Trade union organisations have a definite task-to struggle for the economic interests of the members of the working class; moreover, it is precisely these, that is the economic interests, which for the representatives of the proletariat of both sexes are the same and inseparable. On this point any separation on the basis of sex is artificial; it runs absolutely counter to the interests of the worker and can only damage the immediate aims of the trade union struggle. As the proletarian, on the basis of his own experience, becomes imbued with the realisation of this unity and allows women workers access to his organisations, and more than that – takes special steps to enlist them-then it will no longer make any sense to have separate trade unions for women. [But whereas the organisational division of the unions into male and female harms the unity of the movement in the economic field, on the other hand the separation off of agitational work aimed at the female proletariat is desirable even within the ranks of the trade union organisations. As practice in other countries has shown, this is the only reliable method of enlisting the support of the more recalcitrant of the unions' female members.]

If they remained up until now, it is either in those trades where only women are employed, or it has been under

the indirect influence of bourgeois feminism, which is always harmful to those fighting for class unity.

The second form which the women's proletarian movement can adopt is the *socialist organisations*, pursuing political and general class goals. This form too of women workers' movement falls into two groups: firstly, *independent organisations of women workers*, societies for self-education, clubs for women workers, enlightenment societies, and so on, which, existing out-side the Party, nevertheless work in close collaboration with it, and are under its ideological leadership. Some organisations of this type, like the 'educational societies for women and girls of the working class', which until 1908 were so widespread in Germany, or the Women's Socialist Society of New York, or women workers' clubs in Sweden, see their aims as carrying out propaganda mainly among the most ignorant and backward masses, thereby recruiting new members for the Party. Others, like the Socialist Women's Clubs of Holland, bring together women workers who are already politically conscious, but give them a deeper theoretical and practical preparation for general party work. Both these types of organisations, which are dying out, are inefficient and do not respond to the revolutionary shift which is bringing together and rallying the proletariat of both sexes.

The second type of socialist women's organisations consists of those which are divisions of the party itself, that is, existing not outside but within it as special organs – commissions, committees, bureaux or secretariats, to whom the Party entrusts the special task of serving the women proletariat. This is the vital and acceptable type. Extensive and many-sided activities have fallen to the lot of these special collectives, activities which are especially varied in Germany.

The basic 'loosening of the soil' for the socialist harvest also belongs here, as does the preparation of young

forces for the role of future 'women leaders', and the publishing of a women's party journal, and the concern about the fate of the children of the working class (for example the Commission for the Defence of Children in Germany, or the English committees, concerned with the fate of schoolchildren, the 'hot dinners', summer colonies, and so on), and finally, the organisation of special political actions related to voting rights for women, such as took place 1908-9 in Prussia a propos of the electoral reforms. The women's bureaux, commissions' and secretariats also undertake the responsibility for the organisation of women's meetings, special courses, the calling of women's socialist conferences, the publication of brochures and pamphlets, in brief, the broadly based work of agitation and propaganda among the women proletariat.

In the present time there is practically no country in which the Party would not assign work with women to a special branch of its activity. The necessity of this separation is felt by socialists all over the world and is dictated by simple efficiency. The exclusive position of women in modern society not only gives rise to special demands on the part of the women proletariat (security for maternity and childhood, gaining civil and political equality of rights, reforms in housekeeping, and so on), but it also necessitates significant modifications in the method of agitation and propaganda among the female half of the working class. It goes without saying that this does not destroy the unity of the movement. On the contrary, thanks to the efforts of social democracy and its leadership, the women's proletarian movement, like a fresh stream pouring its waters into a mighty river, fuses with it and raises its level.

In the present time world social democracy no longer contests the necessity and desirability of special work with women. But for a long time the 'fear of feminism' forced not

only socialists, but also socialist women, to shun any such division of labour.

Though it emerged in theory and in principle as a supporter of women's rights, and also took practical steps to defend the interests of women workers, social democracy, nevertheless, for many years made no efforts, nor employed any means to arouse the drowsy, submissive masses of women... if the organised workers did win better conditions of work and life for the women workers, then they did this not with the participation of the woman worker herself, but on her behalf... and this was their main mistake.

Only separate individuals, such as Louisa Otta in Germany, who in 1848 addressed the 'brotherly union' of workers and indicated the necessity of involving women, too, in the workers' organisations, or the ex-worker Henrietta Law, the only woman member in the general council of the First International, who attempted to organise woman workers in England, showed any initiative in this respect. But their attempts were defeated as much by the indifference of their own comrades as by external obstacles of a political character. In addition to this there was that hostile attitude towards the rivalry of female labour, which for a long -time held sway among the male proletariat, and which forced many trade unions to close their doors to women. This hostility, this mistaken and narrow-minded conception of their interests has not completely disappeared even now – one still comes across echoes of it in England, in the Scandinavian countries, in France and even in Germany; sound notions of the unity of the movement, corresponding to the real interests of the working class as a whole, are only gradually making headway.

But, of course, it is only a small thing to open up working organisations to women; to awaken women's consciousness, to give scope to its activity, new methods and a new approach to the masses of women were needed.

Germany was the first to progress along these lines. August Bebel's book, *Woman and Socialism* – the gospel of every woman socialist – did much to assess the question and elucidate it correctly. Having established that the 'woman question' depended on the solution of general socialist problems of our times, it nevertheless noted the specific peculiarities of the position of women in capitalist society, which of themselves define the necessity of separate work with the female proletariat.

It is usually thought that the separation of the women's movement in Germany was made necessary by external reasons, enforced by the existence of laws which forbade women access to political organisations. This conception is radically wrong. One must not forget that after 1892 the restricting paragraph only referred to women's participation in political organisations. Access to trade union organisations was, consequently, perfectly free. Moreover in the nineties in Germany it was precisely in the trade unions that separate, special, agitational work among the female proletariat was being carried out, preparing the ground for socialist propaganda among women workers. To cite this ill-starred paragraph of the German Imperial Laws is also inappropriate because, when the time was ripe and the interests of the Party demanded it, means were found to get round the embarrassing paragraph as well as everything else.

Finally when the law forbidding women to take part in political organisations was repealed, there was no longer, in 1908, any valid external reason for dividing the proletariat according to sex. The organisation became general but the necessity of special work with women was by no means made superfluous. At the Nuremburg Conference in 1908, when they were working out new party rules, the German Social Democrats recognised the necessity of retaining special work with women, separate women's meetings, women's own local

and central representation, the women's central newspaper, women's conferences, and so on.

Two essential moments – economic and political – in the history of the workers' movement defined the necessity for separate work with the female proletariat. As the number of women workers grew, as they represented more intensified competition on the labour market, the question of trade union organisations for women workers became vital and acute. In the name of the interests of the trade union movement, in the name of the successes of the struggle of the proletariat, it was necessary to 'render harmless' these scattered dispersed, and unconscious elements, which appeared as a serious hindrance to the movement; in other words, women too had to be drawn into the trade union struggle. In 1895 the General Commission of Trade Unions of Germany founded a Women's Agitation Commission, sought out new methods of approaching the female masses and carried out special agitation and propaganda among women workers. And throughout the nineties *Gleichheit* appeared as the spokeswoman for a woman's movement which was predominantly trade union-economic and not political.

The second moment which determined the necessity for separate work among women, within the framework of the Social Democratic Party, was the political moment. In a whole range of countries over the last ten years the question of electoral reform, of the further democratisation of the state system, had become more and more urgent and acute. Under this influence, there was a noticeable change in the attitude of the political workers' organisation to the women workers' movement. While theoretically acknowledging the advantage of attracting the female proletarian elements into the political struggle, the Party had not felt in this the same sense of urgency as had encouraged the trade unions to look for new ways and methods, which would provide a way into

the mind and heart of the woman worker. In the nineties not one workers' party throughout the world had manifested its activity in the field of organisation of the female proletariat. Although at the Party Congress at Gotha, in 1896, at the insistence of a group of women Social Democrats it had confirmed the post of 'female confidential agent' who would undertake responsibility for all work among the female proletariat, the German Party, when it drew up its new party rules in Mainz in 1900, *forgot* to include this point... but all it took was for the question of electoral reform in the German Landtags to come onto the 'agenda', and their attitude to the women workers' movement changed.

The Party's indifference to this question had deep and vital roots in the following: while women were deprived of political rights, the involvement of women in the party cadres had incomparably less significance for the immediate successes of the Social Democrats, than energetic work among the male proletariat. Agitation among women workers was somehow intangible – it was work, not for the "present" [22], but only for the remote future. The question of radical reform of the electoral system brought women too into the circle of the political fight. Getting women workers, these possible future voters, into party life acquired a topical interest... The women's socialist movement in Germany began to make rapid progress from the beginning of the twentieth century, since from then on it met with full sympathy from part of the Party; that is precisely the moment when the struggle for electoral reform was flaring up in the country.

We observe the same picture in other countries. In England the indifference of the socialist parties towards the women workers' movement can be explained by the success of the Suffragettes among women workers. For a long time the Suffragettes were the only active spokeswomen for the political demands of women. But the revival of the question

of the radical reform of the whole system of representation in England also generated an interest in the women workers' movement. In 1906 the Women's Labour League was formed,[23] presenting itself as the women's wing of the Labour Party, and setting itself the aim firstly of uniting all the forces of the female proletariat, and then gaining the equality of political rights for women. In 1909 the Social Democratic Party of England set up a separate committee for carrying out special propaganda among women: members of the Party, predominantly women, raised the campaign for universal franchise, to counterbalance the demands the Suffragettes were making for electoral qualification.(24)

The struggle for electoral reform in Austria, in spite of the removal from the agenda of the fifth article of the electoral rules, acted as a spur to the revival of party propaganda among women and led to the definite and systematic organisation of this special branch of party work.

In Belgium the beginning of the women's socialist movement dates from the time of the struggle for electoral reform.

In the United States, where many 'urgent class problems' flared up before the workers and where the movement constantly stumbled against obstacles which were connected with the flaws in the worn out system of bourgeois parliamentarianism, the drawing of women workers into active political struggle was dictated by the interests of the Party. In 1908 the Socialist Party of America organised a women's committee for agitation and propaganda among women workers. On the other hand, in countries such as France or Switzerland, where questions of further democratisation of the state system were not being raised, the women's socialist movement was only weakly developed.

In conclusion, one cannot help noting that in every country (except Germany) the majority of women's cells (commissions, bureaux, and so on) within the party structure

are of very recent origin, having crystallised during the five or six years immediately before the war. The progress made during these last years in drawing women workers into the party is all the more striking and the Women Workers' Conference in Copenhagen was a bright testimony of this. There is no doubt that with the help that the work among the female proletariat is now receiving from the Social Democrats, the involvement of the women workers in the class struggle will go forward at an even faster rate...

The participation of women workers in a general proletarian movement has ceased to be 'a luxury', and has become a basic necessity for the success of the revolutionary struggle.

Editors' Notes

1. Kollontai is referring here to the First World War and the changes brought about in the international socialist movement by the war and the Russian revolution. Before the First World War, all the socialist parties were organised in the Second International. In 1918, when this pamphlet was published, negotiations for affiliation to the Third International were underway. This Third Communist International (the Comintern) was initiated by the Bolsheviks after the revolution, and European socialists at this time had to choose between two distinct forms of organising. Those who continued their affiliation to the Second International were committed to socialism by reform, while those who joined the Third International were committed to socialism through revolution.

It is important to remember that at the time of the Russian revolution, Marxists assumed that revolution in Europe would follow very quickly, and that socialism in Russia would not come about in isolation.

2. By "independent organisations of women workers" she means organisations outside the socialist parties. The "special organisations" to which she refers are these same organisations, not the separate women's sections within the parties. This is made clear later in the pamphlet.

3. See Sheila's introduction, p.vi, on Kollontai's underestimation of the resilience of old attitudes and culture.

4. See note 1 above.

5. i.e., the White Russians and the foreign interventionist troops (including troops sent by England, which were used both to fight against the Red Army and to train the White Russian forces).

6. The Social Democratic Party was the name for the marxist party before the Third International. After the

formation of the Third International, it was called the Communist Party. See Sheila's introduction, pp.iii/iv.

7. i.e., the 1820s.

8. Before 1917, Germany was the centre of marxism, with by far the largest marxist party, the Social Democratic Party. The founders of social democracy in Germany, Bebel and Leibknecht, and leading members of the German S.D.P. like Kautsky, Luxemburg Zetkin and others, were known internationally.

9. Rosa Luxemburg and Clara Zetkin were among the women delegates from abroad who attended this conference, which was organised by the British section of the Second International. Numerous British organisations sent delegates- the Fabian Society, the Independent Labour Party, the Social Democratic Federation, Hammersmith Socialist Society, Oxford District Socialist Union, the Labour Church Union, Trades and Labour Councils and Trade Unions were all represented. (Information from *Report of the Proceedings of the International Socialist and Trade Union Congress held in London 1896*. British Museum.)

10. When Kollontai talks about "the parties" in Europe, she seems to be referring in the British context to both the marxist party – i.e. the Social Democratic Federation founded by Hyndman, called the Social Democratic Party from October 1907 (which joined with other marxists in forming the British Socialist Party in May 1912) – and the non-marxist Labour Party.

11. This concept of "the Party," which in the context of other European countries is used to indicate the Social Democratic Party of that country, is used rather loosely in the British context. See note 12 below.

12. The Women's Labour League was founded by members of the Independent Labour Party in 1906, and affiliated to the Labour Party in the same year. After the General Election of 1906, when it won 29 seats in Parliament,

the Labour Party was recognised for the first time as a party of national importance.

The women had helped to build the movement from its very commencement; they had full recognition in the Party of their citizenship and their right and duty to take part in public work. Yet, owing largely to the fact that the Party is composed in the main of trade unionists, men were coming by hundreds and thousands into the ranks, and the wives and sweethearts were being left outside. If the new Party was not to be a purely masculine affair, we saw that a special effort must be made to reach the women and enlist their support. We do not want to organise ourselves separately from the men, but we have found that the best way to co-operate with them is to educate ourselves; to teach ourselves to discuss and understand and take responsibility in our own meetings, and thus to increase our power and at the same time our powers for the right. We are affiliated nationally to the Labour Party, and our local Leagues work with the local Labour councillors. We have about half a hundred branches now.

Object of the League: To form an organisation of women to work for Independent Labour Representation in connection with the Labour Party, and to obtain direct Labour Representation of women in Parliament and on all local bodies. (Margaret Macdonald, founder member of the Women's Labour League, writing in *Women Workers, Souvenir Pamphlet of Women's Labour Day, July 1909*. London School of Economics Library.)

It is interesting that where for other countries figures for trade union membership are followed by those for membership of the national Social Democratic Party, for England they are followed by figures for membership of the women's section of the Labour Party, rather than for the Social Democratic Party's women's section.

It seems likely that Kollontai's knowledge of events and organisations in England was somewhat sketchy, and that she was not clear about the distinction which existed at that time between the British Labour Party, and the marxist Social Democratic Party of Britain and other countries. In fact, as the Social Democratic parties grew more revisionist and less openly marxist-notably the German S.D.P. – the distinction between them and the British Labour Party became a fine one. Notice also that she refers to the Social Democratic Party in Britain, when after 1912 it had become the British Socialist Party, and that her second account of dates of the foundation of the Women's Committee of the Social Democratic Federation is incorrect. Sheila points out in her introduction that Kollontai appeared to know nothing of the activities of the East London Federation of Suffragettes.

13. In the early stages of the industrial revolution, women went into the factories, but many were still employed doing outwork at home or in domestic service. At the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century, technological change, the growth of light industry and the growth of a mass market were beginning to change the structure of women's work again. This is the period during which women became unionised in significant numbers for the first time.

14. Mrs. Emma Patterson was the first secretary of the National Society for Women's Suffrage in 1871. She set up the Women's Provident and Protective Labour League in 1874, deliberately avoiding the use of 'trade union' in the title out of deference to the middle class well-wishers who at that time were prominent in the organisation (though from the first, trade unionists were involved). The League helped set up women s trade unions in the 1870s, most of which were short-lived (though one, the Union of Working Women in Bristol, survived until the 1890s, and tried to convince the

T.U.C. of the importance of organising women. Later it became the Trade Union League, with an overwhelmingly working class composition.

15. By "a narrowly economic character," Kollontai means that the English trade unionists limited themselves to economic demands at work, without connecting these to the general oppression of women in society.

16. Before the First World War, many working women backed the suffragette demand for the vote 'on equal terms with men', even though the terms on which men had the vote embodied property qualifications which disqualified many working men from voting, and would have disqualified most working women, since they had even less money and property than the men. By 1914, however, some of the suffragettes, notably the East London Federation of Suffragettes, were calling for universal man-hood and womanhood suffrage, without property qualifications of any kind.

17. Controversy over the 'Woman Question' had been going on for some time. Though Engels and Bebel supported women's rights, many German party members thought that women weren't ready for rights, and refused to include women's liberation on the party programme. In later years, Clara Zetkin continued the struggle in Germany for the recognition of the importance of working with and for women.

18. "Confidential Agent" – a party post.

19. See note 12 on the foundation of the Women's Labour League.

20. The Women's Committee of the Social Democratic Party was founded in the spring of 1905 "for the purpose of educating women in socialism and other matters appertaining to it... We have started Women's Circles in many parts, which are conducted in a strictly business-like manner, so that when the members know enough of socialism they

join the local branch of the S.D.P. and are well acquainted with the business methods of the branch." (Quoted from the Introduction by Clara Hendin to *Some Words to Socialist Women* by Mrs. Montefiore. 1907. Marx Memorial Library.)

21. The Duma was the Consultative Assembly, conceded by the Czar in 1905.

22. The Russian word used for 'present' in the text can also mean 'real'. (Tr.)

23. See notes 12 and 19 above. Kollontai's date for the formation of the Social Democratic Party's Women's Committee is wrong here.

24. The suffragettes were not in fact making demands for electoral (property) qualifications. They were demanding the vote 'on equal terms with men'; and while before the war this amounted to accepting the imposition of property qualifications, most of the suffragettes made it clear that they demanded the vote on these terms as better *than nothing*, and did not specifically support the principle of property qualifications. See note 16 above.

Addenda

p.2 Footnote should read: I am referring here to an article by Georgia Pearce entitled .4 Russian Exile, Alexandra Kollontai and the Russian Woman Worker, which appeared in the English newspaper, The Woman Worker, of May 1909. This newspaper is not to be confused with the Bolshevik paper of the same name, to which Kollontai refers in her footnote to p. 26 (cf. erratum below).

p. 18 For "In England the number of women workers organised into unions had already passed the 20,000 mark;" read "In England the number of women workers organised into unions had already passed the 200,000 mark;"

p.24 Insert after "On the central committee of the Party there was also a Special rep-" the words "resentation

for women workers. The Women's Bureau of the Party was not."

p.26 Footnote should read:

The 'Woman's Day' was held by the Party in the following three years: in 1913, in 1914 and in historical 1917 on the 25th of February, the day of the beginning of the great revolution. In the spring of 1917, in Petrograd, the Bolsheviks began to publish the paper. *Woman Worker*, and the Mensheviks published *The Voice of the Woman Worker*. The war put a stop to both papers. For more details of the women workers' movement in Russia see my article in the collection: *The Communist Party and the Organisation of Women Workers*.

p.28 Footnote should read:

But whereas the organisational division of the unions into male and female harms the unity of the movement in the economic field, on the other hand the separation off of *agitatory* work aimed at the female proletariat is desirable even within the ranks of the trade union organisations. As practice in other countries has shown, this is the only reliable method of enlisting the support of the more recalcitrant of the unions' female members.

p.32 For "... and where the movement constantly stumbled against obstacles which were not connected with the flaws in the worn out system of bourgeois parliamentarianism," read ". . . and where the movement constantly stumbled against obstacles which were connected with the flaws in the worn out system of bourgeois parliamentarianism,."

p.34 In note 14 insert "in 1874" after "She set up the Women's Provident and Protective Labour League."

Alexandra Kollontai

The Autobiography of a Sexually Emancipated Communist Woman

Foreword by Germaine Greer

Alexandra Kollontai

The Autobiography of a Sexually Emancipated Communist Woman

1926

Prefatory Note

This is the first time that the complete autobiography which Alexandra Kollontai wrote in 1926 has been published. The sentences and paragraphs in italics were crossed out in the galleyproofs and left out in her time. Variants were indicated in footnotes which likewise were rejected and crossed out. The reader thus will have an idea of the extent and the intensity of corrections made by the author under the pressure of the gradually sharpening Stalinist control.

The Aims and Worth of My Life

Nothing is more difficult than writing an autobiography. What should be emphasized? Just what is of general interest? It is advisable, above all, to write honestly and dispense with any of the conventional introductory protestations of modesty. For if one is called upon to tell about one's life so as to make the events that made it what it became useful to the general public, it can mean only that one must have already wrought something positive in life, accomplished a task that people recognize. [1] Accordingly it is a matter of forgetting that one is writing about oneself, of making an effort to abjure one's ego so as to give an account, as objectively as possible, of one's life in the making and of one's accomplishments. I intend to make this effort but whether it will turn out successfully is something else again. At the same time I must confess that, in a certain sense, this autobiography poses a problem for me. For by looking back while prying, simultaneously, into the future, I will also be presenting to myself the most crucial turning points of my being and accomplishments. In this way I [2a] may succeed in setting into bold relief that which concerns the women's liberation struggle and, further, the social significance which it has.[2] That I ought not to shape my life according to the given model, that I would have to grow beyond myself in order to be able to discern my life's true line of vision was an awareness that was mine already in my youngest years. At the same time I was also aware [3] that in this way I could help my sisters to shape their lives, in accordance not with the given traditions but with their own free choice to the extent, of course, that social and economic circumstances permit. I always believed that the time inevitably must come when woman will be judged by the same moral standards applied to man. For it is not her specific feminine virtue that gives her a place of honor in human society, but the worth of the

useful mission accomplished by her, [4a] the worth of her personality as human being, as citizen, [4b] as thinker, as fighter. Subconsciously this motive was the leading force of my whole life and activity. To go my way, to work, to struggle, to create side by side with men, and to strive for the attainment of a universal human goal [4c] (for nearly thirty years, indeed, I have belonged to the [4d] Communists) but, at the same time, to shape my personal, intimate life as a woman according to my own will and according to the given laws of my nature. [4e] It was this that conditioned my line of vision.[4f] And [4g] in fact I have [4h] succeeded in structuring my intimate life according to my own standards and I make no secret of my love experiences [4i] anymore than does a man.[4k] Above all, however, I never let my feelings, the joy or pain of love take the first place in my life inasmuch as creativity, activity, struggle always occupied the foreground. I managed to become a member of a government cabinet, of the first Bolshevik cabinet in the years 1917/18. I am also the first woman ever to have been appointed ambassadress, a post which I occupied for three years and from which I resigned of my own free will.[4l] This may serve to prove that woman certainly can stand above the conventional conditions of the age. The World War, the stormy, revolutionary spirit now prevalent in the world in all areas has greatly contributed to blunting the edge of the unhealthy, overheated double standard of morality. We are already accustomed not to make overly taxing demands, for example,[4m] on actresses and women belonging to the free professions in matters relating to their married life. Diplomacy, however, is a caste which more than any other maintains its old customs, usages, traditions, and, above all, its strict ceremonial. The fact that a woman, a "free," a single woman was recognized in this position without opposition shows that the time has come when all human beings will be equally appraised according to their activity and their general

human dignity. When I was appointed as Russian envoy to Oslo, I realized that I had thereby achieved a victory not only for myself, but [4n] for women in general [4o] and indeed, a victory over their worst enemy, that is to say,[4p] over conventional morality and conservative concepts of marriage. When on occasion I am told that it is truly remarkable[4r] that a woman has been appointed to such a responsible position, I always [4s] think to myself that in the final analysis, the principal victory as regards women's liberation does not lie in this fact alone. Rather, what is of a wholly special significance here is that a woman, like myself, [4t] who has settled scores with the double standard and who has never concealed it,[4u] was accepted into a caste which to this very day staunchly upholds tradition and pseudo-morality. Thus the example of my life can also serve to dispel[4v] the[4w] old goblin of the double standard also from the lives of other women. And this is a most crucial point of my own existence, which has a certain social-psychological worth and contributes to the liberation struggle of working women. To avoid any misunderstanding, however, it should be said here that I am still far from being the type of the positively new women who take their experience as females with a relative lightness and, one could say, with an enviable superficiality, whose feelings and mental energies are directed upon all other things [5] in life but sentimental love feelings. [6] After all I still belong to the generation of women who grew up at a turning point in history. Love with its many disappointments, with its tragedies and eternal demands for perfect happiness[7] still played a very great role in my life. An all-too-great role! It was an expenditure of precious time and energy, fruitless and, in the final analysis, utterly worthless. We, the women of the past generation, did not yet[8] understand how to be free. The whole thing was an absolutely incredible squandering of our mental energy, a diminution of our labor power which

was dissipated in barren emotional experiences. It is certainly true that we, myself as well as many other activists, militants and working women contemporaries, were able to understand that love was not the main goal of our life and that we knew how to place work at its center. Nevertheless we would have been able to create and achieve much more had our energies not been fragmentized in the eternal struggle with our egos and with [9] our feelings for another. It was, in fact, an eternal defensive war against the intervention of the male into our ego, a struggle revolving around the problem-complex: work or marriage and love? We, the older generation, did not yet understand, as most men do and as young women are learning today, that work and the longing for love can be harmoniously combined so that work remains as the main goal of existence.10] Our mistake was that each time we succumbed to the belief that we had finally found the one and only in the man we loved, the person with whom we believed we could blend our soul, one who was ready fully to recognize us as a spiritual-physical force.[11]

But over and over again things turned out differently, since [12] the man always tried to impose his ego upon us and adapt us fully to his purposes. Thus despite everything the inevitable inner rebellion ensued, over and over again since love became a fetter. We felt enslaved and tried to loosen the love-bond. And after the eternally recurring struggle with the beloved man, we finally tore ourselves away and rushed toward freedom. Thereupon we were again [13] alone, unhappy, [14] lonesome, but free–free to pursue our beloved, chosen ideal ...work.

Fortunately young people, the present generation, no longer have to go through this kind of struggle which is absolutely unnecessary to human society. Their abilities, their

work-energy will be reserved for their creative activity. Thus the existence of barriers will become a spur.[15]

It is essential that I relate some details here about my private life. My childhood was a very happy one, judging by outward circumstances. My parents belonged to the old Russian nobility.[16] I was the only child born of my mother's second marriage (mother was separated and I was born outside the second marriage, and then adopted). I was the youngest, the most spoiled, and the most coddled member of the family. This, perhaps, was the root cause of the protest against everything around me that very early burgeoned within me. Too much was done for me in order to make me happy. I had no freedom of maneuver either in the children's games I played or in the desires that I wanted to express. At the same time I wanted to be free.[17] I wanted to express desires on my own, to shape my own little life. My parents were well-to-do. There was no luxury in the house, but I did not know the meaning of privation. Yet I saw how other children were forced to give up things, and I was particularly and painfully shocked by the little peasant children who were my playmates (we lived almost always in the countryside, on the estate of my grandfather, who was a Finn). Already as a small[18] child I criticized[19] the injustice of adults and I experienced as a blatant contradiction[20] the fact that everything was offered to me whereas so much was denied to the other children. My criticism sharpened as the years went by and the feeling of revolt against the many proofs of love around me grew apace.[21] Already early in life I had eyes for the social injustices prevailing in Russia. I was never sent to school because my parents lived in a constant state of anxiety over my health and they could not endure the thought that I, like all other children, should spend two hours daily far from home. My mother probably also had a certain horror of the liberal influences with which I might come into contact

at the high school. Mother, of course, considered that I was already sufficiently critically[22] inclined. Thus I received my education at home under the direction of a proficient, clever tutoress who was connected with Russian revolutionary circles. I owe very much to her, Mme. Marie Strakhova. I took[23] the examinations qualifying me for admission to the university when I was barely sixteen (in 1888)[24] and thereafter I was expected to lead the life of a "young society woman."[25] Although my education had been unusual and caused me much harm (for years I was extremely shy and utterly inept in the practical matters of life), it must nevertheless be said that my parents were by no means reactionaries. On the contrary, they were even[26] rather progressive for their time. But they held fast to traditions where it concerned the child, the young person under their roof. My first bitter struggle against these traditions revolved around the idea of marriage. I was supposed to make a good match[27] and mother was bent upon marrying me off at a very early age. My oldest sister, at the age of nineteen, had contracted marriage with a highly placed gentleman who was nearly seventy.[28] I revolted against this marriage of convenience, this marriage for money[29] and wanted to marry only for love, out of a great passion.[30] Still very young, and against my parents' wishes, I chose my cousin, an impecunious young engineer whose name, Kollontai, I still bear today. My maiden name was Domontovich. The happiness of my marriage lasted hardly three years. I gave birth to a son. Although I personally raised my child with great care,[31] motherhood was never the kernel of my existence. A child had not been able to draw the bonds of my marriage tighter. I still loved my husband, but the happy life of a housewife and spouse became for me a "cage." More and more my sympathies, my[32] interests turned to the revolutionary working class of Russia. I read voraciously. I zealously studied all[33] social questions, attended lectures,

and worked in semi-legal societies for the enlightenment of the people. These were the years of the flowering of Marxism in Russia (1893/96). Lenin at that time was only a novice in the literary and revolutionary arena. George Plechanov was the leading mind of the time. I stood close to the materialist conception of history, since in early womanhood I had inclined towards the realistic school. I was an enthusiastic follower of Darwin and Roelsches. A visit to the big and famous Krengolm textile factory, which employed 12,000 workers of both sexes, decided my fate. I could not lead a happy, peaceful life when the working population was so terribly enslaved. I simply had to join this movement. At that time this led to differences with my husband, who felt that my inclinations constituted an act of personal defiance directed against him. I left husband and child and journeyed to Zurich in order to study political economy under Professor Heinrich Herkner. Therewith[34] began my conscious life on behalf of the revolutionary goals of the working-class movement. When I came back to St. Petersburg–now Leningrad–in 1899, I joined the illegal Russian Social Democratic Party. I worked as a writer and propagandist. The fate of Finland, whose independence and relative freedom were being threatened by the reactionary policy of the Czarist regime at the end of the '90's, exercised a wholly special power of attraction upon me. Perhaps my particular gravitation towards Finland resulted from the impressions I received on my grandfather's estate during my childhood. I actively espoused the cause of Finland's national liberation. Thus my first extensive[35] scientific work in political economy was a comprehensive investigation[36] of the living and working conditions of the Finnish proletariat in relation to industry.[37] The book appeared in 1903 in St. Petersburg. My parents had just died, my husband and I had been living separately for a long time, and only my son remained in my care. Now I had the opportunity to devote myself completely

to my aims:[38] to the Russian revolutionary movement and to the working-class movement of the whole world.[39] Love, marriage, family, all were secondary, transient matters. They were there, they intertwine with my life over and over again. But as great as was my love for my husband, immediately it transgressed a certain limit in relation to my feminine proneness to make sacrifice, rebellion flared in me anew. I had to go away, I had to break with the man of my choice, otherwise (this was a subconscious feeling in me) I would have exposed myself to the danger of losing my selfhood. It must also be said that not a single one of the men who were close to me has ever had a direction-giving influence on my inclinations, strivings, or my world-view. On the contrary, most of the time I was the guiding spirit. I acquired my view of life, my political line from life itself, and in uninterrupted study from[40] books.

In 1905, at the time the so-called first revolution in Russia broke out, after the famous Bloody Sunday, I had already acquired a reputation in the field of economic and social literature. And in those stirring times, when all energies were utilized in the storm of revolt, it turned out that I had become very popular as an orator. Yet in that period I realized for the first time how little our Party concerned itself with the fate of the women of the working class and how meager was its interest in women's liberation. To be sure a very strong bourgeois women's movement was already in existence in Russia. But my Marxist outlook pointed out to me with an illuminating clarity that women's liberation[41] could take place only as the result of the victory of a new social order and a different economic system. Therefore I threw myself into the struggle between the Russian[42] suffragettes and strove with all my might to induce the working-class movement to include the woman question as one of the aims of its struggle in its program.[43] It was very

difficult[44] to win my fellow members[45] over to this idea. I was completely isolated with my ideas and demands. Nevertheless in the years 1906-1908 I won a small group of women Party comrades over to my plans. I [46] wrote[47] an article published in the illegal press in 1906 in which for the first time[48] I set forth the demand to call the working-class movement into being in Russia through systematic Party work. In Autumn of 1907 we opened up the first Working Women's Club. Many of the members of this club, who were still very young workers at that time, now occupy important posts in the new Russia and in the Russian Communist Party (K. Nicolaieva, Marie Burke, etc.). One result of my activity in connection with the women workers,[49] but especially of my political writings–among which was a pamphlet on Finland containing the call to rise up against the Czarist Duma[50] with "arms"–was the institution of legal proceedings against me which held out the grim prospect of spending many years in prison. I was forced to disappear immediately and was never again to see my home. My son was taken in by good friends, my small household liquidated. I became "an illegal." It was a time of strenuous work.

The first All-Russian Women's Congress which had been called by the bourgeois suffragettes was scheduled to take place in December of 1908. At that time the reaction was on the rise and the working-class movement was prostrate again after the first victory in 1905. Many Party comrades were in jail, others had fled abroad. The vehement struggle between the two factions of the Russian Workers Party broke out anew: the Bolsheviks on the one side, the Mensheviks on the other. In 1908 I belonged to the Menshevik faction, having been forced thereto by the hostile position taken by the Bolsheviks towards the Duma, a pseudo-Parliament called by the Czar in order to Pacify the rebellious spirits of the age. Although with the Mensheviks I espoused the point

of view that even a pseudo-Parliament should be utilized as a tribute for our Party and that the elections for the Duma must be used as an assembling point for the working class. But I did not side with the Mensheviks on the question of coordinating the forces of the workers with the Liberals in order to accelerate the overthrow of absolutism. On this point I was, in fact, very left-radical and was even branded as a "syndicalist" by my Party comrades.[51] Given my attitude towards the Duma it logically followed that I considered it useless to exploit the first bourgeois women's congress in the interest of our Party. Nevertheless I worked with might and main to assure that our[52] women workers, who were to participate in the Congress, emerged as an independent and distinct group. I managed to carry out this plan but not without opposition. My Party comrades[53] accused me and those women-comrades who shared my views of being "feminists" and of placing too much emphasis on matters of concern to women only. At the time there was still no comprehension at all[54] of the extraordinarily important role in the struggle devolving upon self-employed professional women. Nevertheless our will prevailed. A women-workers' group came forward at the Congress in St. Petersburg with its own[55] program and it drew a clear line of demarcation between the bourgeois suffragettes and the women's liberation movement of the working class in Russia. However, I was forced to flee before the close of the Congress because the police had come upon my tracks. I managed to cross the frontier inter Germany and thus, in December of 1908, began a new period of my life, political emigration.

The Years of Political Emigration

As a political refugee henceforth I lived in Europe and America until the overthrow of Czarism in 1917. As soon as I arrived in Germany, after my flight, I joined the German Social Democratic Party in which I had many personal friends, among whom I especially numbered Karl Liebknecht,[56] Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Kautsky.[57] Clara Zetkin also had a great influence on my activity[58] in defining the principles of the women-workers movement in Russia. Already in 1907 I had taken part, as a delegate from Russia, in the first International Conference of Socialist Women that was held in Stuttgart. This gathering was presided over by Clara Zetkin and it made an enormous contribution to the development of the women-workers movement along Marxist lines. I put myself at the disposal of the Party press as a writer on social and political questions, and I was also frequently called upon as an orator by the German Party and I worked for the Party as an agitator from the Palatinate to Saxony, from Bremen to south Germany. But I assumed[59] no leading posts either in the Russian party or in the German party.[60] By and large I was mainly a "popular orator" and an esteemed political writer. I can now openly confess[61] that in the Russian Party I deliberately kept somewhat aloof from the controlling center, and that is explainable mainly by the fact that I was not yet in complete agreement with the policy of my comrades.[62] But I had no desire to pass over to the Bolsheviks, nor could I for that matter since at the time it seemed to me as if they did not attach sufficient importance to the development of the working-class movement in "breadth and depth." Therefore I worked on my own seemingly almost as though I wanted to remain in the background without setting my sights or obtaining a leading position.[63] Here it must be admitted that, although I possessed a certain degree of ambition, like

every other active human being, I was never animated by the desire to obtain "a post." For me "what I am" was always of less importance than "what I can," that is to say, what I was in a position to accomplish. In this way I, too, had my ambition and it was especially noticeable there where I stood with my whole heart and soul [64] in the struggle, where the issue was the abolition of the slavery of working women. I had above all set myself the task of winning over women workers in Russia to socialism and, at the same time, of working for the liberation of[65] woman, for her equality of rights. My book "The Social Foundations of the Women's Question" had appeared shortly before my flight; it was a polemical disputation with the bourgeois suffragettes but, at the same time, a challenge to the Party to build a viable women workers movement in Russia. The book enjoyed a great success. At that time I wrote for the legal and illegal press. Through an exchange of letters I tried to influence Party comrades and women workers themselves. Naturally, I always did this in such a way that I demanded from the Party that it[66] espouse the cause of women's liberation. I did not always have an easy time of it. Much passive resistance, little understanding, and even less interest for this aim, over and over again, lay as an obstacle in the path. It was not until 1914, shortly before the outbreak of the World War, that finally both factions–the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks–took up the question in an earnest and practical way, a fact which had on me an effect almost tantamount to a personal commendation. Two periodicals for working women were launched in Russia, the International Working Women's Congress of March 8, 1914, was celebrated. I was still living in exile, however, and could help the so dearly loved women-workers movement in my homeland only from afar. I was in close contact, also from afar, with the working women of Russia. Already several years earlier[67] I had been appointed by the Textile Workers Union as an official delegate to the

Second International Conference of Socialist Women (1910) and, further,[68] to the extraordinary International Socialist Congress in Basle in 1912. Later when a draft of a bill on social insurance was introduced in the Russian pseudo-Parliament (the Duma), the Social Democratic Duma faction (of the Menshevik wing) requested me to elaborate the draft of a bill on maternity welfare. It was not the first time that the[69] faction lay claim to my energies for legislative work. Just before I was forced to go into exile, I had been enlisted by them–as a qualified expert–to participate in the deliberation of the question of Finland in the Imperial Duma.

The task that had been assigned to me, namely, the elaboration of a draft of a bill in the field of maternity welfare, motivated me to undertake a most thorough study of this special question. The Bund für Mutterschutz, and the outstanding work of Dr. Helene Stöcker, also provided me with valuable suggestions. Nevertheless I also studied the question in England, France, and in the Scandinavian countries. The result of these studies was my book "Motherhood and Society," a comprehensive[70] work of 600 pages on maternity welfare and the relevant legislation in Europe and Australia. The fundamental regulations and demands in this field, which I summed up at the end of my book, were realized later in 1917 by the Soviet regime in the first social insurance laws.

For me the years of political emigration were hectic, quite stirring[71] years. I travelled as a Party orator from country to country. In 1911, in Paris, I organized the housewives' strike "La grève des menagères" against the high cost of living. In 1912 I worked in Belgium setting the groundwork for the miners' strike in the Borinage and in the same year the Party dispatched me to the left-oriented Socialist Youth Association of Sweden in order to strengthen

the Party's72] anti-militaristic tendencies. Several years earlier, this still merits mention here,[73] I fought in the ranks of the British Socialist Party side by side with Dora Montefiore and Madame Koeltsch[74] against the English suffragettes for the strengthening of the still fledgling socialist working-women's movement. In 1913 I was again in England. This time I was there in order to take an active part in a protest action against the famous "Beilis Trial" which had been instigated by the anti-semites in Russia. In the spring of the same year, the left wing of the Swedish Social Democratic Party invited me to Sweden. These were truly hectic years, marked by the most varied types of militant activity. Notwithstanding, my Russian Party comrades also laid claim to my energies and appointed me delegate to the Socialist Party and Trade Union Congress. Thus with the help of Karl Liebknecht I also sparked an activity in Germany on behalf of the deported socialist members of the Duma.[75] In 1911 I was called to the Russian Party School in Bologna, where I delivered a series of lectures. The present Russian Minister of Education in Soviet Russia, A. Lunacharsky, Maxim Gorki, as well as the famous Russian economist and philosopher A. Bogdonov, were the founders of this Party school, and Trotsky delivered lectures at the school at the same time that I was there. The present Soviet Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, G. Chicherin, who at that time worked as secretary of a relief agency for political refugees, oftentimes called upon me to hold public lectures on the most disparate cultural problems of Russian life in order to help fill the relief agency's almost empty kitty. At his behest I travelled all over Europe but Berlin was my fixed abode. I felt at home in Germany and have always greatly appreciated the conditions there so ideally suited for scientific work. But I was not allowed to give speeches in Prussia. On the contrary, I had to keep as quiet as possible to avoid expulsion by the Prussian police.

Then the World War broke out and once again I arrived at a new turning point in my life.

But before I talk about this important period of my intellectual existence, I still want to say a few words about my personal life. The question rises whether in the middle of all these manifold, exciting labors and Party-assignments I could still find rime for intimate experiences, for the pangs and joys of love. Unfortunately, yes! I say unfortunately because ordinarily these experiences entailed all too many cares, disappointments, and pain, and because all too many energies were pointlessly consumed through them. Yet the longing to be understood by a man down to the deepest, most secret recesses of one's soul, to be recognized by him as a striving human being, repeatedly decided matters. And repeatedly disappointment ensued all too swiftly, since the friend saw in me only the feminine element which he tried to mold into a willing sounding board to his own ego. So repeatedly the moment inevitably arrived in which I had to shake off the chains of community with an aching heart but with a sovereign, uninfluenced will. Then I was again alone. But the greater the demands life made upon me, the more the responsible work waiting to be tackled, the greater grew the longing to be enveloped by love, warmth, understanding. All the easier, consequently, began the old story of disappointment in love, the old story of Titania in "A Midsummer Night's Dream."[76]

The outbreak of the World War found me in Germany. My son was with me. We were both arrested because my identity papers were not in order. During the house search, however, the police found a mandate from the Russian Social Democratic Party appointing me as delegate to the World Congress of Socialists. Suddenly the gentlemen

from Alexander Platz became utterly charming: they figured that a female Social Democrat could not be a friend of the Czar and consequently certainly not an enemy of Germany. They were right.[77] I was in fact no enemy of Germany and still less a Russian patriot. To me the war was an abomination, a madness, a crime, and from the first moment onwards–more out of impulse than reflection–I inwardly rejected it and could never reconcile myself with it up to this very moment.[78] The intoxication of patriotic feelings has always been something alien to me, on the contrary I felt an aversion for everything that smacked of super-patriotism. I found no understanding for my "anti-patriotic" attitude among my own Russian[79] Party comrades, who also lived in Germany.[80] Only Karl Liebknecht, his wife Sofie Liebknecht, and a few other German Party comrades, like myself, espoused the same standpoint and, like myself,[81] considered it a socialist's duty to struggle against the war. Strange to say, I was present in the Reichstag on August 4, the day the war budget was being voted on. The collapse of the German Socialist Party struck me as a calamity without parallel. I felt utterly alone and found comfort only in the company of the Liebknechts.

With the help of some German Party friends I was able to leave Germany with my son in August of 1914 and emigrate to the Scandinavian peninsula. I left Germany not because I had felt the slightest manifestation of unfriendliness towards me but only for the reason that without a sphere of activity I would have been forced to live in idleness in that country. I was impatient to take up the struggle against the war. After arriving on Sweden's neutral soil, I immediately[82] began the work against the war and for[83] the international solidarity of the world working class. An appeal to working women made its way, along illegal channels, to Russia and to different other countries. In

Sweden I wrote and spoke against the war. I spoke at public meetings, most of which had been called by the leftist-leaning world-famous[84] Swedish Party leaders Zeta Höglund and Frederic Strön. I found in them the pure echo of my ideas and[85] feelings and we joined forces in a common task for the victory of internationalism and against the war hysteria. It was only later that I learned of the attitude which the leading minds of the Russian Party had taken towards the war. When the news finally reached us, by way of Paris and Switzerland, it was for us a day of ineffable joy. We received assurance that both Trotsky and Lenin, although they[86] belonged to different factions of the Party, had militantly risen up against the war. Thus I was no longer "isolated." A new grouping was proposed[87] in the Party, the internationalists and the "social-patriots." A Party periodical was also founded in Paris.[88] In the middle of my zealous activities, however, I was arrested by the Swedish authorities and brought to the Kungsholm prison. The worst moment during this arrest was born of my concern over the identity papers of a good friend and Party comrade, Alexander Schlapnikov, who had just arrived illegally in Sweden from Russia, which I had taken over for safe-keeping. Under the eyes of the police I managed to hide them under my blouse and somehow make them disappear. Later I was transferred from the Kungsholm prison to the prison in Malma and then banished to Denmark. As far as I know I was one of the first of the European socialists to be jailed because of anti-war propaganda. In Denmark I continued my work but with greater prudence. Nevertheless[89] the Danish police did not leave me in peace. Nor did the Danish Social Democrats exhibit friendliness for the internationalists. In February of 1915 I emigrated to Norway where together with Alexander Schlapnikov we served as a link between Switzerland, the place of residence of Lenin and of the Central Committee,[90] and Russia. We had full contact with the

Norwegian socialists. On March 8 of the same year I tried to organize an international working women's demonstration against the war in Christiania (now Oslo), but the representatives from the belligerent countries did not show up.

That was the time when the decisive rupture in Social Democracy was being prepared, since the patriotically minded socialists could not go along with the internationalists. Since the Bolsheviks were those who most consistently fought social-patriotism, in June of 1915 I officially joined the Bolsheviks and entered into a lively correspondence with Lenin (Lenin's letters to me have recently been published in Russia).[91]

I again began to do a prodigous amount of writing, this time for the international-minded press of the most different countries: England, Norway, Sweden, America, Russia. At this time one of my pamphlets, "Who Profits from the War?," appeared. Deliberately written in a very popular view, it was disseminated in countless editions, in millions of copies,[92] and was translated into several languages, German included. So long as the war continued, the problem of women's liberation obviously had to recede into the background since my only concern, my highest aim,[93] was to fight against the war and call a new Workers International into being. In the autumn of 1915 the German section of the American Socialist Party invited me to journey to America to deliver lectures there in the spirit of "Zimmerwald" (a gathering of international-minded socialists). I was immediately ready to cross the ocean for this purpose, despite the fact that my friends determinedly advised me against it. They were all deeply worried about me because the journey had become very hazardous as a result of submarine warfare. But the aim enticed me enormously. My propaganda tour in

America lasted five months, during which time I visited eighty-one cities in the United States and delivered lectures in German, French, and Russian.[94] The work was extremely strenuous, but also as fruitful, and I had warrant to believe that as a result the internationalists in the American Party were strengthened. Much opposition to the war, passionate debates, also existed overseas, but the police did not bother me.[95] The newspapers, by turns, branded me either as a spy of the German Kaiser or as an agent of the Entente. I returned to Norway in the spring of 1916. I love Norway with its incomparable fjords and its majestic mountains, its courageous, gifted, and industrious people. At that time I lived on the famous Holmenkollen near Oslo and continued to work with the view 'of welding together all the forces of the internationalists in opposition to the World War. I shared Lenin's view which aimed at spreading the conviction that the war could be defeated only by the Revolution, by the uprising of the workers. I was in substantial agreement with Lenin and stood much closer to him than many of his older followers and friends.[96] But my sojourn in Norway was not a long one because only a few months after my arrival I had to embark upon a second journey to America, where I remained till shortly before the outbreak of the Russian Revolution. For me the situation in America had changed insofar as, in the meanwhile, many Russian Party comrades had come over, Trotsky among others. We worked zealously for the new Workers International but America's intervention in the war aggravated our activity.[97]

I had already been in Norway for several weeks, when the Russian people rose up against absolutism and dethroned the Czar. A festive mood reigned among all our political friends. But I harbored no illusions because I knew that the overthrow of the Czar would be only the beginning of even more momentous events and difficult social struggles so I

hastened[98] back to Russia in March 1917. I was one of the first political emigrants who came[99] back to the liberated homeland. Torneo, the tiny frontier town lying north of the Swedish-Finnish frontiers, through which I had to pass, was still in the grip of a cruel winter. A sleigh carried me across the river which marks the frontier. On Russian soil stood a soldier. A bright red ribbon fluttered on his chest. "Your identity papers, please, citizenness!" "I have none. I am a political refugee." "Your name?" I identified myself. A young officer was summoned. Yes, my name was on the list of political refugees who were to be freely admitted into the country by order of the Workers' and Soldiers' Soviet. The young officer helped me out of the sleigh and kissed my hand, almost reverently. I was standing on the republican soil of liberated Russia! Could that be possible? It was one of the happiest hours of my whole[100] life. Four months later, by order of the Kerensky regime (the Provisional Government), the same charming young officer placed me under arrest as a dangerous Bolshevik at the Torneo frontier station ...Such is life's irony.

The Years of Revolution

So overwhelming was the rush of subsequent events that to this very day I really do not know what I should describe and emphasize: what have I accomplished, desired, achieved? Was there altogether an individual will at that time? Was it not only the omnipotent storm of the Revolution, the command of the active, awakened masses that determined our will and action? Was there altogether a single human being who would not have bowed to the general will? There were only masses of people, bound together in a bipartite will, which operated either for or against the Revolution, for or against ending the war, and which sided for or against the power of the Soviets. Looking back one perceives only a massive operation, struggle, and action. In reality there were no heroes or leaders. It was the people, the working people, in soldiers' uniform or in civilian attire, who controlled the situation and who recorded its will indelibly in the history of the country and mankind. It was a sultry summer, a crucial summer of the revolutionary flood-tide in 1917! At first the social storm raged only in the countryside, the peasants set fire to the "nests of gentle folk." In the cities the struggle that raged was between the advocates of a republican-bourgeois Russia and the socialist aspirations of the Bolsheviks ...

As I have previously stated, I belonged to the Bolsheviks. Thus immediately, from the first days onwards, I found an absolute enormous pile of work waiting for me. Once more the issue was to wage a struggle against the war, against coalescence with the liberal bourgeoisie, and for the power of the workers' councils, the Soviets. The natural consequence of this stand was that the bourgeois newspapers branded me as a "mad female Bolshevik." But this bothered me not at all. My field of activity was immense, and my followers, factory workers and women-soldiers, numbered

thousands.[101] At this time I was very popular, especially[102] as an orator,[103] and, at the same time, hated and viciously attacked by the bourgeois press. Thus it was a stroke of luck~ that I was[104] so weighed down with current work that I found hardly any time to read the attacks and slanders against me. The hate directed against me, allegedly because I had been in the pay of the German Kaiser for the purpose of weakening the Russian front, grew[105] to monstrous proportions.

One of the most burning questions of the day was the high cost of living and the growing scarcity of vital necessities. Thus the women of the poverty-stricken strata had an indescribably hard time of it. Precisely this situation prepared the terrain in the Party for "work with women" so that very soon we were able to accomplish useful work. [106] Already in May of 1917 a weekly called "The Women Workers" made its debut. I authored an appeal to women against the high cost of living and the war.[107] The first mass meeting, packed with thousands of people,[108] that took place in Russia under the Provisional Government, was organized by us, by the Bolsheviks. Kerensky and his ministers made no secret of their hatred of me, the "instigator of the spirit of disorganization" in the Army. One particular article of mine in "Pravda" in which I interceded for German prisoners of war unleashed a veritable storm of[109] indignation on the part of patriotic-minded circles. When in April Lenin delivered his famous programmatic speech within the frame of the Soviets, I was the only one of his Party comrades who took the poor to support his theses. What hatred this particular act kindled against me![110] Often I had to jump off tramcars before people recognized me, since I had become a topical theme of the day and often bore personal witness to the most incredible abuse and lies directed against me. I should like to cite a small example

which can show how the enemy worked with might and main to defame me. At that time the newspapers hostile to me were already writing about the "Kollontai party dresses" which particularly then was laughable because my trunk had been lost en route to Russia, so I always wore the one and the same dress. There was even a little street ballad that commented on Lenin and me in verse.[111] There was also nothing extraordinary in the fact that, threatened as I was by irritated mobs, I was always protected from the worst only by the courageous intercession of my friends and Party comrades. Nevertheless I myself personally experienced little[112] of the hatred around me and, of course, there was also a great number of enthusiastic friends: the workers, the sailors, the soldiers who were utterly devoted to me.[113] Moreover, the number of our followers[114] grew from day to day. Already in April, I was a member of the Soviet executive which, in reality, was the guiding political body of the moment, to which I belonged as the only woman and over a long period. In May of 1917 I took part in the strike of women laundry workers who set forth the demand that all laundries be "municipalized." The struggle lasted six weeks. Nevertheless the principal demand of the women laundry workers remained unmet by the Kerensky regime.

At the end of June, I was sent by my Party to Stockholm as a delegate to an international consultation which was interrupted when news reached us of the July uprising against the Provisional Government and of the extremely harsh measures that the[115] government was taking against the Bolsheviks. Many of our leading Party comrades had already been arrested, others, including Lenin, had managed to escape and go into hiding. The Bolsheviks were accused of high treason and branded as spies of the German Kaiser. The uprising was brought to a standstill and the coalition regime retaliated against all those who had

manifested sympathy for the Bolsheviks. I immediately decided to return to Russia, although my friends and Party comrades[116] considered this to be a risky undertaking. They wanted me to go to Sweden and await the course of events. Well-intentioned as these counsels were, and correct as they also appeared to me later,[117] I nevertheless could not heed them. I simply had to go back. Otherwise it would appear to me as an act of cowardice to take advantage of the privilege, that had become mine, of remaining wholly immune from the persecutions of the Provisional Government, when a great number of my political friends were sitting in jail. Later I realized that, perhaps, I might have been able to be move useful to our cause from Sweden, but I was under the compulsion of the moment.[118] By order of the Kerensky regime I was arrested on the border of Torneo and subjected to the most boorish treatment as a spy ... But the arrest itself proceeded quite theatrically: during the inspection of my passport I was requested to step into the commandant's office. I understood what that meant. A number of soldiers were standing in an enormous room, pressed close against each other. Two young officers were also present, one of them being the charming young man who had received me so amiably[119] four months previously. A veritable[120] silence prevailed in the room. The facial expression of the first officer, Prince B., betrayed a great nervousness. Composed, I waited to see what would happen next. "You are under arrest," explained Prince B. "So. Has the counter-revolution triumphed Do we again have a monarchy?" "No," was the gruff reply. "You are under arrest by order of the Provisional Government." "I have been expecting it. Please, let my suitcase be brought in, I don't want it to be lost." "But, of course. Lieutenant, the suitcase!" I saw how the officers heaved a sigh of relief, and how the soldiers left the room with displeasure writ large on their faces. Later I learned that my arrest had occasioned a protest

among the soldiers who insisted upon witnessing the arrest. The officers, however, had feared that I might make a speech to the soldiers. "In that case we would have been lost," one of them told me afterwards.

I was forced to wait for the course of the investigation, like the other Bolsheviks, in a Petrograd prison, in strict isolation. The more incredibly the regime conducted itself towards the Bolsheviks, the more their influence grew.[121] The march of the White general Kornilov on Petrograd strengthened the most radical elements of the Revolution. The people demanded that the jailed Bolsheviks be freed. Kerensky, however, refused to free me and it was only by an order of the Soviet that I was released from jail upon payment of bail. But already on the next day, Kerensky's decree that I be placed under house arrest hung over me. Nevertheless I was given my full freedom of movement one month before the decisive struggle, the October Revolution in 1917. Again my work piled up. Now the groundwork was to be set for a systematic women-workers movement. The first conference of women workers was to be called. It also took place and it coincided with the overthrow of the Provisional Government and the establishment of the Soviet Republic.

At that time I was a member of the highest Party body, the Central Committee, and I voted for the policy of armed uprising.[122] I was also a member of different Party representations in decisive Congresses and State institutions (the preliminary Parliament, the democratic Congress, etc.). Then came the great days of the October Revolution. Smolny became historic. The sleepless nights, the permanent sessions. And, finally, the stirring declarations. "The Soviets take power!" "The Soviets address an appeal to the peoples

of the world to put an end to the war." "The land is socialized and belongs to the peasants!"

The Soviet Government was formed. I was appointed People's Commissar (Minister) of Social Welfare. I was the only woman in the cabinet and the first woman in history[123] who had ever been recognized as a member of a government. When one recalls the first months of the Workers' Government, months which were so rich in magnificent illusions,[124] plans,[125] ardent initiatives to improve life, to organize the world anew, months of the real romanticism of the Revolution, one would in fact like to write about all else save about one's self. I occupied the post of Minister of Social Welfare from October of 1917 to March of 1918.[126] It was not without opposition that I was received by the former officials of the Ministry. Most of them sabotaged us openly and simply did not show up for work. But precisely this office could not interrupt its work, come what may, since in itself it was an extraordinarily complicated operation. It included the whole welfare program for the war-disabled, hence for hundreds of thousands of crippled soldiers and officers, the pension system in general, foundling homes, homes for the aged, orphanages, hospitals for the needy, the work-shops making artificial limbs, the administration of playing-card factories (the manufacture of playing cards was a State monopoly), the educational system,[127] clinical hospitals for women.[128] In addition a whole series of educational institutes for young girls were also under the direction of this Ministry. One can easily imagine the enormous demands these tasks made upon a small group of people who, at the same time, were novices in State administration. In a clear awareness of these difficulties I formed,[129] immediately, an auxiliary council in which experts such as physicians, jurists, pedagogues were represented alongside the workers and the minor officials of

the Ministry. The sacrifice, the energy with which the minor employees bore the burden of this difficult task was truly exemplary. It was not only a matter of keeping the work of the Ministry going, but also of initiating reforms and improvements. New, fresh forces replaced the sabotaging officers of the old regime. A new life stirred in the offices of the formerly highly conservative Ministry. Days of grueling work! And at night the sessions of the councils of the People's Commissar (of the cabinet) under Lenin's chairmanship. A small, modest room and only one secretary who recorded the resolutions which changed Russia's life to its bottommost foundations. My first act[130] People's Commissar was[131] to compensate a small peasant for his requisitioned horse. Actually by no stretch of the imagination did this belong to the functions of my office. But the man was determined to receive compensation for his horse. He had travelled from his distant village to the capital and had knocked patiently on the doors of all the ministries. Always with no results! Then the Bolshevik revolution broke out. The man had heard that the Bolsheviks were in favor of the workers and peasants. So he went to the Smolny Institute, to Lenin, who had to pay out the compensation. I do not know how the conversation between Lenin and the small peasant went. As a result of it, however, the man came to me with a small page torn from Lenin's notebook on which I was requested to settle the matter somehow since at the moment the People's Commissariat for Social Welfare had the greatest amount of cash at its disposal. The small peasant received his compensation.

My main work as People's Commissar consisted in the following:[132] by decree to improve the situation of the war-disabled, to abolish religious instruction in the schools for young girls which were under the Ministry (this was still before the general separation of Church and State), and to

transfer priests to the civil service, to introduce the right of self-administration for pupils in the schools for girls, to reorganize the former orphanages into government Children's Homes (no distinction was to be made between orphaned children and those who still had fathers and mothers),[133] to set up the first hostels for the needy and street-urchins, to convene a committee, composed only[134] of doctors, which was to be commissioned to elaborate[135] the free public health system for the whole country. In my opinion the most important accomplishment of the People's Commissariat, however, was the legal foundation of a Central Office for Maternity and Infant Welfare. The draft of the bill relating to this Central Office was signed by me in January of 1918. A second decree followed in which I[136] changed all maternity hospitals into free Homes for Maternity and Infant Care,[137] in order thereby to set the groundwork for a comprehensive government system of pre-natal care. I was greatly assisted in coping with these tasks by Dr. Korolef. We also planned a "Pre-Natal Care Palace," a model home with an exhibition room in which courses for mothers would be held and, among many other things,[138] model day nurseries were also to be established.[139] We were just about completing preparations for such a facility in the building of a girls' boarding school at which formerly young girls of the nobility had been educated and which was still under the direction of a countess, when a fire destroyed our work, which had barely begun! Had the fire been set deliberately? ... I was dragged out of bed in the middle of the night. I rushed to the scene of the fire; the beautiful exhibition room was totally ruined, as were all the other rooms. Only the huge name-plate "Pre-Natal Care Palace" still hung over the entrance door.

My efforts to nationalize maternity and infant care set off a new wave of insane attacks against me. All kinds of lies

were related[140] about the "nationalization of women," about my legislative proposals which assertedly ordained that little girls of 12 were to become mothers. A special fury gripped the religious followers of the old regime when, on my own authority (the cabinet later criticized me for this action),[141] I transformed the famous Alexander Nevsky monastery into a home for war invalids. The monks resisted and a shooting fray ensued. The press again raised a loud hue and cry against me.[142] The Church organized street demonstrations against my action[143] and also pronounced "anathema' against me...

I received countless threatening letters, but I never requested military protection. I always went out alone, unarmed and without any kind of a bodyguard. In fact I never gave a thought to any kind of danger, being all too engrossed in matters of an utterly different character.[144] In February of 1918 a first State delegation of the Soviets was sent to Sweden in order to clarify different economic and political questions.[145] As Peoples' Commissar I headed this delegation. But our vessel was shipwrecked; we were saved by landing on the Aland Islands which belonged to Finland. At this very time the struggle between the Whites and the Reds in the country had reached its most crucial moment and the German Army was also making ready to wage war against Finland.

The White troops occupied the Aland Islands on the very evening of our shipwreck as we were seated at dinner in an inn of the city of Marieham, rejoicing over our rescue. We managed to escape thanks to the greatest determination and cunning, yet one of our group, a young[146] Finn, was captured and shot. We returned to Petrograd, where the evacuation of the capital was being prepared with feverish

haste: German troops already stood before the gates of the city.

Now began a dark time[147] of my life which I cannot treat of here since the events are still too fresh in my mind. But the day will also come when I will give an account of them.[148]

There were differences of opinion in the Party.[149] I resigned from my post as People's Commissar on the ground of total disagreement with the current policy. Little by little I was also relieved of all my other tasks. I again gave lectures and espoused my ideas on "the new woman" and "the new morality."[150] The Revolution was in full swing. The struggle was becoming increasingly irreconcilable and bloodier, much of what was happening did not fit in with my outlook.[151] But after all[152] there was still the unfinished task, women's liberation. Women, of course, had received all rights but in practice, of course, they still lived under the old yoke: without authority in family life, enslaved by a thousand menial household chores, bearing the whole burden of maternity, even the material cares, because many women now found life alone as a result of the war and other circumstances.

In the autumn of 1916 when I devoted all my energies to drawing up systematic guidelines for the liberation of working women in all areas, I found a valuable support in the[153] first President of the Soviets, Sverdlov, now dead.[154] Thus the first Congress of Women Workers and Women Peasants could be called as early as November of 1918; some 1147 delegates were present. Thus the foundation was laid for methodical work in the whole country for the liberation[155] of the women of the working and the peasant classes. A flood of new work was waiting for me. The

question now was one of drawing women into the people's kitchens and of educating them to devote their energies to children's homes and day-care centers, the school system, household reforms, and still many other pressing matters. The main thrust of all this activity was to implement, in fact, equal rights for women as a labor unit in the national economy and as a citizen in the political sphere and, of course, with the special proviso: maternity was to be appraised as a social function and therefore protected and provided for by the State.

Under the guidance of Dr. Lebedevo, the State institutes for pre-natal care also flourished then. At the same time, central officers were established in the whole country to deal with issues and tasks connected with women's liberation and to draw women into Soviet work.[156]

The Civil War in 1919 saddled me with new tasks. When the White troops tried to march north from south Russia, I was again sent to the Ukraine and to the Crimea where at first I served as chairwoman of the enlightenment department in the Army. Later, up to the evacuation of the Soviet government,[157] I was appointed People's Commissar of Enlightenment and Propaganda in the Ukrainian government. I managed to send 400 women communists out of the threatened zone near Kiev with a special train. I did my most possible best for the communist women workers movement also in the Ukraine.[158]

A serious illness tore me away from the exciting work for months. Hardly having recovered–at that time I was in Moscow–I took over the direction of the Coordinating Office for Work among Women and again a new period of intensive, grueling work began. A communist women's newspaper[159] was founded, conferences and congresses of

women workers were convoked. The foundation was laid for work with the women of the East (Mohammedans). Two world conferences of communist women took place in Moscow. The law liberalizing abortion was put through and a number of regulations of benefit to women were introduced by our Coordinating Office and legally confirmed. At this time I had to do more writing and speaking than ever before...[160] Our work received wholehearted support from Lenin. And Trotsky, although he was overburdened with military tasks, unfailingly and gladly appeared at our conferences. Energetic, gifted women, two of whom are no longer alive,[161] sacrificially devoted all their energies to the work of the Coordinating Office.

At the eighth Soviet Congress, as a member of the Soviet executive (now there were already several women on this body[162]), I proposed a motion that the Soviets in all areas contribute to the creation of a consciousness of the struggle for equal rights for women and, accordingly, to involve them in State and communal work. I[163] managed to push the motion through and to get it accepted but not without resistance. It was a great, an enduring victory.

A heated debate flared up when I published my thesis on the new morality. For our Soviet marriage law, separated from the Church to be sure, is not essentially more progressive than the same laws that after all exist in other progressive democratic countries. Marriage, civil marriage and[164] although the illegitimate child was[165] placed on a legal par with the legitimate child,[166] in practice a great deal of hypocrisy and injustice still exists in this area. When one speaks of the "immorality" which the Bolsheviks purportedly propagated, it suffices to submit our marriage laws to a close scrutiny to note that in the divorce question we are on a par with North America whereas in the question of the

illegitimate child we have not yet even[167] progressed as far as the Norwegians.

The most radical wing of the Party was formed around this question. My theses, my sexual and moral[168] views,[169] were bitterly fought by many Party comrades of both sexes:[170] as were still other differences of opinion in the Party regarding political guiding principles.[171] Personal and family cares were added thereto and thus months in 1922 went by without fruitful work. Then in the autumn of 1922 came my official appointment to the legation of the Russian Soviet representation in Norway. I really believed that this appointment would be purely formal and that therefore in Norway I would find time to devote to myself, to my literary activity. Things turned out quite differently. With the day of my entry into office in Norway I also entered upon a wholly new course of work in my life which drew upon all my energies to the highest degree. During my diplomatic activity, therefore, I wrote only one article, "The Winged Eros," which caused an extraordinarily great flutter. Added to this were three short novels, "Paths of Love," which have been published by Malik-Verlag in Berlin.[172] My book "The New Morality and the Working Class" and a socio-economic study, "The Condition of Women in the Evolution of Political Economy," were written when I was still in Russia.

The Years of Diplomatic Service

I took up my duties in Norway in October of 1922 and as early as 1923 the head of the legation went on holiday so that I had officially to conduct the affairs of the Soviet Republic for him. Soon thereafter, however, I was appointed as the representative of my country in his stead. Naturally this appointment created a great sensation since, after all, it was the first time in history that a woman was officially active as an "ambassador." The conservative press and especially the Russian "White" press were outraged and tried to make a real monster of immorality and a bloody bogy out of me. Now especially a profusion of articles were written about my "horrid views" in relation to marriage and love. Nevertheless I must stress here that it was only the conservative press that gave me such an unfriendly reception in my new position. In[173] all the social relations which I had during the three[174] years of my work[175] in Norway, I never once experienced the least trace of aversion or mistrust against woman's capabilities. To be sure, the healthy, democratic spirit of the Norwegian people greatly contributed to this. Thus the fact is to be confirmed that my work as official Russian[176] representative[177] in Norway was never, and in no wise, made difficult for the reason that I belonged "to the weaker sex." In connection with my position as ambassadress I also had to assume the duties of a Trade Plenipotentiary of the Russian governmental trade representation in Norway. Naturally both tasks in their special way were new to me. Nevertheless I set myself the[178] task of effecting the de jure recognition of Soviet Russia and of re-establishing normal trade relations between the two countries which had been broken by the war and the revolution.[179] The work began with great zeal and the most roseate hopes. A splendid[180] summer and an eventful

winter marked the year of 1923! The newly resumed trade relations were in full swing: Russian corn and Norwegian herring and fish, Russian wood products and Norwegian paper and cellulose. On February 15, 1924, Norway in fact[181] recognized the U.S.S.R. de jure. I was appointed "chargé d'affaires" and officially introduced into the diplomatic corps. Now negotiations for a trade treaty between the two countries began. My life was as crammed with strenuous work and highly interesting experiences alike. I[182] had also to settle grave questions connected with the further development of trade and of shipping. After several months, in August of 1924, I was appointed "Ministre Plenipotentiere" and handed over my warrant to the king of Norway with the usual ceremonial. This, of course, gave the conservative press of all countries another occasion to spew their invectives upon me. After all, never before in all history had a woman been accepted as ambassador with the customary pomp and ceremony.

The trade agreement was concluded in Moscow[183] at the end of 1925 and in February I countersigned the ratified treaty in Oslo with the president of the Norwegian cabinet, I. L. Mowickl.[184]

The signing marked the successful accomplishment of my whole mission in Norway. I could hasten towards new goals and for this reason[185] I left my post in Norway.

If I have attained something in this world, it was not my personal qualities that originally brought this about. Rather my achievements are only a symbol of the fact that woman, after all, is already on the march to general recognition. It is the drawing of millions of women into productive work, which was swiftly effected especially during the war and which thrust into the realm of possibility the fact

that a woman could be advanced to the highest political and diplomatic positions. Nevertheless it is obvious that only a country of the future, such as the Soviet Union, can dare to confront woman without any prejudice, to appraise her only from the standpoint of her skills and talents, and, accordingly, to entrust her with responsible tasks. Only the fresh revolutionary storms were strong enough to sweep away hoary prejudices against woman and only the productive-working people is able to effect the complete equalization and liberation of woman by building a new society.

As I now end this autobiography, I stand on the threshold of new missions and life is making new demands upon me [186]

No matter what further tasks I shall be carrying out, it is perfectly clear to me that the complete liberation of the working woman and the creation of the foundation of a new sexual morality will always remain the highest aim of my activity, and of my life.[187]

In July of 1926

Signed: Alexandra Kollontai

Footnotes

[1] Author's correction: created something which is recognized by society.

[2a] perhaps

[2] Author's correction: to emphasize that which has an importance for the solution of the social problems of our time, and which also includes the great problem of complete women's liberation. Author's note with respect to 2: delete

[3] Author's correction: I had a certain presentiment

[4a] for society

[4b] as creative worker

[4c] who fought for the realization of our social ideals

[4d] Socialists – now communists

[4e] crossed out

[4f] world-view

[4g] I believe

[4h] always

[4i] when once love came, I have my relations to the man

[4k] as men do

[4l] As was shown later, my private life, which I did not shape according to the traditional model, was no hindrance when in all seriousness it was a question of utilizing my energies for a new State [the Soviet Republic] and of functioning first as a member of the first Soviet cabinet, later as ambassadress.

[4m] for example (crossed out)

[4n] crossed out

[4o] crossed out

[4p] : the

[4r] "truly remarkable" (in quotes)

[4s] privately

[4t] crossed out

[4u] crossed out

[4v] can be dispelled (and crossed out)

[4w] that

Author's note with respect to 4: delete completely

Author's new note: Instead of deleting

For it is not her specific womanish virtue that gives her a place of honor in human society, but the worth of her useful work accomplished for society, the worth of her personality as human being, as creative worker, as citizen, thinker, or fighter. To go my way, to create, to fight side by side with men for the realization of our social ideals (indeed for almost thirty years I belonged to the communists), but, at the same time, to shape my personal life as a woman according to my will.

Subconsciously this was the guiding force of my whole life and activity

Above all, however, I never let my feelings, joy in love, or sorrow take the first place in my life: productive work, activity, struggle always stood in the foreground.

[5] Author's correction: primarily upon all other areas

[6] Author's correction: and are not guided by sentimental love-feelings

[7] Author's correction: "spiritual community"

[8] Author's correction: inwardly, in the mind

[9] crossed out

[10] so that only a very subordinate place remains available to love

[11] Author's correction: unreservedly gave our entire ego to the beloved man in the hope that thereby we could attain a complete spiritual harmony.

[12] crossed out

[13] crossed out

[14] crossed out

[15] crossed out

[16] Author's correction: old Russian landowner (class)

[17] crossed out

[18] Author's correction: experienced

[19] crossed out

[20] Author's correction: painfully felt the

[21] crossed out

[22] Author's correction: "rebelliously"

[23] Author's correction: in St. Petersburg

[24] crossed out

[25] crossed out

[26] Author's correction: liberal

[27] Author's correction: "good match" (in quotes)

[28] Author's correction: sixty

[29] Author's correction: "marriage of convenience" and "marriage for money" (in quotes)

[30] "great passion" (in quotes)

[31] crossed out

[32] crossed out

[33] Author's correction: the

[34] Author's correction: at that time; second correction: then

[35] Author's correction: more comprehensive [in German grosse, grossere – tr.]

[36] Author's correction: studies on the

[37] crossed out

[38] Author's correction: to my work

[39] crossed out

[40] Author's correction: and

[41] Author's correction: I realized that in Russia little had yet been done to draw women workers into the liberation struggle. To be sure a quite strong bourgeois women's movement already existed in Russia at that time. But, as a Marxist, it was clear to me that the lib-

[42] Author's correction: against the bourgeois-minded

[43] crossed out

[44] Author's correction: not so easy
[45] Author's correction: comrades
[46] Author's correction: Since
[47] Author's correction: I
[48] crossed out
[49] Author's correction: and propaganda work among the masses of women-workers
[50] Author's correction: Czarism
[51] Author's note: delete
[52] Author's correction: the
[53] Author's correction: (the Mensheviks)
[54] Author's correction: insufficient
[55] Author's correction: the socialist
[56] Author's correction: And
[57] crossed out
[58] Author's correction: work
[59] Author's correction: at that time I had
[60] crossed out
[61] crossed out
[62] Author's correction: (the Mensheviks)
[63] Author's note: delete
[64] crossed out
[65] Author's correction: working
[66] Author's correction: a more zealous activity
[67] crossed out
[68] crossed out
[69] Author's correction: Duma
[70] Author's correction: a
[71] crossed out
[72] Author's correction: in Sweden
[73] crossed out
[74] crossed out
[75] Author's note: delete
[76] Author's note: delete
[77] crossed out

[78] crossed out

[79] crossed out

[80] Author's correction: at that time

[81] crossed out

[82] crossed out

[83] Author's correction: through revival of the

[84] crossed out

[85] crossed out

[86] Author's correction: both

[87] Author's correction: a new grouping took place

[88] crossed out

[89] crossed out

[90] Author's correction: of our Party

[91] crossed out

[92] crossed out

[93] Author's correction: our only and living aim

[94] Author's correction: I had to cross the whole of the United States from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean and deliver lectures in the most different languages along the lines of the Internationalists

[95] Author's note: delete

[96] Author's note: delete

[97] Author's note: delete

[98] Author's correction: as soon as the political amnesty was declared by the new Republic I hastened

[99] Author's correction: who had the luck to

[100] crossed out

[101] Author's note: delete

[102] crossed out

[103] Author's correction: with the workers, the soldiers, the working women and the women soldiers

[104] Author's correction: I, however, was

[105] Author's correction: grew among the non-Soviet minded strata

[106] Author's correction: This gave our Party occasion to initiate enlightenment and political work among working women

[107] crossed out

[108] Author's correction: under the slogan of international solidarity and against the war

[109] Author's correction: the

[110] Author's note: delete

[111] Author's note: delete

[112] Author's correction: did not worry at all

[113] crossed out

[114] Author's correction: of the Bolsheviks

[115] Author's correction: Provisional (Kerensky)

[116] crossed out

[117] crossed out

[118] crossed out

[119] Author's correction: amicably

[120] Author's correction: strange

[121] Author's correction: of Bolshevism

[122] Author's correction: crossed out 34

[123] Author's correction: So far as I knew it was the first time in history that a woman

[124] Author's correction: great aims and

[125] Author's correction: in

[126] crossed out

[127] Author's correction: leper colonies

[128] Author's correction: etc.

[129] Author's correction: we formed

[130] Author's correction: my first day

[131] Author's correction: began as follows

[132] Author's correction: the most important achievements of our Peoples Commissariat (Ministry for Social Welfare) in the first months after the October Revolution were the following:

[133] crossed out

[134] crossed out

[135] Author's correction: to work out

[136] crossed out

[137] Author's correction: were

[138] crossed out

[139] Author's correction: etc.

[140] Author's correction: written in Russian, on laws which "obligated" 12-year old girls to become mothers and suchlike

[141] Author's correction: we

[142] Author's correction: our action

[143] crossed out

[144] Author's note: delete

[145] crossed out

[146] Author's correction: "red" (in quotes)

[147] Author's correction: period

[148] crossed out

[149] crossed out: Author's correction: I

[150] Author's note: delete

[151] crossed out

[152] Author's correction: also

[153] Author's correction: it was the

[154] Author's correction: who recognized the task of the political education of working women as a serious aim of the Party and helped us in our work

[155] Author's correction: emancipation

[156] Author's correction: to win them over to the new political system, to educate them politically

[157] crossed out

[158] Author's note: delete

[159] Author's correction: periodical

[160] crossed out

[161] Author's correction: Inessa Armand, and Samoslova

[162] crossed out

[163] Author's correction: we

[164] crossed out

[165] Author's correction: in Soviet Russia

[166] Author's correction: is

[167] Author's correction: only

[168] crossed out

[169] Author's correction: in the area of sexual morality

[170] crossed out

[171] crossed out

[172] Author's correction: wrote little: three short stories, "F Love," my first attempt at short-story writing, a sociological "Winged Eros," and other unimportant articles.

[173] Author's correction: that in

[174] Author's correction: and one half

[175] Author's correction: diplomatic activity

[176] crossed out

[177] Author's correction: the Soviet Republic

[178] Author's correction: The

[179] Author's correction: laid special claim on my energies

[180] Author's correction: laden with work

[181] Author's correction: (in fact) [in parentheses]

[182] Author's correction: we

[183] crossed out

[184] Author's correction: the trade agreement was ratified

[185] crossed out

[186] Author's correction: and to be sent to Mexico as ambassadress of the Soviet Union

[187] Author's note: delete