"COMRADES AND SISTERS:"
WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION AND POLITICIZATION
IN
THE NATIONAL WOMEN'S SECRETARIAT
1919-1925

by

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Title of Thesis

"Comrades and Sisters": Women's Organization and Politicization in the National Women's Secretariat, 1919-1925

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Abstract

During the turmoil which followed Germany's defeat in the first World War, women were given the vote by the interim Social Democratic government. Presented with women's newly acquired voting rights, each political party considered the ways in which to attract female support. However, the optimism generated by the attainment of universal suffrage and equal citizenship proved to be premature as formal equality was unable to alter the structural dependence and subordinate position of women in society.

From its inception in 1919, the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) reaffirmed its Marxist commitment to women's equality. Perpetuating the classical nineteenth-century interpretation that the "Woman Question" would only be solved in tandem with the social question, it was argued that women's full equality would only be realized in a radical reconstruction of capitalist society. In order to facilitate women's participation in the social revolution, the KPD established a separate women's organization under the supervision of the Third International.

The National Women's Secretariat evolved in affiliation with the Central Committee of the KPD and maintained communication with the urban, district and local party constituencies. Due to the "great passivity and political backwardness of the female masses" the Secretariat was in charge of educating women about their oppression "at the

hands of society." In theory, the KPD supported women's equal economic, social and political rights. In practice, however, women's participation in the party interested the male leadership in only three ways: as voters, as supporters of the social struggle and as mothers and housewives, to bear and nurture a new generation of soldiers and workers for the revolution. Relegated to gender-specific organizations, the party demonstrated a gendered division of labour which served to assign women's politics an inferior status.

The ways in which the Secretariat conceptualized, politicized and mobilized female support can best be understood in an analysis of the official organ for women's politics, *Die Kommunistin*, in conjunction with an examination of Women's Day celebrations and the KPD's abortion reform campaign. Although women were invited to participate in the political struggles of the day, they soon realized that there was a price to pay for their inclusion. Since issues concerning women's lives were addressed only insofar as they affected the movement as a whole, women were forced to subsume their personal quests for the good of the collective, highlighting the tension between equality and difference. The Secretariat's failed attempts to reconfigure class politics to accommodate their new political identities accentuates the problematic integration of women's interests into a Marxist paradigm at this point in German history.

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"Understand, women, that these day-to-day dry and boring politics are also the questions of bread and butter, of clothing, of the home, personal health and welfare for you and yours. The dry boring politics are in fact a strict, stern woman."

Die Kommunistin. Jhrg. 2. N. 20 December 15, 1921. p. 158. (Hoover Institution, Stanford University)

Die Kommunistin

Organ der Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands (Sektion der Kommunistischen Internationale)
Herausgegeben vom Frauenreichssekretariat. Gegründet und unter ständiger Mitarbeit von Clara Zetkin

Nr. 6	[illegible]	Berlin, 15. März 1922	[illegible]	Jahrg. 4

„Ich war, ich bin, ich werde sein" . . .

figure 1.

Title page of *Die Kommunistin*, Jhrg 4 N.6 March 15, 1922. Quote from Rosa Luxemburg, *"Ich war, ich , ich werde sein..."* I was, I am, I will be...

This cover page depicts a young woman upholding the communist banner. In the background, beginning at the far left, we can see representations of Weimar reality: the bourgeois businessman, the military, the Church, and the government. To the right the workers act as work-horses, pulling their oppressors in a carriage toward the factories, looming ominously in the background. This image conveys the Secretariat's desire to create leaders out of women. The leadership role of the communist woman is clear: she occupies the centre of the picture, her back turned to us as our gaze follows her own as she surveys the landscape. Banner raised high and the torch at her side, she acts as a beacon for the hopeful masses.

Introduction

It is common for historians to treat the Weimar Republic as an experiment in contradictions, when the Germany of lyrical dynamism, humanist philosophy and refined cosmopolitanism attempted to replace images of bloody militarism and aggressive foreign policy. Instead of the politics of Bismarck and Schlieffen, the new republic seemed anxious to travel down the historic path of Goethe and Humboldt. Unfortunately, the idealistic search for a usable past did not prevent the eventual collapse of German republicanism. Arthur Rosenberg, commenting on the Nazi menace from exile in England, noted the irony that "history enjoys discrediting arbitrarily chosen symbols."[1] Although Rosenberg directed his scrutiny at the actions of naive Weimar parliamentarians and the problems associated with the search for stability at all costs, the author's statement serves as a warning against the casual acceptance of historical "truths".

Feminist historians have recognized the need to rethink, reconsider and redefine historically accepted maxims in order to unearth and understand women's experience. However, confronted with the paradoxes of this period in German history, most scholars continue to view women's activity solely in terms of the search for equality within a public

[1] Arthur Rosenberg. A History of the German Republic. translated by F.D Morrow and L. Marie Sieveking. 1936, p. 101.

masculine sphere. Yet, Rosenberg's warning must continue to resonate in the problematization of all historical concepts. To be sure, any examination of women's activity in Weimar Germany must address the dubious nature of this legislated "equality" and the extent to which the state and society observed, accepted and applied it in practice.

Women were granted the right to vote in November 1918 and parties across the political spectrum began to consider ways to secure female support. Although paragraph 109 of the Weimar Constitution recognized sexual equality as a basic right, female participation in the political system was limited. "The Woman Question," the preoccupation with the attainment of political and social equality, lost supporters from bourgeois circles as it became clear that the "time had come for women to cease being "equal righters" (*Frauenrechtlerinnen*) and to become party members."[2] However, the optimism generated by formal equality itself proved to be bittersweet as the attainment of the suffrage and equal citizenship failed to alter the structural dependence and subordinate position of women in Weimar society.

Before World War I, the left attributed women's secondary status in the family and workplace to the existence of private property, holding capitalist economic relations or more specifically private property as the sole cause of women's oppression. Taking their cue from the early Marxist

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[2] Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz. "Beyond Kinder, Küche, Kirche: Weimar Women in Politics and Work." in Becoming Visible: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany. New York: Monthly Review Press,

theoreticians Friedrich Engels and August Bebel, only a total restructuring of society according to socialist standards could ensure the true emancipation of women. After the war, sensing that the time was right for such dramatic upheaval, the radical left of the Social Democratic Party separated from the main party and, together with the elements of Independent Socialists, formed the Communist Party of Germany (KPD).[3] With the ideological focus on revolutionary socialism, the KPD concentrated its efforts on securing the revolution. According to Clara Zetkin, premier ideologue on communist women's politics, women were to participate "equally" in the struggle since the "Woman Question" comprised "a piece of the larger social question," and it could "only be realized when the proletariat destroys capitalism and builds communism out of a united struggle of all the oppressed, regardless of gender."[4]

In theory, women and men would fight side by side as comrades for the communist future. Yet, despite the rhetoric, the KPD called for the establishment of a separate organization to facilitate women's participation in the

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1984. p. 36.

[3] It must be stated that the Socialist Party encounted ardent ideological discord well before the first World War. When the reformist section of the SPD affirmed the motion for war credits, the radical left under the leadership of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht reaffirmed their committment to revolutionary socialism. However, among those committed to revolution, discord emerged over the exact nature of this revolutionary activity. In 1910, Luxemburg challenged the International's preeminent theoretician Karl Kautsky and his vision of mass action, the two strategies of "attrition and "overthrow," which were received with great claim to erudition. While there may have been a perception of unity in oppression, there was certainly no shortage of internal division within the left before, during and after the war.

[4] Clara Zetkin. *"Die werktätige Frau im Klassenkampf. Referat auf dem Vereinigungsparteitag der USPD (Linke) mit der KPD. 7. Dezember 1920."* in Zur Theorie und Praxis der kommunistischen Bewegung. Leipzig: Reclame, G.G. Interdruck, 1974. p. 429.

social revolution and generate communist awareness. This separateness was by no means extraordinary at the time. In fact as early as 1907, the now infamous theoretician Rosa Luxemburg reminded Zetkin at the August International Socialist Women's Conference of the importance of having a voice of their own, referring to the then party newspaper for women's politics ironically entitled *Die Gleichheit* (Equality).[5] Nonetheless, the National Women's Secretariat (*Frauenreichssekretariat--FRS*) became the liaison between the *Zentrale*[6] and the women of the working class. Based on the International Women's Secretariat which operated initially under the leadership of Alexandra Kollontai and eventually under Zetkin in conjunction with the Third International, the National Women's Secretariat mediated between party policies and proletarian women's grassroots concerns. Despite the FRS's importance in the execution and application of women's politics, it had virtually no other function in the central policy making of the KPD.

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[5] Historians differ in their appreciation of Rosa Luxemburg as to the extent to which she identified with the "Woman Question." Although never overtly concerned with issues of gender, evidence suggests that Luxemburg was aware of the offensive attitudes of her collegues. August Bebel, who had created a myth around himself as sensitive to women's oppression, wrote in a letter to Karl Kautsky on August 16, 1910, "...it is an odd thing about women. If their partialities or passions or vanities come anywhere into question and are not given consideration, or let alone, are injured, then even the most intelligent of them flies off the handle and becomes hostile to the point of absurdity. Love and hate lie side by side, a regulating reason does not exist." Karen Honeycutt. "Clara Zetkin: A Left-Wing Socialist and Feminist in Wilhelmian Germany." Ph.D. diss., Columbia Unversity, 1975. p. 57.

[6] A party statute adopted by the Sixth (Unification) Congress in December 1920 called for the establishment of the *Zentrale* to become the "political and organisational direction of the party to supervise all organs and functionaries. In 1925, the *Zentrale* was renamed the *Zentralkomitee* (Central Committee), signifying the Comintern's attempts to systematize all communist parties throughout the world according to the Russian model. Ben Fowkes. Communism in Germany Under the Weimar Republic. London: Macmillan Press, 1984. p. 185.

In theory the KPD supported women's equal economic, social and political rights. In practice however, women's agitation interested the party primarily from three standpoints: as voters, as supporters of the social struggle, and as mothers and housewives who bore and nurtured the new generation of revolutionary workers and soldiers. Due to the party's official blindness to sexual difference, issues which were of concern to the female proletariat were addressed only insofar as they affected the movement as a whole. The problematic infusion of women's concerns in the politics of class and the persistence of gender-specific organizations indicate a gendered division of labour within the hierarchical party structure which served to assign women's politics ancillary status.

This thesis addresses four specific problems concerning the KPD's gender-blind vision of women's political identity which contributed to the naturalization of women's inferior status within communist politics. First and foremost is the KPD's hypocritical position on equality. Although women were included in the party ranks to participate with vigor in the class struggle, they were not allowed to determine for themselves the nature of this inclusion. The second is the party's denunciation of women's "special" contribution to the realm of politics despite the establishment of gender-specific methods of politicization. A third inconsistency is the KPD's claim to a progressive "emancipated" policy on women's inclusion which was ultimately undermined by

contemporary traditional notions of gender. While the party believed that the Secretariat's primary purpose was to bring the unenlightened housewife into the public political sphere, its position on abortion reform served to reinforce women's housewifely role in the proletarian patriarchal family. The fourth discrepancy is the KPD's perspective on women's oppression. Since communists acknowledged patriarchy as a by-product of capitalist exploitation, their analysis ignored their own complicity in the perpetuation of this oppression. In this study, these questions will converge to expose the problematic integration of women's interests into a Marxist framework in Weimar Germany.

Scholars of women's historical experience have grappled extensively with the "unhappy marriage of Marxism and feminism"[7] with the hope of reconciling the one term with the other. The task has been especially difficult in expanding the notions of class to include the particular forms of oppression experienced by women. Traditionally, Marxist feminists stressed the importance of women in the struggle against capital as workers but not as women. By expanding Marxist analysis to include reproductive labour, Marxist feminists considered "women as part of the working class even though they work at home."[8] Quickly realizing that the relationship of housework to capital or women to the economic system did little to explain the relationship of men to

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[7] Heidi Hartmann. "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union." in Women and Revolution. ed. by Lydia Sargent. Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1981. pp. 1-41.

women, many scholars turned to an analysis of patriarchy to synthesize Marxist and feminist methodologies.

The numerous attempts to synthesize Marxist and feminist interests failed to consider the importance of the historical context. Following the social and political watershed precipitating the French Revolution, the declaration of the rights of man and the 'vindication' of the rights of woman, Europe slowly gave rise to two new movements of social criticism: socialism and feminism. Concerned with the relationship of the 'new man' to the 'new woman' in the shadow of creeping industrialization, social theorists envisioned a new society based predominantly on the principle of equality. Richard Evans explains that nineteenth-century feminism represented the needs and desires of the middle class, based on notions of liberal individualism "whose roots lay in part in Protestant sectarianism and Enlightenment rationalism."[9]

Liberal individualism envisioned the world as composed of masses of human atoms, all in constant competition for their own individual benefit. However, unrestricted competition would not only benefit the individual, it would also benefit society as a whole. Proponents of liberal individualism believed that a truly "just and equitable society could come into being"[10] with State interference

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[8] Hartmann. p. 6.
[9] Richard J. Evans. The Feminist Movement in Germany 1894-1933. London: Sage Publications, 1976. p. 1.
[10] Ibid. p. 1.

reduced, inequalities between individuals abolished, and all barriers to free competition removed. Realizing that the liberalization of society could not logically be confined in application to men alone, intellectuals such as John Stuart Mill demanded equal citizenship rights for women.

Feminist critics of Mill have illustrated that although he espoused formal equality of rights for men and women in the public sphere, Mill failed to address the unequal power relations within the family which directly resulted from "women's continued confinement to the private familial sphere."[11] Jean Bethke Elshtain explains that Mill invoked a conceptualization of "a traditional division of labour within the family based on males being actively employed outside the home."[12] Similarly, nineteenth-century gender relationships dictated that the "natural" divisions between men and women determined men's activity in the public domain and women's in the private realm. By ignoring the interaction between public and private and the consequent restraints on freedom resulting from separate and gendered spheres of activity, nineteenth-century women relied on the notion of formal equality in their struggle against discriminatory laws and practices which denied them access to education and employment. Hence, liberal feminists emphasized the importance of gaining access to the public sphere of work and

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[11] Barbara Einhorn. Cinderella Goes to Market: Citizenship, Gender and Women's Movements in East Central Europe. London: Verso, 1993. p. 62.

[12] Jean Bethke Elshtain. Public Man, Private Woman: Women in Social and Political Thought. Princeton University Press., 1981. p. 138.

politics, "an emphasis reiterated in the socialist notion of women's emancipation."[13]

In Imperial Germany where class lines were drawn sharply, "the differences between working-class women and middle-class women became virtually unbridgeable."[14] While bourgeois feminists and socialists differed in their appreciation of women's emancipation, both employed the public/private paradigm to explain women's inferior status in society. In his work on the origins of women's oppression, Friedrich Engels located women's inferiority in her problematic relationship to public productivity. Since women's oppression lay not so much in man's power over woman but in woman's economic dependence at the hands of private property it was logical to assume, as August Bebel did in Woman Under Socialism, that only the overthrow of private property through socialism could liberate women. Yet, socialist women rallied for the suffrage for completely different reasons than liberal feminists. While bourgeois feminists recognized the vote as a means to secure personal autonomy, socialists viewed the suffrage as an interim measure to politicize the female masses in preparation for social revolution. In contrast to liberal individualism,

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[13] Barbara Einhorn. p. 63. Despite the liberal feminist quest for public citizenship rights, the preservation of the private sphere was regarded by liberals to be of supreme importance since privacy represented the "locus of freedom and individuality." Steven Lukes suggests that the "essential elements in the ideas of equality and liberty" are the four-unit ideas of individualism-- "respect for human dignity, autonomy, privacy and self-development." Preservation of the private sphere, Lukes continues, "is characteristically held by liberals to be desirable either for its own sake...or else as a means to the realization of other values, such as that of self-development." Steven Lukes. On Individualism. Oxford: Blackwell, 1973. p. 66.

[14] Karen Honeycutt. "Socialism and Feminism in Imperial Germany," in Signs. 1979. p. 34.

Marxism in theory in Germany and in practice in Russia "resonated with the new principle organization of life--collectivism."[15] By bringing women out of the confines of domesticity into the public political arena, socialists sought to channel women's energies into the collective social struggle for communitarian principles. Such an understanding of collectivism represents the polar opposite to individualism in its call for a monistic fusion of all aspects of life. In the words of Alexander Bogdanov, Bolshevik author of the socialist utopian novel Red Star, "collectivism illuminates the depiction not only of human life but also of the life of nature: nature as a field of collective labour."[16]

On the one hand cautioning against the arbitrary implementation of the term feminism, Karen Offen explains that too often historians utilize the term in the liberal sense to describe the quest for individual equal rights. Offen reminds the reader that although the history of feminism "is inextricable from the time-honoured concerns of historiography: politics and power," it must be expanded "by attention to gender."[17] At a glance, one might retort that feminism was always about gender relations. This, however, is

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[15] Svetlana Boym. Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1994. p. 89. Many recent works detail the divergent paths of liberal individualism and socialist and state-socialist collectivism/communitarianism. For additional information see Boym and Barbara Einhorn, Cinderella goes to Market: Citizenship, Gender and Women's Movements in East Central Europe. London: Verso, 1993.

[16] Alexander Bogdanov. "The Paths of Proletarian Creation," in Russia the Avant-Garde, ed. John Bowlt. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1988. p. 181.

to oversimplify. Offen's understanding of feminism maintains the importance of the historical context, which in nineteenth-century Europe equated feminist activity with liberal concerns for the suffrage. At the same time however, Offen reminds the reader that feminism is not solely about the attainment of the vote but must also include other examples of gender solidarity such as "political efforts to elaborate the welfare state so as to serve women's needs as wives and mothers" as in the payment of family allowances to mothers and the establishment of child-care facilities, as well as "efforts to eliminate state control of women's bodies by contesting anti-abortion laws and regulated prostitution."[18]

In this sense, it is important to understand the distinctions between feminism in the nineteenth century and feminist interests in the twentieth century. Although the proletarian women's movement was theoretically based on the Marxist understanding of sex-specific class oppression, the Secretariat was dismantled due to charges of bourgeois-feminist particularism. Any attempt to organize as women and not as workers was viewed as contradicting the socialist vision of the collective struggle. In order to understand the implications of this charge, one must acknowledge the importance of gender as a unifying force in the formulation of communist women's identity. When the women in the

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[17] Karen Offen. "Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach" in Signs. Vo. 14. no. 1 Spring 1988. p. 142.

Secretariat attempted to infuse "neutral" class politics with women's issues, they met extreme reluctance and eventual expulsion. Instead of the preoccupation with synthesizing Marxism and feminism, one must endeavor to understand why it is that class and gender interests appeared inimical at this time.

Moreover, in the attempt to combine Marxist and feminist approaches scholars have dismissed the communist women's movement in the 1920s due to similar confusion surrounding the relationship between class and gender. Jean Quataert claims that socialist women faced "persistent tensions between their loyalty to class and to sex,"[19] because they fought class warfare instead of a war against patriarchy. With the center-right alliance of the Social Democratic Party in 1914 and the cessation of party strife *(Burgfrieden)*, Quataert explains that the anti-militarist and internationalist principles of the Second International were compromised. While the alliance increased socialist interaction with government forces, Quataert suggests that in 1917 "prewar ideological antagonisms and wartime strains combined to demolish proletarian unity"[20] within the party. Although ideological divides surfaced some time earlier, in the wake of World War I the center-right coalition "crystallized into majority socialism (SPD); a disparate

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[18] Ibid. p. 142.
[19] Jean H. Quataert. Reluctant Feminists in German Social Democracy, 1885-1917. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1979. xi.
[20] Ibid. p. 209.

group of oppositionists formed independent socialism (USPD), and a smaller more radical party committed to the principles of international socialism and revolution (the future Communist Party of Germany)."[21]

Quataert contends that the split between majority, minority and revolutionary socialists is visible in the post-war years within the women's movement. While the adherents of majority socialism praised the Weimar constitution, members of the USPD "recognized that statutory equality did not guarantee equality for women."[22] At this point in her study, Quataert reinforces the notion that those who stood on the left of the socialist spectrum, namely the members of the USPD and the emerging KPD, subordinated their struggle for female equality to orthodox Marxism. By focusing on the fact that "they did not fight for feminism if the issue threatened the advancement of socialism,"[23] Quataert's approach betrays its limited utility in understanding notions of power beyond the dichotomy of class and gender, socialist versus feminist consciousness. In order to understand the demise of the Secretariat, one must outline and identify clearly the problematic insertion of women's interests into the politics of class. Such an analysis must examine closely the implications of the KPD's "gender-neutral" construction of class.

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[21] Ibid. p. 209.
[22] Ibid. p. 218.
[23] Ibid. p. 240.

Richard Evans argues that the relationship of class and gender, of orthodox Marxism and feminism, is not as clear-cut as Quataert would have us believe. In his evaluation of the German perspective toward feminism and socialism from the imperial period to World War II, Evans seeks instead "to focus on women as they entered the public sphere"[24] in political organizations and social movements. By tracing the evolution of women's entrance into the "male-dominated public sphere," Evans attempts to subvert what he terms "the previous historical concentration on foreign policy, formal ideology and high politics that had remained dominant, above all in Germany, for so long."[25]

Within Comrades and Sisters, the short assessment of feminist, socialist and pacifist activity between 1870 and 1945, Evans attempts to uncover women's political expression in emancipatory movements of late 19th and early 20th century Europe. From the first pages of the introduction to the concluding statements, it is clear that Evans wishes to reevaluate the history of the socialist women's movement with an eye toward the feminist/socialist dichotomy.[26] While Evans criticizes the portrayal of Clara Zetkin "either as a Marxist-Leninist heroine or an anti-feminist villainess,"[27] he

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[24] Richard J. Evans. Comrades and Sisters: Feminism, Socialism and Pacifism in Europe 1870-1945. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987. p. 4.
[25] Ibid. p. 5.
[26] Contrasting interpretations of Clara Zetkin before 1917 include Philip Foner's Clara Zetkin. Selected Writings. With an Introduction by Angela Y. Davis New York, 1984; Alfred G. Meyer, The Feminism and Socialism of Lily Braun. Bloomington, Indiana, 1985; Karen Honeycutt, "Clara Zetkin: A Left-Wing Socialist and Feminist in Wilhelmian Germany," PhD diss., Columbia 1975.
[27] Ibid. p. 17.

nonetheless exhibits difficulty understanding and interpreting the actions of a strong woman without employing the term "feminist." Despite the author's alleged preoccupation with Zetkin's pre and post-war identity, Evans' omission of the years of European communist activity between 1918 and 1933 clearly undermines this claim.

Like Quataert, Evans' study is limited by the ardent attempt to reconcile the terms socialism and feminism in order to "uncloak the silence"[28] and provide a "widened notion of what the public sphere actually was."[29] Clearly, Quataert and Evans employ outdated "insert woman here" methodologies in order to chart women's occasional forays from the private sphere into the realm of the public. Certainly the real dilemma is the blanket assumption that the "definitive" study of women's political activity need not acknowledge the vast network of communist organizations and their questionable vision of equality.

While the aforementioned authors ignore the communist women's movement altogether, Silvia Kontos focuses on the proletarianization of the labouring female masses to argue that the KPD platform on women's issues (*Frauenpolitik*) was infused with a patriarchal understanding of the importance of production over reproduction. In The Party Fights Like a Man,[30] Kontos maintains that the goal of communist women's

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[28] Jean Quataert. Reluctant Feminists. xi.

[29] Richard Evans. Comrades and Sisters. p. 5.

[30] Silvia Kontos. Die Partei Kämpft wie ein Mann: Frauenpolitik der KPD in der Weimarer Republik. Frankfurt am Main: /Roter Stern, 1979. Title taken from a Zinoviev speech on the task of working and

politics was to integrate women into the class struggle to create a genderless, class-conscious proletariat. Although Kontos' work incorporates the extensive use of empirical data to trace the genesis of the communist women's movement, her study is hampered by her use of the separate spheres dichotomy. In order to educate the "indifferent female masses"[31] in the spirit of communism, Kontos asserts that KPD policies for female involvement in the Party were designed to remove women from the private domestic "feminine" sphere into the public political "masculine" sphere. However, this idea is an oversimplification. While the concept of a genderless proletariat is intrinsic to any understanding of the proletarian women's movement, Kontos neglects to consider the role of the women themselves, who attempted to reconfigure traditional notions of public space to accommodate the many facets of their political identity.

Kontos connects the KPD preoccupation with women workers in 1924 with the gradual Bolshevization of the German Party. By placing blame on the patriarchal nature of communist women's politics, Kontos' approach is in keeping with the scholarship of socialist feminists of the late 1970s and early 1980s whose attempts to view women's oppression historically led to the development and dissemination of a "dual systems theory." Socialist feminists infused orthodox

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farming women in the Soviet Union in the final stages of the revolution printed in InPreKorr 29/1925, S. 434. "We must overcome all obstacles to ensure that the Party may step, like a man, on to the historical stage..."

[31] Ibid. p. 194.

Marxism with issues of sexuality and reproduction[32] by borrowing from the radical feminist conceptualization of patriarchy. In linking the concept of patriarchy with the economic functionalism of Marxism, dual systems theorists located women in the realm of the private and men in the realm of the economic/public.[33] Only through the historicization and problematization of the concept of separate spheres could Kontos address the "connections which occurred in the very process of their separation."[34] An analysis sensitive to gender difference within the KPD's political discourse would scrutinize the ways in which the Communist Party reinforced traditional notions of "separateness" to legitimize women's "special" and therefore marginal role in the labour movement. Despite Kontos' astute argument linking Bolshevization with the masculinization of the KPD, her analysis of reproduction fails to consider the ways in which the party attempted to regulate female reproductive activity in order to safeguard the patriarchal proletarian family.

Dissatisfied with the dichotomy between public and private, Cornelia Usborne examines how the German state and

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[32] There is an enormous literature on this topic. See Eli Zaretsky, Capitalism, the Family, and Personal Life. New York, 1976; Lise Vogel, Marxism and the Oppression of Women. New Brunswick, 1983; Heidi Hartmann, "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union," in Capital and Class 8. Summer 1979, pp. 1-33; Women and Revolution: A Discussion of the Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism, ed. Lydia Sargent. Boston, 1981; Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism. ed. Zillah Eisenstein. New York, 1979.

[33] Lise Vogel. "Feminist Scholarship: The Impact of Marxism," in The Left Academy, vol. 3, ed. Bertell Ollman and Edward Vernoff. New York, 1986. p. 9.

[34] Linda Nicholson, "Feminist Theory: The Private and the Public," in Beyond Domination: New Perspectives on Women and Philosophy, ed. Carol Gould. Totowa, N.J., 1984, p. 223.

its agencies attempted to regulate "the size and balance of population" according to their social, economic and political beliefs "rather than the views and wishes of individuals."[35] In her analysis of the politics of reproduction, Usborne outlines how republican Germany attempted to protect its *Volkskörper*, the body politic, "from the ravages of a social disease which affected all Western Europe: a declining birth-rate."[36] Usborne's examination of the regulation of women's sexuality highlights the conflict between collective and individual interests, between the *Volkskörper* and *Frauenkörper* (the female body) to illustrate how reproductive rights reside on the borderline between the private and public domains.

To support her argument, Usborne claims that gender imagery in the 1920's mirrored the nature of the Weimar Republic itself, replete with contradictions. Although women were granted the vote in November 1918, the Ebert government removed them from their wartime positions with additional help from factory councils and trade unions. Civic equality was tailored to meet the specific needs of the Social Democratic Party's search for stability. Within the communist campaign for abortion reform in 1924, Usborne maintains that the introduction of reproductive issues into the mainstream

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[35] Cornelia Usborne. The Politics of the Body in Weimar Germany. London: MacMillan Press, Ltd., 1992. p. xi.
[36] Cornelia Usborne. p. xi.
[36] Cornelia Usborne. p.vii.
[36] Cornelia Usborne. p. vii.

communist discourse highlighted the successful transformation of the politics of class. This study fails to address the KPD's role in modifying reproductivity to suit its collectivist agenda. Despite the fact that she directs her study at the conflict between individual and collective interests, Usborne fails to consider the absorption of the National Women's Secretariat as a blatant example of this very tension.

In my analysis of KPD political language, the discourses surrounding women's organization and politicization will be considered as both a textual and social relation. Such an examination will result in a substantial reconsideration of the relationship of class and gender in the formation of communist identity. Accordingly, a study of the National Women's Secretariat's role in the construction of female political identity will expose the difficulties in situating issues of gender within the discourse of communist politics in the Weimar Republic. Chapter 1 will outline the history of *Die Kommunistin* and the role of the Secretariat in the publication of the newspaper. Chapter 2 will examine the annual Women's Day celebrations as a means to understand how the Secretariat constructed women's participation. By focusing on the Secretariat's conceptualization of women's political role in Women's Day and the party's subsequent indifference, this chapter will expose the problematic nature of women's inclusion as "genderless" class fighters (*Klassenkämpfer*). Building on

this theme, Chapter 3 will discuss the Secretariat's campaign for abortion reform. Specifically, this study will address the dismantling of the Secretariat and the KPD's inability to include women's interests in their mandate since the definition of class itself was a gendered concept, defined and informed by a universalized male model. Accordingly, the scope of the study will encapsulate the years corresponding to the date of the newspaper's inception in 1919 and the complete reintegration of the Secretariat into the Bolshevized KPD in 1925.

In the past, histories of women's experience have been relegated traditionally to the realm of social history. In German historiography, women in Weimar have until recently featured only in studies of the women's movement or in relation to a changing sexual order. By concentrating either on woman's productive or reproductive role, historians perpetuate the comfortable yet problematic dichotomy of public and private. Instead of analyzing one category to the exclusion of the other, this thesis will build from the conflict between Marxist and feminist analyses to recognize the critical spirit of Rosenberg to blur the lines between arbitrary historical boundaries.

CHAPTER 1

The National Women's Secretariat and *Die Kommunistin*: "agitation and propaganda through action."

The winter of 1918/1919 dramatically altered the political and social fabric of war-ravaged Germany. Within a matter of weeks, the German population abandoned the course of imperial militarism and prepared for a new start under the guidance of an interim Socialist cabinet.[1] Ironically, peace and democracy owed their existence to military surrender and Socialist victory. In the wake of the socialist rise to prominence and the series of reforms that followed, the unthinkable had occurred; women were granted the suffrage and allowed to participate with a full voice in the political process. Instead of recognizing the decades of agitation before the war, women's equality had come "as a by-product of chaos and defeat rather than as the immediate result of a long and hard-fought battle."[2]

When General Ludendorff and Field-Marshall Hindenburg realized by August 8, 1918 that the war was lost after the failure of their Spring Offensive, it was time to sue for peace. Since the Allies would only support a Germany which made concessions to democracy, at Ludendorff's request a new Imperial government was put into effect under Prince Max von Baden; the main goal was to set Germany on a course for a

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[1] Richard J. Evans. Feminists Movements in Germany, 1894-1933. London: Sage Publications, 1976, p. 229.

constitutional monarchy. The government's majority in the *Reichstag* consisted of a Joint Parliamentary Committee comprised of the Catholic Center, the Progressives and the SPD.[3] In keeping with the quest for democracy, Prince von Baden's proposed reforms stressed the introduction of universal suffrage in all states. However, as an SPD member of the committee noted, "no mention was made of votes for women."[4]

Other events soon indicated that these reforms were not enough to prevent intense political upheaval. By the 5th of November, sailors of the North Sea Fleet had overtaken the authorities in Kiel and were demanding the Kaiser's abdication as well as the abdication of all German monarchs, a specific reference to Prince Max's government.[5] Interestingly, among their demands was the inclusion of female suffrage. By the 7th of November, revolutionary worker's and soldier's councils emerged in many German locales. In order to mollify the protesting masses, the Joint Parliamentary Committee chose to reevaluate their reforms. During deliberations, it remained unable to come to a conclusive decision on the question of female suffrage. While the SPD representative Otto Landsberg demanded its inclusion, Gustav Stresemann of the National Liberals opposed

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[2] Claudia Koonz. Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family, and Nazi Politics. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988. p. 22.
[3] Richard J. Evans. p. 228.
[4] *"Die Regierung des Prinzen Max von Baden,"* in *Quellen zur Geschichte des Parlamentarismus und der politischen Parteien*. Bd. 2. Düsseldorf, 1961. pp. 515-516.
[5] Ibid. p. 537.

it with vigor.[6] Finally, the introduction of female suffrage was agreed upon after continued consultation with representatives of the three parties in the Prussian Chamber of Deputies.[7]

Upon reporting to their respective parties, the representatives met with intense objections. This time not only Stresemann but also the Progressive Conrad Haussmann took exception.[8] In a meeting the following day, one member reinforced the acceptance of female suffrage "as a means of calming the revolutionary masses."[9] Nonetheless, the Catholic Center, the National Liberals and the Center Party refused its passage. Late in the evening of November 8, under duress and "the pressure of the revolution,"[10] the committee ultimately agreed on the inclusion of female suffrage into its programme.[11]

The revolutionary fervor which saw the acceptance of female suffrage also registered the demise of the Parliamentary Committee, as the Kaiser abdicated and power passed to the SPD and USPD-led Council of People's Delegates. Despite the misgivings of the "architect of the new republican constitution Hugo Preuss,"[12] the constituent National Assembly extended the vote to women over the age of

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[6] Ibid. pp. 571-572.
[7] Ibid. p. 573.
[8] Conrad Haussmann. *Slaglichter.Reichstagsbriefe und Aufzeichnungen*. ed. U. Zeller. Frankfurt/Main, 1924. p. 266.
[9] Richard J. Evans. p. 228.
[10] Ibid. p. 229.
[11] *"Die Regierung des Volksbeauftragten 1918/1919,"* in *Quellen zur Geschichte des Parlamentarismus und der politischen Parteien*. Bd. 3. Düsseldorf, 1969. p. 38.

21. While the extreme left had wished to delay the calling of the National Assembly, they were defeated by a Social Democratic government "whose fear of the extreme left led it to take into alliance the old institutions of the Empire--the army, civil service, judiciary, (and) police."[13] Moreover, the partial survival of the imperial institutions and the reluctance of notable parliamentarians to accept women's equal rights illustrates the precarious nature of this legisated equality and the difficulties for women to gain acceptance in other areas, despite the possession of the vote.

Presented with women's newly acquired voting rights, political parties tailored their agendas to win female support and despite entrenched reluctance, "every party included women on its list of candidates."[14] Yet contrary to the guise of equality, German women in fact remained tied to the apron strings of the double burden, "on the one hand [...] declared emancipated, which meant taking up their duties in public life," while "also expected to guard private life and preserve the home against the ravages of economic and social turmoil."[15] While paragraph 109 of the Weimar constitution provided for the women's sexual equality, the unrevised Prussian Penal Code continued to bind them to arcane and regressive legal principles.[16] The Weimar

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[12] Ibid. p. 221.
[13] Richard J. Evans. p. 230.
[14] Koonz. p. 29.
[15] Ibid. p. 31.
[16] Ibid. p. 29.

constitution employed three paragraphs in particular from the Prussian Penal Code of 1871 which governed reproductive freedom. Specifically, paragraphs 218, 219, 220 criminalized abortion and sentenced women who underwent such surgery, even in the case of rape, to penal servitude (see Appendix 3). Increasingly, it became clear that the vote alone would not translate into de facto emancipation.

The complex nature of women's inclusion in the political arena raised many questions for those directly involved. In the years prior to World War I, bourgeois, socialist, Catholic and Protestant women differed in their understanding of women's oppression and the means by which to secure emancipation. While bourgeois women rallied for the vote as 'women's righters' (*Frauenrechtlerinnen*) and feminists, socialist women remained loyal to the classical Marxist line espoused by Friedrich Engels and August Bebel that women must be freed from the bonds of domesticity and the confines of the private sphere in order to embrace equality. To ensure the achievement of this goal, communists envisioned the creation of communal kitchens and daycare to alleviate women's domestic drudgery. However, according to revolutionaries, women's true burden remained interwoven with the interests of the proletarian collective. In a purely classist sense, true equality was promised in the smoldering ashes of large-scale social revolution. In the interim, women were expected to put aside their immediate concerns and invest their energy and faith in the class struggle. This

tension between individual and collective concerns resonated in the Secretariat debates on reproductive freedom as to whether abortion was a personal choice or a social responsibility.

With the attainment of the suffrage in 1918, women continued to differ in their appreciation of the new-found "equality." In the election of 1919, people worried that the new voters would either "vote like their husbands," or even worse, "form the much-dreaded 'woman bloc' across party lines."[17] In effect, men and women distributed their votes in a similar pattern except that, in general, women voted less frequently for the Socialists, more often in favor of the Catholics.[18] Despite initial optimism for the vote, the progress of women's rights was disappointing as "judicial decisions upheld women's legal inequality in family law and property rights."[19] While women continued to debate their personal and political freedoms, it is certain that the vote itself not only reflected a fragmented constituency but the fragmented category of 'woman.'

Women continued the imperial tradition of agitation in organizations associated with the political parties. Since being granted the right of association in 1908, women who previously organized clandestinely to rally in support of

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[17] Ibid. p. 30.

[18] In 1919, including women's votes, the Socialists received only 47 percent and were forced to accept a coalition government.

[19] Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz, "Beyond *Kinder, Küche, Kirche*: Weimar Women in Politics and Work." in When Biology Becomes Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany. ed. Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossmann, and Marion Kaplan. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984. p. 36.

projects such as protective legislation and, of course, the suffrage, attempted to infuse women's issues into the mandates of their respective parties. Such is the case within the KPD, when the National Women's Secretariat attempted to insert reproductive freedom into the party programme.

Although the Weimar Constitution guaranteed women's place in the public forum explicitly and parties took steps to secure their support, women soon understood that there was a price for their freedom. It became painfully clear that women's penchant for politics would be streamlined into areas which reflected their "natural" concerns: education, health, welfare, culture and religion. Rarely allowed to break from the entrenched bonds of traditional gender roles, women began to question their position in the emancipated Germany of the 1920's.

Due to the various understandings of women's new role in society, women allied themselves in organizations which reflected their political viewpoints. In particular, women struggled with the definition of equality as they interpreted and experienced it. The question remained whether they were equal citizens or a special-interest lobbying group? Three different approaches to this question surfaced in the minutes and directives of women's organizations in the Weimar period.

Before 1914, middle-class women gathered to form the Federation of German Women (*Bund Deutscher Frauen* or *BDF*) to agitate for legal and political equality. Although fundamentally at odds, middle-class feminists and Socialists

believed in the Enlightenment view that there existed a universal and equal human nature. After World War I, both strains of the women's movement mutated and called the teachings of their mentors into question. The new middle-class woman of the 1920's feared women's masculinization and worked towards securing victories in areas of public life which they viewed as appropriate to their sex.

The preoccupation with women's "special" place in society crossed class lines and spurred a third, often ignored, approach to the Woman Question. Before the war, Socialists such as Clara Zetkin explained that women's inferior place in society resulted from the public/private distinction imposed on them by the capitalist system.[20] In 1918, the Socialist women's movement under the direction of Marie Juchacz emerged with a surprisingly feminist perspective. In the 1890s, Zetkin's steadfast commitment to the notion of universal human equality once "led her to downplay the issue of women's special nature so resolutely that she had voted against introducing birth control as an issue."[21] Juchacz, conversely, implied that the idea of universal equality was exclusively masculine and argued that within this universe women possessed a "special" status due

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[20]August Bebel's Woman Under Socialism and Friedrich Engel's The Origin of the Family formed the theoretical backbone of the SPD understanding of the Woman Question in nineteenth-century Germany. The binary opposites of public/ private continue to be employed in some academic circles as an historical tool with which to analyze women's experiences in the historical past.

[21] Claudia Koonz. Mothers in the Fatherland. p. 32. In the nineteenth century, middle-class women agitated for the vote with a self-avowed 'feminist' agenda while their rivals, the Socialists, found the very word offensive and an instrument of the bourgeoisie. Since the Socialists claimed that the Woman Question

to their "natural" attributes of sacrifice, loyalty and honesty. Infused with images of maternity and sexuality, Juchacz's "guardian of human life"[22] replaced Zetkin's vision of a "genderless proletariat," as illustrated in Juchacz's succession as editor of the long-standing SPD newspaper for women's politics, *Die Gleichheit*. It is indeed ironic that Juchacz would edit a paper literally named "Equality" while advocating a political stance which completely undermined any such pretensions. Despite Zetkin's condemnation of women's "special" political predilections, the KPD nonetheless erected a separate party apparatus devoted to the specific needs of proletarian women.

Marginalized and silenced within her own party, Zetkin dramatically defected from the majority socialists to the Communist Party following a brief stint in the USPD (*Unabhängige Sozialistische Partei Deutschlands*), forming the foundation of the third approach to the Woman Question in Weimar. While historians have outlined the machinations of the bourgeois and socialist women's organizations during the ill-fated fourteen year republic, a lacuna exists in the historiography of communist women's political activity in this same time period.

The Communist Party of Germany, under the guidance of the Third International, acknowledged the potential power of a politicized female proletariat in the struggle for world

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would be solved in the wake of the Social Question, securing the suffrage was tolerated as necessary in the interim on the road to revolution.

revolution. Through the establishment of a National Women's Secretariat (*Frauenreichssekretariat*), the KPD decided to "use every means in order to educate them (women) in the meaning of the new society and to apply communist ethics to social and family life."[23] Alexandra Kollontai's resolution at the First Congress of the Third International refers to women workers as principally reformers of the familial sphere, the goal of which was to "turn out hard-working citizens, imbued with a spirit of solidarity for the Council Republic."[24] Conversely, Clara Zetkin's 1920 Guidelines for the Communist Women's Movement,[25] presented to the Second Congress of the Third International, shattered this one-sided model. Zetkin's directives for women's involvement in the revolutionary struggle criticized Comrade Kollontai's emphasis on the maternal function, calling instead for women's "full and equal participation in all organs and channels of the Party, trade unions and co-operatives."[26] Although Zetkin and Kollontai would continue to argue over women's exact role in the class struggle, both agreed upon the necessity of an organized body to assume the task of politicizing the masses of housewives and working women.

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[22] Koonz. p. 32.

[23] "Resolution on the Role of Working Women," from The First Congress, March 5, 1919, submitted by Alexandra Kollontai. Theses, Resolutions and Manifestos of the III International. London: Pluto Press, 1983. p. 46

[24] Ibid. pp. 46-47.

[25] "*Richtlinien für die kommmunistische Frauenbewegung,*" 1920. in Karin Bauer, *Clara Zetkin und die proletarische Frauenbewegung*. Berlin: Oberbaum Verlag, 1978. pp. 237-267.

[26] Ibid. p. 255.

Following its legalization in 1920, the Communist Party put Zetkin's directives into practice with the establishment of an organ for women's politicization. With a rather pessimistic opinion of the female masses, the first Women's Conference of the KPD in August 1920 proclaimed the "united struggle of men and women" to "make women into class-conscious fighters (*Kämpferinnen*) for the dictatorship of the proletariat."[27] Since they regarded women as having no real understanding of the need for such a movement, the task of the Communist Party became "the politicization of the women of the proletariat, to bring them out of their narrow frame of reference, of housework and the family circle, and place before their eyes the true social and economic problems of today."[28] This assessment is indeed telling since the language employed situates the feminine as secondary and casts the masculine as normative. Consider the woman's "narrow frame of reference" of home and hearth. While socially sanctioned as her "natural" sphere by a patriarchal society, domestic concerns were then dismissed as trivial and subordinate by these same institutions, including the KPD. In effect, issues that affected women on a day-to-day basis were not worthy or "true" problems for revolutionaries. By contrast, masculine concerns are innocuously framed as "the true social and economic problems of today," reflecting the powerful assumptions which formulated them as "true" and

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[27] Women's Conference of the KPD August 1920. *Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganizationen der ehemaligen DDR*, Berlin Germany. (hereafter referred to as *SAPM*)

normal. These universalized assumptions would continually plague the Secretariat, culminating with its dissolution in 1925.

The Women's Secretariat in Germany was one of many organizations affiliated with the International Women's Secretariat and the Third International itself. In order to analyze the network of organizations which imparted the vision of communism to the masses, one must understand the motivations behind both the national and international bodies. From the inception of the Women's Secretariat in 1920, debate erupted over which vision of women's politics would dominate in the international sphere. Initially, Clara Zetkin was recognized as the rightful heir to the women's movement she helped build. However, the success of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 gradually ensured Russian hegemony in the Comintern and, parenthetically, in the international women's movement. Despite the common capitalist enemy, the Germans stood in opposition to their Russian comrades over issues of women's politicization and the methods by which to secure female participation.[29] Confident of their historic past, "the women's movement of the Communist Party of Germany, which--overlooked by the Russian movement--and the furthest in advancement," prepared to be

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[28] Women's Conference of the KPD 8 December 1920.

[29] The cloud of instability which surrounded the women's movement at this time is epitomized in the dislocation of the seat of the International Women's Secretariat. Between 1920 and 1924, the chair of the Secretariat was passed to Zetkin from Kollontai, from Moscow to Berlin. In 1924, the face of international women's politics changed dramatically with the establishment of special women's departments based on the *Zhenotdel* model in the Soviet Union.

"much more than a strong example of the successes of communism in Germany."[30]

The Second International Conference of Communist women which took place in Moscow in 1921 demanded that the various Communist Parties "carry out the resolution and to take seriously the organization of the broad masses of working women for revolutionary struggle."[31] Through the use of "propaganda and agitation among the female proletariat,"[32] women would thereby "deepen and develop their will and ability to fight"[33] for Communist ideas. Although women were to be encouraged to struggle for social revolution, they were reminded that it was "in the interests of the working class that women be drawn into the organized ranks of the proletariat as it fights for Communism."[34] As Chapters 2 and 3 will demonstrate, the communist vision of women's involvement in the movement suggests a reluctant partnership.

In 1921, the Comintern outlined its position more clearly on the women's organizations as a result of mounting tension surrounding the nature of their involvement. To this end, the International Secretariat was allowed to establish a permanent representative on the Executive Committee of the International in order to ensure that women were visible in

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[30] Die Kommunistin. March 21, 1921. p. 36.
[31] "Forms and Methods of Communist Work among Women" from the Third Congress 8 July 1921 in Theses, Resolutions and Manifestos of the III. International. London: Pluto Press, 1983. p. 211.
[32] Ibid. p. 211.
[33] Ibid. p. 211.
[34] Ibid. p. 214.

"all the militant class organizations."[35] However, "the great passivity and political backwardness of the female masses,"[36] could only be dealt with by "a special apparatus"[37] in charge of the female proletariat's mobilization.

The separate women's apparatuses evolved in affiliation with the *Zentrale* of the Party right down to the urban, district and local Party constituencies. At every level, the main priority of the commissions was the proliferation of Communist ideas.[38] In order to be capable of carrying out their most important task, the Communist Party had to grasp the basic principle of work among women--"agitation and propaganda through action."[39] By teaching women about their oppression at the hands of society, the Communist Party hoped to "draw them into practical work in the sphere of construction or struggle."[40] Ultimately, the most effective way to reach the female proletariat was through the press.

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[35] Ibid. p. 217.
[36] Ibid. p. 218.
[37] Ibid. p. 218.
[38] The tasks of the Secretariat included the following:
"1. to educate women in Communist ideas and draw them into the ranks of the Party;
2. to fight the prejudices against women held by the mass of the male proletariat, and increase the awareness of working men and women that they have common interests;
3. to strengthen the will of working women by drawing them into all forms and types of civil conflict, encouraging women in the bourgeois countries to participate in the struggle against capitalist exploitation, in mass action against the high cost of living, against the housing shortage, unemployment and around other social problems, and women in the Soviet republics to take part in the formation of the Communist personality and the Communist way of life;
4. to put on the Party's agenda and to include in legislative proposals questions directly concerning the emancipation of women, confirming their liberation, defending their interests as child-bearers;
5. to conduct a well-planned struggle against the power of tradition, bourgeois customs and religious ideas, clearing the way for healthier and more harmonious relations between the sexes, guaranteeing the physical and moral vitality of working people." Ibid. p. 218.
[39] Ibid. p. 224.
[40] Ibid. p. 225.

The dissemination of propaganda among women took many forms. From meetings and debates to special courses on Marxist theory, the Secretariat was instructed to "use the written word in the course of their agitational, organizational and educational work."[41] The German Women's Secretariat put the directives of the Comintern into practice in the women's organ for party politics, *Die Kommunistin*. Although Clara Zetkin founded the paper in 1919, based loosely on her previous editorial project *Die Gleichheit*, *Die Kommunistin* remained first and foremost a didactic tool. As the newspaper was intended to reach a population that varied both geographically and politically, the doctrinaire theoretical exposés were buttressed by "light-hearted, popular articles."[42]

Despite the appearance that *Die Kommunistin* appealed to the masses, in reality the members of the Secretariat debated constantly its form and function. As distribution grew from 26,000 copies to 40,000 in 1921, so did the editor's concern over the paper's accessibility. In Hertha Sturm's eyes, "the paper must become the living reflection of the life of the woman worker."[43] Since "the broad masses of women [did] not read the political articles in the daily papers,"[44] the Secretariat demanded that *Die Kommunistin* include topical articles which reflected the interests of the readership.

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[41] Ibid. p. 226.
[42] Women's Conference of the KPD 8 December 1920 in Berlin. *SAPM*, Berlin, Germany. p. 20.
[43] Women's Conference of the KPD 7 May 1921 in Berlin. *SAPM*, Berlin, Germany. p. 7.

These reflections included the on-going coverage of the protective legislation debate in the *Reichstag*, child-rearing techniques, questions concerning party politics and a Feuilleton section with stories and poems.

Although these concerns and criticisms were on-going, they reached an annual fever pitch during the preparation for the special Women's Day edition. Indeed, the general organization of Women's Day was of crucial importance to the Secretariat in reaching the female masses. In addition to special editions of *Die Kommunistin*, pamphlets and placards were prepared to reach the women in urban and distant rural settings. Since the Secretariat played an integral role in the development and application of women's political involvement in the KPD, the obvious importance of Women's Day in this process provides a natural starting point for a theoretical analysis, sensitive to the role of language in the construction of political identity. Such an analysis will further expose the problems associated with the creation of a potentially autonomous women's movement.

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[44] Women's Conference of the KPD 28 September 1922 in Berlin. *SAPM*, Berlin, Germany. p. 35.

CHAPTER 2

"You can't draw the masses into politics without drawing the women into politics as well:"[1] International Women's Day and the Mobilization of the Female Proletariat

In February 1921, the members of the National Women's Secretariat executive met in Berlin to discuss the formulation of their first united celebration of Women's Day. Having received the necessary permission from the *Zentrale*, the Executive hurriedly put together a plan of action. The first item on the agenda was to settle on an appropriate date for this all-important event. Executive Secretary Bertha Braunthal reported from the International Women's Conference that the Russian delegates lobbied to have the celebration held in March, as opposed to the German Secretariat's suggestion of the first week in April. Meanwhile, another German executive committee member, Comrade Tennenbaum, angrily denounced the Russian appeal and its inflexible position on Women's Day as "overall close-minded, reflecting the removed nature of the Russian Party to the sentiments of western Europe."[2] While Bolshevik Russia may have had a certain degree of control over the shape of international women's politics,[3] it was not until 1924 that its influence

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[1] V.I. Lenin. "International Women's Day," in The Emancipation of Women. New York: International Publishers, 1966. p. 83.

[2] Protocol of the National Women's Secretariat Executive Meeting, February 26, 1921. *SAPM* Berlin, 1994. p. 1.

[3] The position of Secretary of the International Women's Secretariat alternated between Alexandra Kollontai in 1919 and 1920 and Clara Zetkin in 1921, 22 and 23. Accordingly, the official seat changed venues from Moscow to Berlin. While Zetkin superficially embodied the spirit of the German Communist Party, she was a devout follower of Lenin and continued to agitate for a Bolshevized KPD until her death in 1932. For this reason, Zetkin remains one of the most notorious and surprisingly well-liked characters in the history of the socialist/communist women's movement, despite her questionable allegiance.

would be felt in the German party. Until that time, the National Women's Secretariat concerned itself with the organization of the annual week of street demonstrations and party meetings which memorialized Women's Day.

At that meeting in February, the Secretariat hammered out its directives for the week of agitation including the pertinent slogans which were to epitomize and highlight their struggle. The list began with the need to make women's political equality recognized on a large scale.[4] Second, Women's Day activities would focus on women's right to equal work for equal pay, while the third slogan proclaimed the need for protective legislation for women and children. Although some aspects of protective legislation were no doubt warranted--such as the extended maternity leave--the broader connotations deserve attention. On the one hand, the notion of "protecting" women appears coterminous with many patriarchal evaluations of women's natural weakness such that it highlights and draws attention to women's difference defined solely on the basis of women's biological function. On the other hand, gender-specific protective legislation would seem to undermine women's bid to acquire equal pay for equal work. The distinction between the recognition of difference and the attainment of equality exemplifies the continual dilemma faced by the Secretariat. While these slogans criticized the role of the state in condoning and

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[4]Protocol of the National Women's Secretariat Executive Meeting, February 26, 1921. *SAPM* Berlin, 1994. p. 2.

perpetuating capitalist patriarchal oppression, the KPD's response to the Secretariat's quest for female mobilization suggested that one need not look beyond the Communist Party itself to witness the supreme lack of recognition of women's equal status.

By examining the annual Women's Day activities and the nature of women's participation in these events, this chapter will analyze how the Secretariat attempted to politicize the "indifferent" female masses to make them aware of their role within communist politics. An examination of the Secretariat's methods of mobilization, in light of the party's muted response to their most basic concerns and demands, provides insight as to the degree to which women's interests in general and women's political activity in specific was accepted, welcomed and integrated into the party. The Secretariat's conceptualization of Women's Day celebrations and the party's subsequent indifference exposes the true nature of the equality/difference debate which served to relegate women to an ancillary status within the KPD. By accentuating the ways in which the Secretariat attempted to reconfigure and reconceptualize the public sphere to suit their new political identity, this chapter will illustrate the problematic infusion of sexual difference into communist politics.

While there are many speculations as to the true origin of Women's Day, the widely accepted view accredits Clara Zetkin with its founding. At the second conference of the

Socialist Women's International held in Copenhagen in 1910, Zetkin named March 8 as International Women's Day to commemorate the role women played within socialism. After the official split in 1918,[5] the SPD neglected to observe Women's Day as it increasingly evolved into a rallying cry for communist agitation. Both Soviet Russia and the German Communist Party recognized the enormous potential that Women's Day offered for motivating "inactive" housewives and "apolitical" working women. In the early years of the new Republic, the KPD understood the necessity of mobilizing support for the labour movement yet they nonetheless frowned upon any autonomous activity. Independently organized uprisings were not to be attended by dutiful workers, and husbands were to see to it that "their wives and children stayed home."[6] Instead, the KPD sought to regulate autonomous actions through the establishment of organized and authorized activities such as price control commissions in lieu of spontaneous food "riots". Since women most often were the principle actors in these events, the consolidation of party control over these demonstrations lessened the value placed on independent female activity. This sentiment is clearly conveyed in the party's use of the term "riot," implying a disorderly and unfocused immediate response. As opposed to

[5] The World War caused a split within Social Democracy itself, causing Zetkin to remark later with disdain that "the majority of organized Social-Democratic women sank under the leadership of the Second International to the position of defenders of the national "fatherlands" of the imperialist bourgeoisie." Hilda Scott. Women and Socialism. Boston: Beacon Press, 1976. p. 62.

the well-structured rationality of the party, women's spontaneous activity was associated with the broader conception of women as irrational and emotional. Since spontaneous street-level demonstrations were increasingly replaced by organized para-military and extra parliamentary activity, political action was channeled "into the formal structures of male-dominated parties and trade unions."[7]

The decline of subsistence-oriented demonstrations and labour's controlled crackdown over dissident uprisings eradicated the public political arena which had afforded women an avenue for exercising protest. The disappearance of the spontaneous and autonomous agitation affected the female proletariat in a more direct manner than their male comrades. While disappointed men unleashed their discontent through intense radicalization in the labour unions, more and more women, angered by the relinquished promises of political equality, simply withdrew from political activity.[8] Since most working-class women expressed extreme reluctance toward participating in organized parliamentary, union or party

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[6] Karen Hagemann. "Men's Demonstrations and Women's Protest: Gender in Collective Action in the Urban Working-Class Milieu during the Weimar Republic." in Gender and History, Vol. 5 No. 1 Spring 1993. p. 112.

[7] Ibid. p. 112.

[8] Women's average electoral participation sank from 82% in the National Assembly elections in January 1919 (at that time only 0.1% lower than men's participation) to only 62% in the May 1924 *Reichstag* elections. Men's participation fell far less in May 1924 to 74%. For additional information concerning gender-specific participation in Weimar voting see Claudia Koonz, "Conflicting Allegiances:Political Ideology and Women Legislators in Weimar Germany." in Signs. 1976. pp. 663-683; and Karen Hagemann, *Frauenalltag und Männerpolitik: Alltagsleben und gesellschaftliches Handeln von Arbeiterfrauen in der Weimarer Republik*. Bonn: Verlag J.H.K. Dietz Nachf. GmbH, 1990. especially pp. 468-83 and pp. 562-70. Hagemann explains that women's organization in trade unions, parties and strike participation experienced a lull in the early 1920's after having initially risen during and immediately following the November Revolution.

politics, the KPD surmised that women's politicization would best be handled by the organized body for proletarian women's concerns, the National Women's Secretariat.

Throughout the Weimar period, working-class women were most active in family-oriented endeavors, reflecting the general composition of the female proletariat which consisted of housewives and mothers and an increasing yet relatively small proportion of wage-earning women.[9] Many studies have assessed the motivation for women's participation in and oftentimes self-relegation to gender-specific areas of activity. On the one hand, the creation of a female space is often recognized as representative of the need to provide a safe and "meaningful sphere of social activism."[10] In the example of the Secretariat and Women's Day, women's activity in gender-specific spheres of influence represented the party's hostility in incorporating women's interests into the communist dialogue for collective struggle. Although the party paid lip-service to the integral participation of the female proletariat in the class struggle as a whole, it was disinclined to support any articulation of independent rights or autonomous involvement. Hence, the party settled on the paradoxical creation of a separate sphere for female political activity, which served to perpetuate traditional gender roles and discrimination.

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[9] The female proletariat signifies wage-earning women as well as housewives, who "made up the majority of SPD and KPD members" according to Hagemann. p. 114. In 1922, women represented only 12.2 per cent of KPD party members according to *InPreKorr*, 1923, no. 24, 5 February, p. 184.

[10] Hagemann. p. 114.

Before embarking on an examination of the KPD's Women's Day preparations, one must have a clear understanding of the legacy of the street demonstration in the Weimar Republic and the type of protest conducted by both men and women. The differences between male and female agitation are made plain in a survey of the spaces each gender occupied during organized uprisings. Working-class male demonstrations commonly took place in the public spaces which characterized male activity, namely the workplace, the pub, and the street. As the militarization of public protest grew during the relatively unstable Weimar years,[11] the occupation of public space represented the attempt to secure popular support and political influence. Street demonstrations were especially preferred in working-class districts since "people spent a great deal of everyday life outside their crowded lodgings."[12] Indeed, as working-class conditions worsened due to unemployment, more and more men found themselves on the street.

Women's spaces, conversely, were defined by the home despite the rhetoric to the contrary. Although women were increasingly afforded new possibilities for work and leisure, the home continued to represent the major focal point for most women regardless of age, class status or occupation.[13] Accordingly, woman's spaces included the areas which befitted

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[11] Gottfied K--ff, "*Rote Fahnen und geballte Faust. Zur Symbolik der Arbeiterbewegung in der Weimarer Republik*" in transformationen der Arbeiterkultur, ed. P. Assion. Marburg, 1976. pp. 86-107.
[12] Hagemann. p. 102.
[13] Ibid. p. 102.

her social circumstances such as marketplaces, courtyards and shops. Yet, the street represented something entirely different to women. While it is true that they reached the marketplaces by way of the street, women almost invariably used the main thoroughfares. Despite legislated equality, "respectable" women could not travel without an escort, even in their leisure time as walking without visible purpose through men's public space was often met with derogatory attention and disapproval.[14] If women wished to move and occupy public space outside of their societal roles, they did so at extreme risk to their own safety. For the women in the Secretariat, these difficulties informed their programme to attract and entice women out of the domestic sphere into the potentially dangerous and often volatile realm of political engagement.

In the February 1921 meeting of the Executive, the Secretariat organized the platform for that year's series of demonstrations. In addition to Clara Zetkin, Berlin delegates Ruth Fischer and Martha Arendsee, Executive Secretary Bertha Braunthal and *Die Kommunistin* editor Hertha Sturm developed a list of nine directives which were designed to spread the message to the female proletariat. Three themes informed the discussion at that meeting: how to introduce the topic of women's agitation to the entire party; how to reflect the international character of Women's Day in the upcoming events; and which methods would be most successful in meeting

[14] Ibid. p. 107.

the diverse needs of working-class women. Since the Secretariat's task was "to awaken the spirit of class consciousness," women had to be encouraged to "step out into life...into the factory or workplace where she will see people in the starkest reality;" only in the public political arena could woman "take her place in the fighting struggle of the proletariat."[15]

The Secretariat's nine directives consisted of letters and memoranda to the districts to instruct the regional delegates how to prepare their respective constituents for Women's Day. Included in the directives was the notification that the *Zentrale* would also write to the districts to ensure the entire party's cooperation with the female delegates. For one week in April,[16] Women's Day was to become "the focal point of all party apparatuses."[17] In support of their activities, the Secretariat called for the dissemination of a special edition (*Sondernummer*) of *Die Kommunistin* to outline the historical significance of Women's Day and the importance of this event in the national and international perspectives. Clearly, Women's Day celebrations were established in part to spread the message of the international struggle for revolutionary socialism. In addition to the special edition of *Die Kommunistin*, the daily party newspapers were

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[15] *Die Kommunistin*. Jhrg. 3, Nr. 4, 1921.

[16] In the minutes of the National Women's Conference of May 1921, the executive explained that the decision from the Central Committee about the appropriate date for Women's Day came too late to hold it on the 8th of March. Instead, it was held from the 3rd to the 10th of April. National Women's Conference of the KPD. Berlin, May 7, 1921. *SAPM* Berlin, 1994. p. 6.

instructed to carry similar articles in their editions. However, despite the importance and enthusiasm surrounding the preparation of Women's Day, as early as 1922 the Secretariat would lament the lack of coverage and support from the main communist political paper *Die Rote Fahne*,[18] an event which indicates the beginning phase of the party's articulated reluctance to recognize the independent struggles of working-class women.

At the National Women's Conference in September 1922, Bertha Braunthal reported the Secretariat's success in that year's Women's Day celebrations. Unlike the previous year's organizational errors which led to confusion, Braunthal announced that the Secretariat successfully organized a month in advance so that all *Länder* would observe March 5th to 12th as Women's Week. In addition, major successes were reported in the realm of propaganda. Braunthal's speech detailed how the regional delegates ensured that there were "women's meetings in every small German town."[19] If numbers and figures measured success, the additional 50,000 copies of *Die Kommunistin*'s *Sondernummer* indicated wide-spread support. Yet, how accessible were the Secretariat's activities to the rural and domestic realities of the majority of the indifferent masses they were canvassing for support?

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[17] Protocoll of the Executive Meeting of the National Women's Secretariat. Berlin, February 26, 1921. *SAPM* Berlin, 1994. p. 2.

[18] Letter to the Central Committee of the KPD from the Women's Secretariat. Berlin, March 21, 1922. *SAPM*, Berlin 1994. p. 2.

[19] National Women's Conference. Berlin, September 28, 1922. Prinz-Albrecht-Straße 17. *SAPM* Berlin, 1994. p. 32.

The February edition of *Die Kommunistin* outlined the various activities organized by the Secretariat to commemorate Women's Day in 1922. The article "How are we organizing the International Women's Day?" detailed the major themes to be addressed in the speeches and meetings, reiterating the stress on protective legislation and introducing the campaign for abortion reform. Yet, concern over the accessibility of language and the availability of the newspaper in remote areas of the *Reich* suggests that certain members of the proletarian female masses were excluded from active organization. In this instance, the Secretariat elected to maintain an elevated level of comprehension to promote the appearance of an intellectual disposition, despite the concern of some delegates that the paper did not reflect the level of the average reader. If *Die Kommunistin*'s purpose, in the words of its editor Hertha Sturm, was to become a "living mirror representation of the life of the proletarian woman,"[20] the Secretariat was actively involved in the construction of an idealized female proletariat. In order to examine the social construction of female agitation and politicization, one needs to analyze the ways in which the Secretariat put the propaganda into action. A very effective way to view the attempts to appeal to the masses of indifferent women is through an investigation of the Secretariat's Women's Day leaflets and demonstration placards.

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[20] National Women's Conference. Berlin, May 7, 1921. *SAPM* Berlin, 1994. p. 7.

Approximately one week before the much-anticipated event was to take place, the Secretariat supervised the crucial dissemination of pamphlets to all regions of the Republic. These two-page booklets would first be distributed to the regional delegates for incorporation into their general meetings. Complimented by articles in the local party press, the Secretariat hoped that their literary salvos would "bring women out"[21] into the public political process. The placards detailed a myriad of social issues that the party perceived affected working-class women directly. Intertwined in the prose is evidence which testifies to the diverse backgrounds to which the Secretariat had to appeal. Older and younger women, housewives and women workers, all had to be incorporated into the struggle for class solidarity. Older generation working-class women had been raised in the Wilhelmine period to perceive politics in general as "a male affair."[22] Meanwhile, younger working-class women often viewed the tenuous equality they supposedly enjoyed as liberatory. How, then, was an organization to breach the gap in political sensibilities? If the generation gap was not menacing certainly the different objectives and needs of working women and housewives severed any attempt at unity. In order to appeal to a broad base of women, the Secretariat elected to emphasize the one thing which they perceived as common to all women-- motherhood.

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[21] Pamphlet for Women's Day 1922. *SAPM*, Berlin, 1994. p. 121.
[22] Hagemann. p. 107.

In Dresden in 1923, one placard aimed at working women told them of their 'triple burden' at the hands of capitalist society: "the breadwinner, housewife and mother must organize herself together with the entire working class for the struggle against tyranny."[23] Interestingly, the placard outlines the KPD's strategy on abortion reform and protective legislation yet ends abruptly with the triumphant call for women's equal participation in the political struggle, without ever addressing the nature of women's oppression in general. This omission is not surprising. While women were encouraged to fight for their hard-earned inclusion in the political sphere, membership had dubious privileges. Routinely, the blame was placed on economic relations, the existence of private property and the bourgeois institutions which propagated patriarchal oppression.

In reality, the lack of attention afforded to women's specific oppression as women served only to perpetuate traditional gender roles. However, it is important to recognize the culpability of the Secretariat which actively constructed communist women's political identity in accordance with contemporary notions of gender. If dissatisfaction was noted about the lackluster inclusion of women's political activity, why did the Secretariat and the female proletariat support a party which condoned and perpetuated exclusion on the basis of gender? Women's toleration of this situation can be best understood by

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[23] Placard for International Women's Day. Dresden, 1923. *SAPM* Berlin, 1994.

analyzing the pervasive gender division of labour and the paradoxes surrounding the appreciation of women's 'equal' versus 'special status' or 'difference.'

The gender division of labour ensured the existence of hierarchical divisions of power and influence within the party. It is no coincidence that this polarization occurred at a time when the traditional separate spheres of public and private were under constant challenge by the changing nature of women's political identity. Not uncommon to other parties during the Weimar period, the gender division of labour relied on a dichotomous notion of gender difference, where women were defined in relation to their biological function as opposed to men who were defined by their cultural and social capabilities. Hence, each party's vision of the "natural" division between reproductivity and productivity, between the character of female versus male participation and activity, reflected to a large degree "the outlook of broad segments of the Weimar population."[24] Although the KPD claimed to overlook gender difference in its quest to politicize the anonymous masses and the "genderless proletariat," the propagation of women's special role in politics is informed with the same notions of 'separateness' assumed and normalized in bourgeois and nationalist circles.[25]

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[24] Hagemann. p. 111..

[25] Bourgeois and nationalist parties cultivated the notion of women's separate spheres of activity. In 1919, the German Women's League (*Bund Deutscher Frauen*) rewrote their guidelines to include provisions for women's 'special' contribution to politics. The guidelines, which remained intact until 1933, proclaimed that "The special civil tasks of women lie...in the maintenance of German unity, in the promotion of internal peace, and in the conquest of social, confessional and political antagonisms through a spirit of self-sacrifice, a sense of civic duty and a strong, unified, national consciousness..." In essence, women's

The SPD recognized this dilemma and sought to remedy it swiftly. By positing "women's equal worth but natural difference,"[26] the SPD sought to integrate women into the party to compliment and provide a balance to the cold rationality of high politics. Women's 'natural' capacity for nurturing and providing emotional support predetermined that they were best suited for welfare issues and social policy. The SPD's gender-specific organization strategy emerged out of the need to replace the traditional Marxist interpretations of women's emancipation[27] which they viewed as archaic and outdated.[28] No longer did they believe in the precondition that women must leave the domestic sphere to ensure social emancipation by participating in the production process.

Many scholars juxtapose the actions of the SPD and the KPD to argue that the Communist Party upheld the traditional classist approach to women's emancipation "officially rejecting the gender-specific emancipation strategy."[29] To be

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'natural' predisposition for supportive, passive roles ensured that "women would continue to be encouraged to engage with little hope of adequate recompense in various kinds of communal social and welfare work." Richard J. Evans. The Feminist Movement in Germany 1894-1933. London: Sage Publications Ltd., 1976. p. 236.

[26] Hagemann. p. 110. For a discussion of the SPD perspective of women's politics see "Equal but not the same: the social democratic women's movement in the Weimar Republic," in Bernstein to Brandt. A Short History of German Social Democracy. ed. Roger Fletcher. London, 1987. pp. 133-143; Renate Pore, A Conflict of Interest. Women in German Social Democracy 1919-1933. Westport, Conneticut: Greenwood Press, 1981.

[27] See Jean H. Quataert, Reluctant Feminists in German Social Democracy, 1885-1917. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979; Walter Thönnessen, *The Emancipation of Women: The Rise and Decline of the Women's Movement in German Social Democracy. London: Macmillan, 1973.*

[28] While historians tend to view this endeavour to update the canon on women's oppression as illustrative of the SPD's congenial approach to women's issues during the Weimar Republic, one must recognize that at this time every effort was made to distance the reformist party from its revolutionary past.

[29] Hagemann. p. 110.

sure, the integration of women into the class struggle was problematic. The creation of a separate space for women's agitation, put into practice in the annual Women's Day celebrations, suggests that the KPD officially incorporated and recognized the notion of women's special contribution. However, this line of argumentation ignores the relevance of Zetkin's vision of the "genderless proletariat," of male and female comrades united in the fight for social revolution and the overthrow of oppressive bourgeois institutions.

Of course, the neutrality of the term "genderless proletariat" is deceiving. While women were actively encouraged to participate in the political structure of the party, they nonetheless experienced marginalization due to the fact that communism, specifically the politics of the collective, was characterized by the fundamental repression of sexual difference. By ignoring female sexual difference, the KPD attempted to absorb it under an abstract paradigm of collectivity, which was understood as universal and male.

A pamphlet circulated in the working-class districts of the Rhineland outlined the party meetings to be held in conjunction with Women's Day in 1924. Addressed to working women and mothers of the proletariat, the pamphlet profiled the ways in which women in particular were affected by joblessness and inflation. With "millions of women without

work,"[30] women's burden became overwhelming, destroying the idealized comfort of the proletarian family. In the face of such destruction, women needed to "come out to the streets with (their) husbands and children" to protest against "the murderers of (their) children and the robbers of (their) lifeblood."[31] In the next section, the pamphlet heralded the actions of women in the Rhineland metal industry and in Saxony, who "rallied with vigor for the eight hour day."[32]

In a language laden with contempt for the SPD and its "betrayal of working-class values,"[33] the pamphlet reinforced the legitimacy of the KPD as protector of the proletarian family. Only the KPD could ensure the establishment of a fair and just society where "children wouldn't go to bed without having had a taste of dinner."[34] While the pamphlet was drafted originally in support of Women's Day activities and slogans, it is indicative of the Secretariat's conception of women's agitational concerns. Since women were active in the factories, taking their positions "together with men for the fight for an eight hour work day,"[35] working women understood the class struggle through the ways in which inflation and working conditions affected their lives as mothers and wives. Suddenly the public sphere became the site in which women determined and exercised their identity as workers and

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[30] Pamphlet for Women's Day March 1924. Solingen: Friedrich Baier, 1924. *SAPM* Berlin, 1994. p.1.
[31] Ibid. p. 2.
[32] Ibid. p. 2.
[33] Ibid. p. 2. The pamphlet draws attention to" the legacy of betrayal" at the hands of the SPD such as the legislation which disqualified women from work in the factories if their husbands were earning a wage.
[34] Ibid. p. 1.

mothers. Although proletarian women's sphere of activity remained focused on the home, the traditional interpretation of public and private became disrupted due to this change in women's self-conceptualization.

As stated earlier, the public sphere was reserved traditionally for the male citizenry. Some historians argue that women's involvement in the political process altered their identities to such a degree that they no longer observed and recognized the confines of the private sphere. This argument is simply not plausible in Weimar Germany, where the three K's, *Kinder, Küche,* and *Kirche*[36] still dominated everyday attitudes of women's place. Although there was no fixed place for *Kirche* within communist politics, the Secretariat attempted to alter the traditional notion of the public to include issues normally bound to the private sphere such as motherhood and child care. How did the party respond to the Secretariat's attempt to reconfigure the public sphere?

The minutes and internal correspondence of the Secretariat indicate that the party's response was at best lukewarm and reactions tended to take two main forms. Either the party papers ignored the Women's Day celebrations completely by omitting newspaper coverage in *Die Rote Fahne*, or the events they did report confounded the issues so completely that the "meetings in Berlin bore no connection to

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[35] Ibid. p. 2.
[36] Children, Kitchen and Church.

women's political agitation (in text)."[37] Both reactions served to negate women's particular role in the politics of class on a national and international scale. Since "*Die Rote Fahne* (was) read outside of Germany," the portrait had been painted "that there was no communist women's week in Berlin."[38] At a time of tremendous political conflict, the party made clear that it would not tolerate anything that deviated from the collective standard. In order to make their interests heard, women realized that they would have to adopt forms of action which had been traditionally reserved for men.

In 1925, the Bolshevization of the KPD forced the reconceptualization of women's political contribution including the format of Women's Day. In accordance with the subsequent focus on productivity, discussed in detail in Chapter Three, women's political role altered to accommodate the changing ideology. After the systematization of the party in accordance with the Russian model, the KPD's Women's Day celebrations adopted the regimented style of their Soviet sisters. With the dissolution of the Secretariat under charges of particularism, new organizations emerged to undertake the task of politicizing women. One of the sister organizations, the Red Women and Girls Federation (*Die Rote Frauen und Mädchen Bund-RFMB*) formed to ensure women's smooth transition into the productive labour force and to promote

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[37] Letter to the Central Committee of the KPD from the Women's Secretariat. Berlin, March 21, 1922. *SAPM* , Berlin 1994. p. 2.

adherence to communist principles. In close contact with the male Red Front Fighter's League (*Roter Frontkämpfer Bund-RFB*)--a paramilitary organization which soon fell foul of Moscow--the RFMB represented the preferred organization for politicizing the women and youth of the working class. Accordingly, both the RFMB and the RFB enjoyed great popularity among the proletariat in the latter years of the republic.

In the mid 1920's a new style statement swept the labour movement, focusing on the militarized uniformed demonstration. Largely in response to increasing street tension between adversarial party followers, communist demonstrations adopted the military look and the carrying of imposing banners and flags to add an air of legitimacy and power to the Bolshevized party. This style, which "intended to express discipline, comradeship, strength and readiness for battle," found support from young men in particular. However, the women and girls in the RFMB also adopted the uniform dress and they were recognized as "the most unified and visible communist force in the *Reich.*"[39] While the new uniforms would emphasize the collective identity and common cause of the working class, it would also serve to create the appearance of a "genderless proletariat" by cloaking not only physical characteristics, but gender-specificity under a

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[38] Ibid. p. 2.

[39] In a report to the Central Committee by the bolshevized women's department in 1925, the secretary makes continual reference to the "women in the red kerchiefs" who were visible at every regional meeting and demonstration. Report on the International Women's Week 1925 *SAPM* Berlin, 1994. p. 21.

masculine garb. Ultimately, adopting forms of action traditionally reserved for men could lead to acceptance for women only by disguising difference.[40] Despite the attempts to reconfigure the public sphere to include women's political concerns, the street marches once again were not the place for women's slogans about child care and protective legislation.

Quite simply, women's interests could not be incorporated because they contradicted the very essence of communist politics. Since the KPD embraced the notion that the proletariat was neutral or genderless, it assumed that women's participation in the political sphere would reflect this neutrality. By neglecting to recognize women's sexual difference and homologizing them under the neutral rubric of a genderless proletariat, the party made it very clear that women were allowed into the political process as equals but they were prevented from the crucial process of defining that equality according to their needs as women. With the stress on production and the virtual denial of issues of reproduction, the KPD reinforced the notion that formal equality did not mean substantive equality. It is possible to configure a political reality which observes both sexual

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[40] Eve Rosenhaft points to the party's ambivialence vis-à-vis women's participation in the paramilitary organizations. "Defence activities were very demanding on one's time and energies, and even at their most casual depended on their participants' being available in places like the tavern or contactable through personal networks that rested on male friendships and workplace- or labour-exchange-associations...women in a position to speak out publicly within the Communist organizaion, including those who were entrusted with organizing the women's auxiliaries of such formations as the RFB, repeatedly complained that women were not being taken seriously, let alone treated as equals, within the movement." in Beating the Fascists?

difference and equality as long as the equality at stake "abandons the serializing universalization of the male One."[41]

This chapter outlined how the KPD vision of a genderless proletariat worked to marginalize women from active participation in the party through an examination of the annual Women's Day celebrations. By arguing that the party was reluctant to incorporate women's reconfiguration of the public sphere to include the issues of motherhood and child care, I indicated the fallibility of the communist perception of egalitarian principles. However, it is not simply the negation of sexual difference which sentenced the proletarian women's movement to ancillary status. In Chapter Three, I will discuss how the Secretariat's attempt to infuse reproductivity and women's individual rights into the communist discourse failed due to a masculine conceptualization of class based on a gendered notion of collectivity. An examination of the campaign against the abortion paragraph of the Penal Code, Paragraph 218, exposes the anxiety of the collectivist vision in the face of a potentially autonomous women's movement.

The German Communists and Political Violence 1929-1933. London: Cambridge University Press, 1983. p. 154.

[41] Adriana Cavarero. "Equality and sexual difference: amnesia in political thought." in Gisela Bock and Susan James eds. Beyond Equality and Difference: citizenship, feminist politics and female subjectivity. London: Routledge, 1992. p. 45.

figure 2.

Käthe Kollwitz *"Nieder mit den Abtreibungsparagraphen!"* Down with the Abortion Paragraphs! from Käthe Kollwitz, Graphics, Posters and Drawings ed. Renate Hinz. New York: New York, 1981. p. 93.

CHAPTER 3

Paragraph 218, Abortion Reform, and the Regulation of the Female Body

Despite the defamation campaigns and jostling for political position within the *Reichstag* during the final two years of the Weimar Republic, in 1931 the working class was united on one issue: the need for the decriminalization of abortion. Under the leadership of the KPD, a coalition campaign rallied in support of woman's right to control her own body, justifying the right and access to abortion "in terms of social eugenic health and collective welfare."[1] In her study of the 1931 campaign, Atina Grossmann contends that the KPD viewed the restriction on abortion not so much as an infringement on woman's individual rights but rather as "a personal form of sex-specific class oppression."[2] In the quest to situate feminist concerns within a Marxist framework, Grossmann points to patriarchy as the oppressor of women "by their sex, not only in terms of their relationship to production but in terms of their role in reproduction."[3] Since Grossmann defines patriarchy as an extension of capitalism, responsibility for women's oppression is externalized outside the Communist Party. This approach neglects to consider the role of the party in the masculine construction of class and

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[1] Atina Grossmann. "The 1931 Campaign Against Abortion." in Bridenthal, Grossmann, Kaplan eds. When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984. p. 66.
[2] Ibid. p. 74.
[3] Ibid. p. 78.

the inherent complexity of situating women's interests within this paradigm.

Atina Grossmann's study emphasizes that the 1931 abortion campaign represented an exception to the Central Committee's policy of addressing women as workers in the production sector. While her work attempts to analyze the nature of female agitation, Grossmann fails to address the actions of the National Women's Secretariat who as early as 1920 recognized the importance of abortion reform as a tactical tool for organizing the apolitical female masses. Grossmann centers on the 1931 abortion campaign because she wants her analysis of sexual reform to epitomize the chaotic Weimar years since "the mass violations of the abortion paragraph became the symbols of the bankruptcy of Weimar democracy and its promise of civil equality for the sexes and social justice and protection of the family."[4] In order to assert her hypothesis that the KPD recognized women's double burden under capitalism, her sex-specific oppression in her relationship to production and to reproduction, Grossmann locates her study in the latter years of the republic. In doing so, she ignores the documented actions of the National Women's Secretariat before Bolshevization. Unfortunately, Grossmann's quest to uncover the details of the Communist Party's "recognition" of women's oppression is not only empirically misleading, but also discounts the role of the

[4] Ibid. p. 70.

party in reconfiguring women's reproductivity from its basis as a woman's issue to a social issue.[5]

In this chapter, I will outline the incompatibility of Marxist and feminist interests in the abortion reform campaign of 1924 due to the problematic integration of women's individual interests into a masculine conception of class. It will be argued that official KPD policy viewed reproduction as a women's issue only insofar as women serviced the collective by producing the future generation of working-class fighters (*Klassenkämpfer*). By centering on the abortion reform campaign of 1924, this chapter will address the demise of the Women's Secretariat which resulted from the KPD's reluctance and virtual inability to integrate women's concerns into the politics of class.

While the Secretariat's support of abortion reform was of crucial importance to the politicization of women and was initially supported by the party, in 1924 the KPD called for the complete restructuring of the campaign. Charged with focusing themselves on women's individual rights rather than the collective interests of the working class, the Secretariat was condemned having officially indulged in bourgeois feminism. This designation speaks to the conflict between individual and collective interests in two distinct

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[5] Grossmann writes that "the First Reich Congress of Working Women, in October 1929, raised the abolition of Paragraph 218 as a central demand of the *Reich* Committee of Working Women. *This committee came out of a Communist women's delegate and conference movement first organized in 1926 under the leadership of KPD Reichstag delegate Helene Overlach, with the express purpose of winning Social Democratic or unaffiliated---"indifferent" as they were called---women workers and workers' wives for the party...*" (Empasis added). p. 71.

ways. The KPD's charge of bourgeois feminism harkens back to nineteenth-century notions of the nature of women's oppression. Since the KPD remained loyal to the nineteenth-century Marxist anti-individualist position, they interpreted any concern for individual rights as liberal and middle class. When the Secretariat began to endorse abortion as a woman's issue and not a social issue, the KPD viewed these actions as particularist and bourgeois. However, the KPD's condemnation of the Secretariat speaks less to bourgeois contamination and more to an interpretation of collective interests which were informed by masculine concepts and concerns.

In its most elementary form, Marxists define class as the relationship of a particular group to productive labour. In the past, historians and intellectuals have considered women's inferior status in society a result of the sexual or gender division of labour due to woman's undervalued relationship to production.[6] Instead of being viewed as a productive member of society, woman was defined by her "natural" relationship to reproduction. Woman's position in the private familial sphere, nineteenth-century socialists argued, prevented her from establishing that all-important tie to productive public labour. Women's emancipation, it followed, would only occur when women engaged in public

[6] The classical examples of this theory are August Bebel, Woman Under Socialism. New York: Socialist Literature, 1910; Friedrich Engels, The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State. New York: International Publishers, 1972; Clara Zetkin, *Zur Geschichte der proletarischen Frauenbewegung Deutschlands*. Berlin: 1958.

productivity such as factory work. It is within this context that the KPD in the 1920's worked "to seize the opportunity to educate the housewives and apolitical women of the working class and bring them into the public process."[7]

However, reproductive rights lie on the border between public and private where issues of woman's self-determination through control of her own body converge with "broader issues of morality, legality and social policy."[8] In her study of East Central European women's movements, Barbara Einhorn explains how the tension between woman's right to choose and the state's intervention to safeguard the health and welfare of its citizenry "provides a unique illustration of the dilemmas between the rights and responsibilities of the individual as opposed to those of the collective."[9] Einhorn indicates how socialist states implimented public provision of reproductive facilities not out of concern for women's reproductive freedom, but rather in order to "enable women to maximize their contribution to the collective as working mothers."[10] While this was reflected in response to labour force requirements in the post-Stalin era, in Weimar Germany the KPD's official policy on abortion reform was a means to safeguard the proletarian family in order to produce a revolutionary battalion of workers and soldiers.[11]

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[7] *Die Kommunistin*. Jhrg 2. January 15, 1920. p. 4.
[8] Barbara Einhorn. Cinderella Goes to Market. London: Verso, 1993. p. 74.
[9] Ibid. p. 75.
[10] Ibid. p. 75.
[11] I have elected to draw a parallel between state-socialist visions of reproductive freedom and German Communism in the 1920's since many members of the Bolshevized KPD (including the Bolshevized

Issues which affected the female proletariat were never successfully integrated into the collective struggle.[12] While women's agitational work was supposedly valued by the entire party, news and details of the proletarian women's movement only found expression in the woman's political organ *Die Kommunistin*. Although the physical and textual space provided for women's political participation may seem empowering to some, its lack of importance is reflected in the scant coverage it received in the main party papers. Contributing to more than invisibility, this sporadic coverage demonstrates the auxiliary situation of women in a party which constructed masculine concerns as normative and universal. While at a glance women's political involvement in the Secretariat appears emancipatory, its separateness, isolation, and inability to inform party politics suggests that Zetkin's "genderless proletariat" would always remain elusive. Ironically, it was the very notion of a "genderless" struggle which would sabotage Zetkin's ideal since this universal and supposedly inclusive standard was already gendered by a discourse that situated masculine concerns as

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women's department) go on to occupy prominent decision-making positions in the GDR period. Since the Bolshevized KPD is in effect an embryonic version of the SED (Socialist Unity Party), it is interesting to consider the respective attitudes toward reproduction, specifically the tension between individual and collective concerns.

[12] In their cursory examination of communist attitudes towards female participation in the class struggle, Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz summarize the Engel's thesis: "The inferior place of women within the family was attributed to private property and not to cultural norms or vague entities like the male ego." Certainly, it is to embellish to claim the male ego responsible for women's continued oppression. "Beyond *Kinder, Küche, Kirche*: Weimar Women in Politics and Work." in When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany. ed. Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossmann, and Marion Kaplan. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984. p. 37.

collective concerns, and subsequently defined women against and outside this standard.

As an example, when female comrades rallied for the inclusion of issues they felt had direct relevance to their daily struggles, such as abortion reform, they were encouraged to subsume their individual concerns to the greater good as defined by the universal masculine model. During the Bolshevization of the KPD in 1924/1925, the masculine nature of class politics intensified when the agitational focus shifted away from the grassroots to emphasize organized labour.[13] Since women's contribution took the form of grassroots organization, the "proletarianization" of the party reinforced the primacy of public productive labour--a standard to which women could not easily conform due to domestic obligations. The only way to infuse reproductivity into the politics of class was to subsume women's individual concerns to the good of the collective. Individual and collective concerns, masculine and feminine interests reached an impasse during the Bolshevization of the KPD, finding expression in the dissolution of the National Women's Secretariat.

For the first three decades of this century, Germany like other western European countries was confronted with the dilemma of a declining birthrate (see Appendix 2). Since the turn of the century, the birth-rate declined from 38 births

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[13] Silvia Kontos. *Die Partei Kämpft Wie Ein Mann: Frauenpolitik der KPD in der Weimarer Republik*. Frankfurt/Main: 1979. p. 52.

per 1000 population in 1900 to a record low of 13 births per 1000 population during World War I. Although the rate increased in the years immediately following the war, the trend of decline continued into 1930 as Germany's birth-rate fell below that of France.[14] In the attempt to protect the interests of the collective, Germany developed a population policy which promoted the active interference in the intimate familial sphere. The regulation of female sexuality and reproduction forced a conflict "between the personal and the public, between the bodily concerns of individual women, and the the body politic"[15] or collective good. In Wilhelmine Germany, this intervention was in the form of support for an aggressive military foreign policy; during the Weimar Republic, fertility control and reproductive freedom "was fought in the name of party politics and professional interests."[16]

The Weimar constitution provided concessions for equality between the sexes but three paragraphs, carried over

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[14]"Crude birth-rates for France, Germany, England and Wales 1850-1930," in B.R Mitchell, European Hisorical Studies 1750-1950. London: Macmillan, 1978. pp. 21-32. Scholarship in women's history has devoted much energy to the role of gender, pronatalism, social policies, the rise of the welfare state and in some instances the connection to fascism. For works which examine France's birth-rate and its affect on population and social policy see Karen Offen, "Body Politics: Women, Work and the Politics of Motherhood in France, 1920-1950" in Gisela Bock and Pat Thane eds. Maternity and Gender Policies. New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc., 1991; Mary Lynn Stewart. Women, Work and the French State: Labour Protection and Social Patriarchy, 1879-1919. Montréal, Kingston, Canada: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989. For references to Germany see Gisela Bock, *Zwangssterilisation im Nationalsozialismus: Studien zur Rassenpolitik und Frauenpolitik*. Opladen, Westdeutscher Verlag, 1986. Claudia Koonz, Mothers in the Fatherland. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987. For references to England see D. Dwork, War is Good for Babies and Other Young Children. A History of the Infant and Child Welfare Movement in England, 1898-1918. London: Routledge, 1987; J. Lewis, The Politics of Motherhood: Child and Maternal Welfare in England, 1900-1939. London: Croom Helm, 1980.

[15] Cornelia Usborne. Politics of the Body in Weimar Germany. xvi.

[16] Ibid. p. 156.

from the Prussian Penal Code of 1871, hindered women's reproductive self-determination.[17] Paragraphs 218, 219 and 220 (see Appendix 3) criminalized abortion and stipulated that even in the case of rape[18] "a pregnant woman who has an abortion or who has her foetus destroyed in the womb is to be sentenced to penal servitude for up to five years."[19] The paragraphs extended the threat of imprisonment to "any person helping to procure an abortion for money"[20] with or "without the woman's consent."[21] It is against the backdrop of women's "emancipated" integration into mainstream politics and the continuity of imperial institutions[22] such as the Penal Code that this study of the Communist Party's position on fertility control will work to illustrate the conflict between the personal and the public, between woman's individual concerns and the social welfare of the working class.

To understand the KPD's vision of abortion reform and the problematic infusion of issues of reproduction into the communist discourse, one must examine closely the nature of

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[17]The Penal Code of Germany was based on the Prussian model and introduced after the unification and foundation of the German Empire. In combination with the Civil Code (*Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch*), women's position in society was one of legislated inferiority. In fact, although Germany was swift in legislating equal status in the Weimar Constitution, the continuing existence of both the Civil Code (in existence until the Second World War) and the Penal Code "gave fewer rights to women than the corresponding laws in other advanced countries." Richard J. Evans. The Feminist Movement in Germany, 1894-1933. London: Sage Publications, 1976. p.14.

[18] Ibid. p. 16.

[19] "The Penal Code of 1871" in Cornelia Usborne. p. 214.

[20] Ibid. p. 214.

[21] Ibid. p. 214.

[22] Richard Evans explains how the Social Democrats feared the revolutionary council movement in 1918 and therefore entered into an alliance with the old institutions of the former Empire "such as the army, the

the integration of women's politics (*Frauenpolitik*) into the class struggle. Women's involvement in the Communist Party, as we have seen in the preceding chapters, represented a semi-sweet victory for the proletarian woman. Although she was allowed and encouraged to enter into the political sphere, she subordinated her own quest for emancipation to the collective cause. Speaking on behalf of the National Women's Secretariat to the Third Party Congress of the KPD in February 1920, Ilsa März recognized the need to reassure wary comrades that "party agitation among women would not rest on exclusively women's interests," but would instead reinforce that, "proletarian women [would] join their male class comrades in the fight for communist goals."[23] Interestingly, no other affiliated group, such as the Young Spartacists League (*Jung Spartakus Bund*), was ever forced to defend publicly or privately their allegiance to revolutionary socialism.[24]

As it became clear by 1920 that the revolution would not materialize out of post-war social unrest, the Communist Party decided with some reluctance to re-direct attention toward the untapped power base of apolitical German women. The KPD insisted that the abortion paragraphs affected the working class more than the middle class since working-class women could not afford the luxuries of discrete and qualified

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civil service, judiciary, police and nobility--which the left wished to destroy." It was under these exigencies that women gained political rights and official representation. p. 230.

[23] *Bericht über den 3. Parteitag der KPD (Spartakus) am 25. und 26. Februar 1920*. Berlin: KPD, 1920. pp. 58-59.

practitioners. The lack of discretion more than the cost of abortificients and contraceptives formed the crux of the classist perspective on abortion reform. Since contraception was supposedly out of reach for the working class,[25] in the eyes of the party the abortion debate affected men directly as well as women. In response to the overwhelming support of the decriminalization of abortion among the working class, the KPD "seized upon the popular movement for abortion reform to boost their low level support amongst women."[26] If pursued as the party envisioned, the successful reform of the abortion paragraphs would have two immediate effects: it would secure female participation without the threat of alienating the male proletariat; and since it was viewed as a social issue and not a woman's issue, abortion reform would reinforce the hegemony of the collectivist spirit of Marxism in the face of a potentially divisive individualist feminism.

Initially, the Women's Secretariat embraced the issue of abortion reform as a logical extension of the fight for protective legislation and welfare for women and children. In December 1920, the National Women's Conference in Berlin (*Frauenreichskonferenz*) passed a motion tabled by one of its delegates which linked the *Reichstag* efforts to reform the Penal Code to the KPD's quest for mother's allowance.[27] While

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[24] Young Spartacus League-Minutes and Directives, 1921-1926. *SAPM*. Berlin, Germany. pp. 34-66.

[25] Die Kommunistin Nr. 4 Jahrgang 1921 as quoted in the 1922 Memorandum to the Central Committee of the KPD on the issue of §§ 218 und 219.*SAPM*, Berlin, p. 5.

[26] Cornelia Usborne. p. 158.

[27] National Women's Conference of the United KPD on December 8, 1920. *SAPM*, Berlin, p. 122. Since the proletarian family represented the main concern of the Communist Party, it is logical that they would

this resolution may seem to stress the specific needs of the female proletariat, any individualist overtones for women's health were subsumed within the discourse of collectivity since, "women undergo the operation not for the good of their health but for the health of an entire generation."[28]

The Secretariat continually articulated its adherence to the social question throughout its memoranda, resolutions and directives and in the pages of *Die Kommunistin*. However, as early as 1922 the delegates began to clash over the potential implications of their varying perspectives on the abortion question. Always under the watchful eye of the party, the delegates went to great lengths to assure the *Zentrale* that their loyalty was firmly entrenched. Reminded in the 1922 KPD policy paper to use "the concrete problem of abortion to mobilize women and to win them for the class struggle,"[29] Bertha Braunthal announced to the National Women's Conference that "we must not view our campaign against the [abortion] paragraphs in isolation."[30]

The Secretariat recognized the importance of abortion reform as a means to secure women's participation in the party. In addition to appealing to the masses of women, an

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wish to link accessible abortion to protective legislation. The provision for safe and healthy abortions would ensure that each remaining child in a given family received optimum care. Similarly, protective legilation and mother's allowance, in addition to abortion rights, would provide for women at every stage of her reproductive life. However, the reform of the abortion paragraph, mother's allowance and protective legislation were never to be viewed in terms of a woman's inherent right to control her own body. Executive Secretary Bertha Braunthal reinforced this concept at virtually every meeting of the Secretariat and was still viewed by the party as having given in to insidious particularism.

[28] Ibid. p. 122.

[29] Cornelia Usborne. p. 158.

[30] National Women's Conference September 28. 1922 in Berlin. *SAPM*, Berlin, p. 32.

effective campaign on an issue of reproduction would re-direct attention to the integral role women played in the class struggle. Instead of waiting complacently for the revolution to alleviate inequality within society, the Secretariat seized the opportunity presented by the abortion campaign to upgrade the woman question into the communist political agenda in the *Reichstag*.

In keeping with the spirit of the 'united front' strategy,[31] the Secretariat planned for working-class mobilization in support of the KPD-led *Reichstag* motion to repeal Paragraph 218. A report to the *Zentrale* of the KPD in 1922 outlined the Secretariat's desires for a combined KPD/SPD venture. An "Open Letter," drafted by *Genossin* Hetty Guttmann, contained the signatures of the National Association of Factory Councils (*Reichsausschuss der Betriebsräte*) and the National Women's Secretariat. Hoping to gain their support on the issue of abortion reform and protective legislation for mothers,[32] the Secretariat requested that this letter be sent to the SPD and the General Association of German Trade Unions (ADGB--*Allgemeine Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund*). While the "Open Letter" would help to reinforce abortion as a working-class issue, it was shelved

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[31] After the Third World Congress in 1921, the Russian Communist Party set a course for concessions to the peasantry and to private capital in the New Economic Policy of 1921. With NEP, the face of international socialism had hanged dramatically. Lenin's new course called for the fusion of Communist and Social Democrats in a 'united front' of all workers. Within the German party, the emphasis shifted away from propaganda "for the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat," toward the attainment of a parliamentary Labour Government.

[32] Report from the National Women's Secretariat to the Central Committee. December 1922. *SAPM*, Berlin, p. 129.

temporarily and a united course of action would be curtailed for a year as events deemed more pressing crowded the KPD calendar.

The occupation of the Ruhr, the general strikes in Saxony and Thuringia, and the widespread discontent caused by the hyper-inflation of 1923 forced the abortion issue to take a back seat for most of the year. Accordingly, the Secretariat shifted attention to meet the needs of working-class women caught up in the struggles of the day. Before the ban on KPD newspapers took effect on the fourth of September 1923,[33] *Die Kommunistin* presented numerous articles which outlined the courageous efforts of those who participated in the general strikes. In fact, so much attention was afforded to the male proletariat that delegate Hertha Geffke, spokesperson for women in the textile factories from the industrial Rhineland,[34] took it upon herself to offer an alternative perspective. In an executive meeting of the Secretariat in December 1923, Comrade Geffke outlined how intensely "her women were focused on the final struggle."[35]

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[33] *Die Rote Fahne* and *Die Kommunistin* as well as all communist newspapers in *Rheinland-Westfalen*, *Württemberg*, and *Niedersachsen* are made illegal under the ban initiated on September 4, 1923 by the national Minister of the Interior, Sollmann (VKPD). *Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung*. Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1966. p. 150.

[34] Despite the fact that the majority of women in the Communist Party were housewives and mothers, a number of women worked outside the home, predominantly in the textile industry and in domestic situations. The Secretariat took steps toward organizing both the unpaid and paid labourers yet following Bolshevization, only women working in factories were approached for agitational support.

[35] Protocol of the Delegates Conference of the National Women's Secretariat. December 8, 1923. *SAPM*, Berlin. p. 13.

"Although their actions were followed closely by the French," Geffke mused that, "our women were less timid than the men."[36]

Reporting from the occupied territories, Geffke attempted to shift attention toward otherwise peripheral and undervalued acts. By elaborating upon the exceptional stamina and organizational zeal with which the women in her region participated in the opposition to the French occupation, Geffke's speech illustrates the exact nature of women's involvement in class warfare at this time. Although supposedly regarded as equal in the struggle for social emancipation, the female proletariat was welcomed into the struggle as long as they agreed to accept auxiliary positions. In light of this relationship, one wonders why a party committed to the concept of egalitarianism would allow for, yet discriminate against, gender-specific spheres of activity? While Geffke's demonstrators recognized their participation as contributory to the day's events, their actions nonetheless represent socially sanctioned, gendered responses which speak loudly to the party's patriarchal vision of class politics. The evidence for this assertion can be found in Geffke's account of the demonstrations in the Rhineland.

In her presentation to the Secretariat, Geffke recalled how the demonstrations were widely supported in Düsseldorf, where "3-4000 women marched in the very front of the

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[36] Ibid. p. 13.

protest."[37] She continued to describe events in nearby Solingen, where "women occupied the local dairy to protest the exorbitant cost of milk for children of unemployed workers."[38] Finally, Geffke reported triumphantly how "the communal kitchens now run jointly by the Unemployed Worker's Council and proletarian women ensured relatively decent meals."[39] As Geffke's testimony illustrates, proletarian women were encouraged to view their contribution to the strikes in terms of support to a larger cause. Buttressing the worker's struggle with emotional and nutritional support, Geffke's women agitated as "care-givers," effectively embracing their "natural" role. What are the implications of this particular form of supportive agitation?

While Marxists argued that capitalist society bore responsibility for the creation of patriarchal notions of "care-giver" and "motherhood," it is equally evident that the KPD saw great utility in invoking these very concepts, demonstrating the active construction and promotion of patriarchal interests within working class culture. Geffke's demonstrators were not angry about the type of agitation they enacted. Rather, Geffke's report to the Secretariat was made under the aegis of attaining recognition for their considerable contribution. The Rhineland demonstrators accepted their role as a support network for the collective exploits of the working class since it was the only role

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[37] **Ibid. p. 13.**
[38] **Ibid. p. 13.**
[39] **Ibid. p. 13.**

available. Since this support was of intense social importance in sustaining working-class activities, why then did it go unnoticed?

Certainly, the demonstrators fulfilled a crucial function despite the fact that their actions would never be recognized in the same way as the actions of their male comrades. If they recognized women's active role in the demonstrations, the party would also have to acknowledge their complicity in the construction of women's "special status" as mothers and care-givers. Obviously, this disclosure would compromise the KPD's collectivist framework. By acknowledging difference, by recognizing the actions of the demonstrators, the party would be forced to reconfigure its entire conception of class to include women's experience. As the debate surrounding abortion indicates, the KPD sought to retain control over the configuration of women's issues to ensure the primacy of the "social question" over the "Woman Question."

Acting as spokesperson for the Ebert presidency, General von Seeckt declared the KPD illegal in November 1923. However, the attempts to stifle communist activity had the opposite effect. Instead of silencing oppositional demonstrations, the months of illegality allowed the proletarian women's movement to re-group and re-assess its organizational strategy. Although the meetings of the Secretariat focused tangentially on the decriminalization of Paragraph 218, the harsh social conditions which accompanied

the hyper-inflation of 1923 and women's cross-class participation in food demonstrations renewed the popular support for welfare legislation and abortion reform. The illegality of the party played a direct role in women's politicization; since the "press (was) no longer at (their) disposal," the delegates had to rely on alternative forms of propaganda to reach the masses.[40]

Women's agitation for the decriminalization of the abortion paragraphs took on a colourful flair in 1924. Although the regional delegates would be provided with materials from the Secretariat,[41] since *Die Kommunistin* was out of commission temporarily, the various regions needed to meet the challenge of politicizing the masses themselves. While this forced decentralization would one day alter dramatically the shape and strength of the Secretariat, as far as the regional offices were concerned, it guaranteed them significant space to pursue and develop their own perspectives.

Käthe Kollwitz's placard "Down With the Abortion Paragraphs" (*"Nieder mit den Abtreibungsparagraphen"*)(see figure 2), created a year earlier but delayed distribution until after the period of illegality, surfaced in 1924 to become the reigning symbol of the communist platform against restricted access to abortion. The picture of a woman with a child on the way, holding one infant and clutching the hand

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[40] A Letter to the Regional Leaders of the FAK from the Bertha Braunthal, chairperson of the National Women's Secretariat. Berlin, December 12, 1923. *SAPM*, Berlin. pp. 106-107.

of a toddler was designed to characterize the experience of the working-class woman burdened with her situation. In a letter to Kollwitz in 1923, Bertha Braunthal reinforced the party's desire for pictorial propaganda to be used in street demonstrations in the various regions of the *Reich*. Braunthal reminded Kollwitz that "this law is a class law against the working population," and that proletarian women looked upon pregnancy "with fright."[42] Although it was commissioned to depict the social strain of working-class child-rearing due to the harsh economic conditions and lack of access to abortificients, Kollwitz's poster doesn't overtly disclose the class background of the woman in the picture. Instead, one must come to the image with the foreknowledge that Kollwitz's fame lies in the depiction of working-class hardship, as demonstrated by her sketches of weaver's strikes in the 1890's. Grossmann preferred to view Kollwitz's woman as "dumb, passive and helpless...the ultimate victim of the inhumanity and irrationality of capitalism."[43] While Kollwitz's placard undeniably crushes any sentimentalized and sanitized vision of motherhood, it is clear that it's critique is not limited to the ill-effects of capitalism.

The woman in the poster is obviously exhausted and over-burdened. However, to locate responsibility for her current situation within the faceless category of capitalism is to oversimplify. While man's presence is depicted indirectly,

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[41] Ibid. pp. 106-107.

[42] Letter from Bertha Braunthal to Käthe Kollwitz. Berlin, July 19, 1923. *SAPM*, Berlin. p. 78.

his absence reinforces in our minds that he is not to blame for the woman's situation, as culpability of course lies in the hands of those who uphold the abortion paragraphs. By omitting the man directly, Kollwitz's portrayal of the victimized woman highlights the KPD's particular vision of reproduction.

While it is true that official KPD policy viewed reproduction as a form of class oppression, the party could not endorse woman's right to control her own body since this assumption brought with it greater ideological implications. Any campaign which highlighted women's individual right to abortion was considered particularist and bourgeois since the KPD defined itself against nineteenth-century notions of individualism. Accordingly, the placard was to be instrumental in the KPD campaign to reach the unenlightened masses of women sympathetic to the depicted woman's plight. In order to be successful, the placard had to provide universal appeal; Kollwitz's poster, therefore, was to communicate the party's carefully constructed message. The KPD's intent was to have women view the abortion paragraphs as not a matter of personal choice, but as a means to ensure a happier and healthier family. To this end, regulated motherhood was seen as the means by which to secure and safeguard the proletarian patriarchal family.

In Hamburg, a women's co-operative wrote and produced a play which depicted the brutal reality of "enforced" child-

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[43] Grossmann. p. 68.

rearing. Under the Whip of the Abortion Paragraphs[44] was so successful in attracting crowds in Hamburg that the Secretariat reprinted copies and distributed them to all the regional offices. Like the SPD play Paragraph 218,[45] Under the Whip depicted the trial of a doctor and an unfortunate working-class woman, both victims of the perceived hypocrisy of the abortion law. Since the plot was based supposedly on a real-life incident, each regional producer was advised to reveal the identities of the "original cast" for the purposes of propagandizing the party's position on abortion. The existence and proliferation of these plays contradicts official reports that detailed how working-class women were unable to seek the help of doctors. Recognizing the importance of these plays in the politicization process, the Secretariat made certain that the doctors depicted were sympathetic to communism if not members of the KPD. Additionally, in a letter to a regional delegate, Bertha Braunthal remarked on the necessity of "giv(ing) the female proletariat directions, so that they, like their Hamburg comrades, will be able to set the play in a useful and political manner to promote the appropriate agitational

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[44] Described in detail in a Letter from Bertha Braunthal to Genossin Lydia Keller. Berlin, August 29, 1923. *SAPM*, Berlin. p. 49.

[45] Many plays emerged on the subject of abortion which reflected the particular political perspectives of its authors. Three particular examples cover communist, social democratic and liberal sensibilities respectively. Dr. Friedrich Wolf's *Cyankali*, The Piscator Collective's adaptation of Dr. Credé's successful book *Gequälte Menschen:§218* (Tormented People: Paragraph 218) and Hans José Rehfisch's 1928 *Der Frauenarzt* (The Gynecologist) enjoyed widespread success. In addition to plays, Kurt Tucholsky and Bertolt Brecht published poems to inform social awareness on the issue of abortion reform. Grossmann. p. 73.

perspective."[46] While Braunthal recognized the usefulness of the play, her comment indicates the desire of the Secretariat to remain in control of the direction of the proletarian women's movement. Although Braunthal claims to have full control of women's politics at this time, it is in the period after the brief illegality that Bertha Braunthal's letters to the *Zentrale* move away from the reportage of the Secretariat's progress. Instead, Braunthal's letters call for the official recognition of women's particular place in the class struggle.

In 1924, the campaign against abortion changed venues from regional street demonstrations to the floor of the *Reichstag.* Cornelia Usborne argues there can be little doubt that "it was due in large measure to the female pressure that the KPD backed the decriminalization of abortion."[47] Usborne attempts to support this assertion by divulging that abortion reform "ran counter to the socialist principle that the revolution needed masses."[48] While Usborne's assessment of Weimar population policy is empirically formidable, her treatment of the communist platform suggests a primary appreciation of the problems surrounding the integration of women's participation in Communist Party politics. Although it is undeniable that the KPD took stepts to integrate the issue of abortion reform into its mandate, the infusion of reproduction into the communist discourse in the form of the

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[46] Ibid. p. 49.
[47] Cornelia Usborne. p. 162.
[48] Ibid. p. 162.

campaign to repeal paragraph 218 resulted not so much from female pressure as from the party's legitimate concern for the social regeneration of the working class. The true motivation for abortion reform, as it will be demonstrated in the next section, was the perpetuation of the proletarian patriarchal family. In order to solidify the future dictatorship of the people, the KPD position on fertility control shifted its emphasis away from quantity toward quality. To this end, the Secretariat was instructed to gain support for the *Reichstag* parliamentarians in their quest to protect working-class women from the drudgery of child-bearing.

Within the KPD it was Martha Arendsee who agitated with zeal for the decriminalization of paragraph 218 first in the Prussian Diet of 1924 and finally in the *Reichstag*. Arendsee, the Berlin delegate to the Secretariat, became the voice of the party responsible for linking the official policy on abortion reform with maternity welfare. In both the executive meetings of the women's caucus and in parliamentary sessions,[49] Arendsee's actions gave widespread visibility to women's politics and she was admired within the ranks of the Secretariat as an authority on the abortion debate.[50] Arendsee's uncompromising classist approach guaranteed her position among fellow comrades in the *Reichstag* who rallied

[49] Arendsee tabled a motion in 1925 for maternity legislation and abortion reform, resulting in two interpellations in 1925 and 1926 and finally materializing into a bill in 1928. Usborne. p. 172.

with some success in 1925 against the severity of the Penal Code and the harshness of paragraph 218.[51] Yet, Arendsee's success came at a cost to other hard-working members of the Women's Secretariat, who were purged in 1924 in the intense reconfiguration of the proletarian women's movement. Revered by the party as the perfect spokesperson for communist ideals, Arendsee never allowed her individual concerns to influence her decisions. Although her experience as a mother no doubt informed her sense of self, she, like other delegates to the Secretariat, was never encouraged by the party to use the language of individualism.[52] Despite her importance in early Weimar politics, Arendsee was replaced in 1930 by a woman who would figure prominently in GDR *Frauenpolitik*, Helene Overlach. [53]

The 1920 USPD motion called for the total repeal of the abortion paragraph and asked for abortion on demand.[54] The flaws in this motion were manifold. Although it permitted abortion without physician's consent, the Independent Socialists' proposal brought with it the implication that

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[50] In the Protocol of executive meetings in 1922 and 1923, Arendsee reported on the progress of the regional approaches to abortion reform. Protocol of the meeting of the National Women's Secretariat. Thursday, July 5, 1923. *SAPM*, Berlin. pp. 29-31.

[51] A KPD-led motion on the decriminalization of paragraph 218 in 1925 failed initially to effect change due to the fact that adjustments to the Penal Code were already in the process of ammendment. Included in the changes was the punishment for abortion, lessened from penal servitude to mere imprisonment. Usborne. p. 214.

[52] While it was certainly not unusual to be both a mother and an active participant in women's politics (Bertha Braunthal took a number of months leave from her position as Executive Secretary of the Secretariat in 1922), when assuming the role of delegate, women were expected to divorce themselves from their personal experiences and agitate for the greater social good, as defined by the party.

[53] Although Arendsee can be accredited with sustaining the party line on abortion, she too is dispatched from her position by a more vocal comrade Helene Overlach. Overlach initially chaired the Stalinist *Rote Frauen und Mädchen Bund* which acted as the party's connection to grass-root activism.

termination of pregnancy could in fact occur at any stage of gestation, a concept which was received with overtones of infanticide. A short time later on the 31st of July, the SPD made a motion for abortion on demand within the first trimester since, in the informed opinion of the motion's co-author and future SPD justice minister Gustav Radbruch, "a pregnancy is recognizable by even an inexperienced woman at the latest at the third month."[55]

Although this motion was atypical since it did not require a medical opinion, it nonetheless came under attack from the KPD and the USPD for failing to discuss decriminalization.[56] Radbruch's motion stressed the right of the woman in determining her fate since abortion represented to him "a question of conscience which surely cannot be determined by anybody else but the mother."[57] In 1920, Radbruch's strong emphasis on women's right to abortion threatened the totalizing collective sensibilities of the KPD and USPD opposition. The conflict between individual rights and the collective good, the female body and the body politic, became insurmountable in the KPD's *Reichstag* bid for mother and child protective legislation in 1925.

In January 1922 the KPD retabled the USPD motion, linking the repeal of articles 218 and 219 to the motion for

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[54] *Die Kommunistin*. Jhrg. 2 Issue 15. August 1, 1920. p. 27.
[55] Cornelia Usborne. The Politics Body in Weimar Germany. p. 167.
[56] *Die Kommunistin* . Jhrg. 2 Issue 16. August 15, 1920. p. 48.
[57] Cornelia Usborne. p. 167.

comprehensive maternity and child welfare legislation.[58] Cornelia Usborne contends that the KPD motion for state-supported child-rearing in conjunction with abortion reform is indicative of the communist vision of abortion as a "stop-gap measure," unlike the feminists "who demanded (it) as a basic right."[59] With reference to a quote from the party's political journal *Die Rote Fahne*, Usborne surmises that "as long as the state (did) not look after pregnant women and mothers," the KPD decided that "the state (had) no right to prevent abortions."[60] According to Usborne, the party infused issues of reproduction into the party mandate directed toward the betterment of the entire working class. However, Usborne's cursory treatment of the communist position on abortion reform neglects to consider the conflict which began to emerge at this exact time between the official collectivist vision of the party and the concerns of delegates to the National Women's Secretariat.

A report to the Central Committee outlining the Secretariat's plan of action for the abortion campaign, began with support for the parliamentary motions of January 1922. Later circulated to all regional activists, this paper resounded with a surprisingly feminist tone. In the attempt to mobilize women into action, the paper explained the party's position:

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[58] Protocol of the Meeting of the Women's Secretariat. January 8, 1922. *SAPM*. Berlin, 1994. pp. 4-9.
[59] Cornelia Usborne. p. 168.
[60] Ibid. p. 128.

> "The bourgeois parties support these disgraceful paragraphs and wish to keep them intact [...] In the struggle against this special legislation aimed at proletarian women, the KPD must support women's right to self-determination, in order that they judge for themselves whether they are able to bring a child into this world."[61]

Interestingly, this expression of self-determination ran counter to the communist vision of collectivity. Although this memorandum's purpose was to promote agitation among women by linking it to the collective fight against capitalist tyranny, it did so by implementing language which alluded to the "special" place of women's interests within the class struggle. Aimed at attracting female support, the Secretariat's report to the Central Committee indicates the difficulty in successfully integrating reproductivity into the discourse of production and infusing women's interests into a supposedly genderless class struggle.

This point is best illustrated by the attention given to women's issues in the communist press and literature. Between 1920 and 1932 there were "no fewer than 19 left-wing motions on abortion."[62] Since abortion reform had carved out a piece of the political pie, why then was Bertha Braunthal forced to appeal for coverage in the supposedly guaranteed space for women's issues within the party newspapers?

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[61] Memorandum to the Central Committee with respect to Paragraphs 218 and 219. January 1922. *SAPM*. Berlin, 1994. pp.5-9.
[62] Cornelia Usborne. p. 164.

At the same time that the campaign against paragraph 218 was waging in the *Reichstag*, Braunthal's internal correspondence testify to the Secretariat's increasing level of frustration. One letter explains how, despite the resolutions of the Third Congress of the International to include women's pages in the main party newspaper, the editorial board of *Die Rote Fahne* neglected "to provide the appropriate space for these publications."[63] In conjunction with the articles in *Die Kommunistin*, daily women's pages in the party newspapers brought the news of women's agitation to an additional 45000 people.[64] In his response, the editor informed Braunthal that the Central Committee had decided in its last meeting that the pages devoted to women's agitation were to be published every 14 days "to alternate between Communist youth publications and women's pages."[65] Women's peripheral position could not be made more explicit. Although youth is traditionally characterized by naiveté and immaturity, its secondary status in the party newspaper is acceptable since it is understood as a transitory stage in the development towards political maturation. To be a woman, by association, is to be in a premature stage of political development. Undoubtedly, many women would be startled to discover that the party equated womanhood with lifelong

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[63] A Letter from Bertha Braunthal to the editorial board of *Die Rote Fahne*. December 20, 1922. *SAPM*. Berlin 1994, p. 90.

[64] In a report issued by the Central Committee in July 1922, the total readership of *Die Rote Fahne* was measured at around 45 000 for the morning edition and 38 000 for the evening edition. *Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung. Teil II von 1917-1945*. Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1966. p. 131.

immaturity. In addition to the lack of coverage of women's agitation in *Die Rote Fahne*, by 1923 few meetings of the Secretariat were visited by members of the Central Committee, despite the original mandate.[66]

Is this lack of interest and opposition within the party surprising? As previously stated, the KPD became preoccupied with the urgency of domestic matters; reparations and hyperinflation, currency stabilization, food shortages and general strikes forced the Communist Party to re-assess its course of action. By 1924, internal dissension over the nature of German communism fostered polarized ideological camps. The main source of dissent was the role of Bolshevik Russia in determining KPD strategy and policy. The triumph of the rightist elements over the Ultra-Left and the rise to prominence of Ernst Thälmann, elected presidential candidate of the KPD by the Central Committee in 1925,[67] secured the swift Bolshevization of the German Communist Party. The Bolshevized KPD and the redefinition of the party mandate held dire consequences for the proletarian women's movement

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[65] Letter from editor of *Die Rote Fahne* to Bertha Braunthal. December 22, 1922. *SAPM*. Berlin, 1994. p. 90.

[66] Letter to the Central Committee of the KPD from Bertha Braunthal. Berlin, August 29, 1923. *SAPM*. Berlin, 1994. p.72. According to the original guidelines for women's agitation, one member of the Secretariat's executive would sit on the Central Committee and one member of the Committee would visit the organizational meetings of the Secretariat.

[67] Arthur Rosenberg. A History of the German Republic. New York: Russell and Russell Inc., 1965. p. 265. For a more in depth analysis of the process of Bolshevization see Ben Fowkes, Communism in Germany Under the Weimar Republic. London: Macmillan Press, 1984; for a first-person account of events from the denounced Trotskyist Ruth Fischer see Stalin and German Communism: a Study in the Origins of a State Party. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1948.

in that it reinforced the primacy of the collectivist spirit.[68]

In order to understand the impact of Bolshevization, one must examine briefly the KPD political strategy and its connection to Moscow before 1925. The domestic situation in 1923 formed the backdrop for the political unrest within the factional labour movement. The SPD abandoned the belief in revolution and "did not want to do anything that could further increase the existing chaos in Germany."[69] With its eyes fixed on another shot at government of the *Reich*,[70] the SPD declined invitations for co-operation with the KPD to form a united proletarian front of workers opposed to the Cuno government.[71] Under the leadership of Party Chairman Brandler, the KPD envisioned a parliamentary labour coalition. With the support of the Moscow Government who had just signed the Treaty of Rapallo with the German middle-class Republic,[72] Brandler attempted to shift the focus away from revolution toward the parliamentary establishment of a united labour government. The initial success of labour coalitions in Saxony and Thuringia greatly pleased Moscow and seemed to ensure SPD and KPD collaboration.[73] However, a

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[68] Silvia Kontos explains that "the party's situation in October 1923 and the months of illegality saw the emergence of ultra-left tendencies which played a considerable role in the configuration of women's politics, which developed alongside the burgeoning reformism of the trade unions, eventually to take the form of Boshevization." *Die Partei Kämpft wie Ein Mann: Frauenpolitik der KPD in der Weimarer Republik*. Frankfurt/Main: Roter Stern, 1976. p. 52.
[69] Rosenberg. p. 193.
[70] The SPD was not a part of a coalition government between 1921 and 1923. Cornelia Usborne. p. 166.
[71] Rosenberg. p. 193.
[72] Ibid. p. 194.
[73] Ibid. p. 198.

Communist-led general strike aimed at forcing the resignation of the Cuno Government in Berlin in August 1923, convinced the SPD to renounce any affiliation with the KPD and seek legal official opposition.[74]

While the SPD shared power with Gustav Stresemann's People's Party, the KPD sank deeper into internal chaos. Brandler's failed unity in 1923 angered the left and Ultra-Left factions within the party.[75] Alienated, Brandler was sacrificed in return for the abandonment of left-wing criticism of Moscow.[76] Deeply affected by the appearance of stabilization, some working-class Communists entertained the incorporation of the Soviet ideal into the German model. Instead of a plan for organized revolution, the party attempted to strike a balance between the feuding left and Ultra-Left factions. By 1925, the quarrel over the ideological path was settled. Under Thälmann's "Go to the masses" (*Heran an die Massen*) strategy articulated at the 1925 Frankfurt Party Congress,[77] the Bolshevized KPD emerged re-vitalized and consolidated around the ideology of

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[74] Ibid. p. 199.
[75] Ibid. p. 259.
[76] Recognizing the strength of Soviet Russia, the left-wing KPD leadership sought a deal with Moscow to label Brandler the scapegoat for the troubles in 1923. In exchange for Brandler's complicity, the KPD left wing would gain majority representation in the Central Committee.
[77] The formulation of the new party line "Go to the People" coincided with the purging of ultra-left ideologues Ruth Fischer and Arkadi Maslow. In keeping with the "United Front From Below" strategy articulated at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern, the KPD declared Social Democracy "socially fascist" but was encouraged to appeal to the SPD-sympathetic power base. Grossmann. p. 78. With the help of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, the ultra-left Fischer-Maslow leadership was replaced with the left Thälmann, Dengel and Geschke leadership. Kontos. p. 57.

collectivity. Instead of community-level organizations, the Bolshevized KPD shifted its focus to the workplace.[78]

While Ernst Thälmann's ascendance to power in 1925 marks the official Bolshevization of the German Communist Party, the process of Bolshevization did not go unchallenged and dissent took the form of direct and indirect opposition. The expulsion of ultra left-wing Communists from the party[79] was directed at isolating reactionary forces hostile to the increased visibility of Moscow within German affairs. In order to secure an alliance with Bolshevik Russia, the KPD realized the necessity of eliminating ideological opponents. A discussion on the dissolution of the National Women's Secretariat offers insight into the transitory politics of the KPD, in addition to providing a frame of reference from which to view the impact of Bolshevization. Parenthetically, the absorption of women's politics illustrates the party's desire to regulate women's political identity within the discourse of the class struggle.

Following the 9th Congress of the KPD in April 1924, an article in *Die Rote Fahne* summarized the mood: "Go forward Comrades! Put an end to the discussions! Let's get to work, everyone like a man!"[80] At this congress the debate surrounding women's integration into the political sphere was

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[78] Through the process of Bolshevization, the party refocused all efforts toward attracting and organizing female factory labourers. This shift is most visible in the lack of support given to houseworkers (*Hausarbeiter*) by 1925. Kontos explains that although housewives made up the majority of organized communist women, by 1924/1925 women's politics (*Frauenpolitik*) excluded them from inclusion under this rubric.The result was a reconfiguration of the nature of women's work. p. 53.

[79] Rosenberg. p. 261.

settled once and for all when the Central Committee voted to absorb the Secretariat to supervise women's politics in a more direct manner. In keeping with the process of consolidation, the party alerted prominent and successful leaders in the women's movement to the fact that the reorganization was at hand. In a memorandum to the regional delegates, the newly appointed leaders of the women's department (*Frauenabteilung*) outlined the minutes of the Secretariat meeting from the 12th of May, 1924 when "members of the Central Committee divulged the new path of women's politics."[81]

The memo explained that the regional offices as well as the Secretariat would experience a complete overhaul to ensure that "the mobilization of the female proletariat became the focus of the entire party."[82] The absorption of the Secretariat in general and the resignation of Bertha Braunthal in particular were designed to squash what the Central Committee saw as "the emergence of particularism"[83] incompatible with the party's commitment to Marxist-Leninism.[84] Erna Halbe, former delegate from Magdeburg and one of the leaders of the new women's department, aptly summarized the problems of the previous organization:

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[80] *Die Rote Fahne*. April 4, 1924. p. 16.

[81] Memorandum to Regional and Local offices of the National Women's Secretariat. May 25, 1924, *SAPM*. Berlin, 1994. pp. 129-131.

[82] Ibid. p. 129.

[83] Ibid. p. 130.

[84] In a women's conference in July 1925 Ruth Fischer, one of the new leaders of the women's department (to be ousted later in 1925-26) explained how "the party's acceptance of Leninism was an integral part of

> The KPD is no bourgeois or democratic party. Our former representatives have forgotten this. They have also forgotten that these meetings are not the place to discuss how to acquire another pair of shoes or some stockings from the welfare office. On the contrary, this is the place to discuss the best methods to revolutionize the German proletariat.[85]

Halbe's assessment dramatically encapsulates the transformation of the "Woman Question" within the newly-constituted KPD. By condemning the efforts of her predecessors as "bourgeois" and "democratic," Halbe betrays her firm commitment to the masculine "collective" vision of the class struggle. Moreover, Halbe's banishment of shoes and stockings from the meeting room illustrates in bold fashion the rejection of women's day-to-day needs and issues from party politics.

This chapter examined how the topic of abortion reform represented the most plausible tool for attracting female participation in the communist cause. In addition to its role as an organizational tool, reproductive freedom connected to welfare legislation communicated the message of state responsibility for the severity of working-class social conditions. In this application, abortion reform could be turned into a palatable proposal that even the male proletariat would support. However, this support was

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the struggle against the anti-revolutionary rightist elements, against Brandlerism and Trotskyism." Women's Conference of the KPD. July 11, 1925 in Berlin. *SAPM*. Berlin, 1994. p. 45.

[85] The Fourth National Women's Conference. Berlin, May 1924. Berlin, *SAPM*. p. 127.

contingent upon a careful incorporation of abortion reform within the discourse of party politics and class struggle. Only when viewed as a means to further the collective cause of the genderless proletariat, rather than a particularist and gender-specific concern, could the party truly rally behind the proposal. Only in the context of its application to the collective working class, did abortion reform receive attention. When the individual needs and rights of working-class women were addressed directly, those responsible were labeled feminists. Any concern for individual rights was understood by the party as bourgeois, anti-collectivist and dangerous to the "uneducated and unenlightened masses."[86]

Bolshevization and the assimilation of the Women's Secretariat suppressed any discussion of women's particular struggle or oppression. In order to integrate women's participation in the public political arena, the KPD needed to divert attention away from gender-specific interests. As one delegate to the former Women's Secretariat pointed out, the struggle between male and female interests would not simply fade away during the course of a united struggle for the ever-elusive equality and social emancipation. As delegate Heller made plain, it "unfortunately is the case that it is in man's interest to oppress woman."[87] Although it

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[86] *Die Kommunistin*. Jhrg 3. December 11, 1924. p. 43. Many outspoken communists were labelled "individualists," during the turbulent Bolshevization and creeping Stalinization of the Third International. For example, prominent anti-Stalinist Ruth Fischer was expelled from the KPD in 1926 after a brief re-emergence onto the political scene to negotiate support for Zinoviev in the Comintern. Ben Fowkes. Communism in Germany under the Weimar Republic. London: Macmillan Press, 1984. p. 141.

[87] Protocol of the Women's Conference of the KPD. September 28, 1922. *SAPM*, Berlin. p. 75.

was not apparent to Clara Zetkin at the time, her vision of a genderless proletariat would remain out of reach for this very reason.

Why were women sought after actively for participation in the class struggle when women's interests were perceived as a threat to the collective struggle? The conflict between individual interests and those of the collective explain the source of discord. However, the essential answer to women's ancillary role in KPD politics must address the conceptualization of class itself and the attempt to secure working-class patriarchal authority over women's identity. Since Bolshevization reiterated the primacy of production, productivity and reproductivity were reformulated to service the collective needs of the working class.

If the collective goal was revolution, women's reproductivity was to be harnessed for the good of those involved in the struggle. Instead of infusing the abortion debate with notions of a woman's control over her own body, the communist *Reichstag* members spoke of the social responsibility of the state in enacting protective legislation. The theory of course is that welfare legislation together with abortion reform would provide for a strengthened proletarian populace more capable of overthrowing capitalism. While the women in the Secretariat were perceived as a threat due to their supposed "individualist" preoccupations, the women certainly did not envision themselves as bourgeois feminists. Rather, what the

party condemned as particularist was an emerging gender consciousness which forced women to consider their own oppression in terms of their experience as women, independent of the communist "collective." When examining the abortion debate, it became increasingly clear that women began to understand the issues surrounding reproductive rights in terms of how it affected them differently and more directly than it did their male comrades. Ultimately, it was this developing awareness of gender difference that was labelled by the party as "individualist." Ironically, this gender-consciousness continued to persist after the party's efforts to purge it with Bolshevization. Despite her commitment to the collectivist vision, in the 1931 abortion campaign Helene Overlach declared that "(abortion) was after all a woman's question; I can do this better than a male comrade."[88]

[88] Grossmann, p. 78.

Conclusion

When asked their opinion on the question of abortion reform in the 1994 election campaign, the German parties remained as polarized as they had been in the Weimar Republic. Despite the different party names and agendas, their respective attitudes on the issue of Paragraph 218 remain surprisingly similar to those expressed during the Weimar years. In a special election issue of the German feminist magazine *Emma*, the parties divulged their prospective platforms on women's issues. While the incumbent Christian Democratic Union (CDU) reaffirmed their commitment to the "protection of the unborn life,"[1] the left-wing parties exhibited varying degrees of support for women's choice and access to abortion. Although advocating women's self-determination, the SPD stressed the need for societal responsibility to preserve "dignity and the rights of women."[2] The Alliance'90/Green Party (*Bündnis 90/ Grüne*) and the successor to the SED, the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) called for the unequivocal termination of the "criminal abortion paragraph."[3]

Meanwhile, one of the members of the magazine's editorial staff advocated a unique alternative for women suspicious of the mainstream parties. "Having polled young

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[1] *Emma*. September/October 1994. p. 29.
[2] Ibid. p. 29.
[3] Ibid. pp. 28-29.

women" about their assessment of the 75 years since women's franchise, Cornelia Filter reported that "the vote did not bring very much."[4] Disillusioned with politics-as-usual, Filter concluded that the only way to guarantee women's perspectives in parliament and legislation would be through the creation of an all-woman party.

The implications of this stance speak clearly to the debate surrounding equality/difference discussed in this thesis. On the one hand, an all-woman party would theoretically ensure that women's issues would occupy the premier position within the party mandate. However, there are insurmountable shortcomings to this proposed solution. It is naive to suggest that a female party would be inherently disposed to representing the diverse needs and experiences of all women. Indeed, issues of class, race, sexual orientation, not to mention the perceived chasm between *Ossies* and *Wessies*,[5] would mediate any attempt at unity, in the same way that being born biologically female does not necessarily presuppose feminist consciousness. Clearly, the failure of the Secretariat to inform general party politics is indicative of the degree to which women may organize in the shadow of a hostile system.

This thesis has illustrated the ways in which the National Women's Secretariat conceptualized, constructed and realized women's political participation in the KPD. Ideally,

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[4] Ibid. p. 3.

[5] *Ossies* and *Wessies* are the terms for Easterner and Westerner. Despite the destruction of the physical wall, it is clear that in the hearts and minds of some Germans a divide still separates the East from the West.

the leaders of the Secretariat envisioned that the proletarian women's movement would pave the way for women's participation as "leaders, decision-makers and as independent Marxist revolutionaries."[6] In reality, women's political role was restricted to the realm of support for the collective cause, since her "rights must have as their aim the creation of a Communist society."[7] Due to the danger posed by the "masses of passive working women," special apparatuses evolved within the party with special methods of organizing women "to be resolute fighters for Communism and consequently for the full development of women."[8]

This passage aptly demonstrates the KPD's position on women's real equality, "as opposed to formal or superficial equality" as espoused by "radical feminists."[9] Rather than being seen as a reciprocal formulation, equality was cast in the mold of a unilaterally defined collective; only Communism led to emancipation and since it was envisioned as the final aim of the proletariat as a whole, it was in the interests of both sides that "the two struggles be fought as 'single and indivisible' struggle."[10] It should be emphasized that this "single and indivisible struggle" was not a dialectical process where women's and men's individual interests would

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[6] From Zetkin's speech at the August 1907 International Socialist Women's Conference in Raya Dunayevskaya. Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution. Chicago: University of Illinios Press, 1991. p. 13.

[7] "Forms and Methods of Communist Work Among Women," from the Third Congress of the Third International. in Theses, Resolutions and Manifestos of the III International. London: Pluton Press, 1983. p. 215.

[8] Ibid. p. 214.

[9] Ibid. p. 215.

inform and alter the shape of collective action. Instead, women were to subsume their individual quest for emancipation to the fight of the "genderless proletariat" to ensure that "women and all the other members of the labouring class" become co-owners "of the means of production," in order to take equal part "in distributing them."[11]

As this study demonstrated, the genderless proletariat was a myth; the politics of class were clearly informed by gender. In keeping with contemporary notions of women's "special status," the KPD deemed it necessary to employ specialized tactics to bring women out of the bonds of domesticity and into the political forum. As Chapter 2 demonstrated, this transition from private to public was orchestrated and regulated from above. When the women in the Secretariat began to re-define this public space according to their expectations, the KPD condemned them as opportunistic and bourgeois. When women mobilized as *women* of the working class, they were perceived as a threat to the very social fabric of the revolution. This reaction is indicative of the gendered nature of the collective which was masculine in not only its formulation but also its orientation.

Chapter 3 analyzed the KPD campaign against paragraph 218 to argue that despite the Secretariat's attempt to introduce reproductivity into the communist discourse as a matter of personal import, reproductive rights were re-cast as social obligations to safeguard the health of future

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[10] **Ibid. p. 215.**

revolutionaries. Since party officials believed that the maternal function "must be recognized as a social function," and the appropriate measures "to defend and protect women as child-bearers"[12] must be fought for, the KPD ensured in the very formulation of their position that equality for women would take the form of support as wives and mothers.

Although the party was quick to denounce women's "special" status, they nonetheless cultivated the notion of women's natural difference, which reinforced a gendered division of labour. It was this "naturalness," however, that normalized women in supportive, traditional roles, thereby negating any implication of "special" status. When the Secretariat no longer rigidly upheld their supportive function, when they began to view abortion reform as a means to secure greater political and reproductive control, the party, sensing the broader implications, denounced their actions as bourgeois-feminist and particularistic. Even in the instances when women enthusiastically fulfilled their role as supporters, as in the case of Comrade Geffke's Rhineland demonstrators, they were greeted with a complete lack of interest. This lack of recognition can be explained with reference to the gendered division of labour and the masculine value system that informed it.

Chapters 2 and 3 discussed the emerging Bolshevization with specific references to its implication for the Women's Secretariat. Besides the dismantling and reconfiguration of

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[11] Ibid. p. 215.

the Secretariat, Bolshevization once and for all consolidated a masculine collective ethos. From the uniformed RFMD marching in unison with flags held high, to the banishment of "shoes and stockings" from women's meetings, Bolshevization homologized women's interests into the "genderless" model. However, this model is by no means genderless but indicative of universalized male interests. In this instance, female sexual difference did not result in exclusion. The women who remained in the department (*Frauenabteilung*) were absorbed and made to conform to the standards erected by the male subject. As in the example of the RFMB where the girls physically endeavor to embody masculine characteristics, no other avenue was provided or tolerated for women outside of this masculine paradigm. In a general sense, this intolerance is characteristic of the continuous oscillation between the two poles homologization and exclusion. In the main, women's movements have always fought against outright exclusion by accepting homologization under the guise of "equality." Such transformations were "rendered possible by the neutral universal valency"[13] of the male subject.

Since women's emancipation movements are forced to homologize with the male subject in order to exercise some degree of self-determination, they in turn must suppress sexual difference. The National Women's Secretariat of the

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[12] Ibid. p. 217.

[13] Adriana Caverero, "Equality and sexual difference: amnesia in political thought." in Beyond Equality and Difference: Citizenship, Feminist Politics and Female Subjectivity. ed. Gisela Bock and Susan James. London: Routledge, 1992. p. 39.

KPD, by accepting and proliferating the notion of a "genderless proletariat" in order to secure women's political involvement, demonstrated the problems associated with integrating women's concerns into a Marxist paradigm. The KPD's dissolution of the Secretariat in 1924 represents the most explicit example of repressing difference. This suppression is also evident in the startling transformation of *Die Kommunistin*. In 1922, the paper was predominantly a didactic tool for politicizing housewives. To this end, the newspaper contained articles which were tailored to this segment of the working class. Conversely, in 1926 the paper became reoriented to construct the importance and pre-eminence of the Bolshevized worker. The repression of sexual difference which accompanied Bolshevization reflected the cold rationalization of the proletarian masses--masculine and universal (see figure 3).

Is it possible to achieve equality and still recognize sexual difference? Since the KPD neglected to recognize the extent to which gender informed and shaped their vision of emancipation, integration inadvertently highlighted the oppressive nature of such a totalizing equality. If there is one clear lesson that is evident in the history of the Secretariat it is that as long as equality is understood as universalized and difference as inferior, whether masculine or feminine, the social transformation of dominant values will never be realized.

Nr. 7 | Berlin, Juli 1926 | Jahrg. 8

Wir Frauen wollen Sowjetrußland sehen....

Die „Berliner Arbeiterin" schrieb es vor einem Jahr. Resolutionen aus den Betrieben, Versammlungsbeschlüsse, der Bericht der ersten englischen Frauendelegation drängten immer mehr zur Erfüllung dieses Wunsches.

Der russische Gewerkschaftsrat hat nun die deutschen Arbeiterinnen eingeladen, und bereits steht die Diskussion über die erste Frauendelegation nach Rußland im Mittelpunkt der Betriebe.

Ist es doch das Wunderland für Hunderttausende ausgebeuteter Arbeiterinnen, deren Los sich von Monat zu Monat verschlechtert.

Die Nationalisierung zwingt heute Massen von Frauen zur Aufgabe jeder Kultur. Millionen Erwerbslose, Kurzarbeiter, Heimarbeiter sind nicht einmal in der Lage, den notdürftigsten Hunger ihrer Familie von 10 Mark die Woche zu stillen. Selbst das wöchentliche Bad, das Stück Seife für die Wäsche sind zu teuer.

Frauenarbeit unter den schlechtesten Lohn- und Arbeitsverhältnissen ist heute ein beliebtes Mittel, die Produktion zu verbilligen.

Der menschliche Geist ist rastlos tätig, die technischen Mittel zu verbessern, die Arbeit zu erleichtern, das Leben angenehmer zu gestalten. Aber der Kapitalismus beutet die Massen um ihre Zeit. Er benutzt die neue Maschine, den Wandertisch, das Fließband, die neuen Arbeitsmethoden, um die Produktion zu verbilligen und die Profite zu steigern. Und in Verkennung des wahren Urhebers ihrer Qual, ihres Hungers, ihrer schlechten Wohnungen verfluchen Tausende die neue Maschine, die ihnen Erwerbslosigkeit, schlechte Arbeitsbedingungen, Herabsetzung der Löhne bringt.

Immer klarer kristallisiert sich heraus, daß der Kapitalismus nicht mehr imstande ist, die Wirtschaft auf seiner Grundlage aufrecht zu erhalten. Gleichzeitig mit dem dauernden Abbau in den kapitalistischen Ländern geht es in Rußland aufwärts.

Vergebens haben die Zeitungen über Sowjetrußland die schwärzesten Lügen verbreitet. Die ersten Arbeiterdelegationen bestätigten, was längst zu uns drang, daß in Rußland unter einer planvollen Wirtschaft des Arbeiterstaates die Wirtschaft aufwärts geht.

Der rote Fabrikdirektor

Es gilt, das Lügengewebe über Rußland zu zerreißen. Die Arbeiterschaft muß heraus aus dem immer mehr sich verwirrenden Labyrinth der Wirtschaftskrisen.

Sowjetrußland hat zwar keine Wandertische und Fließband, es baut zum Teil erst seine Industrie auf, aber es steht heute trotz seiner noch rückständigen Industrie hoch über allen Kulturstaaten der Welt. Denn es hat Gesetze geschaffen, die den Unterschied zwischen Reich und Arm, zwischen Mann und Frau auslöschen.

Nur im Arbeiterstaat hat die Rationalisierung wahren Sinn, dort steigert sie die Produktion und bringt alle Verbesserungen in den Genuß des Volkes. Sie erleichtert dort das schwere Los der Arbeiterschaft, ermöglicht Feierstunden und Ferienwochen.

Rußland wird bald westeuropäische Technik sein eigen nennen und diese wird auf Grund der Landesgesetze den Arbeitern bessere soziale Verhältnisse garantieren.

Sowjetrußland ist das einzige Land, das die Frauen bisher gleichberechtigt hat.

6 Wochen vor der Geburt und 6 Wochen nach der Geburt erhalten Schwangere bezahlten Urlaub, ferner eine Geburtenhilfe in Höhe des Monatslohnes, eine Stillprämie von einem Viertel des Monatslohnes, 10 Monate darf die Schwangere und Mutter nicht gekündigt werden, man muß ihr mögliche leichte Arbeit anweisen usw.

figure 3

Title page of *Die Kommunistin*, Jhrg 8 N.7 July 1926. "*Wir Frauen wollen Sowjetrußland sehen...*" We want to see Soviet Russia...

This title page dramatically illustrates the changes the Secretariat experienced due to the Bolshevization of the KPD, highlighted in the alterations to the paper's masthead from imperial script to early socialist realism. Overall, the feminine spirit of Luxemburg has been replaced by the callous androgyny of the "red factory director" and the torch of hope by the wrench of Bolshevization.

Appendix 1

"Press Guidlines." Women's Conference of the KPD 11 July 1924 *SAPM*, Berlin, Germany. p. 70.

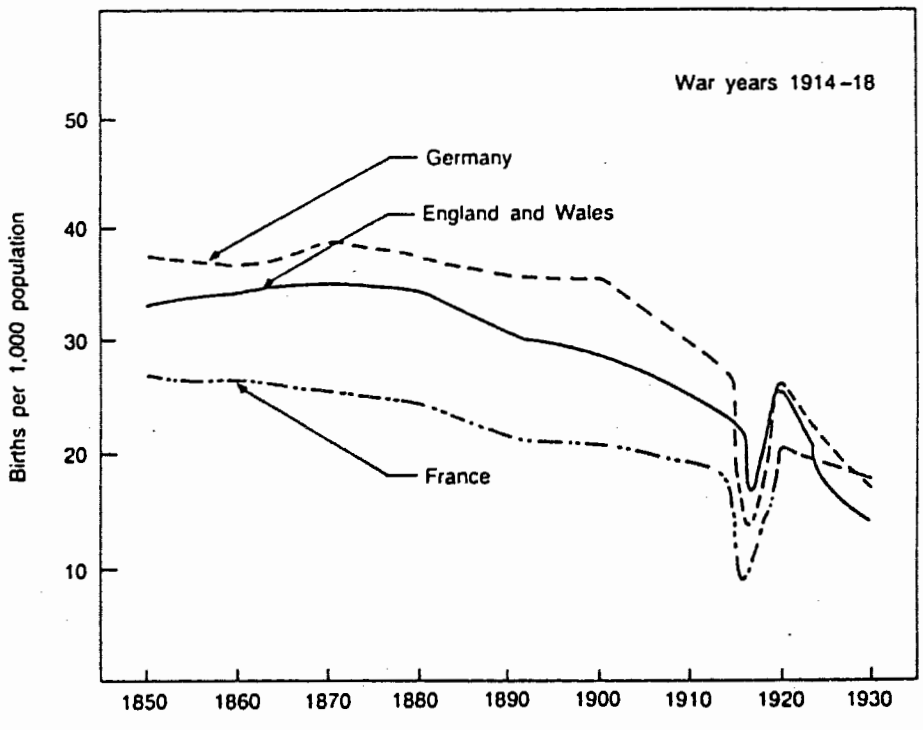
-"A newspaper has not only the responsibility of being read, but must also, perhaps more than any other literature, be readable. This holds doubly true for a proletarian newspaper, the task of which is to disseminate information to motivate participation in the class struggle. And the more ignorant the working class is to the question of equality, the more interesting and easy to understand the paper must be. Above all else, her face (the first page) must speak for the whole paper. The communist press has not only the task to inform but to act as Organizer and Agitator. In order to reach this goal, the following rules must be followed. A paper must:

1. Be very cheap
2. Possess a pleasing format
3. Be easy to read without small print
4. Possess many pictures, at least on the first page
5. Ensure that political articles are no longer than 50-60 lines
6. Ensure that all other articles in general are no longer than 50 lines.
7. Ensure that the headline is in large print
8. Cite authorship for reports
9. Turn reader into co-worker

Appendix 2

Crude Birth Rates for France, Germany, England and Wales, 1850-1930

Source: B.R. Mitchell, European Historical Statistics 1750-1950, London: MacMillan, 1978, pp. 21-32.



Appendix 3

The Prussian Penal Code from Cornelia Usborne, The Politics of the Body in Weimar Germany, pp. 215-219.

The Penal Code of 1871

ARTICLE 218 A pregnant woman who has an abortion or who has her foetus destroyed in the womb is to be sentenced to penal servitude for up to five years. If there are mitigating circumstances the penalty is reduced to a minimum of six months' imprisonment. The same penalty applies to any person helping to procure an abortion or to destroy a foetus in the womb with the consent of the pregnant woman.

ARTICLE 219 Any person helping to procure an abortion for money is to be sentenced to penal servitude of up to ten years.

ARTICLE 220 Any person who procures an abortion without the knowledge or consent of the woman is to be sentenced to penal servitude for not less than two years. If the operation results in the death of the woman, penal servitude for not less than ten years, or for life, is prescribed. Attempts are punishable.

Preliminary draft for a new penal code, 1909

Mitigation of penalty for the pregnant woman to a maximum of three years penal servitude.

Draft by the Legal Commission, 1913

Penal servitude to be restored in serious cases for the woman and her accomplice; advertising of abortifacients and abortion services to be banned.

Government bill to outlaw sterilisation and abortion, July 1918

Operations to sterilise a person or to kill a foetus to be permissible only if carried out by a registered medical practitioner in order to avert serious risk to the health or life of the patient.

The doctor to be required to supply in writing to the appropriate medical officer of health the name and address of the patient, the date of and the reasons for the operation. Failure to do so punishable with imprisonment of up to six months or a fine of 3000 Marks.

Sterilisation with consent but without proper medical indication to be punished with penal servitude of up to three years. Any person undergoing a sterilisation without proper indication to be imprisoned.

Draft of the Penal Code, 1919

Very similar to 1913 draft.

Draft by Reich Justice Minister Radbruch, 1922

Mitigation of penalty for the woman and her accomplice to imprisonment; impossible attempts to be exempted from punishment; up to two years imprisonment for advertising abortifacients or abortion services.

Official draft of the Penal Code, 1925
Penalty for attempted abortion to be restored, but with exemptions under mitigating circumstances.

Amendment to the abortion law, 18 May 1926
Articles 218–20 replaced by a new article 218:

> A woman who kills her foetus by abortion or permits this by somebody else will be punished with imprisonment.
> The same penalty applies to any person helping to procure an abortion or to kill a foetus.
> Attempted abortion is punishable.
> Anybody who procures an abortion without consent or for money will be punished with penal servitude. The penalty also applies to any person who has supplied abortifacients for money. Under mitigating circumstances the penalty is reduced to imprisonment of not less than three months.

Decision by the Supreme Court, 11 March 1927
Therapeutic abortion by a medical practitioner permitted.

Official draft of the Penal Code, 1927
Like the draft of 1925 but permitting therapeutic abortion by a medical practitioner; advertising of abortifacients and abortion services banned, but information for doctors exempted.

Laws introduced by the National Socialists
Law of 26 May 1933: article 219 of the Penal Code restored, banning advertising of abortifacients; article 220 restored, banning advertising of abortion services.

Law to Prevent Hereditarily Diseased Offspring, 26 June 1935: compulsory eugenic sterilisation legalised; abortion on eugenic grounds to be carried out in hospital by a registered medical practitioner after a consilium decision; written notification and medical details to be sent to the medical officer of health.

Decree for the Protection of Marriage, Family and Motherhood, 9 March 1943:

> A woman who has undergone an abortion is punished with imprisonment, in serious cases with penal servitude; attempted abortion is a punishable offence; whoever else procures an abortion will be punished with penal servitude; in cases where the vital strength of the German people had been continuously damaged by the same perpetrator *capital punishment* is prescribed; advertising of *contraceptives* or abortifacients will be punished with up to two years in prison. [Emphasis added]

Appendix 4

Reichstag Motions on Abortion Reform from Usborne, pp. 215-219.

National Assembly

No. 92, 4 Mar 1920 Motion by Frau Schroeder *et al.* (SPD) to permit abortion on social and eugenic grounds. Signed by twelve members: six SPD women; five SPD men; and Marie-Elisabeth Lüders (DDP). Not debated.

Reichstag

FIRST ELECTION PERIOD

No. 90, 2 July 1920 Motion by Aderhold *et al.* (USPD) to repeal articles 218–20 of the Penal Code. Signed by 81 of 84 members. Not debated.

No. 318, 31 July 1920 Motion by Frau Bohm-Schuch, Dr Radbruch *et al.* (SPD) to permit abortion if performed by a woman herself or by a doctor within the first three months of pregnancy. Signed by 55 of 102 members. Not debated.

No. 3396, 21 Jan 1922 Motion by Bartz *et al.* (KPD) to repeal articles 218 and 219. Linked to a bill proposing maternity protection and maternity leave. Not debated.

No. 6574, 5 Mar 1924 Motion by Bartz *et al.* (KPD) to repeal articles 218 and 219, and to grant amnesty to all those convicted previously. Signed by 15 of 62 members. Not debated.

SECOND ELECTION PERIOD

No. 435, 28 May 1924 Motion proposed by Müller (Franken) *et al.* (SPD). Like no. 318. Signed by 17 of 100 members. Not debated.

No. 99, 2 June, 1924 Motion proposed by Frau Golke, Frau Backenecker, Frau Reitler, Frau Krüger *et al.* (KPD). Like no. 3396 plus amnesty request. In case this was rejected: to legalise abortion by a medical official in a state hospital free of charge; other abortions to be illegal. Signed by 19 members. Not debated.

THIRD ELECTION PERIOD

No. 435, 22 Jan 1925 Bill to Protect Mother and Child, proposed by Frau Arendsee *et al.* (KPD). For comprehensive local-authority provision of ante- and post-natal care, obstetrics, midwifery, maternity leave on full pay; restriction of working-hours plus repeal of articles 218 and 219; provision of free abortion facilities in state hospitals on demand and amnesty for all those convicted and a stop to all pending trials. Discussed in Population Select Committee on 10, 17 June 1925, and on 1 Dec 1926; discussed in plenary session on 25 Jan 1927. Rejected.

No. 434, 24 Jan 1925 Interpellation by Frau Arendsee *et al.* (KPD), signed by 33 members. Answered by Reich Justice Minister on 4 Feb 1925.

No. 474, 4 Feb 1925 Motion by Müller (Franken) *et al.* (SPD) to permit abortion on demand but only where performed by a doctor within the first three months of pregnancy. Signed by 30 members. Discussed in Legal Select Committee on 17, 18 Dec 1925. Rejected but alternative motion 149 passed.

No. 149 (Legal Select Committee), 18 Dec 1925 Motion by Dr Moses, Frau Pfülf, Frau Nemitz, Frau Agnes, Frau Dr Stegmann, Crispien (SPD) to commute penal servitude to imprisonment for a pregnant women and her accomplice. Discussed in the Legal Committee of the Reichsrat on 26 Jan 1926, in the Reichstag Legal Committee on 2 Mar 1926; second and third readings on 5, 7 May 1926. Passed.

Nos 150, 151 (Legal Select Committee), 18 Dec 1925 No. 150: motion by Dr Korsch, Frau Arendsee, Schütz (KPD) to exempt attempted abortion from punishment if woman was not pregnant or method used was inappropriate. Rejected. No. 151: motion by Dr Korsch, Frau Arendsee, Frau Plum (KPD) to repeal articles 218 and 219 and to grant amnesty. Rejected.

New law, 18 May 1926 (*RGBl* I, 239)

No. 2337, 7 June 1926 Interpellation by Stoecker, Frau Arendsee (KPD). Answered by Reich Justice Minister end of June 1926.

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