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SOCIALIST IDEALS OF THE NEW WOMAN IN WEIMAR GERMANY

by

Hafife Montgomery

A Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Major: History

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## Abstract

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This dissertation investigates the women's magazines published by the Social Democratic Party of Germany (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, SPD: *Die Genossin*, 1924-1933, and *Frauenwelt*, 1924-1933), the Communist Party of Germany (Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands, KPD: *Die Kommunistin*, 1919-1926), and its media mogul Willi Münzenberg (*Der Weg der Frau*, 1931-1933), as well as the SPD affiliated Arbeiterwohlfahrt (Workers' Welfare: *Arbeiterwohlfahrt*, 1926-1933) during the Weimar Republic (1918-1933). I examine the organizations' reasons for publishing women's periodicals during a time of a printing and media boom and the magazines' aims, target audiences, looks, contents, and attributes as collective products. I also compare the leftist popular papers *Frauenwelt* and *Der Weg der Frau* to commercial housewives' and fashion magazines, using *Berliner Hausfrau* as their representative.

At the center of this dissertation is an investigation of ideals of femininity disseminated within these publications. I examine how Communist and Social Democratic ideals compared to each other as well as to gender norms for women propagated in commercial popular culture. To ground these ideals and the publications, this dissertation also studies Weimar's major leftist organizations (SPD, KPD, USPD) for their stances toward women members, functionaries, and topics of interest, and describes women's segregated organizational structures and cultures in the SPD, the KPD, and their affiliated organizations.

Using the parties' women's magazines' contents, archival sources, party conference, and yearly reports, biographical and autobiographical data in published and unpublished works, and secondary sources, I argue that women members and their interests were marginalized in

Weimar's leftist parties and lacked access to remunerated positions of power and decision-making, except for in the Arbeiterwohlfahrt. This was in part the result of legal contexts during the Kaiserreich (1871-1933), but also due to Weimar-era male SPD, KPD, and USPD male functionaries' and members' conflicted positions on women and their interests and perspectives. As a result, women members and functionaries met in segregated women's groups and events in which personal and social policy topics and welfare work predominated.

I also argue that leftist parties' women's publications were part of their gender-segregated communicative tradition with members, functionaries, and non-members. To compete better for working-class women consumers of illustrated mass media, the SPD published *Frauenwelt* and the KPD's media mogul Willi Münzenberg printed *Der Weg der Frau*. Both magazines followed the layout and contents of commercial fashion and housewives' magazines, incorporating illustrations, entertainment, sports, fashion, homemaking, and childrearing advice into their pages. With their visually more interesting, quick to 'read', and entertaining content, *Frauenwelt* and the more political *DWdF* successfully appealed to both ordinary party members and non-members, who in the case of *Frauenwelt* contributed to many of its segments, thereby making its ideals even more representative of reader's views.

Analyzing the publications' images and texts, including reader contributions, for narratives on women's employment, appearance, leisure practices, attitudes toward sexuality, and connected issues of contraception, abortion, and sterilization, as well as marriage, divorce, motherhood, childrearing, and homemaking, I argue that leftists established two different Socialist New Women with some overlapping attributes and behaviors. Contrary to the claims in other scholarship, both sets of ideals, or both Socialist New Women, were middle-classed, and both combined (to differing degrees) characteristics seen as masculine or feminine during

Weimar. Leftists presented not proletarian women factory laborers but middle-class women engaged in higher white-collar employment and political and welfare activism and hence using mental labor as Socialist New Women, or complete humans (*Vollmenschen*). The second Socialist New Woman was identified by her androgynous to feminine, healthy, youthful, and slender looks, her body-cultural leisure activities involving sports, travel, and gendered rituals of hygiene, her sexually emancipated state and companionate relationships, her control over her fertility, her pedagogical parenting, and her home's modern interior, and her rationalized homemaking patterns. All of these attributes illustrate leftists' desire to elevate proletarian women and their living circumstances to those of the middle classes. Despite some masculinizing and, therefore, emancipatory, language, more so in Communist discourses than in Social Democratic ones, leftists limited this Socialist New Woman's freedoms and insisted she remain feminine for the sake of reproducing a healthy future generation of New Humans.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

AWO: Arbeiterwohlfahrt (Workers' Welfare, the Organization)

*AWO*: *Arbeiterwohlfahrt* (*Workers' Welfare*, the Publication)

*DWdF*: *Der Weg der Frau* (*Woman's Path*, the KPD's Willi Münzenberg's Women's Magazine)

IAH: International Arbeiterhilfe (International Workers' Aid)

KPD: Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (Communist Party of Germany)

[M]SPD: [Mehrheits-] Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party of Germany)

RHD: Rote Hilfe Deutschlands (Red Aid of Germany)

USPD: Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany)

SAJ: Sozialistische Arbeiterjugend (Socialists Workers' Youth)

## Introduction

Even though commercial print media were very successful already at the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century, the Weimar era saw a further boom in the mass production and consumption of media, whose appearance and contents had changed dramatically from prewar print media. A major development was an increase in visual material that could be consumed quickly by a reading public that approved of this development.

Illustrations of apparently single, young, and attractive women of middle-class status adhering to newly gendered attributes and roles graced the regular and advertising pages of the widely successful commercial press. These women sported a less feminine look and enjoyed aspects of middle-class life previously limited to men. They worked in white-collar jobs and took part in popular leisure culture including commercial entertainment, sports, and travel. During all of their activities, they were dressed in interwar clothing styles which were understood at the time to be healthier, more functional, and androgynous to masculine than previous women's fashions. Some of these women's relationships with the opposite sex seemed much freer than traditional gender norms prescribed, while others were depicted as married middle-class women and mothers whose modernized homes, rationalized housekeeping patterns, and consumer practices were in focus. Despite the heterogeneity of these descriptions, interwar media and contemporaries spoke of a monolithic 'New Woman'.

The leftist press constituted a relatively small portion of Weimar's roaring print world even though the leaders of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*, SPD) believed that representing their organizations and ideas in print was essential to communicating with other functionaries and members of the Party and a major tool for persuading non-members of the verity of Socialism. For the same reasons, during Weimar,

other, newly created, leftist parties, the Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany (*Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*, USPD) and the Communist Party of Germany (*Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*, KPD), also published an expanding array of local, regional, and some national papers of daily, weekly, and monthly frequency.

As part of this print culture, each party also put out a women's magazine (KPD: *Die Kommunistin*, *The Female Communist*, 1919-1926; and USPD: *Die Kämpferin*, *The Female Fighter*, 1919-1922), which followed the format of the SPD's long-running *Die Gleichheit* (*Equality*, 1892-1923): a single women's magazine simultaneously targeted the organization's functionaries and members, as well as non-members, and hence provided both organizational and political information.

The New Woman from the commercial press was nowhere to be *seen* in these leftist women's papers because they relied essentially exclusively (*Die Kommunistin* only from 1919-1920) on the written word to communicate. However, although many first and some second-generation female political activists and some professional women prefigured the arrival of the interwar New Woman in the commercial press, Weimar's women functionaries shared some of her attributes: they lived middle-class lives and transgressed traditional gender norms. They were out in masculine-connoted public spaces during their white-collar party, welfare, and parliamentary engagements, including at sites where until Weimar no woman's voice had ever been heard (*Reichstag*, the lower house of the German parliament). Women physicians, psychiatrists, pedagogues, and political and welfare activists worked in male professions. Women cadres traveled for their political activities and began to incorporate leisure and body cultural practices in their training courses, all previously the realm of the middle classes and men. In their day-to-day work, they cooperated with but also fought against resistance by male

functionaries, politicians, and bureaucrats. And while contributors to the parties' women's magazines remained silent about their private lives, leftist cadres had relationships with their colleagues, including married ones.

Despite these commonalities between the popular cultural New Woman and the women traversing the contents of traditional party women's organs, these leftist political women's magazines, lacking popular cultural material such as illustrations and an advertising budget, attracted a minuscule readership in comparison to commercial women's fashion or homemaking papers. Not even most female party members subscribed to them. *Die Kommunistin's* editors attempted to remedy this by adding illustrations and some entertaining sections to it between 1922 and May 1924.

In 1924 the SPD's leaders, and seven years later the KPD's 'Media Baron' Willi Münzenberg, decided to take more radical steps: they adopted the appearance, format, and content of popular illustrated print media. The SPD printed – in addition to the purely functionaries' magazine *Die Genossin (The Woman Comrade, 1924-1933) – Frauenwelt (Women's World, 1924-1933)*; and Münzenberg published *Der Weg der Frau (Woman's Path, DWdF, 1931-1933)*. The latter two magazines contained less political content than traditional multi-tasking party women's organs and focused on topics of interest to women. They entirely omitted organizational information. To the intense displeasure of some female functionaries, these new women's publications carried fashion and entertainment segments, as well as health, exercise, homemaking, and childrearing advice. They were also laden with lithographed photos, drawings, and paintings of women (the last only in *Frauenwelt*), who looked and behaved a lot like the New Woman in commercial popular culture.

Therefore, in the process of popularizing their press, leftists adopted the middle-class New Woman from the commercial press into their pages but tweaked her attributes minimally. As a result, one can speak of the presence of two different but overlapping ideals of femininity within Weimar's leftist women's publications. Contrary to the findings in other scholarship, *neither of these two Socialist New Women was proletarian but rather middle-classed in appearance, attributes, practices, family relations, and living and working conditions*. Both also incorporated varying levels of what contemporaries believed were masculine and feminine characteristics and habits.

For leftist female functionaries, the ideal woman was professionally employed and therefore economically independent, which Socialists' theories deemed to be the main path toward women's emancipation or equality with men. She could also be a political or welfare activist working to implement a better Socialist state and society. According to leftist narratives, these engagements illustrated that such women had adopted masculine self-discipline, rationality, and learning to achieve vocations in higher white-collar employment or careers in politics and welfare. As a result of their mental, not physical, labor they developed their full capacities and talents and lived fulfilling middle-class lives.

Examples of ideal women were leftist activists and contributors to especially the traditional multi-functional and functionaries' papers (*Die Kommunistin* and *Die Genossin*). These pioneering women had overcome traditionally gendered expectations and some working-class origins to become journalists, editors, activists, and functionaries in the parties, the SPD's welfare organization Workers' Welfare (Arbeiterwohlfahrt, AWO), as well as bureaucrats in municipal to state institutions, even parliamentarians. They presented themselves as a vanguard of knowledgeable, skilled, and successful female Socialist political and welfare activists working

hard in public on behalf of working-class women, the party, and Socialism. Professional women such as physicians, psychiatrists, and pedagogues also served as role models. In the various party women's magazines, they informed readers on social policy goals, laws, and their implementation, and advised readers on health, hygiene, and progressive parenting. It was implied that readers should model these women and adopt some of their masculine, objective, and rational outlooks and practices. However, by reading the organization's publications, readers already followed the leftist gender ideal for modern women: they were interested in political, organizational, and social policy information.

The second set of Socialist feminine ideals was visible in images and texts of the leftist popular women's magazines *Frauenwelt* and *DWdF*. With few exceptions, these ideals were the same as those presented by the New Woman in commercial culture. This second Socialist New Woman was also endowed with a combination of masculine and feminine attributes and practices. Many of her masculine attributes and practices were emancipatory: she looked like the New Woman in broader popular culture and enjoyed a middle-class level of access to consumer goods and leisure and body culture, but eschewed commercial leisure. she had a right to sexual satisfaction and therefore engaged in extramarital heterosexual relationships during her search for her long-term companionate partner. If she found herself in a marital relationship that was not companionate, she was willing to make use of divorce, with some caveats. She used contraceptives (SPD) and abortion and sterilization (KPD) to control her fertility and reduce the number of her offspring. Both, sexual experiences and fewer pregnancies, resulted in a greater quality of life for her and her one or two children.

Leftist narratives, however, continued to insist on this Socialist New Woman's essential femininity and her maintenance of traditional gender roles. They still envisioned this Socialist

New Woman with an attractive but feeble female body in need of specialized care. Despite her newfound body culture activities, her main function was to reproduce and raise a healthy future generation of New Humans. She therefore had to adopt pedagogical parenting techniques and create a rationalized home and homemaking patterns that followed traditional middle-class norms. Whereas Social Democrats advocated mothers to be at home full-time for this reason, Communists expected women to combine these identities and responsibilities with those of a worker in capitalist Weimar.

### **The Labor Movement**

The labor movement's parties of the German Empire and the Weimar Republic have been widely and thoroughly studied. However, their treatment of women and women's organizational structures and culture in the parties, in particular during Weimar, have not seen a lot of attention. This appears to be partly due to the widespread dismissal of women's organizational meetings by contemporary male (and some female) political activists as entertaining hen parties (*Kaffeeklatsch*) around what they viewed as 'apolitical' 'women's issues'.

Weimar Germany's Socialist women's press has also been, for the most part, bypassed by media studies scholars and historians studying the Socialist press, except for *Die Gleichheit*.<sup>1</sup> For studies from the 1970s and early 1980s, as well as for more recent works with a feminist and women's history perspective, *Die Gleichheit* functioned as a primary source to study the Imperial-era SPD women's organization; its activist leaders such as Clara Zetkin, Luise Zietz,

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<sup>1</sup> Kurt Koszyk, *Zwischen Kaiserreich und Diktatur: Die sozialdemokratische Presse von 1914 bis 1933* vol.1 and 2 (Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 1958); Gerhard Eisfeld and Koszyk, *Die Presse der deutschen Sozialdemokratie* (Bonn: Verlag Neue Gesellschaft, 1966); and Corey Ross, *Media and the Making of Modern Germany: Mass Communications, Society, and Politics from the Empire to the Third Reich* (Oxford UP, 2008). The exceptions are Mirjam Sachse, "Von 'weiblichen Vollmensch' und Klassenkämpferinnen – Frauengeschichte und Frauenleitbilder in der proletarischen Frauenzeitschrift 'Die Gleichheit' (1891-1923)" (PhD diss., University of Kassel, 2010); and Jennifer M. Lynn, "Contested Femininities: Representations of Modern Women in the German Illustrated Press, 1920 – 1945" (PhD diss., University of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 2012).



and Käte Duncker; the political causes they advocated; as well as their access to power and decision-making within the parties.<sup>2</sup>

Scholars generally concluded that segregated Socialist women's organizations were ineffective in bringing topics of interest to women (women's rights, personal and familial matters, and a variety of social policy issues connected to these) to the forefront of Socialist politics within the overall organizations.<sup>3</sup> Male organizational functionaries and members supported neither women activists nor their political programs beyond rhetoric and redirection to class issues.<sup>4</sup> Women activists, who focused on topics of interest to women in their organizational work, did not reach leadership positions in the party; and if they did, they were

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<sup>2</sup> The following works focus on the women's movement or the women's sections of the labor movement: Marylyn J. Boxer and Jean M. Quataert, *Socialist Women: European Socialist Feminism in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries* (New York: Elsevier North-Holland, 1978); *ibid.*, "The German Social Democratic Women's Movement" (PhD diss., University of California, 1974); *ibid.*, *Reluctant Feminists in German Social Democracy, 1885-1917* (Princeton UP, 1979); Werner Thönnessen, *The Emancipation of Women: The Rise and Decline of the Women's movement in German Social Democracy 1863-1933* trans. Joris de Bres (1969; repr., London: Pluto Press, 1973); R. J. Evans, *Women and Social Democracy in Imperial Germany* (Berlin: J. H. W. Dietz, 1979); *ibid.*, *The Feminist Movement in Germany, 1894 – 1933* (London: Sage Publications, 1976); and Renate Pore, *A Conflict of Interest: Women in German Social Democracy, 1919-1933* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981). For a discussion of women's participation in unions during the imperial era, including the SPD-affiliated Free Unions, as well as the unions' positions on women's employment and political rights, see Gisela Losseff-Tillmanns, *Frauenemanzipation und Gewerkschaften* (Wuppertal: Peter Hammer, 1978).

<sup>3</sup> See Quataert, *Reluctant Feminists*, 153-160; Thönnessen, *The Emancipation of Women*, 75-106 and 125-139; and Pore, *A Conflict of Interest*, xv. Scholars have argued that a determinist notion of women's innate differences in abilities and interests were common across the political spectrum, and was also part of Socialists' views. See Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz, "Beyond Kinder, Küche, Kirche: Weimar Women in Politics and Work," in *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany*, ed. Bridenthal, Atina Grossmann, and Marion Kaplan (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984), 37 and 43. For a discussion of the bourgeois women's movement see Nancy R. Reagin, *A German Women's Movement: Class and Gender in Hannover, 1880-1933* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); and Raffael Scheck, *Mothers of the Nation: Right-Wing Women in Weimar Germany* (Oxford: Berg, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> Bridenthal and Koonz, "Beyond Kinder, Küche, Kirche," 34-38 and 42; Thönnessen called this "proletarian antifeminism," *The Emancipation of Women*, 131, and 128-131. According to Quataert and Grossmann, class repeatedly trumped gender in Socialist politics, prevented collaboration between bourgeois and Socialist feminists, and stopped Communists from maintaining successful women's campaigns such as §§ 218 and 219. Long-term revolutionary class goals were often used to limit immediate demands for gender reforms. See Quataert, *Reluctant Feminists*, 4-14 and 231-240. The only exception was during the abortion reform movement of the early 1930s, see Grossmann, "German Communism and New Women: Dilemmas and Contradictions," in *Women and Socialism, Socialism and Women: Europe Between the Two World Wars*, eds. Helmut Gruber and Pamela Graves, 135 - 168 (New York: Berghahn Books, 1998), 135.

required to kowtow to male leaderships' decisions. Only Zetkin managed to reject such impositions until the Executive curtailed her power and withdrew her editorial position at the *Gleichheit*. This dissertation's findings agree with these positions, arguing that the SPD and the other leftist parties effectively implemented a type of separate spheres ideology of the middle class into their day-to-day practices and overall party organization.

Histories of the Weimar-era Socialist women's movements have also argued that leftist women delegates to state and national parliaments self-segregated in committees to do with social policies and did not tend to speak in the plenum on 'general' or 'greater' politics (national government-parliamentary and international politics). Socialist women politicians usually did not collaborate across party lines or with the bourgeois women's movement, and thus most of their attempts for legal and institutional changes failed in parliaments.<sup>5</sup>

### **Weimar's New Woman**

Investigations of the New Woman in Weimar's popular culture have taken two different directions. Feminist historians and scholars of social history have attempted to verify whether she existed beyond the screen or pages of mass media. Relying in part on oral histories collected in interviews with eyewitnesses, Karen Hagemann's voluminous study *Frauenalltag und Männerpolitik*, as well as Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koontz's "Beyond Kinder, Küche, Kirche" concluded that for the most part, the economically independent New Woman remained a discursive construct during Weimar, and was mainly created by "male fears or an exaggerated notion of progress."<sup>6</sup> While a slight upper crust of working-class women was able to move into

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<sup>5</sup> See Cornelia Usborne, *The Politics of the Body: Women's Reproductive Rights and Duties* (1994; transl. Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1995). Usborne focuses however on the achievements of the Socialist women activists.

<sup>6</sup> Karen Hagemann, *Frauenalltag und Männerpolitik: Alltagsleben und gesellschaftliches Handeln von Arbeiterfrauen in der Weimarer Republik* (Bonn: Dietz, 1990), 12. Hagemann's large study limited itself to the city state of Hamburg and to the Social Democratic milieu but also used national social surveys and statistics. Bridenthal

white-collar positions and a larger group of women worked in the rationalized consumer products industries, most women workers were still engaged in traditional employment sectors: agriculture, family businesses, and in the domestic putting-out (piece work) industry.<sup>7</sup> Since many white-collar women workers were stuck in low-wage, dead-end jobs, they often had to live at home with their parents until they married. Consequently, most women of lower socioeconomic classes could not consume at anywhere near the levels of the New Woman described in popular discourse, and working-class women's lives had little in common with the leisure-oriented New Woman.<sup>8</sup>

Atina Grossmann's work has however demonstrated that young, politically organized women textile workers and female white-collar workers participated in some of the consumer, body, and leisure culture of the New Woman.<sup>9</sup> Living at home with parents, or being married without children, allowed these women to attend movies, purchase newly fashionable consumer products such as tobacco, body care items, and ready-made clothing, and make use of available healthcare, go hiking, and engage in sports.<sup>10</sup> And even though working-class women could not afford modern appliances, they incorporated the principles of time and motion studies from their

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and Koontz' "Beyond Kinder, Küche, Kirche," 148-166; and Bridenthal, Grossmann, and Kaplan, *When Biology Became Destiny*, 10-11.

<sup>7</sup> Ute Frevert, *Women in German History, From Bourgeois Emancipation to Sexual Liberation* (Oxford: Berg, 1997), 168-204. Socialist and welfare activists made up part of this upper crust of some originally working-class but by Weimar middle-class women, who achieved success through work in the party, even if many of them had to do unpaid activism, and support themselves with secretarial work for the party. See Brigitte Suder and Regan Kramer, "Communism and Feminism," *Clio, Women, Gender, History* 41 "Real Socialism" and the Challenge of Gender trans. Regan Kramer (2015): 126-139, here 136.

<sup>8</sup> Hagemann, *Frauenalltag*, 44-50.

<sup>9</sup> Grossmann, "Girllkultur or Thoroughly Rationalized Female: A New Woman in Weimar Germany," in *Women in Culture and Politics: A Century of Change*, ed. Judith Friedlander, Blanche Wiesen Cook, Alice Kessler-Harris, and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986), 69-70.

<sup>10</sup> Katie Sutton, *The Masculine Woman in Weimar Germany* (New York: Berghahn, 2011), 68; and Grossmann, "Girllkultur," 69.

rationalized workplaces into their daily domestic routines: they planned and organized the most efficient timing and sequences for their domestic chores.<sup>11</sup>

Despite theoretically equal constitutional rights afforded to both women and men, women's lives continued to be regulated by discriminatory Wilhelmine-era laws and traditional gender norms. These resulted in a sexual division of labor, with women solely responsible for domestic and reproductive work in the home even if they also worked outside the home.<sup>12</sup> Thus, on top of dead-end jobs, these gendered double burdens caused many women to want a return to 'traditional' roles within marriage as mere wives, mothers, and homemakers, without the added responsibilities of outside employment.<sup>13</sup> The New Woman was therefore largely a symbiotic creation of the consumerist desires of the interwar population and a commercial press providing inexpensive popular culture within anyone's reach.

Grossmann, Weitz, and Osborne have argued conversely that in the area of sexuality and reproduction, working-class women's lives did improve and, in that way, paralleled discourses on the sexually emancipated New Woman.<sup>14</sup> As more working-class women came to view sex as a natural-biological need not merely linked to reproduction, they

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<sup>11</sup> Grossmann, "Girllkultur, 72-75.

<sup>12</sup> Hagemann, *Frauenalltag*, 12; Grossmann, "German Communism and New Women," 14; Frevert, *Women in German History*, 179 and 183-204; Helen Boak, *Women in the Weimar Republic* (Manchester UP, 2013), 200-253.

<sup>13</sup> Bridenthal and Koontz, "Beyond Kinder, Küche, Kirche," 5. On white-collar women workers' common practice of working (in often low-paid, dead-end-jobs, and monotonous tasks) only until marriage see Frevert, "Kunstseidener Glanz: Weibliche Angestellte," in *Neue Frauen: Die Zwanziger Jahre: Bilderlesebuch*, ed. Kristine von Soden and Maruta Schmidt (West Berlin: Elefant Press, 1988), 27-31. Women's salaries were reduced partly to fit Weimar's gendered assumptions that women needed less money to make ends meet since they could take care of their domestic chores while men presumably could not.

<sup>14</sup> Osborne, *The Politics of the Body*, 88-95 and 102-145; Grossmann, "'Satisfaction in Domestic Happiness':" Mass Working-Class Sex Reform Organizations in the Weimar Republic," in *Towards the Holocaust: the Social and Economic Collapse of the Weimar Republic* ed. Michael Dobkowski and Isidor Wallimann, 265-293, (Westport, Conn: Greenwood, 1983); and Grossmann, *Reforming Sex: The German Movement for Birth Control and Abortion Reform, 1920-1950* (Oxford UP, 1995).

adopted more permissive sexual outlooks while “rationalizing” their sexuality (i.e., preventing or ending pregnancies through contraception or abortions). Belinda Davis has illustrated that the large family became tarnished during the war by food scarcity and government subsidies limited to the families of soldiers.<sup>15</sup> By early Weimar, the one to two-child nuclear family became common even among the working classes, allowing women more respite between pregnancies and time for outside employment.<sup>16</sup>

The second strand of scholarship on the New Woman investigated her cultural representations, and how exactly she was defined within popular mass culture. These works were produced more by literary scholars than cultural historians. Among these, the essays in Katharina von Ankum’s *Women in the Metropolis* analyzed Weimar literature, art, and cinema for the New Woman’s *Gestalt*.<sup>20</sup> Contributing scholar Lynne Frame has argued that Weimar’s scientific and popular discourses influenced each other. Both claimed that women were entirely defined by their biology and that nature had created less than a handful of different types of women. To which type any particular woman belonged could be ascertained by her physical appearance, posture, and movements, which also gave direct insights into her intellect, character, biological-evolutionary development, and suitability for marriage and motherhood.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Davis, *Home Fires Burning: Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Osborne, *Politics of the Body*, 102-145; Helen Boak, *Women in the Weimar Republic* (Manchester UP, 2013), 200-253; and Frevert, *Women in German History*, 185-193.

<sup>16</sup> On the one to two-child family being widespread including among the working classes see Grossmann, *Reforming Sex*, 3; Osborne, *The Politics of the Body*, 102-145; and Erik N. Jensen, *Body By Weimar: Athletes, Gender, and German Modernity* (Oxford UP, 2010), 120.

<sup>20</sup> Katharina von Ankum ed., *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

<sup>21</sup> Lynne Frame, “‘Gretchen, Girl, Garçonne?’ Weimar Science and Popular Culture in search of the Ideal New Woman,” in von Ankum ed., *Women in the Metropolis*, 12-40.

While Frame, as well as Jennifer Lynn, have argued that definitions of the New Woman were not monolithic but rather heterogeneous and “contested,” many Weimar typologies characterized an Americanized flapper “Girl” and an androgynous “Garçonne” as “intersexual” types with too many “masculine” attributes.<sup>22</sup> According to such typologies, the ideal German woman was instead a very feminine and maternal “Gretchen” *Vollweib* (complete/perfect woman) or a professionally successful New Woman who eventually married and became a mother.<sup>23</sup> Others promoted the “Girl” as the ideal German woman.

Some literary scholars have argued that despite the New Woman’s iconic presence in public spaces, Weimar movies and print media (particularly novels) curtailed women’s freedom of movement within and their enjoyment of still masculine-connoted urban spaces. Women were not described as subjects with rights to active viewing but as objects to be viewed. Texts in movies and novels continued to portray women who traversed urban spaces beyond brief functional passages to and from work as running the risk of being ascribed identities of ‘working’ women (prostitutes). This stood in stark contrast to the “unbounded, unrestricted” ownership of public spaces and the “pursuit of perception” allowed to male flaneurs of the modern interwar city.<sup>24</sup> These studies imply that contemporary discursive definitions of the New

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<sup>22</sup> Frame, “‘Gretchen, Girl, Garçonne?’,” 20-22.

<sup>23</sup> Frame, “‘Gretchen, Girl, Garçonne?’,” 31-33; Jennifer M. Lynn, “Contested Femininities: Representations of Modern Women in the German Illustrated Press, 1920-1945” (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2012); the female types referred to by Lynn are from Manfred Georg, “Drei Frauen stehen heute vor uns. Die drei Typen: Gretchen, Girl, Garçonne,” *8-Uhr-Abendblatt* (4 June 1927): unpaginated; see also von Ankum, “Motherhood and the ‘New Woman’: Vicki Baum’s *stud. chem. Helene Wilfüer* and Irmgard Keun’s *Gilgi - eine von uns*,” *Women in German Yearbook Vol. 11* (1995): 171-188; Barbara Hales, “Projecting Trauma: The Femme Fatale in Weimar and Hollywood Film Noir,” *Women in German Yearbook*, Vol. 23 (2007): 224-243; and Jochen Hung, “The Modernized Gretchen: Transformations of the ‘New Woman’ in the late Weimar Republic,” *German History* 33, no. 1 (2015): 52-79.

<sup>24</sup> See Anke Gleber, “Female Flanerie and the Symphony of the City,” in von Ankum, *Women in the Metropolis*, 67-88; and von Ankum, “Gendered Urban Spaces in Irmgard Keun’s *Das kunstseidene Mädchen*,” in von Ankum ed., *Women in the Metropolis*, 162-184.

Woman were both affected by and impacted the sociocultural expectations about women, and therefore likely also described the lived experiences of interwar women in the sense that cultural narratives mirrored and prescribed social practices.

Cultural historians have illustrated that German and broader European societies attempted to regenerate their nations after WWI by avoiding any discussion about the loss of or damage to masculinity resulting from war casualties and returned maimed soldiers by focusing on the other sex.<sup>26</sup> The New Woman's stereotyped body was portrayed in precisely opposite terms to that of the wounded and dead soldiers: as youthful and healthy, with a beautiful body steeled to withstand modernity's impact. Even though she was usually depicted as non-pregnant, she was commonly endowed with the biological potential to produce a healthier nation, and hence redeem the German *Volk*.<sup>27</sup>

Critics of the New Woman were, however, concerned about her non-maternal attributes. Instead of potentially saving the German nation, they asserted her refusal to accept her gendered responsibilities threatened the traditional gender order and the nation's future. Katie Sutton has shown that cartoons satirizing successful middle-class professional athletic women suggested the athletes defied their essential-biological female attributes, such as being weaker than men in muscular strength and speed.<sup>28</sup> According to Sutton, many such caricatures denied New Women

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<sup>26</sup> Corey Ross, *Media and the Making of Modern Germany* (Oxford UP, 2008); Peter Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin, 1900* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1996); Kerstin Barndt, "Mothers, Citizens, and Consumers: Female Readers in Weimar Germany," in *Weimar Publics/Weimar Subjects: Rethinking the Political Culture of Germany in the 1920s* ed. Kathleen Canning, Kerstin Barndt, and Kristin McGuire, 95-115 (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010); Burcu Dođramaci, "Mode-Körper. Zur Inszenierung von Weiblichkeit in Modegrafik und -fotografie der Weimarer Republik," in *Leibhaftige Moderne: Körper in Kunst und Massenmedien 1918 bis 1933*, ed. Michael Cowan, Kai Marcel Sicks, 119-135 (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2005); and Kerstin Wilhelms, "Frauenzeitschriften in der Weimarer Republik," in *Neue Frauen. Die Zwanziger Jahre. BilderLeseBuch*, ed. Kristine von Soden und Maruta Schmidt, 65-72 (Berlin: Elefant Press, 1988).

<sup>27</sup> Adam Stanley, *Modernizing Tradition: Gender and Consumerism in Interwar France and Germany* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 2008).

<sup>28</sup> Sutton, *The Masculine Woman*, 72-73.

athletes their womanhood since their athletic performances allegedly deformed their bodies such that they were no longer recognizable as female at first glance. Public discourses also reminded audiences of the New Woman's supposedly feminine essence (a codeword for women's heterosexuality in Sutton's view) by insisting that her cross-dressing and gender-transgressive performances remain limited to the daytime. At night she should return to more traditionally feminine appearances and behaviors: by selecting feminine and erotic dresses to wear and behaving coyly and passively.

Stanley also noted re-feminizing discourses, and has argued that advertising in mass media contained and reduced the gender-bending attributes of the real-life New Woman's public success, individual creativity, and economic independence.<sup>29</sup> Commercial advertising framed her activities as potentially damaging to her body and its reproductive functions by suggesting that women's bodies and minds were naturally weaker, more prone to chronic diseases, and required the care and protection of male spouses and scientists in all areas of her life. Interwar German advertising also consistently exhibited the New Woman not at waged or salaried work but at home. It, therefore, characterized the New Woman with very traditionally feminine responsibilities of reproductive and domestic work, but whose rationalized performance redefined her as a modern homemaker.<sup>30</sup>

According to Gerard Sherayko, in those instances when Weimar advertising depicted New Women in white-collar employment, it established them as subordinate to males, both in terms of work hierarchies as well as the composition of the images, wherein typically the male

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<sup>29</sup> Stanley has studied "cultural constructions of gender" in interwar advertising and promotional materials targeting women consumers in France and Germany. *Modernizing Traditions*, 10.

<sup>30</sup> Stanley, *Modernizing Traditions*, 8-11 & 25-55; and Gerard F. Sherayko, "Selling the Modern: The New Consumerism in Weimar Germany" (PhD diss., Bloomington: Indiana University, 1996).



“boss stands directly over her while the woman dutifully... and happily takes his dictation.”<sup>31</sup>

Such ads depicted and reinforced “traditional gender relationships.”<sup>32</sup>

### **The Socialist New Woman**

Various scholarly contributions have analyzed how Social Democrats and Communists defined their Socialist New Woman, but their results vary considerably depending on the sources investigated and their target audiences. In her study of Weimar election material targeting women Julia Sneeringer has argued that Communists defined the female voting audience, hence the ideal femininity, primarily as a worker.<sup>35</sup> Mirjam Sachse, who investigated Communist women’s publications claimed that the ideal femininity therein was engaged in revolutionary politics.<sup>36</sup>

Weitz’s study of the Communist press aimed at general audiences has asserted that the ideal Communist femininity was presented as a proletarian, sexually more modest, less consumption, and more politically-oriented version of the fashionable New Woman seen in popular culture.<sup>37</sup> Otherwise, she was very much like her more bourgeois counterpart: employed,

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<sup>31</sup> Sherayko, “Selling the Modern,” 233-234, here 234.

<sup>32</sup> Sherayko, “Selling the Modern,” 233 and 235.

<sup>35</sup> Sneeringer, *Winning Women’s Votes: Propaganda and Politics in Weimar Germany* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

<sup>36</sup> Sachse studied the Social Democratic women’s magazine *Gleichheit* as well as *Die Kommunistin* and *Die Kommunistische Fraueninternationale* in “Entwicklung und Wandel linker Frauenbilder im Spiegel sozialdemokratischer und kommunistischer Frauenzeitschriften,” in *Zwischenkriegszeit: Frauenleben 1918-1939*, ed. Susanne Elpers and Anne-Rose Meyer (Berlin: Edition Ebersbach, 2004), 195-196.

<sup>37</sup> Weitz investigated the *Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung (AIZ)*. Grossmann included a greater number of Communist publications, such as the *AIZ*, *Der Weg Der Frau*, and *Die Kämpferin*, in her discussion of KPD representations of women.

economically independent, single, non-pregnant, and with an athletic and erotic body.<sup>38</sup> My dissertation agrees with most of Weitz's findings except for her *proletarian* characterization.

In a similar vein, investigating popular Social Democratic and Communist women's magazines, Elizabeth Kautz has argued that these publications defined the Socialist (both the Social Democratic and Communist) New Woman as one who participated in the same body culture as the non-Socialist New Woman and prioritized hygiene and physical exercise as her only way to achieve socioeconomic success.<sup>39</sup> In the context of women's economic and legal inequalities, which stood in stark contrast to the promises of equality made by the Weimar constitution, this focus on women's bodies in the leftist women's magazines represented, according to Kautz, a redirection of women away from politics, offering them only "a very narrow field of agency and expression."<sup>40</sup>

This dissertation confirms the heightened attention to women's body culture in the popular leftist women's press while acknowledging that this content was sought after by readers, who added to such content with their requests for information on body culture. Kautz' argument may be too reductive since Kautz does not consider that the publications also illustrated another pathway for women's socioeconomic emancipation: professional women and functionaries

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<sup>38</sup> Weitz, "The Heroic Man and the Ever-Changing Woman: Gender and Politics in European Communism, 1917-1950," in *Gender and Class in Modern Europe*, ed. Laura L. Frader and Sonya Rose (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1996), 311-352. According to Franzen-Hellersberg, "With their forceful, boyish heads, their athletic bodies and sober dresses, these [Socialist] girls have an appearance which is not playful, feminine, *raffiné*, but rather serious, knowledgeable, worldly-wise, and in every move Amazonian," in *Die jugendliche Arbeiterin: Ihre Arbeitsweise und Lebensform*, quoted in Günter Berghaus, "Girllkultur: Feminism, Americanism, and Popular Entertainment in Weimar Germany," *Journal of Design History* vol. 1, no. 3/4 (1988): 193-219, here 211. Berghaus's study of *Girllkultur* relies too much on Weimar-era social critics and their views on consumerist popular culture and its role for and effect on Weimar girls and women. He therefore describes white collar worker New Women as victims of the mass culture industry as well as of Weimar economic conditions.

<sup>39</sup> Kautz, "The Fruits of Her Labor: Working Women and Popular Culture in the Weimar Republic" (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 1997).

<sup>40</sup> Kautz, "The Fruits of Her Labor," 12.

contributed articles to these publications in which they presented themselves as authorities on a variety of topics and as Socialist New Women. Readers were presented with successful models to emulate. *Frauenwelt* also offered the occasional article on white-collar professions newly open to women; and throughout *Frauenwelt*'s printing, readers requested and provided information on educational tracks for careers for daughters and advertised their job searches and offerings. *DWdF* also presented professional women in the Soviet Union as Socialist New Women. And finally, before national elections, *Frauenwelt* called on readers to vote.

Kautz, Grossmann, Lynn, and Sachse have also illustrated that Weimar-era leftists' ideals of femininity continued to incorporate motherhood.<sup>41</sup> Grossmann has concluded that the Communist Party had a very ambivalent relationship with the New Woman. The party advocated for the greatest rights for women compared to other Weimar parties. It was committed "to creating 'new' women" as part of its greater agenda to promote the generation of new human beings with "new relations between female and male comrades." Nevertheless, the organization ultimately "profoundly mistrusted the Weimar 'New Woman', her association with Americanism, and the 'distraction' of mass consumer society."<sup>42</sup>

Yet the KPD's publisher, Münzenberg, embraced practices and strategies used by popular media. He put out the successful illustrated *Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung* (*Workers'-Illustrated-Newspaper*, *AIZ*, 1924-1933) and *Die Welt am Abend* (*The World in the Evening*, 1922-1933),

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<sup>41</sup> Grossmann, "The New Woman, the New Family and the Rationalization of Sexuality: The Sex Reform Movement in Germany 1928 to 1933" (PhD diss., Rutgers University, 1984), 1; *ibid.*, "Girlikultur," 62-80; *ibid.*, "German Communism and New Women," 146; Lynn analyzed the *Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung*, the Communist women's magazine *Der Weg Der Frau*, the SPD women's magazine *Frauenwelt*, and middle-class and National Socialist illustrated magazines in "Contested Femininities,". According to Hung, there was a shift in the early 1930s away from the 1920s' favored 'Garçonne' and 'Girl' type of the New Woman and toward a more conservative 'Gretchen' type, who added maternal attributes to her otherwise modern ones. Hung, "The Modernized Gretchen," 52-79.

<sup>42</sup> Grossmann, "German Communism," 135.

both targeting general audiences, as well as *DWdF*.<sup>43</sup> Laden with illustrations, *DWdF*, just like the SPD's *Frauenwelt*, was a women's magazine that followed the look, layouts, and contents of the popular commercial women's press, and thereby each also incorporated New Women within their pages. The main distinction was that *Frauenwelt* and *DWdF*, much more the latter than the former, also contained leftist messages and perspectives in addition to fashion, homemaking, child care, exercise, and health advice, as well as entertainment sections.<sup>44</sup> These publications and *Die Kommunistin* (*The Female Communist*, 1919-1926) from 1922 onward (as it began to display more material for immediate visual consumption) evidenced Socialists' desire to tap into popular culture. While Lynn and Kautz have included an analysis of *Frauenwelt* and *DWdF* for leftists' ideals of femininity, these publications, as well as the Socialist functionaries' and member magazines, merit further investigation.<sup>45</sup>

As necessary background information on the parties of the Weimar-era labor movement and their women members and functionaries, this dissertation provides an initial overview of women's organizational structures and culture in the SPD, the KPD, and to a much lesser extent in the USPD (mostly limited to a discussion of a few USPD women's structures) with the aid of archival data, traditional women's and functionaries' magazines, conference reports, autobiographies, and secondary sources. Here I argue that male members and functionaries of the leftist parties marginalized women members and cadres as well as their perspectives and agendas

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<sup>43</sup> According to Lynn, the non-Socialist press adopted the AIZ's innovative narrative photo essays, series of photos that narrated a progression of events. "Contested Femininities," 56.

<sup>44</sup> The popularization of the Socialist women's press was controversial. See Kerstin Wilhelms, "Frauenzeitschriften in der Weimarer Republik," in *Neue Frauen: Die zwanziger Jahre. Bilderlesebuch*, eds., von Soden and Schmidt, 65-70 (Berlin: Elefant Press, 1988).

<sup>45</sup> Kautz analyzed women's representations in a variety of bourgeois Weimar-era periodicals, but also the Social Democratic *Frauenwelt* and within literature written by women and involving female lead characters. She also discussed reader/consumer agency, not differentiated by class/income levels, toward negotiating a definition of a variety of female identities through the use of interactive fora within the press. *The Fruits of Her Labor*.

due to men's conflicted position toward women and their perspectives but also as a result of historic circumstances and patterns. Consequently, women often met separately and focused on topics of interest to them, in which the personal and familial, welfare, and entertainment as a strategy to attract more women played a large role.

In effect, the parties implemented the middle-class ideology of the separate spheres into their day-to-day activities and even organizational structures, whereby men dealt with 'public' issues of national, international, and class politics, were remunerated for their work, and advanced in party positions. Women on the other hand, focused on 'private' matters of the personal and familial, denigrated by men as apolitical issues, who expected most women to work for free in the party, similar to unremunerated housework. Male members and functionaries also zealously guarded opportunities for advancement away from the great majority of women members and cadres, claiming that women were not qualified for paid functionary posts and municipal and parliamentary positions.

Moving on from the party practices, I investigate several leftist women's publications: the traditional multi-tasking party women's organ *Die Kommunistin*; the more specialized functionaries' paper *Die Genossin*, both edited and contributed to by the parties' women cadres; and the two popular publications *Frauenwelt* and *DWdF* published by the labor movement parties and their affiliated organizations. I argue that by the middle of the 1920s, it was clear that the traditional format of the party women's organ as represented by *Die Kommunistin* was unable to meet its desired goals (especially given the lack of an advertising budget) of winning non-members and party members – in addition to functionaries – as readers. The SPD understood a job division was necessary even within women's propaganda and communications. *Frauenwelt* and *DWdF* represented the parties' successful attempts to win more readers to the party

periodicals by participating in the popular print culture of Weimar. Herein, the innovatively illustrated *DWdF* managed to maintain a higher level of political information and commentary despite its adoption of fashion, entertainment, body culture, and homemaking to its content. On the other hand, *Frauenwelt* incorporated and hence represented at a much greater rate the views of readers.

An analysis of Weimar-era leftists' gendered ideals described within these four women's publications is a central aspect of this dissertation, with *Die Kommunistin*'s first printing on 1 May 1919 and the final March 1933 edition of *Frauenwelt* delimiting the scope of my investigation. These four publications discussed women's employment, and party and AWO cadres' organizational and wider political and welfare engagement, but the popular women's magazines were especially about fashion, entertainment, leisure and body culture, sexuality, marriage, divorce, contraception, abortion, reproduction, motherhood, homemaking, and childrearing. Studying these discourses in the women's magazines, I give an account of what kinds of attributes or practices defined ideal women according to leftists. The *AWO*, the organ of the SPD Workers' Welfare organization, offered several articles on homemaking and child-rearing. In my analysis, I include findings from such articles as well as speeches and discussion contributions by functionaries at SPD and KPD women's conferences, in addition to biographical and autobiographical information.

Both Social Democrats and Communists envisioned an ideal *Socialist* society of the future. Therefore, with the term 'Socialist', I refer to the ideals of both parties, although I identify the functionaries, contributors, and readers of the magazines as Social Democratic or Communist, or refer to both as leftists. Whenever Social Democratic definitions of the ideal femininity diverged from Communist ones, I illustrate such differences and also note any

divergences between the Socialist New Woman and the non-Socialist one from popular commercial culture. The New Woman in commercial culture was frequently identified as a ‘bourgeois New Woman’ by Communists. My examination covers both types of ‘texts’: images and words. Even though *Die Genossin*, *Die Kommunistin*, and the *AWO* were not popularly styled and eschewed illustrations (except for *Die Kommunistin* from 1922 to 1926), a Socialist New Woman nevertheless populated these magazines.

This work views gender as socially constructed and entailing power relations between the sexes as theorized by Joan W. Scott; and I assume the same for identities of class, race, and nation.<sup>46</sup> Here I follow Kathleen Wilson’s understanding that all such identities are ‘performed’ in “historical processes,” unfolding in day-to-day activities visible or legible to others.<sup>47</sup> Scholars have noted essentializing tendencies in Weimar’s scientific and popular narratives, meaning they often located gender in biology. Interwar discourses did so even though many attributes of the New Woman relied on malleable behaviors (her adoption of a specific hairstyle and fashion wear, her sports and leisure practices, and her decisions and practices surrounding sexuality, family, and employment).<sup>48</sup> I inquire about whether leftist editors, contributors, and readers of women’s magazines also envisioned gender as a mere product of biology or at least in part as “performative.” I then investigate how they explained this mutability of gender and examine which allegedly gender-bending practices and appearances of the New Woman in popular culture they considered appropriate for their Socialist New Woman, and which they identified as unacceptable gender transgressions.

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<sup>46</sup> Scott, “Gender, A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (1986): 1053-1075.

<sup>47</sup> Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2003), 3.

<sup>48</sup> Wilson, *The Island Race*, 3.

This dissertation also deals with issues of class. Leftists frequently decried that working-class women and men could not benefit from modern civilization and the – albeit still limited – successes of a modern German consumer society. The New Woman in commercial popular culture thoroughly enjoyed ready-made clothing, imported and processed foods, and other consumer items, as well as various urban entertainments, health care, exercise, and travel with modern modes of transportation. If a working-class Socialist New Woman were to have equal access to these consumer and leisure practices (presumably both necessities and luxuries), did she retain her proletarian attributes and identity, according to leftists? Did Social Democrats and Communists, therefore, redefine what it meant to be proletarian?

Other essential characteristics of the New Woman in broader popular culture were her clean, fashionable clothes, white-collar employment, and rationalization of domestic chores using modern, often electric, household appliances. Domestic chores appeared easily done and non-strenuous in the hands of the New Woman, and except during exercise itself – and one might argue that very often even then – she was usually not depicted as working hard physically. If leftists defined the Socialist New Woman as a proletarian, such as argued by Weitz, and if this Socialist New Woman engaged in manual labor involving pollutants and hard physical labor, how did Socialists explain the divergence of their proletarian Socialist New Woman from the non-Socialist? If activists did not define their ideals of femininity in connection with manual labor, then how did especially Communists explain positing a white-collar middle-class Socialist New Woman as their ideal femininity even as they usually denigrated and attacked petit-bourgeois and non-professional middle-class women? If, on the other hand, they imagined their ideal Socialist woman to be a homemaker, how did leftists align this ideal with Zetkin's theory on women's emancipation through employment and economic independence?



I consider both types of magazines in this study as collaborative projects, as they encouraged to varying degrees reader participation. Readers' submissions – whether articles, letters, jokes, questions, and answers on numerous topics for the advice sections, or their contributions to prize competitions – were usually partially identified. *Frauenwelt* and *Die Genossin* increasingly moved to naming contributing authors in bylines, many of them women, an unusual situation in an otherwise starkly male publishing world of the SPD and KPD.<sup>49</sup> *DWdF* followed this practice with some articles while it and *Die Kommunistin* left many other contributors unnamed.

Contributions with the names of authors should not be seen as freestanding texts to be analyzed independently. Female editors, contributors, and readers represented themselves and their activities as they created, contributed to, and read the women's publications, attended *Frauenwelt* and *DWdF* entertainment evenings, and likely discussed the papers and their contents with others. I, therefore, ask how contributors presented themselves and whether they enacted being Socialist New Women and role models. I also ask if readers' ideals of Socialist femininity differed from those offered by editors and party functionaries or whether they overlapped.

Leading women functionaries, pioneers in working-class women's rights, wholeheartedly supported the production – exemplified by their regular contribution of articles – of traditional political-organizational publications for women functionaries, members, and non-

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<sup>49</sup> Speaking at women's conferences SPD women functionaries insisted that *Frauenwelt* needed to be edited by a woman. Richard Lohmann edited *Frauenwelt* from its inception in March 1924 until February 1928. At the Kiel 1927 SPD Women's Conference, women functionaries argued that Lohmann hid his sex from his readers behind his initials. At this conference as also during previous women's conferences, the women functionaries criticized *Frauenwelt* for its popular styled content and lack of political content, as they saw it.

members. In the process, they imprinted their ideals of emancipated femininity into these women's papers.

The popular women's publications were however the product of some female and male functionaries' hope to attract more readers by meeting their consumerist expectations of mass media. The popularization of the leftist women's press through illustrations, fashion pages, homemaking advice, entertainment, body culture, and child-rearing advice automatically engendered less lofty political and intellectual ideals for women as well as a greater emphasis on women's appearance, leisure activities, and practices in the family and the home. Nevertheless, didactic and political intentions were behind leftists' creation of even the popular publications, and women cadres also contributed to these magazines and the ideals of femininity within them. Because ordinary women readers participated in the making of these ideals with both the purchase of the papers as well as their contributions to them, the ideals of femininity were perhaps closer to the experienced and desired realities for many contemporary women.

I argue that the investigated Socialist women's magazines described not just one but two seemingly different Socialist New Women who had both commonalities with and divergences from each other as well as with the non-Socialist New Woman in popular culture. Contrary to what other scholars have claimed, neither of the Socialist ideals of femininity was proletarian. Both were instead middle-classed in their attributes and practices involving their employment and socioeconomic status, and social, cultural, and political practices and outlooks.

Many leftist women functionaries were either middle-class or even if they had working-class backgrounds, by the time they contributed to the publications had achieved middle-class status. Moreover, they took part in interwar German and European culture and wished to improve working-class women and families and their living standards with the aim to create

healthier, happier, and more productive New Humans in a progressive society of the near future. It should not be surprising that they took middle-class norms as ideals for their Socialist New Woman.

Working-class readers were used to and enjoyed commercial media, whose New Woman luxuriated in middle-class levels of access to consumer goods, leisure time, and body-cultural activities. As scholars have argued, this was in part because the postwar populations yearned for the material comforts presented in popular media. Therefore, the presence of a middle-class ideal Socialist New Woman in popular leftist women's magazines is also understandable.

One of these two ideal Socialist femininities was a Socialist professional or activist involved in the SPD or its welfare organization AWO, and therefore a middle-class woman. She was a woman who engaged in mental labor and higher-level white-collar work on behalf of working-class women, the poor, and others. Like popular cultural narratives surrounding the New Woman, leftists' language commonly linked appearances and performances with identity. In the case of the most highly idealized Socialist New Woman, her profession and her political or welfare activism, and her public presence in pursuit of these and hence only her performances (and not her specific physical and fashionable appearance) defined her as emancipated, progressive, and modern Socialist New Woman.

Their performances provided information about their gendered internal mental attributes leftist narratives suggested. Professionals and political and welfare activists contributing to both types of publications described themselves as a vanguard of Socialist women. They had overcome traditionally gendered middle-class expectations and working-class origins to become journalists, editors, activists, and functionaries in the parties and/or the AWO, as well as bureaucrats in municipal to state institutions and even parliaments. They were either

socioeconomically independent through their profession or if their work was unremunerated, they lead fulfilling lives outside the home replete with meaningful engagement toward establishing a progressive Socialist society. This engagement demanded the extensive development of all their talents and rational capacities toward becoming a *Vollmensch* (complete or perfected human), a human being with a good balance of both feminine emotionality and caring and masculine rationality, self-discipline, political outlooks, and interests.

However, leftists did not see all types of women's employment as representing women's masculinization, rationality, or emancipation. Zetkin defined outside employment as a necessary step toward women's liberation from economic dependency on spouses leading to equality and emancipation within the family. Nonetheless, Social Democratic, and especially Communist narratives described Weimar's female manual laborers, including factory laborers, as backward, non-emancipated, ignorant, apolitical, exploited, and anachronistically and excessively feminine beings. This was attributed to female physiology and social construction. Women manual laborers allowed themselves to be manipulated by priests, religious and housewives' organizations, and middle-class employers. As a result, they adopted or maintained the excessively feminine gendered norms, practices, and limitations for their lives which these social circles and organizations advocated as appropriate gendered performances. Social Democrats and Communists claimed that entrenched domestic perspectives also prevented employed women from pursuing their own, presumably classed, interests. In a similar manner, they portrayed lower-level white-collar workers, such as store clerks and office workers, with excessive femininity since they allowed themselves to be sexual victimized by employers and commercial exploited by producers of mass goods and leisure industries.

Class intersecting with gender played further roles in Social Democratic and Communist narratives rejecting manual labor as ideal for proletarian women. At the same time as their discourses described female manual laborers, including factory laborers, as being excessively feminine, they also claimed these women were not treated enough like women. The definition of New Womanhood had come to be linked with middle-class attributes as well as notions of racial belonging to advanced European and North American civilizations (“*Kulturgesellschaften*”). Both disassociated the New Woman from heavy physical labor and pollutants and linked her instead to a variety of comforts. Leftists described female manual laborers in exactly opposite classed and gendered terms to the New Woman: working-class women commonly endured heavy physical labor appropriate only for men and machines; they worked in dangerous environments lacking sufficient access to hygienic and health provisions, as well as leisure time and necessary consumer goods. Therefore, in women’s magazines, activists and professionals argued that women’s manual labor, both in its conditions and wages, denied manually working women the ability to follow the new ideals of femininity in popular culture, which leftists had clearly adopted. Social Democrats and Communists hoped that working-class women would stop being manual laborers through a whole host of state and employer interventions and education. Women should instead acquire white-collar professions and well-paid careers, in addition to becoming active in politics and welfare.

Particularly in the popular women’s papers, leftists argued that such elevation in class should also benefit working-class women’s bodies, material goods, social relations, homes, home lives, and overall lifestyles as represented by the second Socialist New Woman. Working-class women should ideally consume nearly at the same levels as the middle-class New Woman from commercial culture, and hence be virtually indistinguishable from her. They should visit

hairstylists to have their hair cut into a short bob, wear clothing in Weimar's fashion styles, and have middle-class conveniences in their homes.

Like the description of the most ideal Socialist New Woman, this second Socialist New Woman combined classed and gendered attributes and practices that were masculine and feminine. Nevertheless, in this second set of ideals defined more by women's looks, leisure activities, and social practices and relations, there was a greater emphasis on the maintenance of women's femininity. Leftists thereby adopted wider cultural concerns for women's return to traditional gender roles.

A re-feminization was the effect of language on modern home designs and 'rationalized' homemaking patterns even as the rhetoric also endowed rationalized homemakers with masculine attributes. Social Democrats and to a slightly lesser degree Communists called on proletarian women to adopt modern appliances, furnishings and interior designs as well as the rationalized homemaking techniques advocated in popular media. Embracing these would illustrate women's embodiment of masculine rationality, improving the efficiency of their domestic labors, and generating spare time for women. Nevertheless, this language discursively reorganized the proletarian home and gender relations along middle-class lines: wives became solely responsible for cooking and cleaning in Frankfurt-style kitchens, while separate living rooms allowed husbands the peace and quiet to relax. Such discourses also re-feminized and classed women in middle-class terms: women had to make sure they always looked youthful, healthy, and beautiful even while working, and maintain postures that suggested their work was physically non-strenuous.

Leftists had suggestions for what working-class women should do with their leisure time generated by their more efficient homemaking patterns. They argued that even working-class

women had a right to middle-class leisure time and attention to their bodies through gendered rituals of hygiene and body culture, especially in liberating outdoor recreation and travel formerly exclusive to aristocratic and middle-class males. Popular and leftist discourses on steeling women's bodies through exercise to endure modern rationalized industrial and urban life associated these with masculinity and machines. However, leftist narratives, like popular ones, immediately re-feminized and limited women's leisure activities. They asserted that women's bodies were weaker than men's and women ran the risk of damaging their reproductive functions with exercise if they did not heed expert advice and avoided sports that were too masculine, competitive, or aggressive. Image after image of exercising women insisted that outdoor exercise was for women's enjoyment, health, and maintaining their elegant and graceful figures, balance, and mobility; and not primarily to increase women's muscles. The total effects of the exercise and hygiene rituals should be meticulously clean, beautiful, youthful, slender, and healthy-looking bodies befitting middle-class expectations of gendered care, cleanliness, and aesthetics. Therefore, the discourse on sports insisted on maintaining women's secure femininity.

Leftists also advocated for another set of bodily regimes that were once again middle-classed individualistic-emancipatory and aimed toward the establishment of new egalitarian heterosexual social relations in contemporary and future Socialist societies. They called for sexual freedoms for girls and women and connected these to women's ability to control their fertility. They stated that decriminalizing the advertising of contraception and legalizing abortions and voluntary sterilizations (with Social Democrats only demanding legalized advertising of contraception and at most first-trimester abortions to be legal) would open up access to middle-class levels of 'social hygiene' and medical care for proletarian women, thereby

enabling them to enjoy sexual intercourse in ‘egalitarian’ companionate heterosexual relationships based on shared outlooks and interests.

Far from leading to women’s rejection of their reproductive obligations, women’s civilized (meaning befitting middle-class and European and North American societies) control over their bodies would result in women’s greater femininity or their better performances of traditionally gendered roles. Motherhood by choice among proletarians would lead to a reduction of family sizes down to 3 or 4 members following middle-class social patterns, but also to an improvement in the eugenic quality of offspring. Social Democrats expected bourgeois levels of maternal attention paid to each child, such that each child was raised in a hygienic, healthy, orderly, and loving home environment that would promote children’s development and talents. All mothers should prioritize their children’s needs over their own by taking a many years-long hiatus from their work for at least a half dozen years to provide their children with full-time mothering. Even though leftists generally called for changing divorce laws to allow divorce when either or both partners felt there were irreparable differences, under existing Weimar divorce laws Social Democrats recommended mothers forego desired divorce or remarriage to ensure they could continue to care for all of their children.

Communists believed that a healthy and pedagogically progressive upbringing of children was possible in Communist child-care institutions while mothers worked. Therefore, they only expected mothers to stop working for a few mothers after childbirth, and were consistent in their advocacy for divorce and separation when a partnership was no longer companionate, even among couples with children.

The refeminization of the second set of Socialist ideals of femininity was also evident in leftists’ attempts at distinguishing their ideals from the ‘bourgeois’ New Woman in commercial



culture. Even as leftist language incorporated popular rhetoric on masculine qualities, Communists claimed that some gender boundaries should not be crossed to preserve women's femininity. Immoderate levels of consumerism was a middle-class attribute they noted, and proletarian women should use masculine rationality, objectivity, and pragmatism, to keep their consumerism at the levels of the practical, functional, simple, and honest. At the same time, they should avoid specific types of clothing (pants and pajamas) and certain types of sports because these were too masculine for women and represented excessive gender-bending, in addition to inauthentic forms of emancipation.<sup>52</sup>

### Chapter Outline

My first chapter looks at the organizational structures for women in Weimar's major leftist parties, the SPD, USPD, and KPD, and investigates how women were treated within them by male leaders and members. Using archival sources, information in women's periodicals, party conference and yearly reports, biographical and autobiographical data in published and unpublished works, as well as secondary literature, I ask whether women had equal access to decision-making and opportunities to influence party agendas, directions, and propaganda. I then provide an overview of women's organizational practices and culture, including their conferences, training courses, regular meetings, and special events. This chapter also provides brief descriptions of the activities of women within SPD and KPD-affiliated organizations such as the AWO, the *Rote Frauen- und Mädchenbund* (Red Women's and Girls' Association, RFMB), the *Internationale Arbeiter-Hilfe* (International Workers' Aid, IAH), the *Rote Hilfe Deutschlands* (Red Aid of Germany, RHD), and the KPD's Women Worker Delegates

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<sup>52</sup> On the class-transcending effects of Weimar fashions see Hake, "In the Mirror of Fashion," 185-201.

(*Frauendelegierten*) and Working Women's Conference 'Movement' (*Konferenzen der Werktätigen Frauen*).

I argue that women members and their interests were marginalized in the leftist parties and they lacked access to remunerated positions of power and decision-making. This was in part the result of contexts during the Kaiserreich, but also Weimar-era male functionaries' and members' conflicted positions on women and their gendered needs, interests, and perspectives. As a result, women members and functionaries met in women's groups and events, and steered these in the direction of their interests, often to do with personal or familial (social policy), welfare, and entertainment.

Chapter Two incorporates the leftist political women's press into the booming production and consumption of mass media during Weimar. Using archival data, conference reports, and secondary sources, it presents the SPD's rationalizations for publishing popular women's magazines in imitation of the commercial women's press and airs voices opposing this popularization of their party's political press. It then introduces four political women's magazines published by the leftist parties and their affiliated organizations, the traditional multi-tasking political women's organ *Die Kommunistin*, the SPD functionaries' paper *Die Genossin*, and *Frauenwelt* and *DWdF*, the latter two in a popular format. Here, I illustrate the women's magazines' target audiences, purposes, looks, and contents, as well as their attributes as collective products; and examine how *Frauenwelt* and *DWdF* compared with each other and to the mass women's press as represented by *Berliner Hausfrau* (1900-1944). *Frauenwelt* and *DWdF* successfully appealed to both non-members and ordinary members with their visually more interesting, quick to 'read', and entertaining content, while also offering more (*DWdF*) or

less (*Frauenwelt*) overt and intensive political commentary on topics of interest to women. *Frauenwelt* was more representative of readers' perspectives.

Chapters Three through Six focus on Socialist ideals of femininity found within all of these women's periodicals but especially within *Frauenwelt* and *DWdF*. Chapter Three relates Socialists' theories on women's employment and emancipation. It then compares these with narratives in the four women's publications, and sometimes also in the *AWO*, on female manual laborers and their employment conditions, women in various white-collar employments, and women engaged in the labor movement and its associated organizations. Included in this examination are the reports women activists sent to the publications and/or their national women's bureaus. Articles written by women functionaries and professionals on a wide variety of social policy topics are also part of this chapter's investigation. In their articles, authors implicitly or explicitly commented, almost exclusively in words, about their gendered and classed ideals of femininity as related to employment. It asks whether the leftists' ideal woman was a proletarian and what kind of employment or activism she engaged in. It then works to ascertain why leftists prioritized particular ideals.

This chapter argues that despite Socialists' theories on women's emancipation through economic independence, narratives in the women's publications on employment did not propose manual labor or lower-level white-collar employment as ideal forms of employment for women. They instead claimed that physically strenuous and unhygienic conditions of manual labor defeminized women workers, and lower-level white-collar workers often had to accept sexual exploitation as part of their working conditions. Middle-class mental labor as performed by women in professional careers and by political or welfare activists suited women better and

promoted their development into complete humans (*Vollmenschen*), with a perfect combination of masculine and feminine attributes.

Chapter Four examines other aspects of Socialist ideals of femininity in many images and texts in *DWdF* and *Frauenwelt*. Investigating leftist classed and gendered ideals of femininity as related to women's appearance and leisure activities, I compare these to the New Woman's attributes in commercial popular culture as determined by other scholars. Here too, I highlight leftists' justifications for their particular ideals.

I argue that this especially visually-defined Socialist New Woman – who seems to be different from the one described by her employment and political engagement in Chapter Three – looked and acted very much like the New Woman in non-Socialist popular culture, with minor differences. This second set of Socialist ideals of femininity was also middle-classed, illustrating leftists desired an elevation of proletarian women and their living circumstances from their appearance, to access to body and leisure culture, to consumer items. Despite masculinizing and emancipatory language associated with these ideals, Social Democratic and Communist narratives also re-feminized women's behaviors, thereby limiting women's range of options.

Chapter Five examines articles, serial novels, short stories, and especially reader contributions to *Frauenwelt* and *DWdF* on the issues of women's sexuality, contraception, abortion, sterilization, marriage, divorce, motherhood, and childrearing. Whereas these topics were traditionally thought of as private matters; Weimar's public sphere, the leftist women's press, and within these, readers intensely debated these issues. I ask what stances leftists took on these topics. I make note of classed and gendered attributes of leftists' perspectives and highlight differences between Social Democratic and Communist ideals. I also illustrate conflicting positions between abstract theoretical ideals as called for in articles, and the practices and

attitudes of women readers and contributors visible in the reader contribution segments. Using biographical and autobiographical information, I also note contributing authors' silences in women's publications about their lived experiences as related to these topics, illustrating discrepancies between cadres' more radical feminist experiences in their lives and their ideals presented in the periodical.

Leftists called for transformations in gendered and classed social norms as well as laws that would give women greater sexual and reproductive freedoms, establish more egalitarian heterosexual relationships, and lead to motherhood only by choice. Middle-class ideals of individualistic experiences, family forms, and social relations predominated leftist language, some of which also supported traditionally gendered norms. Whereas Communist language was more emancipatory when presenting alternate forms of family, Social Democrats made only limited demands for women's rights, elevated motherhood to women's primary role, and prioritized the needs of the next generation over those of mothers.

During a time of severe housing shortages, the interwar Frankfurt home-building projects became widely known for offering more affordable and modern home designs for more affluent workers. These were equipped with modern technologies and built-in furniture and placed into Hausmannized environs within nature.<sup>54</sup> The Weimar era also saw widespread popular discourses on the professionalization and rationalization of homemaking. My sixth and final chapter investigates leftist language on the ideal home and homemaking patterns in their publications for their gendered and classed ideals of womanhood and illustrates how leftists

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<sup>54</sup> See H.L., "Die Moe" Sonderschau: Die billige Wohnung," *DWdF* 5 (May 1932): 27; Martin Knauth [Architekt BDA], "Vom eigenen Herd zur Großküche," *DWdF* 5 (Oct. 1931): 4-6; and Ottfried, "Romantik und Wirklichkeit," *Frauenwelt* 14 (1924): 224-225. On modern urban design and Hausmannization see Nicholas Bullock, "Modern Design and Municipal Patronage: Frankfurt 1924-30," *Oxford Art Journal* 2, no. 2 Art and Society (April 1979): 21-24; David P. Jordan, "Baron Haussmann and modern Paris," *The American Scholar* 61, no. 1 (Winter 1992): 99-106.

explained their recommendations for traditionally-gendered and middle-classed behavior in the home.

The New Building and Living as presented by the Frankfurt housing estates presented for leftists near ideal, middle-class, living conditions for proletarian populations they viewed as long deprived of easy access to healthy green environs and hygienic, ordered, and modern living standards. Leftists, therefore, called on women to recreate the bare, easy-to-clean, and thoroughly thought-out arrangement of interior furnishing of the Frankfurt homes. Social Democrats and to a slightly lesser degree Communists also advocated for working-class women to adopt rationalized domesticity into their daily practices. In the process, they gendered and classed the working-class home and domestic responsibilities in very traditionally middle-classed patterns.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Juchacz, "Frau und Wohnung," *Die Genossin* 1 (Jan. 1927): 14-16.

## Chapter One: Leftist Parties and Women

Chapters Two through Six will examine leftist women's publications and the ideals of femininity within them. This first chapter will set the stage for what follows by overviewing the organizational structures for and culture among women members of the leftist parties and their affiliated organizations. These illustrate women's level of access to decision-making in the parties and their organizations and women ability to steer agendas into the directions desired by them.

The Social Democratic Party of Germany (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, SPD) and its splinter groups, the Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany (Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, USPD), and the Communist Party of Germany (Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands, KPD), were very clear about their goals for gender relations in a future Socialist state and society: They wanted a Socialist society with a complete political, legal, and socio-economic equality of the sexes. This support for women's equal rights was expressed, in addition to their programs, also in the fact that just three days after the proclamation of the "German Republic," on 12 November 1918, male SPD and USPD Executive members governing Germany in the Council of People's Representatives (Rat der Volksbeauftragten) gave women both the right to vote active and to be elected to office for the first time.<sup>1</sup>

These leftist parties grappled however with the question of how to treat women in the here and now during Weimar. Should they be entirely gender-blind, or should they treat female functionaries, members, and potential voters as a special category with different interests;

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<sup>1</sup> Philipp Scheidemann (1865-1939, member of the SPD's executive, elected Reich Minister President by the 1919 National Assembly, and member of the Reichstag from 1920-1933) proclaimed the establishment of the German Republic on 9 November 1918. Some municipalities and a few states had allowed women's active vote already before Weimar, but women had not been allowed to vote in national elections and most German states.

somewhat as they treated male potential members by their employment sectors? If they decided that women were a special category, who should be responsible for creating propaganda targeting women outside the party and for establishing and maintaining group meetings and training segregated by sex? Given women constituted on average 20 percent or less of the organization's membership, should they leave them to their statistical fate and impotent to send female representatives to party conferences and into the leaderships of the organization? Would women feel sufficiently represented by male delegates and executives, or should the parties instead require quotas and proportional representation for women members? If they chose quotas, proportional representation, and a women's organizational structure for women's propaganda and mobilization, how should they define such a treatment and structure ("special treatment," "petty bourgeois," "feminist," "Social Democratic," "a foreign body," and "divisive of the united front between male and female 'proletarians'")?<sup>2</sup> If they create a separate women's structure with only women functionaries, how much independent decision-making power should female functionaries have for the recruitment, training, and mobilization of women? Should women functionaries in this area be paid for their work like men usually were, or should women just volunteer their time and effort, since many women were housewives and likely had a male breadwinner at home?<sup>3</sup>

Neither leftist party managed to cut a clear and consistent path during Weimar in response to these questions. Given women's equal membership rights in the parties, their political equality in the Republic (confirmed by the Weimar Constitution); male functionaries

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<sup>2</sup> Any consideration for women functionaries and women's topics tended to be labeled as 'special' or "feminist" – with women having to explain and justify these. Silvia Kontos, *Die Partei kämpft wie ein Mann: Frauenpolitik der KPD in der Weimarer Republik* (Frankfurt a.M: Strömmfeld/Roter Stern, 1979), 185-186; and "Der Parteitag der Arbeit," *Die Kommunistin* 4 (1923): 28.

<sup>3</sup> See Kontos, *Die Partei kämpft*, 180-194.



and members of all three parties, as well as some female functionaries, often assumed no further special organizational attention to women was needed apart from some targeted propaganda before elections. In the SPD and KPD there was a trend in the leadership's language and decisions that insisted women were not a special category. They, therefore, eliminated some special women's structures they had either inherited or created in the first interwar years.

In practice, the leaderships of all three parties treated women differently. They expected women functionaries to work for free while male functionaries were usually paid. They nominated, elected, and promoted male members and functionaries at much greater rates to party, parliamentary, and municipal bureaucratic posts, while simultaneously discriminating against women members and functionaries, claiming they were not qualified for paid posts. Only the short-lived USPD seemed to allow more women access to decision-making and paid posts at the national level. The three parties also treated potential women members and voters differently than men: they ignored them in most of their propaganda (see Chapter Two) even as they were acutely attentive to the different perspectives and needs of men in different employment sectors. They believed that the 'greater political' topics they commonly dealt with should be of interest to all humans. Therefore, male functionaries also ignored women's interests and perspectives during their all-party events (conferences and congresses).

Throughout the interwar era, women functionaries felt their ambitions and organizational goals thwarted by male party members and leaders. Women on the whole played a relatively low-key role in the SPD, the USPD, and the KPD. They hardly influenced general organizational decision-making from the local through national levels, party conference agendas, party electioneering messages, or the contents of the general party dailies. Noting this neglect and sidelining, as well as women's different perspectives and interests, some women functionaries

insisted women were a special category of voters, members, and functionaries. They called on the parties to establish quotas, special structures, and propaganda tailored to women. They explained that women had less interest in greater politics because of women's historic socio-economic, cultural, and political-legal discrimination; and because women have different biologically-determined characteristics, such as greater emotionality. Therefore, only women functionaries could understand women's perspectives. Consequently, women should continue to create propaganda, establish and maintain organizational practices and training courses for women. Like male functionaries, they should be paid and appreciated for their work. and nominated into Party posts where they would have greater decision-making power.

Women did not stop at words. Most women members and functionaries illustrated with their actions that they were a separate category of members and cadres. They met in women-only groups where they preferred discussing and learning about topics that they identified as "women's issues." They filled their women's meetings with different types of activities involving political learning, entertainment, and practical welfare work on behalf of children, youth, pregnant women, new mothers, the elderly, and the poor in general. The SPD's Workers' Welfare Organization AWO, was central to this work. Some women hardly distinguished their work for the AWO from their organizational work for the SPD. Co-founded by numerous female and male functionaries, many women in the AWO were in leading and decision-making positions and responsible for the majority of the work at both the local and national levels.

In effect, the parties implemented the middle-class ideology of the separate spheres into their day-to-day activities and overall organizational structures, whereby men dealt with 'public' issues of national, international, and class politics, were remunerated for their work and advanced in party positions, while women focused on 'private' matters of the personal and

familial, denigrated by men as apolitical issues. As in the middle-class home, male party members and leaders expected women to work for free in the party while offering few opportunities for advancement for the great majority of women cadres with the excuse that women were not qualified for paid functionary, municipal, and parliamentary posts.

### **Imperial Roots**

Weimar leftist political parties were not created from whole cloth, not even the USPD and KPD, which were founded in 1917 and December 1918/January 1919 respectively. Continuities and similarities in programs, personnel, perspectives, attitudes, and activities in the three parties were in part the outcome of historic conditions, decisions, and experiences. The SPD had its origins in the unification in 1875 of two men's only labor movement organizations, the General German Workers' Association (Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiterverein, ADAV, founded in 1863 in Leipzig by Ferdinand Lasalle) and the Social Democratic Workers' Party (Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei, founded in 1869 in Eisenach by August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht). Their unified organization's name, the Socialist Workers' Party of Germany (Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands, SAP), was changed to the Social Democratic Party of Germany in 1890 after the end of the Anti-Socialist Laws.

At the heart of all the leftist Weimar parties' program segments associated with women lay the class and gender theories of Clara Zetkin, the long-time editor of the SPD's women's organ *Die Gleichheit* (1891-1923). Combining the writings of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Bebel with feminist perspectives from the Leipzig branch of the middle-class General German Women's Association (Allgemeiner Deutscher Frauenverein, ADF), Zetkin argued that working-class women suffered double discrimination: as women and as workers.<sup>4</sup> She claimed, however,

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<sup>4</sup> Henriette Goldschmidt (1825-1920) and Auguste Schmidt (1833-1902) were Zetkin's teachers. They were also peers of Louise Otto-Peters, a pioneering German Suffragist in the 1840s. Schmidt and Otto-Peters co-founded the

that working-class women's class position impacted them more than gender, and that therefore the feminism of the middle-class women's movement could not offer proletarian women a satisfactory solution. Besides gaining emancipation vis-à-vis their husbands through paid employment, women should join the leftist labor movement because they would only see their grievances met in a Socialist society.<sup>5</sup> In that utopian society they would have not only the same political, legal, and economic rights as men but also a variety of state and communal support institutions to help take care of 'their' domestic chores and maternal obligations.

At the 1896 Gotha SPD Party Congress Zetkin managed to persuade the delegates to adopt into the Party platform her demands for women's equal rights to suffrage, education, and professional careers only by compromising her original demand for women's equal rights to employment by calling for some state restrictions of women's employment.<sup>6</sup> Zetkin's 1896

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General German Women's Association (Allgemeiner Deutscher Frauenverein, ADF). Once Zetkin came into contact with Socialism, she rejected any cooperation with the ADF or more radical middle-class women's groups, though she incorporated feminist perspectives into her Socialist programs. Jean H. Quataert, *Reluctant Feminists in German Social Democracy, 1885-1917* (Princeton UP, 1979), 68-70.

<sup>5</sup> Scholars who have studied how the SPD political activists dealt with their class vs. gender activism usually argued there was a conflict between their feminism and class-focused socialism in practice. In that conflict, class activism usually won, with women postponing their egalitarian demands to a utopian socialist future. See Claudia Koontz, "Conflicting Allegiances: Political Ideology and Women Legislators in Weimar Germany," *Signs* 1, no. 3 (Spring 1976), 663-683. Quataert argued that the SPD political women activists were "more feminist than they liked to admit publicly." *Reluctant Feminists*, 10.

<sup>6</sup> Dagmar Stuckmann, "*Gebt Raum den Frauen:*" *100 Jahre Internationaler Frauentag in Bremen* (Wiesbaden: Thrun, 2011), 29; Thönnessen described Lasalle's General German Workers' Association as vehemently against women's employment outside the home, believing it caused wage depression and the breakup of families. Thönnessen, *The Emancipation of Women*, 15-45; Hilde Lion argued that the Lasalleans only permitted women's employment within the home and then only in female-gendered jobs. *Zur Soziologie der Frauenbewegung* (Berlin: F.A. Herbig, 1926), 26. The Paris International Workers' Congress in 1889, where Zetkin had first demanded the full equality of women workers without restrictions, adopted instead resolutions for prohibiting women's employment "in all branches of Industry where the work is particularly damaging to the female organism; the prohibition of night work for women and young workers under the age of 18," quoted in Thönnessen, *The Emancipation of Women*, 40 from Protokoll des Internationalen Arbeiterkongresses, Paris 14-20 Juli 1889, tr. W. Liebknecht (Nürnberg 1890), 81. See also Richard J. Evans, *Sozialdemokratie und Frauenemanzipation im deutschen Kaiserreich* (Berlin: J.H.W. Dietz, 1979), 84; Stuckmann, "*Gebt Raum den Frauen,*" 28-29; and Quataert, *Reluctant Feminists*, 68. Thereafter, in contrast to feminist and socialist demands in England and the US, Zetkin and future Socialists saw no contradiction in demanding full gender equality with simultaneous protectionist measures for women. The 1903 SPD Party Congress in essence adopted universal suffrage. *Protokoll über die Verhandlungen*

Gotha demands would become the cornerstone of all three Weimar-era Marxist Parties' programmatic stipulations on behalf of women.

Notwithstanding, until 1908 Prussia, Bavaria, and many other German states prohibited women from membership in political parties and from attending political events.<sup>7</sup> As a result, the SPD continued to be mostly a men's-only Party, where leftist women's political activities and organizations were clandestine, and "semi-autonomous" from the SPD.<sup>8</sup> Women usually met separately from the regular SPD men's events and made decisions in their own women's conferences about their loose organizational structure (to avoid police detection), topics of interest, and on which women delegates, resolutions, and petitions to send to the SPD men's 'general' Party conferences.<sup>9</sup> The SPD's women's propaganda was also separate from all of the Party's other massive written proselytism targeting men: *Die Gleichheit* was the only women's organ the SPD created, posting Zetkin as its paid editor in 1891.

Once women's political activism became legal throughout the German Empire in 1908 the SPD executive (against the wishes of leading women) dismantled the semiautonomous women's organizational structure, eliminated women's special group rights, and incorporated women as ordinary members into the SPD. Even though women would continue to meet in regular women-only meetings at the local level, they now depended on the SPD (regional and national) executives' permission for arranging regional and national women's conferences, and

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*des Parteitages der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands. Abgehalten zu Dresden vom 13. bis. 20. September 1903* (Berlin: Vorwärts, 1903), 117.

<sup>7</sup> On the 1851 Prussian Association Law see Stuckmann, "Gebt Raum den Frauen," 28-32.

<sup>8</sup> On Zetkin's ideological leadership of this semi-independent women's structure see Quataert, *Reluctant Feminists*, 56, 65-74, and 107-133.

<sup>9</sup> On the clandestine women's organization associated with the SPD see Anna T. Blos ed., *Die Frauenfrage im Lichte des Sozialismus* (Dresden: Kadan, 1920).

no longer elected female delegates in separate women-only meetings to SPD general Party congresses. Since women constituted between 5.6 and 16.1 percent of the overall membership between 1908 and 1914 (see Table 1), women's votes were inadequate to send women delegates to Party Congresses.<sup>11</sup>

**Table 1: SPD Membership**

Year	No. Total	No. Female	Percentage Female
1908	527,336	29,459	5.6
1910	720,038	82,642	11.5
1914	1,085,905	174,751	16.1
1918	249,411	66,000	26.8
1919	1,012,299	207,000	20.5
1920	1,180,208	207,000	17.5
1921	1,221,059	192,485	14.1
1923	1,261,072	130,000	10.3
1924	940,078	148,125	15.8
1925	844,495	153,693	18.2
1926	823,529	165,492	20.1
1927	867,671	181,541	20.8
1928	937,381	198,771	21.2
1929	949,306	201,000	21.2
1930	1,037,384	228,278	22
1931	1,008,953	230,331	23

From: Werner Thönnessen, *The Emancipation of Women. The Rise and Decline of the Women's Movement in German Social Democracy, 1863-1933*, trans. Joris de Bres (Pluto Press, 1973. First published Frankfurt a/M: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1969), 116.

<sup>11</sup> Thönnessen, *The Emancipation of Women*, 68 and 116.

Therefore, even though women had become equal members of the Party, they could not make successful women-specific demands. The Party continued to serve men's interests during the rest of the Empire. As Stuckmann has argued, the Imperial-era SPD was interested in women as members, but not in a Socialist women's movement as a coordinated group, which might pull Party politics into a different direction than that intended by male members.<sup>12</sup> As a result, there was an effort amongst male executives and members to keep women members and functionaries in check.

The SPD compensated women for the loss of their autonomous structure by promising them that all executives in the organization would have a woman responsible – in consultation and agreement with the rest of the executive – for the recruitment of women, their organizational work, and their ideological and functionary training.<sup>13</sup> No pay structure was set up for these women executive members except for the woman member of the National Executive.<sup>14</sup> Even though the SPD had a surprising 82,642 female members in 1910, making up 11.5 percent of the Party's overall membership, the Executive expected the rest of the SPD's work toward recruiting and training new women members and functionaries, and the organizing of meetings to be done by volunteers.<sup>15</sup>

The Party's reformist or revisionist leadership (preferring the gradual establishment of a Socialist state with democratic means, not through revolution) also consolidated its power. As

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<sup>12</sup> Stuckmann, "Gebt Raum den Frauen," 61. Karen Hagemann and Christl Wickert argued the same about the Weimar-era SPD. Hagemann, *Frauenalltag und Männerpolitik: Alltagsleben und gesellschaftliches Handeln von Arbeiterfrauen in der Weimarer Republik* (Bonn: J.H.W. Dietz, 1990), 630; and Wickert, *Unsere Erwählten: Sozialdemokratische Frauen im Deutschen Reichstag und im Preußischen Landtag, 1919-1933* (Göttingen: Sovec, 1986), 1:156.

<sup>13</sup> Thönnessen, *The Emancipation of Women*, 65 and 116.

<sup>14</sup> Stuckmann, "Gebt Raum den Frauen," 32.

<sup>15</sup> Thönnessen, *The Emancipation of Women*, 116.

part of its gradual removal of power from the headstrong and radical revolutionary activist Zetkin, it nominated Luise Zietz (née Körner, 1865-1922), someone the Executive believed was more likely to cooperate with it, into the Executive and simultaneously to head the National Women's Bureau.<sup>16</sup> Zietz was renominated until the Executive dismissed her from the Executive for her opposition to the SPD's support for war credits and its *Burgfrieden* policy – the promise not to criticize the German government for its involvement in WWI.<sup>17</sup>

Activists like Zetkin, Zietz, and Käthe Duncker (Paula Kathinka Döll, 1871-1953) experienced and rejected the SPD's neglect of women and women's perspectives. They co-founded the USPD and KPD to make these new parties better represent their wishes to institute both revolutionary Socialist goals and women's rights practices well before the establishment of a Socialist society.<sup>18</sup> They tried to make sure that the statutes of the new parties did not simply assert women members' equality within the organization. Some of these leading women, as did some women in the SPD, insisted during Weimar that given women's long-standing discrimination in society and politics, and their innate psychological differences from men; propaganda and organizational events had to be geared toward women's greater emotionality

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<sup>16</sup> Bloss, *Die Frauenfrage*, 72; Stuckmann, "Gebt Raum den Frauen," 32, from Thönnessen, *The Emancipation of Women*, 41-79; Lion, *Zur Soziologie der Frauenbewegung* 96-97; Quataert, *Reluctant Feminists*, 74; and Evans, *Sozialdemokratie und Frauenemanzipation*, 172- 183. The National Executive rewrote the Party's organizational structure to reduce the Control Commission's power where Zetkin was an influential member. Zietz was born into a weaver family. She worked as a domestic servant and a daycare teacher before joining the labor movement sometime before 1900.

<sup>17</sup> Evans, *Sozialdemokratie und Frauenemanzipation*, 90.

<sup>18</sup> Robert F. Wheeler has argued that more of the well-known female functionaries chose to stay in the USPD. "German Women and the Communist International: The Case of the Independent Social Democrats," *Central European History* 8, no. 2 (June 1975): 113-139. Other historians, including Stuckmann, have emphasized that the more active female party politicians from the USPD switched to the KPD, Stuckmann, "Gebt Raum den Frauen," 150.



with topics related to the family, or ‘women’s issues’ (social policy).<sup>19</sup> These women saw no contradiction in their demand for equal but different treatment. After all, men too had long insisted on a similar equal but different treatment of women workers as a special category of laborers in need of much more protectionist measures than male workers. Moreover, the entire leftist (and middle-class feminist) claim about women’s equality was based on a notion of equal rights but a complementarity and the very difference of the sexes.

The M[Majority]SPD’s executive began the Weimar Republic as it had ended the Imperial era, with the position that no special women’s structure was needed for women – given their full political and Organizational equality within the SPD. It therefore gradually eliminated remaining remnants of structures which treated and gave women power as a collective, while also neglecting women as a potential audience for Party propaganda.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, the SPD’s male leadership increased the number of individual women with access to decision-making. Since the Executive had kicked many leading women activists out of the Party during WWI, a slightly younger and less experienced generation of female activists was thrust into leadership positions.<sup>21</sup>

One of those inherited Imperial-era institutions was the annual women’s conferences that happened at levels just as the general party conferences. Party conferences served to make major decisions on organizational matters and policy directions, but in contrast to the pre-1908 era, the national women’s conferences of the SPD could no longer elect delegates to the Party

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<sup>19</sup> *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Sozialdemokratie für das Jahr 1929* (Berlin: Dietz, 1929, reprint Nendeln, Liechtenstein: Kraus, 1976), 188.

<sup>20</sup> Schreiber noted that Party executives with their propaganda mainly targeted men as potential voters and even prioritized small but male economic sectors over women in general. Schreiber, “Die Sozialdemokratin als Staatsbürgerin,” in Blos ed., *Die Frauenfrage*, 144.

<sup>21</sup> Wickert, *Unsere Erwählten*, 2: 44.

congresses, and the USPD and the KPD never permitted it. National women's conferences had no specific mandate in any of the three leftist party's statutes; as a result, decisions made during the women's conferences had no official significance for the party overall. Nevertheless, national women's conferences offered leading party women publicity, the chance for female functionaries from throughout the Reich to get to know each other, discuss recruitment, training, and mobilization experiences as well as formulate and pass resolutions, petitions, new strategies, and guidelines. If their petitions and resolutions related to the 'general' party, women delegates to both the women's conference and the party congress would submit the women's conference resolutions to the organization's congresses, and illustrate to the attendees of the congresses the women functionaries' collective wishes. Generally, these would be shelved before or after they were voted on.<sup>22</sup> However, if approved by the congress, the demands could then – depending on their nature – be included in party programs or statutes, forwarded to the leadership or parliamentary faction for their implementation, and disseminated downward by the regional and sub-regional women's conferences as well as through the women's literature.

However, right from the start of the Weimar Republic, the SPD's Executive worked to reduce the impact of the women's conferences by scheduling them after the general Party congresses.<sup>23</sup> In this way, any petitions, resolutions, or demands made during national women's conferences had to sit on shelves for a year before they would be heard at the next general Party congresses. This reduced SPD women's power to speak as a collective and make demands.

Women protested against this practice, with the Executive mostly offering scheduling conflicts

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<sup>22</sup> Hagemann, *Frauenalltag*, 633.

<sup>23</sup> Except for in 1920 and 1921, the Weimar National Women's Conferences were all scheduled for after the Party Congresses.

as reasons why it could not place women's conferences ahead of Party congresses. At the 1927 National Women's Conference in Kiel, Minna Martha Schilling (née Petermann, 1877- 1943), member of the National Assembly (1919-1920) and the *Reichstag* (1920 - May 1924; Dec. 1924 - 1928) illustrated the more likely reason for the Executive's scheduling preferences. She noted that:

The Party Executive explained yesterday through comrade Müller, that the Party congress does not care to hatch out the eggs laid by the women's conference. Yesterday, many found this funny. However, it illustrates that the Party Executive finds it beneath its dignity to respect and consider [at the Party congress] the decisions of the women's conference.<sup>24</sup>

At this 1927 Kiel National Women's Conference, SPD women once again demanded women's conferences be scheduled ahead of the Party congresses. Marie Juchacz, the National Women's Secretary and member of the majority male National Executive, successfully steered this petition into a vote to end women's conferences altogether.<sup>25</sup> Thereafter, women had to present their concerns at the Party Congress as all the male members did. Since the SPD regional organizations sent few women as delegates to general Party congresses (women delegates constituted on average 13 percent of conference delegates while making up 19 percent of the Organization's members in 1927), women were not likely to impact decision-making at Party congresses unless they had the backing of male delegates.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Schilling, in *Sozialdemokratischer Parteitag 1927 Kiel Protokoll mit dem Bericht der Frauenkonferenz* (Berlin: Dietz, 1927), 324.

<sup>25</sup> Hagemann writes that the majority of the women in the Party executive and the Party Committee did not want any national women's conferences or a separate women's organization in the SPD, but rather that the Party Congress dedicate more time and space to women's topics. The other group of women, led by Bohm-Schuch, was both more feminist and leftist in their outlooks and wanted some independence for the SPD women with continuatin of special women's conferences scheduled before the Party Congresses. See Hagemann, *Frauenalltag*, 631.

<sup>26</sup> Hagemann, *Frauenalltag*, 632. The 1919 Party statute allowed regional organizations to send one additional woman delegate to Party congress for every 10,000 women members in that regional organization, but this appears to have been followed inconsistently. Hagemann writes that women made up fewer functionaries in proportion to their numbers in the party than male cadres.

The mostly male National Executive also continued its prioritization of male workers' and members' demands and greater national and internal politics at Party conferences. It placed few women speakers (3 speakers during 9 Weimar-era congresses, each of which lasted 5-7 days) with 'women's issue' topics into congress agendas. Usually, the only female speaker was the National Women's Secretary reporting on the organization's 'women's movement'.<sup>27</sup>

One area where women saw some improvements in the SPD was women's participation in the Organization's decision-making bodies, where some of the women were paid.<sup>28</sup> An Imperial-era recommendation that every local through regional executive should have one unpaid woman member, tasked with women's propaganda and mobilization, continued in the books through Weimar. The 1919 all-Party gathering decided that strong SPD organizations in large industrial regions should start paying their Regional Women's Political Secretaries; and the 1920 Party Congress expanded that to all (32) SPD regional organizations.<sup>29</sup> The Executive was slow to fulfill its obligations. By 1927, it was paying for 17 Regional Women's Political

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<sup>27</sup> The women's speeches at congresses were: Johanna Reitze, "Die SPD im Kampf um die wirtschaftliche und soziale Stellung der Frau," at the Augsburg September 1922 Congress; Juchacz "Die Frauenbewegung," at the Goerlitz September 1922 Party Congress, a more expanded speech than her usually very brief reports on the Party's women's movement; and Juchacz, "Die Frau in Politik und Wirtschaft" at the Magdeburg May 1929 Party Congress. Wickert, *Unsere Erwählten*, 2: 42; *Protokoll der Sozialdemokratischen Parteitage in Augsburg, Gera, und Nürnberg 1922* (Berlin: Dietz, 1923), 83; *Sozialdemokratischer Parteitag Magdeburg 1929 vom 26. bis 31. Mai in der Stadthalle* (Berlin: Dietz, 1929), 220-232; and *Protokoll über die Verhandlungen des Parteitages der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands. Abgehalten in Würzburg vom 14. Bis 20. Oktober 1917* (Berlin: Vorwärts Paul Singer, 1917), 491.

<sup>28</sup> Hagemann, *Frauenalltag*, 585.

<sup>29</sup> *Protokoll über die Verhandlungen des Parteitages der SPD abgehalten in Weimar vom 10. bis 15. Juni 1919 Mit dem Bericht über die 7. Frauenkonferenz abgehalten in Weimar am 15. und 16. Juni 1919* (Berlin: Vorwärts Paul Singer, 1919), 513; and Hagemann, *Frauenalltag*, 585. At the 1920 Party Congress, Kirschmann-Röhl advocated for the increased hiring of Regional Women's Political Secretaries. In a rarer speech by a woman at a Party Congress, see "Women's political and organizational effectiveness within the Party," in *Protokoll über die Verhandlungen des Parteitages der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands abgehalten in Kassel vom 10. bis 16. Oktober 1920. Bericht über die Frauenkonferenz abgehalten in Kassel am 9. und 10. Oktober 1920* (Berlin: Vorwärts, 1920), 342-346. In her petition at the same conference, Hedwig Wachenheim (1891-1969) suggested the Executive pay the female regional secretaries by requiring the regional organizations to submit an additional 5 percent of their earnings to the Executive. 417.

Secretaries; while the remaining 15 continued to work on a voluntary, unpaid basis as did the great majority of SPD (as also USPD and KPD) women functionaries.<sup>30</sup> However, the paid Political Secretaries did not make decisions entirely on their own: they still had to clear their decisions and work with their Regional Executive.

The SPD also continued to nominate a woman (Juchacz from 1917 to 1933), to the National Executive. This Executive member was simultaneously the ‘National Women’s Secretary’ at the head of the ‘National Women’s Bureau’.<sup>31</sup> Despite her title, Juchacz initially rejected demands by women functionaries to centrally coordinate women’s propaganda and organizational work. She called such demands “feminist” (“*frauenrechtlerisch*,” thereby associating them with the middle-class Women’s Movement). Attempts to create a separate women’s organization (“*Sonderorganisation*”) within the Party were identified by others as a “foreign body” (“*Fremdkörper*”).<sup>32</sup>

In response to continued demands by SPD women, the Executive, the Party Committee (which assisted the Party Executive with political directions and major policy decisions), and

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<sup>30</sup> Juchacz in *SPD Parteitag 1927 Kiel*, 302.

<sup>31</sup> Juchacz (née Gohlke, 1879-1956) came from a family of small farmers and carpenters. She divorced her husband in 1906 and moved to Berlin with her children and her sister Elisabeth. In 1913 she was nominated to be the Cologne Women’s Secretary of Propaganda for the Upper Rhine regional organization. Quataert, *Reluctant Feminists*, 81-82; and Adele Schreiber, “Die Sozialdemokratin als Staatsbürgerin,” in Bloss ed., *Die Frauenfrage*, 97-127, 105.

<sup>32</sup> Pioneering union activist Helene Grünberg (1874-1928, the first female paid Women Workers’ Secretary in the SPD-affiliated trade unions and member of the Reichstag, 1919-1920) (at the 1919 Women’s Conference in Weimar); and Juchacz’s sister Elisabeth Kirschmann-Röhl (née Gohlke, 1888-1930, National Assembly member (1919-1920), Prussian Landtag delegate (1920-1930), editor of several columns of the Organization’s women’s magazines, and part of a younger generation of SPD women functionaries) (at the 1920 Women’s Conference in Kassel); called on Juchacz to start such communication and provide guidelines and instructions to regional, subregional and local women functionaries at the executives, and coordinate with them women’s propaganda and organizational and training efforts, *SPD Parteitag 1919 Weimar*, 483. Kirschmann-Röhl also called for a third woman to be installed in the National Executive. *SPD Parteitag 1920 Kassel*, 342-346. On Grünberg see Joseph Joos, *Die sozialdemokratische Frauenbewegung in Deutschland* (München-Gladbach: Volksverein, 1912), 38. Juchacz, Ansorge, Kaehler, and Bloss, in *SPD Parteitag 1919 Weimar*, 483, 472, and 476-477; and Minna Bollmann, in *SPD Parteitag 1927 Kiel*, 331.

various congresses agreed to increase the number of women in the National Executive and the National Women's Bureau to 3, and assign to them the coordination of women's propaganda and organizational work.<sup>33</sup> Elfriede Ryneck and Anna Nemitz were elected to the posts, resulting in the three women constituting 14 percent of the 21-member National Executive.<sup>34</sup> A few years later, the 1925 Heidelberg Party Congress determined that regional organizations with 7,500 female members could elect an additional person, a woman, to the Party Committee, tripling the number of female Party Committee members to 10 by 1927.<sup>35</sup> These women were also tasked with assisting Juchacz, Ryneck, and Nemitz with women's propaganda and mobilization.

Together these women functionaries created and forwarded a variety of materials, such as instructions and guidelines on how to establish and maintain local SPD women's and Workers' Welfare (Arbeiterwohlfahrt, AWO) groups, and set up various types of women's meetings and events. They also sent out speech outlines on numerous topics for novice speakers, lists of speakers for booking by local through regional organizations, and lists with rental slide films,

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<sup>33</sup> *SPD Parteitag 1919 Weimar*, 500; and "Bericht über die Frauenbewegung," in *Sozialdemokratischer Parteitag 1925 in Heidelberg. Protokoll mit dem Bericht der Frauenkonferenz* (Berlin: Dietz, 1925), 43. In 1921 Juchacz amended and reprinted the brochure put out by Hamburg's women functionaries, called "Praktische Winke für die sozialdemokratische Frauenbewegung: Richtlinien für die Agitation und für die Organisation," with guidelines for women's propaganda and organization. The guidelines did not establish a formal women's recruitment/propaganda structure but added women's propaganda, recruitment, and training work to the responsibilities of those women who were elected into any Party offices. If there were no women in elected party offices, unpaid women selected by women should organize women's propaganda. "Praktische Winke für die sozialdemokratische Frauenbewegung: Richtlinien für die Agitation und für die Organisation," (Berlin: Vorstand der SPD, 1921).

<sup>34</sup> *SPD Parteitag 1919 Weimar*, 18 & 342; Wickert, *Unsere Erwählten*, 2: 11; and Hagemann, *Frauenalltag*, 583-5. Ryneck (1872-1951) was a co-founder of the AWO, a member of the National Assembly in 1919, the *Reichstag* (1920 to 1924), and the Prussian *Landtag* (1924 - 1933). Nemitz (née Voigt, 1873-1962) was a member of the USPD's National Executive from 1919 through September 1922, and a member of the *Reichstag* (1920-1933). These women were renominated and reelected during the remainder of Weimar for the same offices, consistent with the reappointment history of the rest of the SPD Party leadership. Hagemann, *Frauenalltag*, 633. The 1919 statute set women's membership fees at 75 percent of men's fees and also transformed the organizational structure to a regionally based one. The 32 regional organizations had altogether 9,236 local organizations in early 1919. "Organisationsstatut der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands. Nach den Beschlüssen des Parteitages in Weimar," *SPD Parteitag 1919 Weimar*, 519 and 517. See also Hagemann, *Frauenalltag*, 583.

<sup>35</sup> "Frauenreichskonferenz," in *SPD Parteitag 1927 Kiel*, 322; and Hagemann, *Frauenalltag*, 584-85.

movies, flyers, brochures, and posters which they created in collaboration with the Advertising and Film division.<sup>36</sup> Increasingly Juchacz also offered detailed curricula for SPD and AWO educational courses for female functionaries which she and other women functionaries helped establish. The presentation of this material shifted in 1924 to the Party's and the AWO's women functionaries' organ, *Die Genossin*.<sup>37</sup>

For the most part, this was the extent of improvements women saw in the SPD. The Organization created a dismal record during Weimar for nominating women to Party posts, municipal through parliamentary, and other bureaucratic-administrative positions.<sup>38</sup> Men usually justified their resistance to nominate women by claiming there were no qualified female candidates.<sup>39</sup> Even though the SPD listed very few women among the top three candidates on the election lists (those with a good chance of being elected) some SPD women functionaries were nevertheless elected into the parliaments of the *Länder* (the individual German states) and into

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<sup>36</sup> *Jahrbuch der SPD 1926*, 35. Juchacz published these also in *Die Genossin*. See also Hagemann, *Frauenalltag*, 585.

<sup>37</sup> Once the AWO published its own magazine in 1926, AWO matter was printed there.

<sup>38</sup> Even though the party's agency for producing print material for its dailies, the Pressedienst, was responsible for creating the women's supplements to the Party's dailies, by 1927 not a single woman editor was among the editors working there, nor did the Party's main organ, the *Vorwärts* have a woman editor among its 24 editors there. Marie Arning and Mathilde Wurm, in *SPD Parteitag 1927 Kiel*, 318 & 317. Arning suggested women contribute more unpaid articles to women's supplements. In 1926, there were 295 women among 6,773 SPD-city council members, and 452 women compared to 29,020 male rural SPD administrators. Schreiber, "Die Sozialdemokratin als Staatsbürgerin," 130.

<sup>39</sup> Wickert argued that despite the Heidelberg SPD statute from 1925, which demanded that women be considered for Party positions in proportion to their membership numbers, election lists make evident that women were not considered in proportion to their numbers. Wickert, *Unsere Erwählten*, 2: 9. There were repeated demands for nominating more women to paid posts: Kirschmann-Roehl, "Women's political and organizational effectiveness within the Party," in *SPD Parteitag 1920 Kassel*, 342-346; *SPD Parteitag 1919 Weimar*, 83; and *SPD Parteitag 1927 Kiel*, 331. For derogatory statements about women being unqualified as a group see Minna Bollmann at the 1927 Kiel National Women's Conference, in *SPD Parteitag 1927 Kiel*, 331; Lohmann at the same conference, *SPD Parteitag 1927 Kiel*, 319; even in written material to functionaries: Juchacz, "Praktische Winke für die sozialdemokratische Frauenbewegung: Richtlinien für die Agitation und für die Organisation," (Berlin: Vorstand der SPD, 1921), 8; Margarete Stegmann wrote that male SPD members and functionaries appreciated a female functionary as an equal only if she had extraordinary talents, "Die Frauenblindheit der Männer – Eine alte Krankheit," *Genossin* 6 (1929), 229-230; and Hagemann, *Frauenalltag*, 634.

the *Reichstag*. The SPD's women parliamentarians constituted an average of 11 percent of delegates to the National Convention in 1919-1920 and to 8 successive *Reichstage* until 1933, the largest percentage of women sent by any single party.<sup>40</sup> However, with the exception of Toni Sender (1888-1964), who was interested in foreign policy and the economy, SPD women generally gravitated – voluntarily and by pressure – toward committees to do with population policies such as welfare, healthcare, and education (the so-called ‘women’s issues’); which allowed them a sphere with some decision-making. Reportedly some would have preferred other areas of engagement.<sup>41</sup>

### **Arbeiterwohlfahrt**

One area where SPD women had much more decision-making power was the AWO created in 1919. Juchacz and other Social Democratic women functionaries and members had been engaged in the wartime National Women’s Service (*Nationaler Frauendienst*). There women provided welfare and social services directly and advised women from lower socio-economic strata on services offered by municipalities and state and private organizations, often in an interlinked manner.<sup>42</sup> At the 1917 Party Congress in Würzburg Juchacz, as the new National Women’s Secretary, announced her intention to continue to engage female members and functionaries of the SPD in welfare work even after the end of the war. Juchacz believed a welfare organization similar to the Catholic Caritas and Protestant Inner Mission would not only become a significant factor in the SPD’s push to improve the lives of the poor but also attract

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<sup>40</sup> See Wickert, *Unsere Erwählten*, 2: 64-69, and 14.

<sup>41</sup> Hagemann, “Men’s Demonstrations and Women’s Protest,” 315. Schreiber wrote that women parliamentarians were pressured to engage in committees to do with social policies. “Die Sozialdemokratin,” in Blos ed., *Die Frauenfrage*, 118.

<sup>42</sup> Blos, *Die Frauenfrage*, 84; and Schreiber, “Die Sozialdemokratin,” 102.



women to the SPD who would otherwise not be interested in joining a political party.<sup>43</sup> The Party Executive agreed, and Juchacz and numerous other women and male functionaries co-created the AWO, to be financially supported by SPD members.

Starting in 1919, Juchacz and Ryneck, the first and second executive leaders of the Arbeiterwohlfahrt and its Main Committee (*Hauptausschuß*) in Berlin helped create an organization linked to the Party but outside of the regular Party structure. There Juchacz and other leading women, such as Wachenheim, had decision-making power in the organization and its administration. Men were among the AWO's leading functionaries, especially working with public welfare institutions, but they were in a minority, and in a gendering of welfare, they left the practical work of providing welfare services to women.<sup>44</sup> By 1931, with 2,300 local committees in 35 regions, the AWO had developed into a sizable organization even if far outmatched by the religious welfare organizations.<sup>45</sup>

By holding simultaneous positions in the leadership of the Arbeiterwohlfahrt and in national and state parliaments, Juchacz, Wachenheim, Ryneck, and others hoped to eventually transform the interlinkage of public funding and private welfare provision into a single source public provision of welfare by the state and its institutions, thereby ending the state funding of religious charities.<sup>46</sup> They also wanted to change the rationale for welfare services: instead of characterizing welfare as a kindness that focused on the virtues of the provider, welfare was to

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<sup>43</sup> After 1925, when the new AWO statutes required AWO members to be simultaneously SPD members, more women members came to the SPD through the AWO, but Hagemann has argued that these new members did not become political or social policy activists for the SPD. Hagemann, *Frauenalltag*, 600.

<sup>44</sup> Hagemann, *Frauenalltag*, 625 and 628.

<sup>45</sup> The AWO was nevertheless far outmatched by the religious welfare institutions, which received much more state funding in proportion to their provision of services. Hagemann, *Frauenalltag*, 601 and 609, Hagemann quoted the *Jahrbuch d. AWO 1931*, 46-51.

<sup>46</sup> Hagemann, *Frauenalltag*, 627 - 628.

become every citizen's right. SPD parliamentarians helped create – with many compromises to the center and right-wing parties – national and state welfare and healthcare laws and institutions. Among these were the Youth Welfare Laws (*Jugendwohlfahrtsgesetz*) which established Youth Care Offices (*Jugendämter*) to oversee an expansive set of services to children.<sup>47</sup> Consequently, during the Depression era, right-wing parties attacked the Weimar Republic as a 'welfare republic' and blamed the SPD for its creation.

Besides functionaries' parliamentary activities, the local and regional committees of the AWO established welfare projects they focused on, sometimes in collaboration with the Socialist Worker Youth (*Sozialistische Arbeiterjugend*, SAJ) and the Friends of Children (*Kinderfreunde*). Among the AWO projects were homes for single women, the elderly, and unemployed youth, vacation (*Ferienheime*) and health retreats (*Erholungsheime*) for children of low-income families. Here, women volunteers helped in the application and selection processes, accompanied the children on their commute to the vacation homes, cooked, and assisted children with their leisure activities at the retreats.<sup>48</sup> Especially during the inflation years of 1922/1923, and the Depression and high unemployment periods of the early 1930s, AWO women maintained communal kitchens that offered meals at reduced rates and participated in Winter assistance (*Winterhilfswerk*) with non-SPD women's organizations. Throughout the year, women collected donated clothes to repair and distribute and created new textile goods for children of all ages with donated funds. Accomplishing some of the projects meant women increased their knowledge in legal-bureaucratic, logistic, fundraising, and financial matters, but they also

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<sup>47</sup> Hagemann, *Frauenalltag*, 601. Schreiber wrote that Juchacz, Pfülf, Schroeder, and the USPD's Mathilde Wurm were influential in the *Jugendwohlfahrtsgesetz*. Schreiber, "Die Sozialdemokratin," 118.

<sup>48</sup> Hagemann, *Frauenalltag*, 619 – 625.

allowed women volunteers to involve their children for free in activities, retreats, and projects they otherwise might not be able to afford.<sup>49</sup>

The AWO also functioned as a potential job creation institution for women; by helping open up a wide array of volunteering functions where women hoped they might be employed at a future time. Paid welfare jobs in social work (*Fürsorgerinnen*) and administration were initially monopolized by women from better-off economic strata and by men due to lengthy schooling and expensive state testing requirements. Juchacz and Wachenheim tried to open up professional training opportunities to women of lower socioeconomic strata and worked for a future when women would find employment in ever more social services, welfare, and preventive care for an expanding clientele. With that in mind, AWO volunteers made use of educational seminars. The activists' efforts culminated in the opening of the AWO Welfare School in Berlin in 1928, which provided stipends to students from low-income sectors. With the reduction of state welfare funding after 1929, however, the AWO's hopes for expanding services to a broad array of social sectors were dashed.

### **SPD's Training for Women Functionaries**

Most Party education was organized at the regional level, although some were also locally organized and at the subregional level. Few women tended to attend or complete courses offered to all Party members.<sup>50</sup> This may have had to do with the duration and timing of the courses, their curricula favoring working men's perspectives or interests, and being heavy on

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<sup>49</sup> Hagemann, *Frauenalltag*, 618. In 1930, women made up 22 percent of SPD members, 26.5 percent of the Verband Volksgesundheit, 25 percent of the Arbeiter-Abstinente Bund, 34.2 percent of the Naturfreunde, and 60 percent of the AWO. Peter Lösche and Franz Walter, "Zur Organisationskultur der sozialdemokratischen Arbeiterschaft" in *Zwischen Emanzipation und Sozialismus. Die sozialdemokratische Frauenbewegung im Kaiserreich* ed. Heinz Niggemann (Wuppertal: Hammer, 1981), 526.

<sup>50</sup> Hagemann, *Frauenalltag*, 599.

Marxist theory. After the currency stabilization about a third of the 32 regional organizations offered women's courses intended for the entire region, usually lasting multiple evenings. In fewer cases, but increasing toward the 1930s, multi-day vacation courses ("*Ferienkurse*" or "*Heimschule*") were set up over either an extended weekend or an entire week at scenic locations.<sup>51</sup> Such courses usually combined study with socialization, collective daily exercise, and leisure practices such as hikes and sightseeing –the latter also including visits to local institutions associated with welfare, health care, and children's homes.

Course topics included 'general' SPD history, Socialist theory, the Heidelberg Program, a study of the Weimar constitution (likely with a focus on women's rights), as well as topics geared toward women's interests. Examples include "problems associated with women's education ("*Berufsausbildungsgesetz*")", employment" ("*Probleme der Frauenerwerbsarbeit*"), populationist policy, social policy issues, hygiene, children's school education, and women's rights.<sup>52</sup> Some of the regional courses were offered to women functionaries who were already involved in municipal politics and local welfare work, to give them a further grounding in the legal-political and economic contexts of their daily activities.

For both new and longstanding functionaries there was the national leadership school ("*Reichsspitzenkursus*") in Probstzella, set up in 1928 by the Executive and the National Women's Bureau, where students learned about the structure of the Party organization, population policy, laws on women's education and employment, as well as instruction on how to

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<sup>51</sup> *Jahrbuch der SPD 1927*, 189 and 1928, 144-148. *Jahrbuch der SPD 1928*, 148; *Jahrbuch der SPD 1930*, 125, 222-223, and 238; and Kirschmann-Roehl, in *SPD Parteitag 1927 Kiel*, 315.

<sup>52</sup> *Jahrbuch der SPD 1926*, 30; and *Jahrbuch der SPD 1927*, 190.

do propaganda.<sup>53</sup> These lasted 7, 10, or 14 days, with about 30 participants each. Some of these courses were taught by veteran leading women functionaries such as Mathilde Wurm, Juchacz herself, and other experts in fields relevant to the course subjects. Others were taught by “Wanderlehrer,” functionaries, such as Luise Mössiger-Schiffgens hired to teach courses throughout Germany over the year.<sup>54</sup>

### Local SPD Women’s Practices

By 1931, the SPD had a total of 9,844 local organizations.<sup>55</sup> Their regular ‘general’ Party meetings usually took place in smoky pubs at times not suited to women’s work and household schedules, such as in the evenings or Sunday mornings (when married women prepared the traditional Sunday roast for their families’ lunch). They dealt exclusively with topics of interest to men or from their points of view in part due to traditional practices.<sup>56</sup> Where women were members of local organizations, they frequently did not attend such events.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> *Jahrbuch der SPD 1928*, 144 & 167; *Jahrbuch der SPD 1930*, 223; *Jahrbuch der SPD 1931*, 122; and Hagemann, *Frauenalltag*, 599. In 1928 there were 22 regional women’s conferences, 167 sub-regional women’s conferences, and 159 women’s courses. *Jahrbuch der SPD 1928*, 147.

<sup>54</sup> In 1930, there were 129 “Wanderkurse” (traveling courses) taught by traveling teachers. One of these teachers, Luise Mössinger-Schiffgens (nee Simons, 1892-1954) was a City Councilor in Aachen from 1920 to 1929, delegate to the Prussian Landtag from 1929-1930, member of the Reichstag (1924-1930), and Arbeiterwohlfahrt functionary in the Saar region. *Jahrbuch der SPD 1930*, 223.

<sup>55</sup> Hagemann, *Frauenalltag*, 632.

<sup>56</sup> Issues of interest to women were discussed only before elections at general Party events. Hagemann, *Frauenalltag*, 590.

<sup>57</sup> The report on the women’s movement at the 1925 Party Congress minutes describes how women usually didn’t attend mixed-sex public events, but if they did, they commonly did not speak up to ask questions or comment on what was said. Therefore, the author claimed separate events for women are necessary -- and allow the women functionaries to get to know the women members. He implied that while male discussions in mixed-sex or general Party events are “rational,” women are too emotional and too afraid to participate in such discussions. K. Ludwig, “Bericht über die Frauenbewegung,” in *SPD Parteitag 1925 Heidelberg*, 45; and Hagemann, “Men’s Demonstrations and Women’s Protest: Gender in Collective Action in the Urban Working-Class Milieu during the Weimar Republic,” *Gender and History* 5, no. 1 (1993): 101-119, here 106.

In 2,197, or 21 percent of the local organizations (in 1931), women created their own women's groups, 87 percent of these held women's evenings at cafés, town halls, sewing rooms, and other public places.<sup>58</sup> The women's groups worked to attract new women members, and reached out to ordinary women members to offer them a sense of belonging. As in the Imperial era, during the interwar years, most SPD women functionaries and members were housewives in their middle ages, between 30 and 50, with children old enough to no longer need a lot of supervision.<sup>59</sup>

Women met biweekly or monthly for women's reading evenings ("*Leseabende*") of Socialist and women's movement theoretical or historical works, such as Bebel's *Die Frau unter Sozialismus*, or Social Democratic newspaper articles on contemporary social policy topics with discussions afterward.<sup>60</sup> Some women's groups founded a local committee for Workers' Welfare (*Arbeiterwohlfahrt*, AWO) and alternated SPD organizational meetings with AWO meetings every two weeks. Especially during the AWO meetings, but also in regular SPD reading evenings, women engaged in sewing, knitting, or crocheting while simultaneously listening to

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<sup>58</sup> Hagemann, *Frauenalltag*, 600 and 632; "Bericht über die Frauenbewegung," in *SPD Parteitag 1925 Heidelberg*, 43; and *Jahrbuch der SPD 1929*, 188.

<sup>59</sup> Kirschmann-Röhl, "Die politische und organisatorische Wirksamkeit der Frauen in der Partei" at the Women's Conference of the *SPD Parteitag 1920 Kassel*, 339-347, here 340; Helene Overlach's "Bericht über die Arbeit unter den Arbeiterinnen," in *Protokoll des 12. Parteitags der KPD (Sektion Kommunistische Internationale) Berlin-Wedding 9. Bis 16. Juni 1929* (Berlin: Internationale Arbeiter-Verlag, 1929), 116-126, here 122; Hans-Jürgen Arendt, "Weibliche Mitglieder der KPD in der Weimarer Republik - Zahlenmäßige Stärke und soziale Stellung," *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 4 (1977): 652-660, here 658.

<sup>60</sup> In the Hamburg SPD, the only local party for which gender-differentiated figures on age exist, 79 percent of female members in 1929 were over thirty years old. In 1927, 72 percent of all women Social Democrats and 79 percent of all women Communists in Hamburg were listed as housewives who did not work outside the home. Women under thirty made up the majority of the small group of women in full-time employment in both parties." Hagemann, "Men's Demonstrations and Women's Protest," 317. Several national women's conferences discussed how to gain especially the young women who outgrew the Socialist Workers Youth (*Sozialistische Arbeiterjugend*, SAJ) organization. There was a generational issue. SPD events were gender segregated, the participants engaged in traditionally gendered activities, such as sewing, and focused on altruism on behalf of others. Young women in the SAJ were used to mixed-sex body culture activities involving, exercise, hiking, and camping, for their own benefit. Hagemann, *Frauenalltag*, 594; and *Jahrbuch der SPD 1926*, 34-35.

the reading of Socialist material. They then donated the items created at their welfare events, which included yearly Christmas celebrations for the elderly, the poor, and children.<sup>61</sup> Some women's evenings consisted of collective singing of Socialist songs.<sup>62</sup>

In larger cities, women's groups set up "women's evenings" ("*Frauenabende*") where a functionary would give a speech on social policies, women's rights, the history of the SPD women's movement, and Socialist theory, followed by discussions. In her memoir written many decades after Weimar, Wachenheim labeled such separate women's evenings with speakers as show events because, in her opinion, they led nowhere and had calcified, unnecessary, or too feminine rituals. She described that the speeches at women's political events were expected to be one and a half hours long and include a long 'pathetic' segment narrating the centuries-long socio-economic and legal discrimination against women before the arrival of industrialization and modern society and politics.<sup>63</sup>

It was a tradition that speakers at women's meetings spoke in the most sentimental tones about women's fate under capitalism and during the war – as if men had it better under capitalism and in the war! Women were portrayed as pacifists (*Kriegsgegnerin*) by nature since they bring life into the world. Before getting to the actual topic one was presenting, one always had to deliver a sentimental introduction about the special nature of women. When one has no skills in a special area [that was considered part of 'greater politics' by men], as a woman, one could only accomplish things in the party if one submitted to this ritual. I hated it, but I yielded to the ritual.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Hagemann, *Frauenalltag*, 595.

<sup>62</sup> L. Reichenbach wrote that during alternate women's evening meetings, her group collectively learned and sang new songs published in the *Arbeiterjugendliederbuch* or the *Rote-Falken-Liederbuch* and this as a collective identity-forming practice to other women's groups. "Eine Anregung zur Ausgestaltung der geselligen Frauenabende," *Die Genossin* 12 (Dec. 1931): 391.

<sup>63</sup> Wachenheim, *Vom Großbürgertum zur Sozialdemokratie: Memoiren einer Reformistin* (Berlin: Colloquium, 1973), 59.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

Women functionaries tended to speak on social policy issues, which might include the housing problem, issues surrounding women's employment, rationalization, technological progress, the increase in employment in the home industries (domestic putting-out or piece work), women's domestic labor for their family, protectionist measures on behalf of women workers, expectant and new mothers, STD prevention and treatment, the deregulation of prostitution, contraception and the decriminalization of abortion, populationist policies, women's rights, marriage, child-rearing, and children's education as well as the expansion of social services for infants, children, and youth.<sup>65</sup>

To attract more women into the organization, after the currency stabilization starting in 1924, SPD women increasingly held cultural or entertainment evenings (“*Unterhaltungsabende*”) such as “variety evenings” (“*Bunte Abende*”), “literary evenings” (“*Literarische Abende*”), “women's leisure hours” (“*Frauenfeierstunden*”), or *Frauenwelt*-evenings (“*Frauenwelt-Abende*”), a reference to the SPD's popular women's magazine *Frauenwelt* (1924-1933). These events would take place in cheerfully decorated venues, sometimes offering light refreshments and desserts, and more commonly providing a variety of music, poetry recitations, literature readings, theatrical performances, and perhaps a short oral presentation on a social policy topic.<sup>66</sup> *Frauenwelt*-evenings also included brief fashion shows

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<sup>65</sup> *Jahrbuch der SPD 1927*, 190. Among Hamburg's SPD women for the economic and social policy topics as well as contemporary political topics were not popular during women's evenings until the end of the 1920s. Hagemann, *Frauenalltag*, 594.

<sup>66</sup> The introduction of ‘women's leisure hour’ belonged to a new conception of women's agitation which sought to fulfill the needs of so-called ‘indifferent’ women by bringing more ‘diversion and relaxation’ into their ‘laborious and care-worn lives’. Juchacz, in *Sozialdemokratischer Parteitag 1924 [Berlin]. Protokoll mit dem Bericht Frauenkonferenz* (Berlin: Dietz, 1924): 226-227. 318-319



and demonstrations of household gadgets.<sup>67</sup> The SAJ and Social Democratic choirs and bands would assist women's groups with such entertainment evenings.

Around the same time, women's groups increasingly set up hiking excursions into the countryside, sight-seeing trips to nearby towns ("*Ausflüge*" or "*Frauenfahrten*"), visits to local or nearby social institutions, women's prisons, consumer union facilities, progressive child care and educational facilities that followed the teachings of Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852) or Maria Montessori (1870-1952), and visited neighboring SPD women's groups, including across borders with non-German socialist women.<sup>68</sup> Also increasingly after 1924, SPD women offered slide film presentations on topics of interest to Socialists or women's topics, such as *Neu-Wien*, which illustrated the new architectural building styles of the Social Democratic-controlled Red Vienna for populations from lower socio-economic strata.<sup>69</sup> Toward the 1930s women's groups screened movies with a Socialist message and/or produced by the SPD, such as *Kreuzzug des Weibes* and *Dein Schicksal*.<sup>70</sup> Slide films and movies usually attracted more participants than mere political speeches. The functions of these women's events were "to win supporters and voters" for the party, "to gradually familiarize them with our line of thought," and to "then thoroughly train our female comrades and systematically strengthen their sense of belonging."<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> *Jahrbuch der SPD 1931*, 122.

<sup>68</sup> Hagemann, *Frauenalltag*, 592-593 and 600. Berlin's local SPD women's organizations had altogether 642 women's events of various types in 1924. "Bericht über die Frauenbewegung," in *SPD Parteitag 1925 Heidelberg*, 45.

<sup>69</sup> Another slide film series was called "Die Frau im Dritten Reich." *Jahrbuch der SPD 1931*, 122.

<sup>70</sup> *Kreuzzug des Weibes*, (1926), directed by Martin Berger, written by Martin Berger and Dosio Koffler, with Conrad Veidt, Maly Delschaft, and Harry Liedtke, *Jahrbuch der SPD 1930*, 190. See IMDB at <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0017046/> accessed April 14, 2019; *Dein Schicksal* (1928) directed by Ernö Metzner and Oskar Fischinger produced by the SPD. [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0018820/?ref\\_=fn\\_al\\_tt\\_1](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0018820/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1) accessed April 14, 2019, and [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_German\\_films\\_of\\_1928](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_German_films_of_1928) accessed April 14, 2019.

<sup>71</sup> [Juchacz], "1925," *Die Genossin* 1 (Jan. 1925): 3-4.

The SPD women would also hold yearly one-week-long recruitment drives – often in late fall or winter – for both members and subscribers to the women’s magazines.<sup>72</sup> For this purpose, women divided city districts into neighborhoods where groups of two women would go from door to door and speak to tenants, occasionally offering them free materials but usually trying to sell them copies of brochures and magazines.<sup>73</sup> These recruitment drives included the same types of popular events they held throughout the year.

Women in local, sub-regional, regional, Länder, and national organizations also worked on behalf of the ‘general’ Party. During election times, even when few or no women were placed on election lists (or at best placed into lower ranks where they were unlikely to be elected), women participated fully in electioneering. This usually involved similarly repetitive and undesirable footwork called “*Kleinarbeit*” as during the recruitment drives. They did door-to-door campaigning, put out flyers and posters, and sold brochures. They also gave speeches on behalf of the SPD, helped organize and set up ‘general’ events, and collected names and addresses at such convocations to then target attending women with further attention and advertising. Outside of election times, if they attended ‘general’ organizational meetings, women were usually tasked with taking the minutes and working as treasurers. The latter meant women usually had to visit members at their homes to collect membership fees.

Starting with 1926 the SPD women’s organizations especially in urban areas, held week-long International Women’s Day events, demanded by the former USPD women functionaries. The week-long International Women’s Day events, while initiated centrally, were locally-organized public spectacles, with festive women’s programs involving demonstrations ending

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<sup>72</sup> *Jahrbuch der SPD 1927*, 177.

<sup>73</sup> *Jahrbuch der SPD 1927*, 190.

with rallies in front of town halls and parliaments. They were intended to display power in numbers with speeches on social policies and ‘greater political’ topics.<sup>74</sup> In 1931, the SPD held 1500 such rallies all over Germany, with larger cities attracting crowds of up to 5000 women for single events.<sup>75</sup> In 1926, the SPD women collaborated with the KPD by including the issue of the appropriation of German princes’ lands without compensation (“*Fürstenabfindung*”) into their International Women’s Day slogans – but they still held their events separate from KPD functions.<sup>76</sup> In 1930, the SPD’s International Women’s Day carried the motto “Woman and Socialism” in honor of August Bebel’s work of the same title. In 1931, the SPD chose the motto “Against War and Nazi terror” for its International Women’s Day campaigns, but also included signs and speeches for the decriminalization of abortion.<sup>77</sup>

### **The USPD and Women**

The women who joined the USPD seem to have seen the new Party initially as a way to overcome all the problems they experienced within the SPD, including gender discrimination, the neglect of women’s perspectives and topics, and strong centralized power.<sup>78</sup> Early on, the USPD nominated more women to its major decision-making bodies than was common in the

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<sup>74</sup> Hagemann, “Men’s Demonstrations and Women’s Protest,” 104.

<sup>75</sup> *Jahrbuch der SPD 1931*, 218.

<sup>76</sup> Stuckmann, “*Gebt Raum den Frauen*,” 166.

<sup>77</sup> *Jahrbuch der SPD 1931*, 125. The SPD women held International Women’s Day events in 1926, 1927, 1929, 1930, and 1931.

<sup>78</sup> Zietz said during the Founding Party Congress of the USPD in April 1917: “I have the hope, that women’s demands are going to be treated differently than in the old Party; the Party executive postponed and rejected my petitions again and again.” Eichhorn, Emil, *Protokoll über die Verhandlungen des Gründungs-Parteitag der USPD vom 6. Bis 8. April 1917 Gotha: mit Anhang. Bericht über die gemeinsame Konferenz der Arbeitsgemeinschaft und der Spartakus-gruppe vom 7. Januar 1917 in Berlin*, reprint in *Protokolle der Parteitage der Unabhängigen Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands Vol 1: 1917-1919* (Glashütten im Taunus: Detlev Auverman, 1975), 31-32. For the history of the USPD see David Morgan, *The Socialist Left and the German Revolution: A History of the German Independent Social Democratic Party, 1917-1922* (London: Cornell UP, 1975); and Eugen Prager, *Geschichte der USPD* (Berlin, 1922).

SPD. Some women also attempted to establish a women's structure within the Organization but did not get far toward their goals. The Party disintegrated by 1921 after many of its members left the Organization in 1920, either abandoning political organizational work entirely or to join the KPD. The remaining women eventually rejoined the SPD in September 1922 at the Nuremberg Reunification Congress. As scholars have noted, once back in the SPD, the former USPD women functionaries pushed the Party leadership to accept some of their preferences for women's politics.

To a greater extent than in the SPD and KPD, the USPD was willing to allow women into decision-making positions. From late 1917 through 1920, Zietz, a Political Secretary in the USPD's leading Central Action Committee, played a much greater role in running the Party than did Juchacz in the SPD National Executive, effectively running the Party together with Wilhelm Koenig (1886 – 1963) while most of the male Central Action Committee members were part of the Weimar government or away in talks with Moscow.<sup>79</sup> The early USPD also elected other women to leading Party offices at a greater rate than did either the SPD or KPD. The 1917 Gotha Organizational Principles determined that at least one of the Volunteer Members ("Beisitzer," with voting rights) of the Central Action Committee had to be female; but in 1919 the USPD elected Bertha Braunthal (1887 - 1968), Martha Arendsee (1885-1953), Nemitz, Minna Reichert (1869-1946), and Mathilde Wurm (1874-1935) into the Central Action Committee.<sup>81</sup> Zetkin and Lore Agnes (1876-1953) were elected into the Control Commission, with Sender in the Advisory Council ("*Beirat*") to the Central Action Committee.<sup>82</sup> The Advisory Council and the Central

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<sup>79</sup> Zietz in, *Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands. Protokoll über die Verhandlungen des außerordentlichen Parteitages vom 2. Bis 6. März 1919 in Berlin* (Berlin: Freiheit, 1919), 73-74. Wickert described Zietz overall as influential in the USPD leadership. *Unsere Erwählten*, 1: 85 - 87.

<sup>81</sup> "Organisations-Grundlinien," in *Außerordentlicher [USPD] Parteitag März 1919 Berlin*, 9.

<sup>82</sup> Wickert, *Unsere Erwählten*, 1: 80 - 87; *ibid.*, 2: 37.

Action Committee formed the Party's leading bodies and hence women constituted 22 percent of the USPD's central leadership.<sup>83</sup>

However, in all other areas, USPD women experienced gender discrimination. Women made up only 13, 11 and about 18 percent of the USPD parliamentary factions elected into the National Convention in 1919, the Reichstag in 1920, and the Prussian Landtag in 1921 respectively.<sup>84</sup> Repeated efforts to increase the number of women delegates to Party congresses via proportionate representation failed. Even allowing for the underrepresentation, women's topics were still much more often presented at USPD Party congresses than at the SPD and KPD congresses.<sup>85</sup>

As for a USPD women's structure: in 1917 the USPD created a National Women's Committee (Reichsfrauenausschuß) with Zietz at its head. The Organization decided right from the start that Zietz and the National Women's Committee, whose other members were the female leaders of the regional organizations' executives, should coordinate women's propaganda and organization and establish unified policies and practices.<sup>86</sup> However, in the few years of its existence, the National Women's Committee met twice a year at best, with only a few women

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<sup>83</sup> "Organisations-Grundlinien," in *USPD Parteitag März 1919 Berlin*, 9.

<sup>84</sup> Wickert, *Unsere Erwählten*, 1: 80 - 81. I calculated the last percentage figure from Wickert's data in *Unsere, Erwählten*, 1: 81. Nemitz, "Die Frau in den Parlamenten," *USPD Parteitag Leipzig 1922*, 231-234.

<sup>85</sup> See Wickert, *Unsere Erwählten*, 1: 81. Women delegates at the USPD Party Congress in Leipzig in Nov.- Dec. 1919 and the October 1920 Congress made up 10.6 percent and 10.9 percent respectively, while women constituted 14.2 percent of USPD members. Wheeler, "German Women," 118. The 1917 Organizational Principles on delegates' selection for Party congresses determined that the number of women delegates *should* relate proportionately to the number of women members in the party. "Organisationsstatut der Unabhängigen Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands," in *USPD Parteitag Leipzig 1922*, 10-14, 11. At the November 1919 Party Congress, four so-called women's topics were presented. See "Inhaltsverzeichnis," *USPD Parteitag 1919*, 560.

<sup>86</sup> "Organisations-Grundlinien für die Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschland. Beschlossen auf der Konferenz Ostern 1917 Gotha," in *USPD Parteitag März 1919 Berlin*, 9, 62-63; and Wickert, *Unsere Erwählten*, 2: 39.

from the regional executives taking on the travel and associated expenses. As a result, the National Women's Committee was not known for major organizational or policy decisions.<sup>87</sup> Perhaps for this reason too, in late 1919, the Extraordinary Party Congress of the USPD created a National Women's Bureau with a full-time paid National Woman Secretary. The position had only an advisory role in the Central Action Committee but was tasked with the central coordination of the Party's women's organization and propaganda.<sup>88</sup> In the Spring of 1920, the Executive chose Bertha Braunthal (1887-1967), a clerical worker with Jewish-Viennese and Socialist family background for this role. However, during part of her short (10 months) tenure the Organization was in tumultuous debates over whether to accept the Communist International's 21 Conditions and join it. As a result, a fourth of the Party's women members abandoned membership in a political organization altogether, while another 44,000 women members, along with Braunthal, shifted to the KPD.<sup>89</sup> Between late 1920 and the reunification with the SPD in September 1922, the USPD women's movement appears to have been largely in disarray, trying to recover from the loss of so many women members (see Table 2).<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> By January 1922, the National Women's Committee had no special mention in the statute. See "Mitwirkung der Frauen," in "Organisationsstatut der Unabhängigen Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands," in *USPD Parteitag Leipzig 1922*, 13; and Wickert, *Unsere Erwählten*, 1: 81.

<sup>88</sup> *USPD Parteitag März 1919 Berlin*, 63 and 531.

<sup>89</sup> *USPD Parteitag Oktober 1920 Halle*, 42 – 43; and Wheeler, "German Women," 129-131. Wheeler argued that even though at the USPD October 1920 Halle Party Congress a majority of delegates voted for joining the Third International, a larger number of female functionaries as well as ordinary members decided against the Third International. Women were not enthralled by the Communist International (Comintern) and its 21 Conditions because the Comintern had not paid much attention to women's issues, acted against women's independent decisions surrounding the Bern International Women's Conference of 1915.

<sup>90</sup> See comments by A. Schroeder, Zietz, Sender, and Wurm at the January 1922 Leipzig USPD Women's Conference, *USPD Parteitag Leipzig 1922*, 196-197, 183, 194, and 200.

**Table 2: USPD Membership, 1919-1922**

Year	No. Total	No. Female
Jan. 1919	300,000 <sup>96</sup>	70,000 <sup>97</sup>
Fall 1920	300,000 <sup>98</sup>	135 464 <sup>99</sup>
Spr. 1921	340,057 <sup>100</sup>	50,000 <sup>101</sup>
Jan. 1922	300,659 <sup>102</sup>	44,766 <sup>103</sup>

### **The KPD and Women**

Beginning in late 1920, the KPD established a special women's propaganda and organizational structure following Zetkin's Comintern-approved ideas and paid a few leading women functionaries for their work. In 1924, a new "ultra-leftist" leadership rejected this women's structure and its focus on housewives, dismantled the Organization's women's structure, and sidelined many of the female functionaries engaged in women's propaganda and organizational work theretofore. They argued that factory workers, as the Party's main constituency, needed no gender-specific propaganda or organization. Though the KPD failed to organize women factory workers in factory cells, it was happy to segregate some of its front or mass organizations and 'Delegate movement' by sex, in the process reassigning women's

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<sup>96</sup> Zietz's estimate, in *USPD Parteitag März 1919*, 50.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Weber, *Die Wandlung* vol. 1, 254.

<sup>99</sup> Zietz, in *USPD Parteitag Oktober 1920*, 24.

<sup>100</sup> Wheeler, "German Women," 129.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ludwig, "Kassen- und Organisationsbericht," in *USPD Parteitag Leipzig 1922*, 130.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

recruitment to women functionaries. While the Red Women's and Girls' League (Rote Frauen und Mädchenliga, RFMB) and the Delegates 'movement' had successful phases and aspects, they too mostly attracted housewives.

In August 1919 the fledgling KPD, with very few members and a small budget, established a National Bureau for Women's Mobilization led by Ilse März (a pseudonym probably for Rosi Wolfstein), Lydia Keller, and temporarily Ruth Fischer.<sup>104</sup> Relatively quickly a battle was fought between Keller and März on the one side rejecting a structure for women's propaganda and organization in the KPD, and Zetkin on the other who was working to have the Comintern approve her plans for a special women's structure in the Party. By the Unification Congress with the USPD in December 1920, the Comintern and the now United Communist Party of Germany (Section of the Communist International), (Vereinigte Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (Sektion der Kommunistischen Internationale), VKPD) decided to go with Zetkin's position. Zetkin and her "Guidelines for the Work Amongst Women" ("Richtlinien für die Arbeit unter den Frauen") explained that biological and socio-culturally constructed differences among the sexes require that primarily female KPD functionaries create women's propaganda and organizational practices; and teach women self-confidence, independent thinking, and the collectivist Socialist/Communism outlooks needed for the revolution.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> According to Ossip Flechtheim, the KPD had 50 members in Berlin and a few thousand in the Reich at its founding. *Die KPD in der Weimarer Republik* (Offenbach a.M: Bollwerk-Verlag Karl Drott, 1948), 47; Hans-Jürgen Arendt, "Das Reichsfraussekretariat bei der Zentrale der KPD (1919-1923)," *Mitteilungsblatt der Forschungsgemeinschaft* (1986): 5-21, here 6; an undated letter "An die Zentrale der KPD" from Berlin and signed Keller, März, and Fischer, SAPMO BArch RY 1/I 2/701/10 Fiche 1, images 5-7; and letter from 19 November 1919 "KP (Spartakusbund) Reichssekretariat für Frauenagitation KP (Spartakusbund)," signed Ilse März, "An die Zentrale," BArch RY 1/I 2/701/10 Fiche 1, images 8-11. Wolfstein had been arrested multiple times during and immediately after WWI, the latter in part due to her membership in the Düsseldorf Workers' and Soldiers' Councils, and would have had a good reason for using a pseudonym. Jutta Dick and Marina Sassenberg list Wolfstein as the Women's Secretary of the KPD after its founding. See Dick and Sassenberg, eds, *Encyclopedia of the Jewish Women's Archive* at <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/wolfstein-frolich-rosi> retrieved on 15 May 2019.

<sup>105</sup> "Richtlinien für die Frauenarbeit" in *Bericht über die Verhandlungen des Vereinigungsparteitages der USPD (Linke) und der KPD (Spartakusbund) Abgehalten in Berlin vom 4. bis 7. Dezember 1920. Anhang: Bericht über die*



Therefore, the Unification Congress elected Braunthal as the paid National Women's Secretary (*Frauenreichssekretärin*) and designated 3 other women functionaries as her paid assistants in the National Women's Bureau. These were Hertha Sturm (pseudonym for Edith Schumann, née Fischer, 1886-1945), Edda Tennenbaum a.k.a. Else Baum (née Hirschfeld, 1878-1952), and Katharina 'Ketty' Guttman (pseudonym Katharina Ekey, 1883-1967). One of their major responsibilities was to create propaganda targeting women specifically. They therefore edited and contributed to the Party's women's paper *Die Kommunistin*, which Zetkin had created and edited since May 1919. The Party dailies' women's supplement, *Tribüne der Proletarischen Frau*, and the *Communist Women's International* (the publication of the Comintern's International Women's Secretariat in Moscow, IWS) were two other platforms for their propaganda.<sup>106</sup>

The National Women's Bureau had also helped set up a centralized women's structure within the KPD, with women's mobilization committees from the local through regional levels parallel to the KPD overall structure. It was responsible for the recruitment of women to the Party, their ideological conversion during regular women's meetings, and their functionary

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1. *Frauen-Reichskonferenz am 8. Dezember 1920 in Berlin* (Leipzig: Franke, 1921), 261-269; "Richtlinien für die kommunistische Frauenbewegung. Anhang Einleitung der russischen Ausgabe der Richtlinien." (Leipzig: Franke, 1920); and "Richtlinien für die Frauenagitation der Vereinigten Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands (Sektion der Kommunistischen Internationale)," 1921.

<sup>106</sup> Mathilde Jakob co-edited *Die Kommunistin* between 1919 and 1920, with Zetkin in charge. Hermann Weber and Andreas Herbst, "Jacob, Mathilde" *Handbuch der Deutschen Kommunisten* (Berlin: Karl Dietz Verlag, 2008) & *Bundesstiftung zur Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur*, Berlin, <https://www.bundesstiftung-aufarbeitung.de/wer-war-wer-in-der-ddr-%2363%3b-1424.html?ID=4513> retrieved 26 June 2019. Tennenbaum was from Mitau/ Kurland in Baltic Russian territories, a member of the Russian, Polish, and Lithuanian social democratic parties, worked for the Comintern starting in 1919, spoke German with native fluency, collaborated with Zetkin on the making of *Die Gleichheit* between 1909 and 1911, was an editor at the *Rote Fahne*, the KPD organ in Berlin; and *Die Kommunistin* from 1920 until 1924, taking turns with Sturm, Guttman, and Käthe Güsfield, with Wolfstein supporting them. "Protokoll der Sitzung des Zentralkomités am 10. Dez. 1920," at SAPMO BArch RY 1/I 2/2/13 Fiche 1 image 5, p. 2. The KPD sidelined Tennenbaum in 1924, as it did many other women functionaries, assigning her only archivist and librarian duties, and subsequently ejected her entirely from the Party in 1928. Weber and Herbst *Handbuch der Deutschen Kommunisten*.

training at the regional level. However, communication with regional organizations suggested that few women's mobilization committees had been created, and frequently no one seemed responsible for women's propaganda and organization.<sup>107</sup>

As a result, in May 1921 the National Women's Bureau quickly nominated 5 women (some of whom were members of state parliaments) as full-time Regional Women's Secretaries responsible for the propaganda, organization, and training of women.<sup>108</sup> Rosi Wolfstein (1888-1987) was assigned to cover Berlin-Brandenburg, Hertha Geffke (1893-1974) to Rhineland-Westphalia, Minna Reichert (née Bene, 1869-1946) to Halle-Merseburg, Martha Schlag (née Press, 1875-1956) to Saxony, and Erna Halbe (née Demuth, 1892-1983) to the Wasserkante Nord and greater Hamburg region.<sup>109</sup> The National Women's Bureau sent these women, its own staff, and volunteers to the regional and local organizations to help set up women's mobilization committees, to instruct the women's mobilization committee members on how to do women's propaganda and organizational work, and to teach women's courses on public speaking and Socialist/Communist ideology.<sup>110</sup> They also presented speeches at mixed-sex symposia around

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<sup>107</sup> KPD membership was heavily concentrated in urban and industrial areas such as Berlin, Halle, Magdeburg, Gera, Hamburg, Bremen, and regions of the Ruhr and Rhine. There were complaints about memos from the National Women's Secretary not being forwarded to Women's Mobilization Committees by regional secretariats and instead accumulating in the offices or being trashed; possibly because the Women's Mobilization Committees only existed on paper.

<sup>108</sup> See *Bericht über die Verhandlungen des 2. (7) Parteitages der Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands (Sektion der Kommunistischen Internationale). Abgehalten in Jena vom 22 bis 26. August 1921*, (Berlin, 1922), 24; and Arendt, "Das Reichsfrauensekretariat," 11.

<sup>109</sup> *Parteitag der KPD Jena 1921*, 24-25; and "Frauenkonferenz der KPD am 7. Mai 1921 in Berlin" at SAPMO-BArch RY 1/I 2/701/2 Fiche images 1-14. Wolfstein had a business qualification, SPD membership beginning in 1908, joined the USPD in 1917, was a member of the revolutionary Duisburg Workers' and Soldiers Council in November 1918, delegate to the Founding Congress of the KPD, delegate to the II. World Congress of the Comintern in the summer of 1920, Zentrale member between 1921 and 1923, but was sidelined in 1924 by the leftist Zentrale, left the KPD in 1929 to join the Communist Party Opposition, KPO, then the Socialist Workers' Party (Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei, SAP). See Weber, *Die Wandlung des deutschen Kommunismus. Die KPD in der Weimarer Republik* (Frankfurt a.M.: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1969), 2: 346.

<sup>110</sup> Johanna 'Hanna' Ludewig (1891-1937) was one of the travel speakers for the SPD's National Women's Bureau. She was an accountant, then USPD member, joined the KPD at the Unification Congress, was a KPD delegate to the

general KPD campaigns and elections, at public women's events, and at an array of yearly women's conferences at all levels of the organization.<sup>111</sup>

In 1924, after the failed 1923 'German [KPD] October Revolution', a new "ultraleftist" leadership (Ruth Fischer, 1895-1961; Arkadi Maslow, 1891-1941; and Ernst Thälmann, 1886 - 1944) reorganized and refocused the KPD to fit more closely with the guidelines of the 1921 Third World Congress of the Comintern.<sup>112</sup> This involved a shift from the neighborhood organizations to factory cells as the basic KPD organizational units, at a time when the Party's members increasingly became unemployed.<sup>113</sup>

This "Bolshevization" also involved a greater centralization of the Party, and as part of this process, the leadership dissolved the KPD's separate women's recruitment structure,

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Prussian Landtag (1921-1933), in the RFMB leadership from 1927 -1930, and headed the women's and girl's section of the Kampfbund gegen den Faschismus in 1932. Weber, *Die Wandlung*, 2: 211. Hertha Geffke (1893-1974), was a domestic servant, started her SPD membership in 1912, shifted to the USPD in 1917, was part of the Stettin Workers and Revolutionary Council in 1918, delegate to the III. World Congress of the Comintern in 1921; elected to Prussian Parliament 1921-1924, but was sidelined starting in 1924. Helmut Müller-Enbergs, Jan Wielgoths, Dieter Hoffmann, Andreas Herbst, Ingrid Kirschey-Feix. *Wer war wer in der DDR? Ein Lexikon ostdeutscher Biographien*. Berlin: Links, 2010. <https://www.bundesstiftung-aufarbeitung.de/de/recherche/kataloge-datenbanken/biographische-datenbanken> retrieved 5 April 2023.

<sup>111</sup> See Geffke, "Aus der Organisation: Aufbau der Frauenpropaganda im Rheinland," *Die Kommunistin* 16 (1922), 127; and a letter from 15. October 1923 from Frauenreichssekretariat, Braunthal, "An die Zentrale," SAPMO BArch RY 1/I 2/701/13 image 26.

<sup>112</sup> Weber, *Die Wandlung des deutschen Kommunismus. Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republik* (Frankfurt a.M.: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1969), 1: 8. Weber divided the Party's development toward Stalinization into three stages: a revolutionary phase (1919-1923), a stabilization phase with directional changes ("Bolshevization") and internal factional turmoil (1924-1928), and a "Stalinization" period (1929-1933). Arkadi Maslow was Isaak Jefimowitsch Tschemerinski (Jelisavetgrad/now Kirovograd 1899 - 1941). From a Jewish merchant family, a musician and studied Physics under Albert Einstein and Max Planck, was an editor to *Rote Fahne's* International Politics section, and was in the leadership of the Berlin-Brandenburg organization with Fischer in 1921. Mario Kessler, *Ruth Fischer: Ein Leben mit und gegen Kommunisten* (1895-1961) (Cologne: Böhlau, 2013), 78.

<sup>113</sup> See *Bericht über den IX. Parteitag der Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands (Sektion der Kommunistischen Internationale) Abgehalten in Frankfurt am Main vom 7. bis 10. April 1924* (Berlin: Viva, 1924), 37-39. The X. Party Congress in 1925 confirmed the change toward the factory cell organization by including it in the Party statute. See Weber, *Die Wandlung*, 1: 258-259. The KPD noticed it had a large number of unemployed members; it carried two sets of membership numbers: one with those who could afford the full membership fees; and another set with members who no longer paid fees because they were relying on decreasing unemployment, welfare, and crisis support funding.

accusing the women functionaries of independent, gendered (meaning feminist), and “rightist” practices that were misdirected toward recruiting housewives over women workers.<sup>114</sup> The new leadership sidelined many female functionaries and established a much more dependent Women’s Division at the Zentrale to work on winning women workers to the Party.<sup>115</sup> However, since many KPD members were unemployed, and women functionaries were housewives and not workers, factory cells did not materialize to the degree desired by the KPD leadership, and those that were established amongst men usually did not try to recruit women workers.<sup>116</sup> Moreover, women workers, afraid of being dismissed from their jobs, stayed clear of KPD events.<sup>117</sup>

A KPD tactic used especially during the second half of Weimar was to rely on front or mass organizations, whose KPD origin and connection were only partially hidden to attract people who otherwise would not join the KPD or its organizations. It was more successful, but it too attracted mostly housewives – who didn’t necessarily go on to become members of the KPD.

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<sup>114</sup> See “Bericht der Reichsfrauenkonferenz der KPD 1924. Berlin, den 12. May 1924,” in SAPMO BArch RY 1/I 2/701/3, Fiche 1 images 1-41.

<sup>115</sup> Braunthal, “Resolution: Über die Stellung der Gesamtpartei zur Arbeit unter dem weiblichen Proletariat,” in “Bericht der Reichsfrauenkonferenz der KPD 1924. Berlin, den 12. May 1924,” in SAPMO BArch RY 1/I 2/701/3 Fiche 1 images 1-41, here image 15, 21-24, 26.

<sup>116</sup> Johanna Piiper, *Die Frauenpolitik der KPD in Hamburg 1928 bis 1933* (Cologne: Pahl-Rugenstein, 1988), 58 and 90; Akira Saito, “Die Geschlechterpolitik in der KPD. Zum Verhältnis von der Politisierung der proletarischen Frauen und der kommunistischen Frauenbewegung,” *政経論叢 [Political and Economic Series]* 72, no 2-3 (28 Feb. 2004), 19-36, here 23, at <http://hdl.handle.net/10291/8417> retrieved on 13 July 2019. Saito quoted the *Rechenschaftsbericht der Bezirksleitung Ruhrgebiet der KPD für die Jahre 1930-32* (Essen, 1932, Reprint Hamburg, 1972), 24. Overlach admitted at the March 1927 Party Congress that the KPD had little influence on women workers in factories, and blamed women workers’ backwardness and lack of political schooling, *Bericht über die Verhandlungen des XI. Parteitags der Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands (Sektion der Kommunistischen Internationale) Essen vom 2. Bis 7. März 1927*, (Berlin: Viva, 1927), 145.

<sup>117</sup> Eva Walter, “Meine Frau hat keine Zeit: Frauen in der KPD während der Weimarer Republik,” in *Demokratie und Arbeitergeschichte* 2, 96-107 (Stuttgart: Alektor, 1982). Overlach noted that women workers tended to get fired when employers found out they were delegates. “Die Aufgaben der Reichsfrauenkonferenz der Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands” SAPMO-BArch RY 1/I 2/701/3 image 79-83, here image 81 p. 3.

Among these front organizations was the very successful International Workers' Aid (Internationale Arbeiterhilfe, IAH) led by Willi Münzenberg and the Red Aid of Germany (Rote Hilfe Deutschland, RHD). The IAH was known for attracting women from the SPD, as well as many unaffiliated women, to fundraising and practical welfare work.<sup>118</sup> The IAH assisted families of lower socio-economic strata in numerous ways from strike kitchens to children's vacation retreats and children's homes, whereas the RHD provided economic and other aid to the politically persecuted and their families.

The KPD also used the Red Women's and Girls' League (*Roter Frauen und Mädchenbund*, RFMB) to try to attract women workers to its propaganda sphere. Led by Helene Overlach (1894-1983), the RFMB was founded in late 1925 after the Red Front Fighter League's (*Roter Frontkämpferbund*, RFB) male leadership ejected women from the organization for not being able to keep up with the men during drills.<sup>119</sup> Fischer's language at the April 1924 KPD Women's Conference indicated that the leadership of the KPD and the RFB thought the presence of women emasculated male members and reduced the tough and militarist impression they wanted to make during public events. By 1927, the RFMB had 400 local organizations and 25,000 paying members, four-fifths of whom were not members of any political party (see Table 3).<sup>120</sup> The KPD had some control over the RFMB's leadership, ideology, programs, slogans, and

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<sup>118</sup> At the 1927 KPD National Women's Conference Genosse Pehlke from the RHD reported the organization had 175,000 members of which only 20,000 were women. "Protokoll der Reichsfrauenkonferenz in Berlin am 18./19. Juni 1927" in SAPMO-BArch RY 1/I 2/701/3 image 232; Arendt estimated the RHD had a membership of 50,000-60,000 women in 1929 and 140,994 at the end of 1930. The IAH had 42,000 women members, constituting 63 percent of the IAH's overall members in 1931. "Zum Anteil der Frauen an den Organisationen der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung in den Jahren der Weimarer Republik," in *Mitteilungsblatt der Forschungsgemeinschaft zur Geschichte des Kampfes der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung um die Befreiung der Frau' an der Pädagogischen Hochschule 'Clara Zetkin'* 1 (Leipzig, 1978), 17-31, here 25, cited in Piiper, *Die Frauenpolitik der KPD*, 68.

<sup>119</sup> *Jahrbuch der SPD 1927*, 191; and Helene Overlach in "Frauenreichskonferenz 19 Juni 1927," in SAPMO-BArch RY 1/I 2/701/3.

<sup>120</sup> Piiper, *Die Frauenpolitik der KPD*, 57 and 62.

activities, as it did in the many other front or mass organizations; thereby believing that it influenced the outlooks of members of such organizations.<sup>121</sup> Before the RFB's and therefore also the RFMB's prohibition by the government in 1929, the KPD used the RFMB to protect KPD women's events and implement KPD election and special campaigns among women, such as the campaign against the princes' compensation (*Volksbegehren für die Fürstenenteignung*).<sup>123</sup> It also used the RFMB for publicity, as the organization's women created visible and audible public spectacles with demonstrations of uniformed women (wearing red scarves) marching in unison at the annual Red Women's Convocations (*Rote Frauentreffen*, with festive rallies and concerts).<sup>124</sup> However, according to Kontos, not all of these activities were KPD-led. During a time when the Party rejected topics and perspectives of interest to women and the familial within Party politics, women in the RFMB used the organization to create "women's

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<sup>121</sup> Overlach was in command at the RFMB in Berlin after the absent Zetkin, and starting in the spring of 1927, she was also the leader of the KPD Women's Division. The KPD assigned its women functionaries to work in the RFMB, create regional and local RFMB organizations and lead them while obscuring their KPD affiliation. Nevertheless, many local RFMB leaders were not simultaneously KPD members according to Piiper, *Die Frauenpolitik der KPD*, 57-58. Her data comes from Kurt G. P. Schuster, *Der Rote Frontkämpferbund, 1924-1929. Beiträge zur Geschichte und Organisationsstruktur eines politischen Kampfbundes* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1975), 119; and Sturm, *InPreKorr*, 74 (1926), 1171-1177, here 1174. RFMB groups regularly protected KPD women's events. *11. Parteitag der KPD März 1927 Essen*, 251-253; and Genossin Hanna from Breslau in "Frauenreichskonferenz 19. Juni 1927" in SAPMO-BArch RY 1/I 2/701/3 Fiche image 233.

<sup>123</sup> The RFMB's die-hard members switched over to the women's divisions of the Fighting League Against Fascism (Antifaschistische Action/Kampfbund), founded in the fall of 1930 by the KPD. Piiper, *Die Frauenpolitik der KPD*, 59. The RFMB collected funds for IAH strike kitchens during labor actions and set up its own strike kitchens. See Piiper, *Die Frauenpolitik der KPD*, 58-63, and Kontos, *Die Partei kämpft*, 60; and "Resolution über die Arbeit der KPD unter den Frauen. Angenommen vom 11. Parteitag der KPD. Essen 2. - 7. März 1927." In *Dokumente der revolutionären deutschen Arbeiterbewegung zur Frauenfrage* (Leipzig, 1975), 109. During the princes' compensation campaign mass demonstrations with 200,000 participants took place and the campaign received 15 million votes at the referendum, missing the 20 million votes needed to succeed. Kontos, *Die Partei kämpft*, 62.

<sup>124</sup> All three parties used rallies and demonstrations before their conferences as public spectacles for propaganda purposes. The RFMB did so as well but their uniformed members were perhaps greater attention catchers. Piiper, *Die Frauenpolitik der KPD*, 61-62.

milieus” with “alternative social relations” and forms of entertainment and activities catered to their own likes, needs, and perspectives.<sup>125</sup>

**Table 3: Membership in KPD Mass/Front Organizations**

Organization	Overall Membership	Female Members
IAH 1931	ca. 148,000	71,500
Rote Hilfe Deutschland 1930	503,500	141,000
RFMB 1927	25,000	25,000
Kampfbund gegen den Faschismus, 1931	106,000	12,000
Revolutionäre Gewerkschaftsopposition	250,000	50,000

From: Hans-Jürgen Arendt, “Zur Frauenpolitik der KPD und zur Rolle der werktätigen Frauen im antifaschistischen Kampf im Frühjahr und Sommer 1932,” *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 14 (1972): 805-818, here 46.

In late 1926, with Overlach leading the RFMB and soon simultaneously the Women’s Division in the KPD Zentrale, the League began implementing another KPD women’s mass or front organizational strategy: the Women Worker Delegates (Arbeiterinnendelegierten) and the Conferences and Congresses of Working Women (Konferenzen der Werktätigen Frauen).<sup>126</sup> Once again, the KPD did not officially acknowledge organizing the delegates’ events. The Party intended for the delegates’ ‘movement’ to look like a grass-roots movement of women workers who spontaneously elected delegates from amongst themselves and then set up conferences and congresses.<sup>127</sup> However, the KPD assured that a clandestine core of Communist women

<sup>125</sup> Kontos, *Die Partei kämpft*, 62 and 60; Walter, “Meine Frau,” 96-107; and Piiper, *Die Frauenpolitik der KPD*, 60.

<sup>126</sup> The March 1927 Party Congress adopted guidelines, the “Resolution zur Arbeit unter den Frauen,” which determined that the Party had to immediately begin implementing the women’s delegates’ movement nationwide as the Party’s most important method for influencing women workers “Resolution zur Arbeit unter den Frauen,” 11. *Parteitag KPD Essen 1927*, 398-399; Kontos, *Die Partei kämpft*, 71-72, Piiper, *Die Frauenpolitik der KPD*, 13-14, 74, and 78-81; and Arendt, “Das Reichskomitee werktätiger Frauen,” 744.

<sup>127</sup> See “Kommission zur Ausarbeitung von Richtlinien für die Frauen-Delegierten-Versammlungen” SAPMO-BArch RY 1/I 2/701/16 images 90-99; a letter from Berlin on 16 June 1925 from the KPD Women’s Division at the Zentrale “Pol-Sekretariat der KPD,” “An das Internationale Frauensekretariat Moskau,” SAPMO-BArch RY 1/I 2/701/19 image 292-294, here 292; and undated letter, but likely from early 1927, from the “Zentralkomitee der KPD Sekretariat (Frauen),” “An das Internationale Frauensekretariat, Moskau,” in SAPMO-BArch RY 1/I 2/701/19 images 305-308, image 307 p. 3. Hanna Schulz’s speech on the delegates system at the 1927 National Women’s Conference “Das Delegierten-System,” in “Protokoll der Reichsfrauenkonferenz in Berlin am 18./19. Juni 1927,” BArch RY 1/I 2/701/3 images 165-181, here 165, p. 131-132; letter from Sturm ‘Frauenabteilung des EKKI’

delegates were selected into committees that would steer delegates' meetings, conferences, and congresses to align ideologically with the KPD.<sup>128</sup> Delegates met at small biweekly gatherings, both before and after conferences, and discussed their grievances. After gaining the other delegates' interest and trust, the Communist core was to assign them tasks on behalf of the Party, such as the acquisition of co-workers' home addresses, the creation and dissemination of workplace newspapers and the KPD's women's publications *Die Kämpferin* or *Arbeiterin* at the factory.<sup>129</sup> According to Piiper, these delegates' meetings and even the initial local conferences were not merely tools for the KPD, however; attendees used the delegates' meetings to create supportive women's networks, with some of the delegates' practices becoming anchored into neighborhoods.<sup>130</sup>

The larger regional and state-wide (Länder) Conferences and Congresses of Working Women, however, and especially the two National Congresses in 1929 and 1930, mainly served the publicity desires of the KPD.<sup>131</sup> The delegates' conferences utilized public spectacle the way

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Moskau, 20. November 1926 "An das ZK der KPD Sekretariat, Abteilung Frauen, Berlin" from 20. November 1926. SAPMO-BArch RY 1/I 2/701/19 images 194-211, here image 196, p. 3;

<sup>128</sup> Hans-Jürgen Arendt, "Das Reichskomitee werktätiger Frauen, 1929-1932." *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 5 (1981): 743-749, 744-746; Sturm, Frauenabteilung des EKKI, "An das ZK der KPD Sekretariat Abteilung Frauen, Berlin," letter from Moscow 20 November 1926, SAPMO-BArch RY 1/I 2/701/19 image 194 – 211, here image 198 p. 5; and letter from the 'Frausekretariat der Komintern,' "An die Frauenabteilung der KPD" from 10. November 1924, BArch RY 1/I 2/701/19 images 252-256, here 254, p. 3.

<sup>129</sup> Overlach, *Bericht XI. Parteitag KPD Essen 1927*, 146. Schulz warned that delegates have to be assigned the task to disseminate the *Arbeiterin* and other simple jobs without letting on that those assigning them were KPD members. Schulz, "Das Delegierten-System," in "Protokoll der Reichsfrauenkonferenz in Berlin am 18./19. Juni 1927" SAPMO-BArch RY 1/I 2/701/3 images 165-188, 169, 177 and 188, and 174. Kontos illustrated that the Hamburg KPD member/functionaries' organ detailed in September and October 1929 how the workplace and street cells should set up the delegates' elections in preparation for the National Congress of Working Women and sign all poster invitations for such elections with a non-existing "Bezirksfrauenkomitee zur Organisierung des Kongresses werktätiger Frauen". This was one of the KPD's ways to obscure its leadership role in setting up the conferences and congresses. Kontos, *Die Partei kämpft*, 75; and Piiper, *Die Frauenpolitik der KPD*, 91-92.

<sup>130</sup> Piiper, *Die Frauenpolitik der KPD*, 134.

<sup>131</sup> The last two delegates' conference occurred in November 1931 in the Ruhr region and in May 1932 in Berlin. Kontos, *Die Partei kämpft*, 83-84.



most party events did during Weimar. The KPD women functionaries set up demonstrations and rallies through working-class neighborhoods and the RFMB provided opening and closing band music and plays. *The International* was sung collectively and a KPD speech choir (*Sprechchor*) presented political propaganda. Overlach, Thälmann, and even Comintern representatives from the Soviet Union spoke at the conferences. Then the delegates were called onto the stage. After introducing themselves and their problems to the attendees, some delegates (who were likely clandestine KPD functionaries) denounced the SPD as ‘social fascists’ and publicly announced their enrollment in the KPD and the KPD’s union, the Revolutionary Union Opposition (Revolutionäre Gewerkschaftsopposition, RGO).<sup>132</sup> Toward the conclusion of the congresses, resolutions were passed expressing support for women’s rights, peace, the KPD, and the Soviet Union.<sup>133</sup>

The delegates’ meetings, conferences, and congresses lasted close to five years and reached a high point in 1930/1931 with thousands of women attending local conferences, 7 state-wide congresses (Länderkongresse) in late 1931, and the two National Congresses of Working Women.<sup>134</sup> However, apart from the publicity, for the KPD the delegates’ movement was a

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<sup>132</sup> Overlach, “Mein Erlebnis als Frauendelegierte in Berlin [Bericht einer parteilosen Frauendelegierten], 1931,” (Berlin, Internationaler Arbeiter-Verlag, 1931), 9, 14-15.

<sup>133</sup> Likely Overlach, “Tagesordnung und Verlauf der 3. Frauendelegiertenkonferenz” in SAPMO-BArch RY 1/I 2/701/3 image 91.

<sup>134</sup> Delegates conferences and conferences of working women – with mostly wives of workers – were held in connection with the strike movements in 1928 and more so in 1929 in industrial areas of the Rhein, Ruhr, Silesia, and Saxony. The 20-21 Oct. 1929 National Congress of Working Women had 400 delegates, and the 22/23 November 1930 Congress had 1,000 delegates. Piiper, *Die Frauenpolitik der KPD*, 6, 19, 73-74. There were 80 regional conferences of delegates in preparation for the November 1930 Second National Congress of Working Women. Kontos, *Die Partei kämpft*, 71-81; and Arendt, “Der Kampf der Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands um die Einbeziehung der Werktätigen Frauen in die revolutionäre deutsche Arbeiterbewegung in der Periode der Weltwirtschaftskrise (1929 bis 1932)” (Ph.D. Diss, Leipzig, 1979), 81-124 and 207-213; *ibid.*, “Das Reichskomitee,” 743; *ibid.*, “Zur Frauenpolitik der KPD und zur Rolle der werktätigen Frauen im antifaschistischen Kampf im Frühjahr und Sommer 1932,” *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 14 (1972): 805-818, here 806; Schulz, “Das Delegierten-System,” in “Protokoll der Reichsfrauenkonferenz in Berlin am 18./19. Juni 1927” SAPMO-BArch RY 1/I 2/701/3 images 165-181, 180.

failure: it did not manage to attract many working women; most delegates were housewives, the sector of women it preferred not to be associated with.<sup>135</sup> Contrary to the KPD's wish to make the delegates' movement part of its 'united front from below' policies and win SPD members for the movement, it also did not attract any noticeable number of SPD women, with KPD women members constituting more than 50 percent of the initial delegates.<sup>136</sup> Therefore, in the spring of 1932, the KPD stopped holding conferences of working women and instead called on women to join the *women's groups* of the 'Anti-fascist Mass-Self-Protection Association' (Antifaschistische Aktion).<sup>137</sup>

Of all the major leftist Weimar parties, the KPD nominated the fewest number of women to paid functionary positions during Weimar, with women making up about 7 percent of paid KPD functionaries overall.<sup>138</sup> Ten women were Central Committee members over the course of Weimar, but usually not in the first two executive positions. Only Zetkin, who held her position nominally starting in 1923, and to a lesser extent Fischer, Braunthal, and Helene Overlach (1894-1983) were recurrently nominated.<sup>139</sup> Only a handful of women were political secretaries in the

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<sup>135</sup> Arendt, "Das Reichskomitee," 743. A spring 1929 membership review, or "Reichskontrolle zur Überprüfung der Mitgliederbewegung" had still found that only 6 percent of KPD women members were employed in factories. Saito, "Die Geschlechterpolitik in der KPD," 20.

<sup>136</sup> Kontos, *Die Partei kämpft*, 73. The SPD leadership opposed SPD women's collaboration with the KPD with few exceptions, such as the princes' non-compensation campaign. Arendt, "Das Reichskomitee," 743.

<sup>137</sup> Overlach, *Bericht XI. Parteitag KPD Essen 1927*, 146; Schulz, "Das Delegierten-System," in "Protokoll der Reichsfrauenkonferenz in Berlin am 18./19. Juni 1927" SAPMO-BArch RY 1/I 2/701/3 images 165-188; Arendt, "Zur Frauenpolitik antifaschistischen," 805-818, here 806; and *ibid.*, "Das Reichskomitee," 743-749. My emphasis.

<sup>138</sup> Weber calculated that there were 34 women among the 504 KPD functionaries KPD Weber, *Die Wandlung*, 2: 26.

<sup>139</sup> Female Central Committee members were Luxemburg (1919), Zetkin (1919-1933), Fischer (1921 and 1924-1925), Duncker (1919), Wolfstein (1920-1921), Braunthal (1920-1924) in light of her position as the head of the National Women's Bureau, Overlach (1927-1930), Helene Rosenheiner-Fleischer (1929), Klara Blinn (1929), Frida Krüger (1929), and Erna Weber (1929). Weber, *Die Wandlung*, 2: 12-17.

regional organizations.<sup>140</sup> Women did serve as Women's Political Secretaries (1920 - 1924) and Women's Division Leaders (1924 - 1932), in the central, regional, sub-regional, and local organizations; working to recruit, train, and mobilize women for the Party; but in many cases as unpaid functionaries and with decreasing rights to decision-making over the course of Weimar.

The KPD also nominated fewer women than the SPD and USPD as candidates for parliaments. Women usually constituted less than 11 percent of the KPD factions in the Reichstag.<sup>141</sup> Between 1924 and 1928 the KPD had only 3 to 5 women representatives in the Reichstag. At the 1929 Magdeburg Party Congress Thälmann demanded proportional female representation in Party assemblies and local through regional elections, and the number of KPD women parliamentarians shot up: the KPD sent 9 to 13 women delegates to the Reichstag between 1930 and 1933.<sup>142</sup>

While more women were editors of the KPD's dailies than in the other parties, the KPD liked to hire over-qualified women (who had doctorates in economics and physics and diplomas in teaching, welfare administration, childcare, and trade) into secretarial and even cafeteria worker positions, while concurrently these women were unpaid for their political-organizational work. Even from these positions, some rose into paid positions and parliamentary posts.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Fischer and Becher were in the regional leadership in Berlin-Brandenburg, Erna Halbe in Hamburg and in Magdeburg-Anhalt, Hanna Sandtner in Munich and later in Berlin-Brandenburg, and Gesine Becker as an Organizational leader of the North-West regional organization. Weber, *Die Wandlung*, 2: 10; and 2. (7) *Parteitag der KPD Jena 1921*, 448.

<sup>141</sup> Wickert, *Unsere Erwählten*, 2: 65-69.

<sup>142</sup> Wickert, *Unsere Erwählten*, 2: 65-69.

<sup>143</sup> Overlach had worked as technical help including for Wilhelm Pieck before she became an editor of the *Ruhr Echo* and the chief editor of the *Niedersächsische Arbeiterzeitung*. Arendt, "Sie tritt mit Herz und Verstand für den Sozialismus: Helene Overlach," *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 6 (1988): 803-812, here 805. Frieda Düwell was one of the women, who started as a technical help at the KPD. From a Jewish family background, she was a teacher in Hamburg but was dismissed due to involvement in the labor movement, did clandestine Party work first for the SPD, then USPD, and KPD. She worked first as technical staff then as a political secretary for the International Women's Secretariat in the early 1920s, attended a World Congress of the Comintern, and was

According to Akira Saito, from the local through national organizations women members were often “not seen as active political participants or leaders, but rather as helpers and supporters of the movement.”<sup>144</sup>

### Local KPD Women’s Practices

KPD women members generally made up 15 percent or less of the overall membership throughout Weimar (see Table 4), but the actual number of female Party members in local organizations could vary greatly as it did in the SPD, from none at all – with the rare KPD organization even refusing female membership altogether – to close to 20 percent in larger cities such as Berlin, Hamburg, Halle, Leipzig, and Dresden, again with housewives making up the greatest proportion.<sup>145</sup>

Women usually participated in biweekly mixed group meetings, where members read and discussed Communist theory, current political events, and KPD policies, and dealt with

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sidelined in 1924 as a Rightist. SAPMO BArch SgY 30-0173 image 4 “Erinnerungen von Frieda Düwell. 3. Und 9. März 1951. Helene Kirsch, who led the Women’s Divisions of the Berlin subregional organizations of East and Lichtenberg between 1925 and 1930, worked as a kitchen aid and waitress at the KPD’s Karl-Liebknecht building in 1930-1931, to then become a member of the Reichstag in November 1932-1933. Müller-Engbergs, <https://www.bundesstiftung-aufarbeitung.de/de/recherche/kataloge-datenbanken/biographische-datenbanken/helene-kirsch-fredrich> retrieved 3/25/2023.

<sup>144</sup> Saito, “Die Geschlechterpolitik in der KPD,” 23. Saito described how male KPD functionaries and members in the Ruhr region between 1930 and 1932 viewed the Party as an institution for males, marginalizing women and women’s propaganda. As a result, women there created their own member groups and activities. Scholars have noted the much younger ages of Communist women members, well below thirty years old – especially in the second half of Weimar – which differentiated KPD women members from female SPD members. In 1930 83 percent of the KPD’s female members were housewives. In 1932, those younger than 25 years old made up 60 percent of the female functionaries, many were even under 20 years old. Arendt, “Weibliche Mitglieder der KPD in der Weimarer Republik – Zahlenmäßige Stärke und soziale Stellung,” *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 4 (1977):652-660, here 658 and 660; and Saito, “Die Geschlechterpolitik in der KPD,” 20. The majority of women Social Democrats and Communists were housewives and mothers between thirty and fifty. Weber, *Die Wandlung des deutschen Kommunismus*, 1: 26.

<sup>145</sup> Some local KPD organizations refused to place women on election lists for parliaments, denied them access to the assemblies for electing candidates, and some even rejected women as members. Saito, “Die Geschlechterpolitik in der KPD,” 23 quoting ZK der KPD Frauenabtlg, “Sonderrundschreiben über die Arbeit der Partei unter Frauen,” from 30. March 1931 in SAPMO-BArch RY 1/I 2/701/15/110; and Arendt. “Weibliche Mitglieder der KPD in der Weimarer Republik. Zahlenmäßige Stärke und soziale Stellung,” *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 4 (1977): 652-660.

organizational issues.<sup>146</sup> If there were enough women members in a local/district organization, women sometimes chose to form exclusive women's groups and met every two weeks for women's reading or sewing evenings. On important dates, such as the May 1<sup>st</sup> Worker's Holiday, the anniversary of the Russian October Revolution, and before elections, KPD members of both sexes attended demonstrations, rallies, and symposia. There, women members performed music, sometimes a short play, such as *Parag 218: Unter der Peitsche der Abtreibungsparagraphen* created by Hamburg women cadres (unless Agitprop troops performed them), or recited poetry and chanted political slogans in speech choirs.

**Table 4: KPD Membership, 1919-1933**

Year	No. Total	No. Female	Percentage Female
1919	106,656	5,000	4.7
1920	78,715	6,000	7.6
1921	200,000	20,000	10.0
1923	294,230	32,856	11.2
1924	150,000	18,700	12.5
1925	114,204	14,800	13.0
1927	124,729	16,200	13.0
1928	120,000	14,700	12.3
1929	124,511	21,100	16.9
1930	176,000	26,400	15.0
1931	246,554	37,000	15.0
1932	287,180	43,100	15.0

From: Hans-Jürgen Arendt, "Weibliche Mitglieder der KPD in der Weimarer Republik. Zahlenmäßige Stärke und Soziale Stellung," *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 4 (1977): 652-660, here 654.

<sup>146</sup> Margarete Buber-Neumann, *Von Potsdam nach Moskau: Stationen eines Irrweges* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1957).

KPD women ran special women's campaigns against the so-called 'double earners' (*Doppelexistenzen/Doppelverdiener*) decrees and campaigns, the French occupation of the Ruhr region, the paragraphs 218/219 that criminalized abortions, and for equal wages for equal work. At both the mixed-sex and women-only events there were slide film presentations, documentaries, or movies; usually set up in cooperation with the Education Division (Abteilung Bildung), the IAH, the Red Aid, or the AgitProp division.<sup>148</sup> Some of the more popular films for female audiences were *Die Frau im Daseinskampf*, *Die Frau im neuen Rußland*, and *Parag 218*.<sup>149</sup>

Women usually helped publicize these events by disseminating flyers and posters printed by the regional organizations from boilerplates made available by the national organization's Press Agency and the Agitprop division. Female functionaries also arranged women's public assemblies of differing sizes in the open air in the neighborhoods (*Häuserblockversammlungen*) or at public venues such as cafes and town halls. For such events, women members would sew standards and flags suited to the occasion and decorate neighborhoods or other spaces in which the events took place.

As with the SPD, women performed a lot of mundane grassroots work for the Party during its many campaigns before elections and during recruitment drives. Women went from door to door – usually in pairs for protection – selling *Die Kommunistin* and later *Die Kämpferin* (1927-1933), as well as the many brochures the party regularly put out for its campaigns.<sup>150</sup> They

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<sup>148</sup> "Frauenreichkonferenz 19 Juni 1927," in SAPMO-BArch RY 1/I 2/701/3 Fiche image 232.

<sup>149</sup> These three movies were screened most at Hamburg women's organizational events. Other films were: *Die Frauen kämpfen gegen die kapitalistische Kriegsgefahr*, *Die Rote Kommune*, *Die Waffe des Zukunftskrieges*, *Die Kinderheime der Roten Hilfe*, *Die Mutter* (directed by Gorki), *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles* (directed by Tucholsky). Piiper, *Die Frauenpolitik der KPD*, 61.

<sup>150</sup> Women were sometimes yelled at and derided for their Communist identities and membership while going from door to door.

sold these to spread the Communist message and, in collaboration with the IAH and RHD, to collect funds for special situations and events. Some of these causes were strike kitchens, the Russia aid, and members' travel to conferences, courses, and to the Soviet Union. KPD women also collected funds for the children's vacation homes of the KPD, such as the 'Mopr' in Elgersburg, Thuringia; and as part of their RHD work assisting political dissidents with their escapes into exile.<sup>151</sup>

In the second half of Weimar, when the KPD focused on winning women workers, women functionaries would set up gatherings near factories and unemployment offices. A woman functionary would give a speech and hold discussions on workers' problems and make demands specific to a factory, but these were not well-attended.

The KPD women mostly did not participate in the violent protests and other events surrounding the 'March Action' of 1921 or the 'German October Revolution' of 1923. Some women helped set up barricades and served as first aid samaritans, and functioned as couriers during the March Action.<sup>152</sup> The KPD did use some female functionaries to persuade policemen and soldiers to not fight against Communists or arrest them.<sup>153</sup>

## Conclusion

The major Weimar leftist parties had an ambivalent position toward women. They wanted women as members but did not care to give women collective rights as a separate

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<sup>151</sup> Rosa Aschenbrenner, as part of the RHD, was known for her assistance to political dissidents. See Günther Gerstenberg, "Rosa Aschenbrenner: eine Pionierin der Roten Hilfe," in *Die Rote Hilfe: Die Geschichte der Internationalen kommunistischen 'Wohlfahrtsorganisation' und ihrer sozialen Aktivitäten in Deutschland (1921-1941)*, ed. Sabine Hering and Kurt Schilde (Opladen: Leske and Budrich, 2003).

<sup>152</sup> Hagemann, "Men's Demonstrations and Women's Protest: Gender in Collective Action in the Urban Working-Class Milieu During the Weimar Republik," *Gender and History* 5, no. 1 (2014): 101-119.

<sup>153</sup> "Erinnerungen von Frieda Düwell, erzählt am 3 March and 9 March 1951" SAPMO BArch SgY 30-0173 4 of 45; Braunthal, in *Parteitag der KPD Jena 1921*, 245; and Eve Rosenhaft, *Beating the Fascists? The German Communists and Political Violence, 1929-1933* (Cambridge UP., 1983).

category of members. As a result, they dismantled any women's structures that remained from the Kaiserreich or those they had set up early in Weimar. The Parties' men also did not adjust their organizational practices to women's preferences, leaving women to join and acclimate to men's organizations and their practices or to meet separately.

While many generally younger KPD women participated in men's organizational meetings, many other KPD and SPD women – especially those of the age group that constituted the majority of SPD members (30-50) wanted to meet in women-only party gatherings. They felt more comfortable amongst themselves, discussing and learning about topics that were of interest and importance to them. Practical work was usually part of their regular meetings, whether sewing for the AWO or setting up entertaining *Frauenwelt* evenings.

They were willing to do mundane work for the organization, such as putting out flyers during election campaign work, collecting party dues from members, or keeping the minutes at meetings. However, they also demanded to be recognized for their work, in part through promotions to paid positions, and parliamentary and bureaucratic posts. They understood it would mean they had to learn as they went, just as the male functionaries had.

Interwar-era parties were also not interested in women's topics that involved the personal and familial. Therefore, the Parties generally excluded topics of interest to women from their regular Party platforms (in both conferences and propaganda) and created specific women's organs or women's supplements for their dailies to carry 'women's issue' topics. The next chapter will discuss the SPD's and the KPD's periodical women's propaganda.



## Chapter Two: The Leftist Women's Press

Weimar women were the first German women to be enfranchised and made up a little over half of the nation's population. In light of this, both Social Democrats and Communists consistently remarked that the creation of a Socialist state and society was not possible without women's support. Though women turned out en masse for early Weimar elections and voted in similar numbers as men for the SPD; they voted for the KPD, joined leftist organizations, and subscribed to their 'general' publications in much lower numbers than men.<sup>1</sup> This helped convince Social Democrats and Communists that women were 'indifferent' to politics, which they understood to be only parliamentary and international politics. As Chapter One illustrated, leftists also concluded that only women functionaries – due to their shared sex and gender-related characteristics, experiences, and outlooks with ordinary women – could reach women with matters labeled as 'women's issues'.

While Chapter One looked at the parties' organizational structures for women, and the latter's day-to-day organizational work, this chapter will investigate the propaganda materials the parties and affiliated organizations created for three groups of women: party members, functionaries, and non-members. As with the organizational and political work, the parties initially continued the longstanding practice of compartmentalization-cum-bunching when it came to women: they left women's propaganda primarily to women using mainly a single women's organ, which for the Weimar SPD continued to be *Die Gleichheit* (1892-1923; edited

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<sup>1</sup> Adelheid von Saldern, "Modernization as Challenge: Perceptions and Reactions of German Social Democratic Women," in *Women and Socialism, Socialism and Women*, eds., Helmut Gruber and Pamela Graves (New York: Berghahn Books, 1998), 101-102. On KPD membership and election data see Ben Fowkes, ed., *The German Left and the Weimar Republic: A Selection of Documents* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 332-333. Few voting districts divided ballots by sex; therefore, their data is at best only roughly representative. At the December 1924 elections, the KPD received for every 100 male votes only 46 female votes in Cologne and 68 female votes in Spandau. Women overall were less likely to vote for the KPD than any other party. The KPD was aware of and concerned about this, see SAPMO BArch RY 1/I 2/701/19 Bericht der Frauenabteilung fiche image 79.

by Clara Zetkin, 1892-1917; Heinrich Schulz, 1917-1919; and Clara Bohm-Schuch, 1919-1922 sequentially). For the KPD it was *Die Kommunistin* (1919-1926; edited by Zetkin, 1919-1920; and the KPD's National Women's Bureau, 1920-1924), and *Die Kämpferin* (1917-1922, edited by Mathilde Wurm) was the USPD's women's paper.

But the interwar period also saw a search for better and more diverse publication formats to reach women outside the party and serve their wishes while also meeting women members' and functionaries' information, communication, and training needs. In 1924 the SPD found what leading male and some women functionaries believed was a suitable solution to this complex and difficult task: a labor division in propaganda with the creation of two main women's journals. *Die Genossin* (*The Female Comrade*, 1924-1933) was purely a functionaries' organ, while *Frauenwelt* (*Women's World*, 1924-1933) was styled after contemporary popular illustrated housewives' and fashion publications. The latter was tasked with redirecting member and non-member working-class women's consumerist practices to the Party press, and with winning non-member women to the Organization and its ideas. In the process, the SPD acknowledged women as mass media consumers and was willing to shelf Socialist ideology and reporting on 'greater politics' in favor of 'women's issues' journalism diluted with a large helping of illustrated entertainment, homemaking, childrearing, fashion, and body culture content.

Some women functionaries remained dissatisfied with both *Die Genossin* and *Frauenwelt*. They not only missed Socialist theory and 'greater politics' in both, but also rejected the SPD's use and promotion of popular, commercial, and middle-class culture for the sake of attracting non-member women to the Party and its press. Those in support of *Frauenwelt's* conceptualization argued that titrating commercial and middle-class culture with subtle Socialist messaging was necessary to win and maintain women as consumers of Socialist mass media and

to reduce purely conservative and reactionary messages from reaching working-class women by way of non-Socialist publications. In this way, they believed they could influence readers' political perspectives but also gradually teach them an appreciation for a more elevated culture, outlooks, and practices.

The KPD struggled to reach all three categories of women (functionaries, members, and non-members) with a single women's organ, from 1919 to 1926 with *Die Kommunistin (The Female Communist)*, and for the remainder of the Republic with *Die Kämpferin (The Woman Fighter, 1927-1933)*.<sup>2</sup> The Organization increased its difficulties further through battles over which 'indifferent' women to target: housewives or women workers. This negatively impacted not only its women's organization (as discussed in Chapter One) but also its women's propaganda. It was 1931 before the KPD and its affiliated organizations established a labor division for its women's press similar to what the SPD had chosen to do. Willi Münzenberg, the KPD's propaganda and media czar, published the Communist *Der Weg der Frau (Woman's Path, DWdF)*, edited by Marianne Gundermann), which like the SPD's *Frauenwelt* resembled popular non-Socialist women's magazines, but which did not dilute its Communist political messaging to the same degree as the Social Democratic women's periodical. Despite carrying

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<sup>2</sup> The KPD dailies published the women's supplements the "Tribüne der proletarischen Frau" (1921- late 1922, presumably printed by 11-34 dailies), and "Die werktätige Frau," ("The Employed Woman," 1931-33). Lily Korpus, the future chief editor of the A-I-Z, also published *Die Arbeiterin* (1924 - 1925/26) in Berlin. The "Tribüne der proletarischen Frau" and *Die Arbeiterin* were supposedly entirely written by women workers, many of whom were more likely women cadres of the KPD. Braunthal, Frauenreichssekretariat, "Bericht an die Zentrale" from 25. July 1921 SAPMO BArch RY 1/I 2/701/12 Fiche 1, image 11; SAPMO BArch RY 1/I 2/701/19 Fiche image 274; and *KPD Party Congress Jena 1921*, 245. A functionary named Frida, likely Frida Lux, one of few female editors in the KPD working for the *Rote Fahne* Berlin, noted that very few female worker's correspondents sent articles to the KPD dailies, which then were printed in *Die Arbeiterin*. Frida suggested that female functionaries edit these contributions by female workers' correspondents' because they were "unstilistisch und mangelhaft." This illustrates that any correspondents' reports were at the very least edited by KPD cadres. See *Bericht X. Parteitag der KPD 1925*, 755-756. See also Hans-Jürgen Arendt, "Die kommunistische Frauenpresse in Deutschland 1917 bis 1933," *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 1 (1987): 82 - 84; and Manfred Brauneck, *Die Rote Fahne, Theorie, Feuilleton, 1918-1933* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1973), 21.

entertainment, fashion, homemaking advice, and body culture topics, most of *DWdF*'s contents carried strong Communist themes and lessons.

This chapter introduces the political, organizational-cultural, and economic reasons why the SPD and KPD, and their affiliated organizations, produced and funded women's magazines and highlights debates on the purposes and contents of women's organs. It then describes the major attributes (conceptualization, look, and content) of their women's magazines. First, the KPD's *Die Kommunistin*, which this chapter treats as representative of traditional multi-tasking leftist women's publications aimed at women functionaries, party members, and non-members. Next, it describes and compares the two popular-held women's periodicals *Frauenwelt* and *DWdF* to one another as well as to the non-Socialist *Berliner Hausfrau*, taken here as representative of the commercial media which the leftist papers emulated. And finally, it describes the Social Democratic *Die Genossin*, the professional SPD paper intended to inform and train women functionaries. Throughout the discussion of these magazines, this chapter also highlights internal SPD debates surrounding the women's periodicals' components. The KPD was not transparent about its functionaries' reactions to *DWdF*. Conflict levels may, however, have been low due to *DWdF*'s officially independent publication by Münzenberg, and because *Frauenwelt* had proven successful before *DWdF*'s introduction to the market.

### **Early Twentieth-Century Printing and Reading Mania (“*Lesewut*”)<sup>3</sup>**

Leftists believed in the power of the spoken and written word to awaken people of lower socio-economic strata to their working-class identity, which Marx had defined as automatically created by capitalist structures. Social Democrats and Communists hoped that they could persuade proletarians to become readers of their publications. Readers could then be converted to

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<sup>3</sup> Peter Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1998), 54.

Socialism, induced to vote for and join the leftist organizations as members, and in the case of Communists also support their future revolution. In addition to deploying political speakers to live organizational and mass appeal public events, the pre through postwar-era SPD, and the Weimar KPD, won and retained the majority of their members with the aid of their numerous and varied party presses. The SPD published 95 dailies in 1919 and had more than doubled that figure to 204 dailies (of which 70 were local editions of regional papers) by 1928.<sup>4</sup> Of the 65 million Germans at that time, 1.3 million received an SPD newspaper.<sup>5</sup> KPD publication data is less reliable, but it claimed to have 33 newspapers (11 of them local editions of regional papers) in 1920. In early 1933 it may have published as many as 60 newspapers, with a total circulation of 282,000.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to the dailies, the two Leftist parties and their affiliated organizations put out a variety of weekly, biweekly, and monthly magazines. The KPD's Willi Münzenberg (1889-1940) produced the *Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung* (*Workers'-Illustrated-Newspaper, A-I-Z*, 1921-1933, Neuer Deutscher Verlag) with nearly half a million circulation, and the SPD published the satirical illustrated *Der wahre Jacob* (*The real Jacob*, 1877-1933, J.H.W. Dietz). Every subdivision within the two parties (and their affiliated organizations) printed and circulated

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<sup>4</sup> Friedhelm Boll, *Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie und ihre Medien: Wirtschaftliche Dynamik und Rechtliche Formen* (Bonn: Dietz, 2002), 18; J. Herbert Altschull counted 203 SPD newspapers, "Chronicle of a Democratic Press in Germany Before the Hitler Takeover," *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 52, no. 6 (1975), 229-238, here 237. During Weimar, the SPD created a central agency that investigated for economic viability the prolific number of its local dailies that had mushroomed after WWI and after the inflationary period. On the SPD press see also Alex Hall, *Scandal, Sensation, and Social Democracy: The SPD Press and Wilhelmine Germany, 1890-1914* (Cambridge UP, 1977).

<sup>5</sup> Boll, *Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie und ihre Medien*, 18.

<sup>6</sup> "Berichte der Abteilungen: Abteilung für das Zeitungswesen," in *Bericht über den 5. Parteitag der Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands (Sektion der Kommunistischen Internationale) vom 1. bis 3. November 1920 Berlin* (Leipzig: Franke, 1921), 17; Heinz D. Fischer, *Handbuch der politischen Presse in Deutschland, 1480-1980: Synopse rechtlicher, struktureller und wirtschaftlicher Grundlagen der Tendenzpublizistik im Kommunikationsfeld* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1981), 236 and 240.

newsletters for their members, and a variety of informational materials for functionaries.<sup>7</sup>

Around elections, the parties also put out a plethora of broadsheets and posters in the millions.

Finally, both the Social Democratic publishing company J.H.W. Dietz and Münzenberg's Neuer Deutscher Verlag printed book-length works by Social Democrats and Communists (respectively).<sup>8</sup>

Social Democrats and Communists were not the only ones with a print and corresponding reading mania. SPD publications made up only about three percent of all Weimar print media.<sup>9</sup> Since the turn of the century, Germany had experienced a mass media boom: by 1932, 2,483 different daily and weekly newspapers were published, primarily through the three major publishing houses of Ullstein, Mosse, and Scherl/Hugenberg.<sup>10</sup> They churned out the commercial press (*Generalanzeiger Presse*) that was often local in reach and content. Ullstein's *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, an illustrated weekly had a circulation of a million and a half at the end of the 1920s.<sup>11</sup> According to Reuveni, in 1931 there were "a total of 301 magazines for sports, 227

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<sup>7</sup> Helmut Gruber, "Willi Münzenberg's German Communist Propaganda Empire, 1921-1933," *The Journal of Modern History* 38, no. 3 (Sep. 1966), 278-297, here 287; Christa Hempel-Küter, *Die kommunistische Presse und die Arbeiterkorrespondentenbewegung in der Weimarer Republik: Das Beispiel Hamburger Volkszeitung* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1989); Heinz Willmann, *Geschichte der Arbeiter-Illustrierten Zeitung, 1921-1938* (Berlin: Dietz, 1974); and Heinz Sommer, *Im Zeichen der Solidarität. Bibliographie von Veröffentlichungen der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe in Deutschland, 1921-1933* (Berlin: Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der SED Bibliothek, 1986).

<sup>8</sup> On the J.H.W Dietz publisher see Angela Graf, *J.H.W. Dietz: Verleger der Sozialdemokratie* (Bonn: Dietz, 1998). On Willi Münzenberg's media empire see also Sean McMeekin, *The Red Millionaire: A Political Biography of Willi Münzenberg* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004); and Rolf Surmann, *Die Münzenberg-Legende: Zur Publizistik der revolutionären deutschen Arbeiterbewegung 1921-1933* (Cologne: Prometh, 1982).

<sup>9</sup> Gerhard Eisfeld and Kurt Koszyk, *Die Presse der deutschen Sozialdemokratie. Eine Bibliographie* (Bonn: Neue Gesellschaft, 1980, first edition 1966), 30.

<sup>10</sup> Altschull, "Chronicle of a Democratic Press," 229. Altschull determined that in the 1930s 147 different newspapers were published in Berlin alone. *Ibid.*, 234. As other scholars have illustrated, the turn of the century saw a rise in the commercial mass-market daily and the penny press, and during Weimar, this market expanded to incorporate illustrated magazines. Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin*; Gideon Reuveni, *Reading Germany: Literature and Consumer Culture in Germany before 1933* (New York: Berghahn, 2006); and Bernhard Fulda, *Press and Politics in the Weimar Republic* (Oxford UP: 2009).

<sup>11</sup> Reuveni, *Reading Germany*, 2.

illustrated and light entertainment magazines, 175 different women's and fashion magazines, 67 magazines for youngsters, and 58 radio and broadcasting magazines."<sup>12</sup>

The mass press was at the head of Weimar's booming consumer culture, and even the poorest families were literate enough to read newspapers and subscribed to one daily paper, often in addition to a weekly or monthly illustrated.<sup>13</sup> In Reuveni's words, "reading in the period after the world war became one of the basic needs of day-to-day existence for all social strata" and the commercial press adjusted its looks and contents while "striving to meet the reading tastes of readers from a broad range of social strata and groups."<sup>14</sup> The "big city daily had become the primary source of information and entertainment for metropolitans," bringing sensationalist local news, innovative advertising, sports, entertainment, and increasingly colorful illustrations with the help of technological advances.<sup>15</sup> It was also increasingly an "encyclopedia of daily life" by mirroring the lives, pleasures, concerns, and difficulties of men and women, especially as consumers.<sup>16</sup>

Economic considerations were not limited to the production of commercial media. Even though the KPD received supplemental funding from the Soviet Union, both leftist parties relied in great part on earnings from their publications.<sup>17</sup> For example, in 1928, 75 million Marks

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<sup>12</sup> Reuveni, *Reading Germany*, 128. For a brief history of women's magazines since the nineteenth century (with a larger history of a specific women's periodical), see Sylvia Lott-Almstadt, *Brigitte. Die ersten Hundert Jahre; Chronik einer Frauenzeitschrift* (Munich: Mosaik, 1986).

<sup>13</sup> Reuveni, *Reading Germany*, 56-96; Fritzsche noted that already around 1900, it had become a routine practice for every Berliner to read a daily newspaper. *Reading Berlin*, 18.

<sup>14</sup> Reuveni, *Reading Germany*, 86.

<sup>15</sup> Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin*, 58.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>17</sup> Fowkes, *The German Left*, 173; and McMeekin, *The Red Millionaire*, 163-173.

flowed from the Party businesses into SPD coffers (presumably before expenses), of which 22.7 million were from ads, 22.5 million from subscribers, 21.9 million from printing jobs by party printers, and 8 million from its published books.<sup>18</sup> Not surprisingly the lifestyles of leading party figures – who tended to be concurrently journalists, editors, and parliamentarians – were made possible by their publishing and journalistic enterprises.<sup>19</sup>

The importance of the Social Democratic and Communist press to functionaries is evident in the physical, discursive-political, and economic battles the organizations engaged in over ownership of publishing houses. When in 1917 a group of radical leftist revolutionaries broke away from the SPD in protest over its approval of Germany's participation in WWI (the SPD had voted for war credits and promised not to criticize the government, i.e., the *Burgfrieden*), they took some SPD newspapers and printing houses to their newly founded USPD. Accusations of theft of party organs were frequently made by the remaining Majority Social Democratic Party of Germany (Mehrheitssozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, MSPD).<sup>20</sup>

The importance of newspapers and publishing houses was not lost on ordinary Germans. On 4 and 5 January 1919, 100,000 supporters of the USPD and KPD walked out of their

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<sup>18</sup> Konrad Ludwig, "Bericht des Parteivorstandes: Kasse," in *Protokoll Sozialdemokratischer Parteitag Magdeburg 1929 vom 26. bis 31. Mai in der Stadthalle* (Berlin: J.H.W. Dietz, 1929), 50. The number of SPD-owned editorial and publishing houses, as well as the SPD printers, were a matter of Party pride, representing economic and political might. See Vorstand der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands, *Jahrbuch der deutschen Sozialdemokratie für das Jahr 1926 [-1931]* (Berlin: Dietz, 1926-1931).

<sup>19</sup> Boll, *Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie und ihre Medien*, 237.

<sup>20</sup> Otto Braun, "Über Presse und Presseneugründungen," in *Protokoll der Parteikonferenz in Weimar am 22. und 23. März 1919*, in Horst-Peter Schulz ed. *Protokolle der Sitzungen des Parteiausschusses der SPD 1912-1921. Inkl. Protokoll der Parteikonferenz in Weimar am 22. Und 23. März 1919 und Protokoll über die Verhandlungen der Reichskonferenz der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands abgehalten in Berlin am 5. Und 6. Mai 1920*, 619-1921 (Berlin: Dietz, 1980), 628; and Friedrich Ebert, "Bericht des Parteivorstandes: Parteipresse," in *Protokoll über die Verhandlungen des Parteitages der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands abgehalten in Würzburg vom 14. Bis. 20. Oktober 1917* (Berlin: Vorwärts Paul Singer, 1917), 21.



workplaces and demonstrated in protest against the MSPD's violent treatment of mutinous and hostage-taking USPD followers in the People's Navy Division (*Volksmarinedivision*), and the dismissal of the police president Emil Eichhorn (a USPD functionary).<sup>21</sup> Some demonstrators occupied the building of the SPD's main organ, the *Vorwärts*, as well as several other publishing houses in Berlin's newspaper district.<sup>22</sup> This uprising with the potential to impact the future government system of Germany (whether to establish a parliamentary democracy or a workers' and soldiers' council-led soviet-like system), was violently suppressed by a collaboration of MSPD, the military, and paramilitary groups.<sup>23</sup> Throughout this tumultuous time and while on the run for their lives, the two leading revolutionaries and cofounders of the KPD, Rosa Luxemburg (1871-1919) and Karl Liebknecht (1871-1919) had published the Communist *Rote Fahne* newspaper, in which they called on Germans to join the uprising and turn it into a Communist Revolution.<sup>24</sup>

Given the importance of the press – in Fritzsche's words “revolutionary activity and newspaper reading [commonly] went hand in hand” – neither the SPD nor the KPD was satisfied with the circulation numbers of their publications, even though they were proud of their accomplishments so far.<sup>25</sup> They frequently debated the reasons for the huge discrepancy between

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<sup>21</sup> Otto Wels (MSPD), aiming to reduce the Navy division in size, had refused to pay its salaries. See Robert Gerwarth, *November 1918: The German Revolution* (Oxford UP, 2020), 146.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 146-7.

<sup>23</sup> According to Gerwarth, 200 people were killed on these days by the military and paramilitaries.

<sup>24</sup> Luxemburg and Liebknecht were murdered by paramilitary forces on 15 January 1919. *Ibid.*, 156. Luxemburg was of Jewish and Polish background, a Ph.D. economist, exiled from Poland for her Social Democratic political engagement, co-founder and editor of the Polish Socialist newspaper in Parisian exile *Sprawa Robotnicza* (PPS), and chief editor of the German SPD's *Sächsische Arbeiterzeitung*. Karl Liebknecht – the son of Wilhelm Liebknecht, one of the co-founders of the SPD – was a delegate to the Imperial Reichstag.

<sup>25</sup> Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin*, 56.

their readership numbers and those of the commercial press, as well as the disparity between their voter numbers and their membership and subscriber figures. For example, in the 1919 National Assembly elections the SPD received 11.4 million votes, 39 percent of all votes; in the same year, the SPD had only 1.01 million members and 1.07 million subscribers to its dailies.<sup>26</sup> The KPD, which abstained from the 1919 National Assembly elections but participated in all elections during the remainder of the Weimar Republic, was the party – of all Weimar parties – that consistently received the fewest women’s votes; and women made up only 15 percent of its members through most of Weimar.<sup>27</sup>

### **Women as Target Audiences**

There were therefore both strong political and financial reasons for the parties to increase their subscriber numbers, and through that, they hoped, also their membership figures. One way to do this was to increase their targeting of women as potential readers and members. Women, in particular working-class women, were already great consumers of commercial culture for the masses including fashion papers, housewives’ magazines, romance novels, and cinema movies; all of which leftists (as also other middle-class critics and sociologists), commonly bemoaned as low in cultural, intellectual, and political value.<sup>28</sup> They argued that media producers created trashy mass goods to satisfy and profit from the emotional and escapist needs of female consumers and thereby train women to political lethargy and/or traditional-conservative views.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Eisfeld and Koszyk, *Die Presse der deutschen Sozialdemokratie*, 30.

<sup>27</sup> Eric D. Weitz, *Creating German Communism, 1890-1990: From Popular Protests to Socialist State* (Princeton UP, 1997), 189; and Arendt, “Weibliche Mitglieder der KPD in der Weimarer Republik. Zahlenmäßige Stärke und soziale Stellung,” *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 19 (1977): 654.

<sup>28</sup> Reuveni, *Reading Germany*, 217.

<sup>29</sup> Richard Lohmann at the 1927 Women’s Conference in Kiel, in *Sozialdemokratischer Parteitag 1927 in Kiel. Protokoll mit dem Bericht der Frauenkonferenz* (Berlin: Dietz, 1927), 319.

At the same time, they complained that women consumers were those with power: they dictated, with their purses, what media goods were produced.<sup>30</sup>

Since the Kaiserreich era, the SPD had worked to reach working-class men of all employment and interest groups and ages with special publications; and by including topics of interest to all of these sectors in their dailies.<sup>31</sup> Male and female functionaries, who commonly assumed that women were indifferent to national and international politics or Socialist ideology, believed they could best be baited with ‘women’s issues’ such as topics on healthcare and welfare, women’s employment, family matters, consumer prices, housing problems, etc. Instead of including such themes in their existing ‘general publications’, as many women activists consistently demanded during Weimar, many leading male and female functionaries compartmentalized these topics into special women’s weekly and monthly supplements to their existing local dailies, or into their women’s monthly organ with more national reach.<sup>32</sup>

Given the SPD put out many diverse publications to reach men within and outside of the organization, one might think that the Party, as well as the KPD during Weimar, would have felt the need to publish multiple different types of women’s magazines, each targeting a different

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<sup>30</sup> Reuveni, *Reading Germany*, 224-273.

<sup>31</sup> Among other papers, in 1920 the SPD published the weekly papers *Der freie Beamte* (*The Free Civil Servant*, with “Free” referring to SPD affiliated unions), *Der freie Lehrer* (*The Free Teacher*), *Volk und Zeit* (*Nation and Time*), and was planning to print a weekly entertainment paper. See “Bericht des Parteivorstandes über das Geschäftsjahr 1919,” in *SPD Parteitag 1920 Kassel*, 48.

<sup>32</sup> Clara Bohm-Schuch, in *SPD Parteitag 1919 Weimar*, 466; and Toni Pfülf at the Women’s Conference in Kiel, in *SPD Parteitag 1927 in Kiel*, 322. Juchacz noted at the 1925 SPD Party Conference in Heidelberg that the SPD local dailies to monthlies collectively published 60 women’s supplements, and she complained that only 3-5 of those women’s supplements had content intended to inform and train women functionaries. Presumably all the rest had popular content. Yet Juchacz also spoke with pride at the Women’s Conference following the general Party Conference about having created the women’s supplement to *Vorwärts* upon her own idea and initiative for a short while during an unspecified time. Juchacz, in *SPD Parteitag 1925 in Heidelberg*, 118 and 338. As late as 1929 the SPD employed only 2 women editors (in Hamburg and Magdeburg) among its 400 to 500 editors. Wickert, *Zwischen Familie und Parlament: Sozialdemokratische Frauenarbeit in Südniedersachsen 1919-1950 am Beispiel von Hann. Münden und Einbeck* (Kassel: Sovec, 1983), 14; Ludwig, in *SPD Parteitag 1929 Magdeburg*, 50; and *SPD Parteitag 1927 Kiel*, 47-48.

demographic: such as women members and functionaries, housewives, factory workers, white-collar workers, and women consumers. This was not the rationale of the early Weimar-era SPD; nor was it part of the KPD's logic until 1931. Both parties relied on a single women's organ with a nationwide reach in addition to a few weekend women's supplements to their local dailies instead. *Die Gleichheit* had served from its inception in 1892 until 1923 as the sole SPD women's magazine to win new women members to the Party, as well as to inform ordinary members and functionaries of the activities, policy positions, and accomplishments of women functionaries; and further, to train women functionaries in Socialism and organizational and propaganda work.<sup>33</sup> While the *Die Gleichheit* appears to have succeeded during the Kaiserreich in that task, it died a slow death by mid-1923.<sup>34</sup>

### ***Die Kommunistin***

Since most of *Die Gleichheit's* publication time (*Kaiserreich*) falls outside of this dissertation's investigation time period (the Weimar Republic), this chapter will describe the KPD's *Die Kommunistin's* (see Figure 1) conceptualization, look, and contents as being characteristic of the traditional multifunctional leftist women's publication. A single magazine was tasked with: winning new women readers and new members; informing members and functionaries of organizational decisions, directives, and activities, as well as political information; and training functionaries in leftist theory and for political, organizational, and

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<sup>33</sup> *Die Gleichheit's* predecessor, *Die Arbeiterin* was founded in 1891 by Emma Ihrer, and funded privately by her husband. In 1892, the SPD's publisher Dietz took over its publishing and hired Zetkin as its new editor, who changed the paper's name to *Die Gleichheit*. Blos, *Die Frauenfrage im Lichte des Sozialismus*, 24. On *Die Gleichheit* see Elisabeth Vormschlag, "Inhalte, Leitbilder und Funktionen Politischer Frauenzeitschriften der SPD, der USPD, der KPD in den Jahren 1890-1933 und der NSDAP in den Jahren 1932-1945" (PhD. diss. Göttingen, 1970).

<sup>34</sup> *Die Gleichheit's* print run was down to about 15,000 in 1919 when the SPD had 200,000 women members. "Bericht des Parteivorstandes über das Geschäftsjahr 1919," *SPD Parteitag 1920 Kassel*, 49. Bohm-Schuch petitioned that women members should get an automatic subscription to *Die Gleichheit* with their membership fee or that the paper become a women's supplement to the SPD dailies. *SPD Parteitag 1920 Kassel*, 61-622.



Figure 1: *Die Kommunistin* 6 (15 March 1922): title page.

propaganda work. *Die Kommunistin* of especially 1919 through 1920 was similar in appearance and content to the Kaiserreich-era *Die Gleichheit*.<sup>35</sup> Not surprising, since Zetkin edited both, following her own conceptualization and undeterred by decisions and recommendations from others in her parties.<sup>36</sup> Once the KPD's National Women's Bureau took over editing *Die Kommunistin*, it transformed the magazine to better serve as a propaganda tool for non-member women and perhaps gain a larger following. In April 1924, however,

the paper became a victim of internal Party strife, the dissolution of the National Women's Bureau, and the leadership's decision to target only women workers with *Die Kommunistin*, which it then transformed into a women's supplement to the KPD dailies before publication ended in 1926.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> In July 1919, *Die Gleichheit's* editor Bohm-Schuch added a biweekly illustrated supplement "Die Frau und ihr Haus" with homemaking tips, fashion pages, and body culture to the main paper, published every 8 days. Otherwise, the paper retained its focus on organizational information, the greater women's movement, social policy on especially women's issues, and municipal and welfare training and work. *SPD Parteitag 1919 Weimar*, 21 and 466.

<sup>36</sup> Zetkin was a pioneer of the SPD women's movement from 1878-1917, cofounder of the Spartacist League turned USPD from 1917 through mid-1919, and the KPD from 1920 to her death in 1933. Zetkin's communications with Luxemburg show that Zetkin considered herself part of the KPD months after its founding but remained officially in the USPD, to help pull more USPD members with her at her official departure from the USPD.

<sup>37</sup> As the new head of the Women's Section, Erna Halbe was responsible for editing *Die Kommunistin* by summer of 1925. "Bericht über den Stand der Arbeit der KPD unter den Frauen, auf Grund meiner Informationen als Delegierte

In KPD internal communications and at women's conferences, *Die Kommunistin* was referred to as a "Kampforgan" (a publication for the fight) and given the established triple mission: transmitting Communist ideology to KPD women members and spurring them on to become active in the organization; providing political and organizational information to female KPD functionaries for their propaganda, organizational, and parliamentary work; and winning non-member women as readers to the magazine and members to the Party.<sup>38</sup> Despite frequent changes in its editorship and the gradual incorporation of more popular-visual materials, *Die Kommunistin* of all eras struggled to fulfill this complex mission, in particular the winning of new readers and members, which the radical Left felt was very important following Lenin's estimation of the press as a "collective organizer," or enticer of proletarians into party organizations, thereafter revolutionizing them.<sup>39</sup> Because it lacked the advertising and dissemination budget of the KPD dailies, and because it contained too much political and organizational content, it is probably fair to say that *Die Kommunistin* was read mainly by women functionaries while it was edited by Zetkin; by functionaries, members, and some Communist sympathizers while under the editorship of the National Women's Bureau; and perhaps by some wives of male readers to the party dailies when the women's paper was a women's supplement to the KPD dailies from May 1924 to 1926.<sup>40</sup>

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des Internationalen Frauensekretariats zur Frauenkonferenz der KPD am 11. Juli 25." SAPMO BArch RY 1/I 2/701/19 Frauenabteilung, fiche image 135, p. 3.

<sup>38</sup> See Hertha Sturm, "Die erste Reichsfrauenkonferenz der Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands," *Die Kommunistin* 7 (11 March 1920): 49-53, here 51.

<sup>39</sup> Brauneck, *Die Rote Fahne*, 14-15.

<sup>40</sup> Arendt, "Die kommunistische Frauenpresse," 80.

From May 1919 until December 1920 (while the KPD Women's Bureau was still in the making, underfunded, and met at the homes of its members), *Die Kommunistin* was edited by Zetkin (with help from Mathilde Jacob, 1873-1943, Luxemburg's former secretary, a co-founder of the KPD, and an editor and translator).<sup>41</sup> During this time it was published initially as a thrice, then twice-a-month women's supplement to the *Rote Fahne*.<sup>42</sup> The Organization hoped that, besides women functionaries (who likely subscribed to the *Rote Fahne*), ordinary women members and the wives of male members would find the women's supplement already in their homes as part of their husband's *Rote Fahne* subscription and read it.

Left radical editors in the Spartakus Group, a sub-group within the USPD and the co-founders of the future KPD, had wanted *Die Kommunistin* to be a "popularly and propagandistically made out paper with a similar look and content as the *Rote Fahne*" (as one of its leading members, Luxemburg, had informed Zetkin in late November 1918).<sup>43</sup> Zetkin,

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<sup>41</sup> Hermann Weber, and Andreas Herbst, *Deutsche Kommunisten. Biographisches Handbuch 1918-1945* vol. 1 (Berlin: Karl Dietz, 2004); and Helmut Müller-Enbergs, and Jan Wielgoß, Dieter Hoffmann, Andreas Herbst, Ingrid Kirschey-Feix, *Wer war wer in der DDR? Ein Lexikon ostdeutscher Biographien* (Berlin: Links, 2010), Bundesstiftung zur Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur, Berlin, <https://www.bundesstiftung-aufarbeitung.de/de/recherche/kataloge-datenbanken/biographische-datenbanken/mathilde-jacob?ID=4513> retrieved 16 July 2019. *Die Kommunistin* was also briefly published – with the same content – as the *Spartakistin. Kommunistisches Frauenorgan* (Apr. 1919 – early 1920) with the only difference being that the *Spartakistin* was published one month prior to *Die Kommunistin*. See ZDB <https://zdb-katalog.de/title.xhtml?idn=01189234X> and <https://zdb-katalog.de/title.xhtml?idn=015339289> accessed on 13 Nov. 2019; Vormschlag, "Inhalte, Leitbilder," 58 and 144-145; and Mario Kessler, *Ruth Fischer: Ein Leben mit und gegen Kommunisten, 1895-1961* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2013), 73 and 651.

<sup>42</sup> *Die Kommunistin's* subtitles changed frequently, mostly to provide information about the Party's name changes and shifts in its editors. In 1919 it was: *Frauenorgan der Kommunistischen Partei. Herausgegeben von Klara [sic] Zetkin*; in April 1920: *Frauenorgan der Kommunistischen Partei (Spartakusbund). Herausgegeben von Clara Zetkin*; in Dec. 1920: *Frauenorgan der Vereinigten Kommunistischen Partei (Sektion der Kommunistischen Internationale). Herausgegeben von Clara Zetkin*; in Feb. 1921: *Organ der Vereinigten Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands (Sektion der Kommunistischen Internationale). Herausgegeben vom Frauensekretariat. Gegründet und unter ständiger Mitarbeit von Clara Zetkin*; and in 1924: *Organ der Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands (Sektion der Kommunistischen Internationale). Gegründet und unter ständiger Mitarbeit von Clara Zetkin*. Beginning with the February 4 edition of 1926 *Die Kommunistin* stopped carrying a subtitle.

<sup>43</sup> Brauneck, *Die Rote Fahne*, 441-2; and Arendt, "Die kommunistische Frauenpresse," 80.

however, created *Die Kommunistin* in the image of her old paper *Die Gleichheit*, and the women's supplement of the USPD's *Leipziger Volkszeitung* (which she edited at the time).

From 1919 through 1920 and for most of 1921, *Die Kommunistin* had a homogeneous and traditional look with text only, consistently divided into two columns, with font and titles not chosen to catch readers' attention. The paper seemed overstuffed with words as if the editor – believing in each word's vital importance and effect on readers – had tried to squeeze as many words as possible onto each page. These attributes, as well as the small contents list located at the back of the paper, discouraged perusal and suggested the magazine should be read like a book: from beginning to end following the article sequence decided on by the editor. Zetkin addressed readers with an authoritarian tone using the traditional, formal, third person plural; commonly referring to 'proletarian women' as a single, homogeneous, and clearly defined group: whose thought patterns, outlooks, behaviors, needs, and demands Zetkin claimed to know and understand.<sup>44</sup>

*Die Kommunistin* was meant to be deeply ideological and politically informative. In her first edition's opening commentary, Zetkin announced that her magazine's main goal was to create awareness among proletarian women of their working-class identities, encouraging them to then participate "unswervingly and selflessly" in the revolutionary and socialist projects.<sup>45</sup> Each edition featured just such a one to two-page long lead article, a commentary on contemporary national and international politics, Socialist theory, and the Organization's directional and strategy debates and decisions (such as the use of mass strikes as a political weapon and the establishment of soviets in Germany). Many other political commentaries and

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<sup>44</sup> "Frauenforderungen der Stunde," *Die Kommunistin* 1 (1 May 1919): 4-6.

<sup>45</sup> "Was wir wollen," *Die Kommunistin* 1 (1 May 1919): 1.



articles were within the rest of *Die Kommunistin*. All tended to be very polemical, criticizing unjust SPD government actions against revolutionaries using hyperbole and colorful adjectives to target readers' emotions; while offering little concrete information on any chronology of events, motivations, and actions of participants (since Zetkin assumed readers had already read reports about them in dailies).<sup>46</sup>

*Die Kommunistin* also informed readers about the emerging organizations of KPD women and youth and their practices. In recurrent segments it described propaganda tours by pioneering radical leftist activists like Schlag and Bertha Thalheimer (1883-1959), publicized successful methods developed by local and regional organizations for others to imitate, and offered guidelines by the KPD and the Comintern (Communist International).<sup>47</sup> The columns "*Sozialistische Frauenbewegung im Ausland*" ("Socialist Women's Movement Abroad") and "*Frauenwahlrecht*" ("Women's Suffrage") provided information on international non-Communist women's organizations and events promoting women's suffrage and other women's rights.<sup>48</sup> Even her "Feuilleton" for women and the children's section "*Für unsere Kinder*" ("For

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<sup>46</sup> "Der gegenrevolutionäre Reichstag," *Die Kommunistin* 19 (1920): 145-146; "Der Schlusstrich," *Die Kommunistin* 3 (21 Jan. 1920): 17-18; "Die Friedensmacht," *Die Kommunistin* 2 (11 May 1919): 9-11; "München," *Die Kommunistin* 2 (11 May 1919), 11-12; R. Luxemburg, "Die opportunistische Methode," *Die Kommunistin* 5 (11 Feb. 1920): 35, an excerpt from her *Sozialreform oder Revolution* (Leipzig: Vulkan, 1919, first published in *Neue Zeit* 1897/98.); E. Bernstein (posthumous publication) "Engels' Grundsätze des Kommunismus," *Die Kommunistin* 24 (1920): 204-205; "Tolstoy über den Antisemitismus," *Die Kommunistin* 24 (1920): 186; Alexandra Kollontay, "Der erste russische Arbeiterinnenkongreß," *Die Kommunistin* 11 (15 May 1920): 83-84; and "Lenin über die Befreiung der Frau," *Die Kommunistin* 11 (15 May 1920): 87.

<sup>47</sup> The recurrent segments were: "Notizenteil" ("News"), "*Aus der Organisation*" ("From the Organization") renamed "*Aus unserer Parteiarbeit*" ("From our Party Work") and "*Aus der kommunistischen Frauenbewegung*" ("From the Communist Women's Movement").

<sup>48</sup> "Internationale Kommunistische Frauenbewegung: Richtlinien der Kommunistischen Frauenbewegung," *Die Kommunistin* (1920): 175; "Zur Frage unserer Frauenbewegung," *Die Kommunistin* 9 (21 April 1920): 70; "Für den Frieden und die internationale Solidarität: Eine schöne Solidaritätskundgebung bürgerlicher Frauen in Frankreich und Deutschland," *Die Kommunistin* 5 (1 July 1919): 38; Frida Richter, Adlershof, "Wie eine Frauenagitationskommission arbeitet," *Die Kommunistin* 10 (25 May 1921): 78-79; "Aus der Organisation: Die Organisation der FAK," *Die Kommunistin* 21 (15 Nov. 1921): 174-175; and Ruth Fischer "Über die Einrichtung und Organisation von Frauenkursen," *Die Kommunistin* 12 (25 June 1921): 90-91.

our children”) were educational in terms of both general information and a radical Socialist/Communist perspective.<sup>49</sup> Leading KPD woman functionaries were the primary consumers of this early *Die Kommunistin* according to ‘Ilse März’ (a pseudonym for likely Rosi Wolfstein) and the National Women’s Bureau, who argued that the paper was too difficult a read for both ordinary members and non-members.<sup>50</sup>

At the Unification Congress of the KPD and the Left USPD the National Women’s Bureau was tasked with editing *Die Kommunistin*. Therefore, from January 1921 until April 1924 Hertha Sturm, Edda Tennenbaum (a.k.a. Else Baum), and Ketty Guttmann (all members of the National Women’s Bureau), and possibly also Käte Duncker edited the women’s paper, even though Martha Arendsee (immune from political persecution as a member of the Prussian Landtag, 1920-1924, and the Reichstag, 1924-1930), signed as its responsible editor (and contributed many articles).<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> The feuilleton for women and the children’s sections alternated with each other. Following the acclaimed children’s segment of the *Gleichheit*, *Die Kommunistin*’s children’s segment was also worth reading, as it provided descriptions of animal life and some science in an easy-to-understand form for children, as well as fairy tales and poetry, written in part in contemporary times and befitting a Marxist perspective. See Oscar Wilde, “Der glückliche Prinz,” *Die Kommunistin* 10 (21 Aug. 1919): 79-80; *Die Kommunistin* 11 (1 Sept. 1919): 85-86; and *Die Kommunistin* 12 (11 Sept. 1919): 95-96.

<sup>50</sup> “Genossinnen, an die Arbeit, in den Kampf!” *Die Kommunistin* 15 (1 July 1920): 113-114; “Die erste Reichsfrauenkonferenz der Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands,” *Die Kommunistin* 7 (11 Mar. 1920): 49-53; Ilse März, in *Bericht über den 3. Parteitag der Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands (Spartakusbund) am 25. und 26. Februar 1920* (Berlin: Kommunist, 1920), 59-64, 60. Confirming März’s comments, Johanne Mildner reported in June 1920 that only the upper-level women functionaries of her Chemnitz women’s group subscribed to *Die Kommunistin*. Mildner, “Notizen: Aus einem Bericht über Frauenagitationsfragen der Ortsgruppe Chemnitz,” *Die Kommunistin* 14 (17 June 1920): 111.

<sup>51</sup> In December 1920 the KPD’s Central Committee (Zentralkomitee, ZK) decided Käte Duncker should help the National Women’s Bureau and Sturm to edit *Die Kommunistin*. “Protokoll vom 17. Dezember 1920 des Zentralkomitees,” SAPMO BArch RY 1/I 2/2/13 Fiche 1 image 12, p. 2. Arendsee contributed articles on parliamentary debates and decisions on welfare and protectionist measures on behalf of women but likely did not actually edit the magazine. Arendsee, “Das Hebammengesetz im preußischen Landtag,” *Die Kommunistin* 14 (25 July 1921): 106-7; *ibid.*, “Die Arbeit der Frauen in der Genossenschaftsbewegung,” *Die Kommunistin* 18 (Sept. 1922): 149; and *ibid.*, “Mutterschaftsfürsorge in Deutschland,” *Die Kommunistin* 11 (1 June 1923): 83-84.

During this phase, *Die Kommunistin* was published as a separate monthly magazine. But whereas the KPD dailies commonly hired advertising agencies with agent ‘colonies’ going door-to-door through neighborhoods to win new subscribers, *Die Kommunistin* did not have this sales support calculated in its budget. Instead, women functionaries sold subscriptions and individual copies during their door-to-door propaganda campaigns, at KPD convocations, and at rallies before elections and during membership drives. The magazine was also sent to KPD offices throughout the Reich from where it was to be forwarded to women functionaries and members, likely with considerable delays of up to six months, but an unknown number of copies were commonly left in offices and never disseminated.<sup>52</sup>

The National Women’s Bureau reduced the ‘greater political’ content (national and international politics not related to social policies and women’s rights) of *Die Kommunistin*, adjusting commentaries and articles to a female perspective. It increased reports on women’s organizations, how to set up local and regional Women’s Agitation Committees (*Frauenagitationskomitees*), and articles by leading women on ‘women’s issues’.<sup>53</sup> It carried more critical reviews of parliamentary debates and decisions immediately related to women, accounts of women’s workplace injuries and illnesses, news about unions’ decisions and events as related to women workers, articles on protectionist measures on behalf of women workers, school-related topics, and reports on housing. Welfare, consumer unions, marriage, family, prostitution, abortion, and women’s legal rights were other common topics in *Die*

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<sup>52</sup> Mildner, “Notizen: Aus der kommunistischen Frauenbewegung,” *Die Kommunistin* 14 (17 June 1920): 111. In Chemnitz and Württemberg women’s membership came with an automatic subscription to *Die Kommunistin*. Demands at women’s conferences for all KPD regions to adopt this practice usually met with the argument that doing so would make membership too expensive for homemakers. “Die erste Reichsfrauenkonferenz der KPD,” *Die Kommunistin* 7 (11 March 1920): 50-53, here 51; and Ilse März, in *3. Parteitag der KPD Februar 1920*, 60.

<sup>53</sup> See undated memo from the National Women’s Bureau, “Zum Rundschreiben Nr. 5” likely from Dec. 1920 or Jan. 1921 in SAPMO-BArch RY 1/I 2/701/14 Fiche image 8 p. 2.

*Kommunistin*.<sup>54</sup> These usually attacked contemporary laws as piecemeal reforms and described institutional policies and social practices as classed, gendered, and unjust.<sup>55</sup> In 1921, *Die Kommunistin* brought many commentaries on revolutionary and counterrevolutionary forces in the Soviet Union and some articles on the food aid needs of the Soviet Union.<sup>56</sup> Beginning in 1922, it presented examples of the ideal institutional treatment of the poor and working-class women in the Communist Soviet Union.

Complaints and reports continued that this *Kommunistin* was not any more suited than Zetkin's paper had been for ordinary members or to win new readers. As a result, the editors within the National Women's Bureau gradually altered the magazine's appearance and contents to make it more appealing to visual consumers less interested in demanding reading.<sup>57</sup> By 1922 *Die Kommunistin*'s title pages consistently depicted half to full-page black-and-white cartoonish illustrations that were attention-grabbing, boldly satirical, politically critical, and intended to be printed and sold separately at KPD events (see Figure 2).<sup>58</sup> These illustrations consistently

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<sup>54</sup> "Neuregelung der Reichswochenhilfe und -fürsorge," *Die Kommunistin* 18 (15 Sept. 1923): 140. The 1921 editions of *Die Kommunistin* brought 20 reports about the KPD's women's conferences and resolutions; 35 articles attacking the government and other parties and relating these attacks to economic conditions or the presumed classed biases in the justice system, as well as articles with election propaganda; 23 articles on the conditions in the Soviet Union and calls on support for it through donations and assistance; 13 articles on laws relating to youth and schools; 8 articles on the home, church, abortion, and prostitution; 5 articles with guidelines and suggestions on how to do propaganda and agitation amongst women; and 2 articles on social legislation, unions, and the conditions of working women. Vormschlag, "Inhalte, Leitbilder," 149.

<sup>55</sup> "Botwins letzte Augenblicke," *Die Kommunistin* 18 (Oct. 1925): 72; "Wie eine kommunistische Abgeordnete die weiße Justiz brandmarkt," *Die Kommunistin* 13 (10 July 1921): 102-3.

<sup>56</sup> R.W. [likely Rosi Wolfstein], "Kommunisten vor dem Strafrichter," *Die Kommunistin* 12 (25 June 1921): 93; Henriette Roland-Holst, "Antimilitarismus und Rote Armee," *Die Kommunistin* 12 (25 June 1921): 39-40; E.T. [likely Edda Tennenbaum], "Zwei Lager," *Die Kommunistin* 19 (15 Oct. 1921): 153-4.

<sup>57</sup> Baum, "Die 3. Frauen-Reichskonferenz der KPD," *Die Kommunistin* 20 (15 Oct. 1922): 155-156, here 156.

<sup>58</sup> In 1922 the illustrations of cartoonists like Peter Stecher, Fritz Hampel (F.h.), Karl Holtz (K.H.), as well as artists who used the pseudonyms ADEF and HAWI and initials L.G and FuR to sign their work graced *Die Kommunistin*'s title pages. *Die Kommunistin* 24 (15 Dec. 1922): title page; *Die Kommunistin* 13 (1 July 1923): title page; K.H., *Die Kommunistin* 14 (15 July 1923): title page.

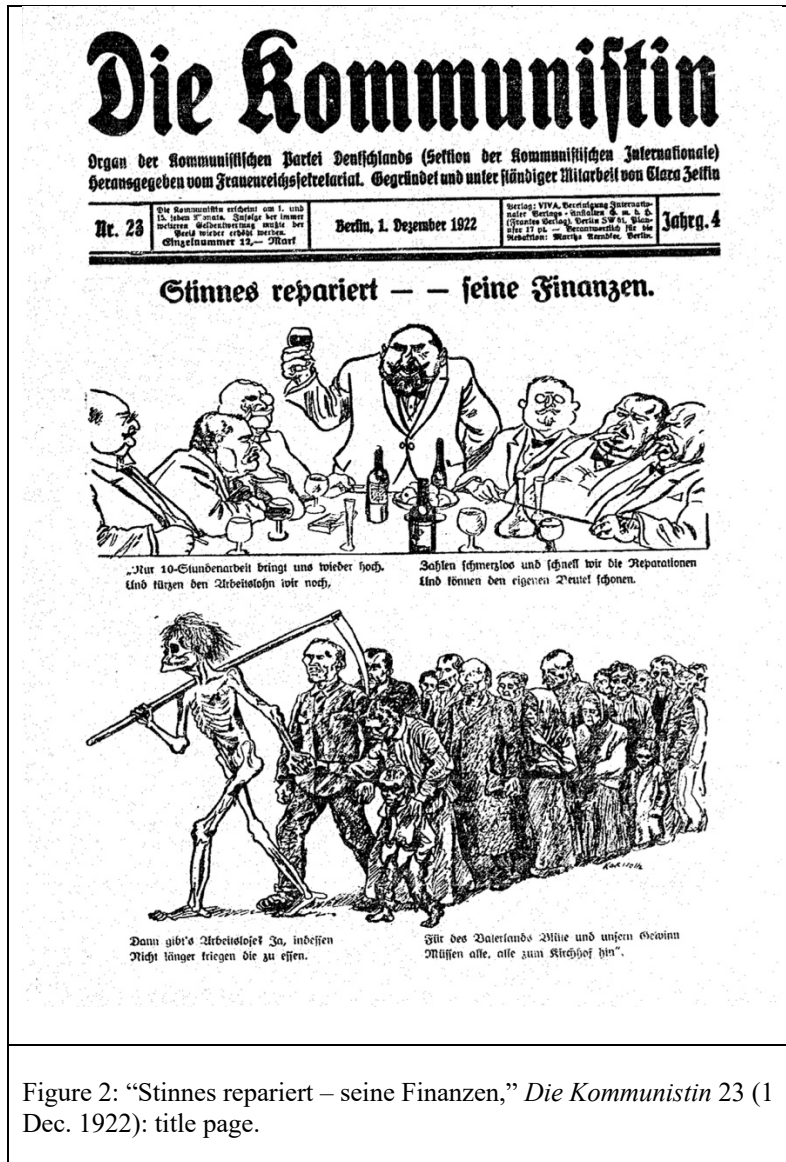


Figure 2: “Stinnes repariert – seine Finanzen,” *Die Kommunistin* 23 (1 Dec. 1922): title page.

and their children.<sup>60</sup>

In 1923, titles became bolder, larger, and more attention-grabbing, ending in exclamation points, taking advantage of a lot of white space in the background, and containing some sensationalist or spectacular claims. Examples include: “*Verhöhnung der Arbeiterinnen durch*

<sup>59</sup> Karl Holtz, “Stille Nacht – heilige Nacht!” *Die Kommunistin* 24 (15. Dec. 1922): title page; “Es gibt auf Erden Brot genug für alle Menschenkinder...” *Die Kommunistin* 16 (15 Aug. 1923): title page; K.H., “Schlagt die Juden tot!” *Die Kommunistin* 14 (15 July 1923): title page; and P. Sommer, “Der Bauch des Kapitals versperrt uns den Weg zum Brot,” *Die Kommunistin* 11 (1 June 1923): title page.

<sup>60</sup> “In dem elektro-technischen Laboratorium,” *Die Kommunistin* 17 (1 Sept. 1923): 133.

described Weimar democracy and its capitalist economy as controlled by land-owning Junkers, industrialists and their luxury-encased wives, and subservient SPD politicians; who together exploited starving workers and their children.<sup>59</sup> All were usually depicted as obese, with men bearing stereotyped Jewish characteristics. Drawings and photos on the inside pages continued to be small and showcased the advances made by the Communist state and society on behalf of proletarian women

*die Gewerkschaften*” (“Unions Mock and Deride Women Workers”); and “*Der Skandal der Frauenlöhne*” (“The Scandal of Women’s Wages”).<sup>61</sup> Each edition of the magazine also printed, in a bold and larger font than article titles, many direct addresses to readers – varyingly identified as “workers’ wives,” “female workers,” “female proletarians,” “proletarian housewives,” and “female comrades” – using the familiar and informal second person singular and plural “*Du*” and “*Euch*” – urging readers to take immediate action. Some were short, such as “Workers’ wives, don’t forget!” (referring to the violent repression of radical leftists’ strikes and uprisings in the first months of the Republic), while others were longer.<sup>62</sup>

“Proletarian Women at Home and the Factory!  
To the Battle against the Exploiters’ War!  
Join the Fighting Class Front of the Proletariat!”<sup>63</sup>

*Die Kommunistin* appeared visually less formal, more playful-experimental, and at times entertaining. Titles and illustrations allowed readers to peruse the magazine and select articles they wanted to read. It began carrying short sketches with dialogues between ordinary Berliners in which Communists convinced non-Communist proletarians of the correctness of their view that a revolution was needed to improve contemporary conditions or to desist from actions that broke with proletarian solidarity. Topics included women’s and youth’s food thefts in 1923, and

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<sup>61</sup>“Der Skandal der Frauenlöhne,” *Die Kommunistin* 9 (29 Aug. 1924): 45; and “Die Peitsche saust!” *Die Kommunistin* 11 (Sept. 1924): 53.

<sup>62</sup> “Merkt’s Euch, Arbeiterfrauen!” *Die Kommunistin* 10 (15 May 1923): 75.

<sup>63</sup> *Die Kommunistin* 3 (1 Feb. 1923): 18; “Arbeiterinnen! Die Unternehmer rüsten wieder zum Angriff. Auf Euch haben sie es zuerst abgesehen. Schließt Euch zusammen! Wehrt Euch!” *Die Kommunistin* 12 (Oct. 1924): 60; “Proletarierinnen heraus! Am 29. Juli ... gegen die Faschisten,” *Die Kommunistin* 14 (15 July 1923): 107; “Arbeiterinnen u. Proletarische Hausfrauen!” *Die Kommunistin* 4 (13 June 1924): 27; “Achtung, Genossinnen, vor Spitzeln!” *Die Kommunistin* 5 (25 June 1924): 30; “Am 4 Mai bekennt Euch zum Kommunismus,” *Die Kommunistin* 3 (May 1924): 14; “7000 Kämpfer in den Kerkern der Republik!” *Die Kommunistin* 3 (May 1924): 22; “Sammelt für die Rote Hilfe am 4. Mai!” *Die Kommunistin* 3 (May 1924): 22; “Heraus mit den politischen Gefangenen!” *Die Kommunistin* 3 (May 1924): 26; and “Ihr gehört auf den Arbeiterkongreß!” *Die Kommunistin* 4 (13 June 1924): 27.

unpaid work requirements for the unemployed.<sup>64</sup> *Die Kommunistin* also delivered classic and contemporary short stories, poetry, and travelogues written by women functionaries and German and international (in particular Russian) authors with socially and politically critical attitudes.<sup>65</sup>

Whereas *Die Kommunistin* under Zetkin looked a lot like a one-woman product; in the hands of the National Women's Bureau the number of contributing authors grew.<sup>66</sup> Authors, from the local through national organization, sent reports about their groups' actions, rallies, demonstrations, speeches, successes and (occasionally) their failures and problems. Knowing the National Women's Bureau would publish their reports in *Die Kommunistin*, they described themselves – as Schlag had done in 1919 – as heroines.<sup>67</sup> *Die Kommunistin* of 1921 to 1924 appears to be communication platform and representational stage for Communist women functionaries. A collaborative collective – a club of women KPD functionaries – is notable during this time.<sup>68</sup>

The National Women's Bureau hoped ordinary readers would send in articles denouncing their working or living conditions and experiences with public institutions, but few such articles

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<sup>64</sup> "Auf dem Markt," *Die Kommunistin* 21 (1 Nov. 1923): 165-166; and "Pflichtarbeit," *Die Kommunistin* 1 (Feb./Mar. 1924): 7; this late publication was due to the illegalization of the KPD and its press after the failed Hamburg revolution in October 1923.

<sup>65</sup> Maxim Gorki "Großvater Archip und Lenjka," *Die Kommunistin* 9-16 (1920); "Der Gekennzeichnete: Aus den Tagen des Kapp-Lüttwitz-Putsches im Ruhrrevier," *Die Kommunistin* 18 (1920): 143-144; Else Baum, "Die Bäuerin Barmaschewa," *Die Kommunistin* 15 (1 Aug. 1922): 119-120; and 'Parteilose Arbeiterin, Annenburg', "Erinnerungen. Clara Zetkin gewidmet," *Die Kommunistin* 4 (15 Feb. 1923): 32.

<sup>66</sup> Contributors increased despite a 1923 decision by the KPD leadership (Zentrale) that functionaries working in women's propaganda would not be remunerated for their contributions to the magazine. *KPD Party Congress Leipzig* 1923, 440.

<sup>67</sup> Ida Heller, "Die Justiz gegen den Gothaer Kontroll-Ausschuß," *Die Kommunistin* 9 (1 May 1923): 69-70.

<sup>68</sup> *Die Kommunistin* 10 (25 May 1921) has a report on the Second National Women's Conference of the United KPD (Vereinigte KPD, VKPD; KPD and Left USPD) two regional women's conferences, of Pfalz and Wasserkante, a report about the work of local FAK and their leaders in northern Bavaria, Thuringia, and 'Adlershof' and areas with problems.

were published.<sup>69</sup> *Die Kommunistin* likely continued to be read mainly by functionaries, and perhaps some members and Communist sympathizers who attended Communist public events.<sup>70</sup> *Die Kommunistin*'s print run increased to 40,000 in April 1921 (see Table 5), but it is unknown how many copies were sold and how many lay in offices.<sup>71</sup> In mid-1923 Sturm noted many women members still did not even know *Die Kommunistin* existed.<sup>72</sup>

In May 1924, after dropping *Die Kommunistin*'s print run down to 15,000, the Bolshevizing KPD Executive dissolved the National Women's Bureau, accusing its members of having targeted – unsuccessfully – only housewives with their propaganda and activism.<sup>73</sup> *Die Kommunistin* was returned to its original publication mode as a women's supplement to the *Rote Fahne* and other dailies, and its content now focused on winning women workers as readers and Party members. The previously eight-page, letter-sized, *Die Kommunistin* dwindled to four pages.

After May 1924, workplace-related articles predominated, and the periodical seemed more formulaic and impersonal printing fewer names of German authors.<sup>75</sup> There were more articles by named Soviet authors about Lenin, Communist theory, organizational strategies, laws,

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<sup>69</sup> "Aus der Organisation," *Die Kommunistin* 1 (10 Jan. 1921): 6.

<sup>70</sup>"Die Kommunistin in Gefahr," *Die Kommunistin* 20 (15 Oct. 1922): 154.

<sup>71</sup> Arendt, "Die kommunistische Frauenpresse," 82.

<sup>72</sup> Sturm, "Wer liest die Kommunistin? Und wer soll sie lesen?" *Die Kommunistin* 12 (15 June 1923): 93-94.

<sup>73</sup> *IX Parteitag KPD 1924 Frankfurt*, 64/36; and Arendt, "Die kommunistische Frauenpresse," 82.

<sup>75</sup> Editors and contributors to the magazine/supplement likely tried to avoid political persecution, given the illegality of the Party in late 1923 and early 1924. On the other hand, some of the authors may have been male, and would have wanted to obscure this from the female readership, see E. H. "Die Kommunistische Internationale organisiert die arbeitenden Frauen," *Die Kommunistin* 7 (July 1926): 3.



and women's supposed working and living conditions in the Soviet Union.<sup>76</sup> Negative economic and political commentaries about Germany made up the rest of *Die Kommunistin's* content. Some of its attention-grabbing titles, such as “Der Bubikopf mordet die Heimarbeiterinnen,” (“The bobbed haircut murders female home workers”), became outrageously facetious, cynical, or sarcastic.<sup>77</sup> Its new editors wanted to maintain the collaborative aspect of the supplement. They asked workers to recount their “work experiences, wages, and working conditions,” but few reports were printed.<sup>78</sup> Those that were published informed readers about heroic strike activities by female workers, and denounced employers by name for employment conditions, low wages, the firing of older workers, and their refusal to recognize workers' health needs.<sup>79</sup> Latest with the end of *Die Kommunistin* printing in 1926, the three-fold mission and target audiences had proven unsuccessful.

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<sup>76</sup> “Zetkin's Erinnerungen an Lenin,” *Die Kommunistin* 19 (Nov. 1925): 76; N. Krupskaja, “Das Leben Lenin's im Ausland,” *Die Kommunistin* 15 (Aug. 1925): 60; “Lenin in der Verbannung,” *Die Kommunistin* 1 (Jan. 1926): 4; “Russische Fürstenabfindung,” *Die Kommunistin* 2 (Feb. 1926): 4; Drechowa Zujewo, “Wie die Arbeiterkonsumgenossenschaft arbeitet,” *Die Kommunistin* 4 (April 1926): 4; “Wir Frauen wollen Sowjetrußland sehen...,” *Die Kommunistin* 7 (July 1926): 1; “Die Frau im Arbeiterstaat,” *Die Kommunistin* 7 (July 1926): 2; Maria Cogan, “Die Betriebskorrespondenz Darja,” *Die Kommunistin* 7 (1926): 4; and A. Kirdoda [presumably a “village correspondent”], “Unsere Lesehalle,” *Die Kommunistin* 9 (Sept. 1926): 4.

<sup>77</sup> “Der Bubikopf mordet die Heimarbeiterinnen,” *Die Kommunistin* 6 International Women's Day Edition (March 1925): 3; and K. Duncker, “Um die Abtreibungsstrafe,” *Die Kommunistin* 5 (May 1926): 2.

<sup>78</sup> “Arbeiterinnen!” *Die Kommunistin* 9 (29 Aug. 1924): 48; “Die Arbeit der Kommunistin,” *Die Kommunistin* 14 (Nov. 1924): 67; “Berliner Genossinnen auf Landagitation,” *Die Kommunistin* 11 (May 1925): 44.

<sup>79</sup> “Frauenarbeit in Giftbuden,” *Die Kommunistin* 5 International Women's Day Edition (Mar. 1925): 5; “Gefängnisordnung in den Betrieben: ‘Arbeitsordnung’ einer Porzellanfabrik,” *Die Kommunistin* 5 (Mar. 1925): 19; “Die siebzigjährige Verkäuferin,” *Die Kommunistin* 14 (July 1925): 55; “Der verweigerte Krankenschein,” *Die Kommunistin* 14 (July 1925): 55; “Ludwigshafener Arbeiterfrauen vor Gericht,” *Die Kommunistin* 10 (12 Sept. 1924): 50; and “Mutiges Vorgehen der Danziger Arbeiterfrauen,” *Die Kommunistin*, (12 Sept. 1924): 50. The last report described how the wives of harbor workers selected a delegation – likely consisting of KPD women functionaries – to speak to the SPD-affiliated umbrella organization of unions, the ADGB, and the Hamburg Parliament (*Senat*). They were instead beaten by the police. See also “Antwortschreiben der Thüringer Arbeiterinnen und Bäuerinnen an ihre Schwestern im Südosten Sowjetrußlands,” *Die Kommunistin* 10 (May 1925): 40. None of the language offered anything personal.

**Table 5: Print-Runs of Leftist Women’s Magazines**

	<i>Frauenwelt</i>	<i>DWdF</i>	<i>Kommunistin</i>	<i>Die Genossin</i>	<i>Die Gleichheit</i>
Dec. 1920			26,000 <sup>81</sup>		11,000 <sup>82</sup>
April 1921			40,000 <sup>188</sup>		25,000 <sup>189</sup>
Dec. 1922			25,200 <sup>83</sup>		
May 1923			< 20,000 <sup>84</sup>		
Sept. 1923			41,000 <sup>85</sup>		
Feb./Mar. 1924	67,000 <sup>86</sup>		15, 000 <sup>87</sup>		
July 1924	90,000 <sup>189</sup>				
Dec. 1925	100,000 <sup>189</sup>			12,000 <sup>88</sup>	
1926	120,000 <sup>190</sup>			30,000 <sup>89</sup>	
1931				40,000 <sup>90</sup>	
Mid-1932		150,000 <sup>91</sup> 200,000			

<sup>81</sup> Arendt, “Die kommunistische Frauenpresse,” 82.

<sup>82</sup> Thönnessen, *The Emancipation of Women*, 119.

<sup>83</sup> Vormschlag, “Inhalte, Leitbilder,” 145, 155.

<sup>84</sup> Sturm, “Wer liest die Kommunistin? Und wer soll sie lesen?” *Die Kommunistin* 12 (15 June 1923): 93-94.

<sup>85</sup> *KPD Parteitag 1924*, 64/33. The huge differences in the print numbers within one year suggest that the National Women’s Bureau temporarily increased the printing of *Die Kommunistin*, not due to sudden increases or decreases in subscriptions, but rather in the expectation that it would sell more copies at special events.

<sup>86</sup> “Frauenwelt,” *Die Genossin* 1 (July 1924): 5; Eisfeld and Koszyk, *Die Presse der deutschen Sozialdemokratie*, 38.

<sup>87</sup> *IX Parteitag KPD 1924*, 64/36; and Arendt, “Die kommunistische Frauenpresse,” 82.

<sup>88</sup> See table “Gesamtmitgliederbewegung in den Bezirken nach Quartalen,” in *SPD Parteitag und Frauenkonferenz Heidelberg 1925*, 42.

<sup>89</sup> K. Ludwig, “Bericht des Vorstandes: Agitation, Organisation und Kasse,” in *SPD Parteitag 1926 Kiel*, 41-53, here 47.

<sup>90</sup> *Jahrbuch der SPD 1931*, 125.

<sup>91</sup> The first figure is from Arendt, “Zur Frauenpolitik der KPD,” 814; the second from Surmann, *Die Münzenberg-Legende*, 204.

## New Conceptualizations for Leftist Women's Organs

As is also evident in the transformations of *Die Kommunistin* in the hands of the National Women's Bureau, since the beginning of Weimar, SPD and KPD functionaries had increasingly advocated for making their parties' organs more attractive to an audience used to sensationalist, visually attractive, entertaining, and easy-to-read print media. At the Editors' Conference of the Workers' Press Association on 16 January 1926 in Berlin, Wilhelm F. Sollmann (1881-1951) (journalist and editor to various SPD dailies; delegate to the Cologne Municipal Parliament; the 1919 National Assembly of the Weimar Republic; the Reichstag, 1920-1933; and briefly Interior Minister of Germany, Aug.-Nov. 1923) pointed out that readers preferred the commercial dailies over the Socialist press for four reasons: they contained more ads, local news and information, entertaining sections, and altogether more paper for wrapping purposes. Sollmann demanded his Party's press meet such reader expectations by reducing its political content while increasing its entertaining aspects, and hence "polemicize less and chat more."<sup>92</sup>

In 1924, two years before Sollmann's advocacy for the popularization of the Party press, and after about a year without any women's organ, the SPD leadership decided to publish two new women's magazines and incorporated a division of labor: *Die Genossin* was to be the Party's and the AWO's publication for functionaries in a cut and dry format, while a popularly-themed *Frauenwelt* was to target non-member women.<sup>93</sup> *Frauenwelt*'s conceptualization and content, with illustrations, a fashion segment, homemaking advice, and a lot of entertainment,

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<sup>92</sup> Eisfeld and Koszyk, *Die Presse der deutschen Sozialdemokratie*, 31.

<sup>93</sup> For some functionaries *Frauenwelt*'s popular conceptualization also signified the ultimate victory of the male Party leadership over dissident voices among female functionaries and members, which began with Zetkin's removal from *Die Gleichheit* as editor and Zietz's dismissal from the Party Executive given their anti-war stance during WWI. Zetkin's replacement in the Women's Bureau and the Executive, Juchacz, toed to the Executive's line throughout Weimar.

followed the formats and contents of commercial women's fashion and housewives' magazines, such as *Berliner Hausfrau* (*The Berlin Housewife*, 1900-1944, edited by Dorothea Goebeler), much maligned by SPD women functionaries for their magnetic effect on homemaking proletarian women.<sup>94</sup>

Positive responses to, but also a lot of criticism of, *Frauenwelt* were aired by women cadres at SPD women's conferences beginning soon after its initial publication. At the 1924 SPD Women's Conference, Düsseldorf's women functionaries submitted a petition against *Frauenwelt* from their Subregional Women's Conference:

The Women's Conference of the SPD's Elberfeld Subregion does not believe the newly published women's magazine [*Frauenwelt*] is suited to train women in Socialism. The Conference demands the replacement of this bourgeois homemakers' magazine with the *Gleichheit* in its original format. The women leaders of the Düsseldorf district ... reject *Frauenwelt*, and are not willing to make propaganda for this new magazine in its current make-up. [Instead, we] demand a paper that contains informative articles and submissions by women comrades from the entire Reich to train and motivate [functionaries].<sup>95</sup>

As women functionaries in the labor movement, who were working to improve proletarian women and their lives, the petitioners could not identify with a product lacking political, Socialist, and organizational material, but rather misdirected women to focus on middle-class traditional gender roles.

A popularization of their press signified to many women functionaries a slavish submission to the lowest common denominator, a cheapening of SPD products, and in many ways a betrayal of their politics: they wanted to uplift and elevate proletarians into educated and cultured New Humans, not submit to the lowly consumerist cravings stimulated by capitalism.

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<sup>94</sup> Its subtitle was: *Hackebeils Praktisches Wochenblatt für alle Hausfrauen*, and Guido Hackebeil was listed as its publisher and printer.

<sup>95</sup> *SPD Parteitag 1924 Berlin.*, 230.

Functionaries also did not feel that the contents of easy-to-read and entertaining print products with visually-attractive fashion, homemaking, and body culture content represented their own identities as avant-garde Socialist activists and intellectuals. They felt that the popular formats pulled women further into commercial mass cultural activities like movie theatre or dance hall visits, distracting them from what was truly important: politics. Housewives' magazines also had reactionary tendencies, they believed, returning women's attention and practices to excessive and traditional femininity and housework, cooking, sewing, and frivolous reading. These were all activities they themselves had left behind, in part by adopting what they believed was the masculine attribute of rationality, to become public political activists working toward a better, Socialist, society.

The SPD's male executive and some leading women functionaries countered that the indifferent masses, in particular poorly educated women, were too exhausted after a hard day's work to reach for demanding political literature. If they read at all, they preferred material that was easier to read, more enjoyable, and distracted them from their hard and unpleasant lives. By emphasizing difficult political material, they claimed Socialists gave bourgeois media unfettered access to the masses. Among *Frauenwelt's* advocates was a rare woman member of the revolutionary workers' and soldiers' councils in 1918, a former USPD member, a delegate to the Reichstag, and the editor of *Frauenwelt* beginning in 1928, Toni Sender, who insisted: "There is a need for such [popular entertaining] reading material, and since Socialists have not fed this need, people have reached for the convenient and supposedly apolitical bourgeois entertainment."<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Sender, "Die Umgestaltung der Frauenwelt," *Die Genossin* 2 (Feb. 1928): 35-37, here 36.

She and others were not just complaining about the resulting loss of revenue for their party. They contended that the seemingly non-political content of the commercial mass press carried both subtle and overt middle-class conservative to right-wing perspectives, assumptions, and norms. “Regardless of whether readers are aware of this, the novels, the [homemaking] advice, and all of the entertaining content of these [women’s] magazines argue for the maintenance of the middle-class ideology,” Sender noted.<sup>98</sup> Marie Juchacz, the head of the SPD’s Women’s Bureau, delegate to the National Assembly in 1919 and to the Reichstag (1920-1933), portrayed working-class women as addicts to and manipulated by mass media:

Not long ago I visited Vienna during its municipal elections and have heard from the women comrades there about the strength of the suggestive power of film on women at the Viennese movie theatre, not only through images but also through the spoken word. It has got to be something special that causes a married woman and mother to go to the movie theatre even when her income is relatively small and she frequently has to go hungry. [...] She does not know that the images and the accompanying text in the *Friedericus Rex* or other movie presentations put drops of political poison into her. The same thing happens when women read the *Gartenlaube*, Courths-Mahler’s novels, *Berliner Hausfrau*, *Sächsische Hausfrau*, *Praktische Berlinerin*, or *Wegweiser*. (Very good! And cheerfulness [audience commentary]).<sup>99</sup>

A few years later, in May 1929, Willi Münzenberg, who had by then successfully adopted and advanced the popular mass publications’ sensationalist and visual characteristics in his Communist *A-I-Z*, and the *Welt-am-Abend* (1922-1933), explained his reasons as follows:

We are ... of the opinion that it is a punishable crime to leave the monopolistic influencing of the masses to the bourgeois and Social Democratic trusts [the SPD press] without a fight [...] everything possible has to be done to break this monopoly in the areas of film, daily newspapers, magazines, and elsewhere. The experiences and

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Juchacz, “Die Frauen und die Wahlen,” in *SPD Parteitag 1924 Berlin*, 226-7. On how Juchacz agreed with the SPD male executive that they needed to utilize the popular women’s magazine format see Saldern, “Modernization as Challenge,” 128. Lohmann used the word “devour” to describe proletarian women’s consumption of the commercial women’s press. In *SPD Parteitag 1927 Kiel*, 319.

successes of recent years ... prove that it is possible to increase the propaganda strength of proletarian organizations with the aid of such endeavors.<sup>100</sup>

Leftist critics believed that bourgeois ideologies and norms packaged within commercial mass media led working-class women to identify with bourgeois sectors of society. The SPD and KPD saw their worries confirmed during the Weimar's elections. During her speech at the 1924 Women's Conference, Juchacz claimed that non-Socialist mass media influenced women to stay out of Leftist political events and not vote for them.<sup>101</sup> Comparing women's votes (in just two voting districts) for the National Assembly in 1919 and the 1924 elections, Juchacz saw a movement toward the political right among women.

Has women's position toward the Party not become a question of life and death for the Party? [...] If we fail as a Party, given women are to blame for this (judging by the voting numbers), who is morally responsible for such an unfavorable development of such immense consequences for society and therefore also women themselves? [...] In Dittersdorf in Saxony, women voted in disproportionately high numbers for the German Nationalist People's Party [Deutschnationale Volkspartei, DNVP]. A similar result comes from Spandau [Berlin], where the German Nationalists also benefited from women's great sympathies for them [...] In contrast, the great majority of the sample results show us that Communists and the German People's Party [Deutsche Volkspartei, DVP], with the exception of Bavaria, did not receive as many votes from women as from men.<sup>102</sup>

Even though women voted at the same or even higher levels than men for the SPD, she, as well as male functionaries, expected more women than men to vote for the SPD because of a women's surplus of about 2 million during Weimar.<sup>103</sup> Therefore, Juchacz asserted it was imperative for the SPD publications to use the same tactics and materials as the popular press to

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<sup>100</sup> Münzenberg, "Zum Geleit," *Der Rote Aufbau* 1 (May 1929): 3. The A-I-Z had a circulation of 400,000. Fischer, *Handbuch der politischen Presse*, 237.

<sup>101</sup> Juchacz, "Die Frauen und die Wahlen," 223.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Juchacz, noted that for every 998 to 1100 female votes Social Democrats received 1000 male votes. "Die Frauen und die Wahlen," 223.

draw the masses to its press, remove the bourgeois press and its influences from proletarian homes, and interweave Social Democratic ideals into the popular material they published. In consequence, women functionaries should stop complaining about the SPD's use of illustrated entertainment, fashion, body culture, and homemaking segments in their women's press.

These are things we cannot eliminate by moralizing, and we have to consider these things [...and we have to] proceed similarly. Up to a certain point, we should not judge our work methods; they aim to reach a particular goal. (Agreement). *Frauenwelt* has been presented to you. I don't claim that *Frauenwelt* is following in the footsteps of *Die Gleichheit*. (That is right!) The goal of my explanations is to illustrate how we can utilize *Frauenwelt*. (Very good!) There is a drop of politics in each and every woman's or family magazine. Why should we miss such an opportunity? We would be very foolish if we did that. We should not say: this thing isn't for us. It is not intended to be for us but for the benefit of the Party. The newspaper is a means toward a goal. (Very true!) We should improve what is imperfect with constructive criticism and active collaboration.<sup>104</sup>

A year later at the 1925 Heidelberg Women's Conference, Anna Ziegler, a functionary from Leipzig, added to Juchacz' line of thought that *Frauenwelt* had already become a "welcome tool that acted like insect repellent in proletarian homes by ridding them of bourgeois fashion magazines."<sup>105</sup>

Ziegler nevertheless presented at that conference a petition from the Greater Leipzig women's organization demanding a third women's publication focusing on Socialist theory to train women functionaries.<sup>106</sup> Other women functionaries also felt the lack of Socialist theory, and contemporary national, international, and class politics which in *Frauenwelt* was limited to editions immediately before elections (when *Frauenwelt* brought articles, commentaries by leading female and male parliamentarians, and direct addresses by Sender to readers).<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 226-7.

<sup>105</sup> Ziegler in *SPD Parteitag und Frauenkonferenz 1925 Heidelberg*, 165.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>107</sup> See Todenhagen, in *SPD Parteitag 1924 Berlin*, 233. See also the comments of a Frau Stiegler from the Bremen organization, Klara Zils-Eckstein, Elise Thümmel, and Johanna Reitze, in *SPD Parteitag 1927 Kiel*, 309, 312, 321,



*Frauenwelt*'s homemaking section was frequently subject to criticism. They accused Richard Lohmann (1881-1935), a journalist, pedagogue, and editor of *Frauenwelt*, of copying middle-class women's magazines and presenting a middle-class ideal to working-class women. Lohmann's comments during the much-cited Berlin 1924 Women's Conference suggest that he did not view women's unpaid work in the home as pertaining to any particular class and that he was oblivious to women cadres' aims to free women from homemaking:

[Accusations that] we are copying a bourgeois paper in *Frauenwelt* are entirely wrong. It is not easy to find a solution to this problem. If you believe that the paper is not Socialist enough, I beg you to show me examples that illustrate this. If the rubric "Die Axt im Haus" does not look Socialist then that is not my fault. I cannot change it that socks cannot be mended in a Socialist manner. (Agreement and amusement.)<sup>108</sup>

Other women cadres criticized *Frauenwelt* for not mirroring the economic poverty and harsh living and working conditions of working-class people. They suggested that they could only create a sense of "outrage" among readers and convince them to support the SPD by showing them their own and other proletarians' misery.<sup>109</sup> Lohmann found fault with this traditional assumption and argued that misery does not attract readers to their press:

The woman comrade from Gera (Selbert) noted that the magazine [*Frauenwelt*] did not show the misery in proletarian women's lives. I am of the opinion, and I know that the great majority of women comrades who live surrounded by misery – as many of whom have expressed in their many letters to me – don't want to see the same kind of misery they have at home also in images in front of them during their leisure times. (Enthusiastic agreement [among the audience]) They want to see the sun that will shine into their lives thanks to Socialism. (Renewed enthusiastic agreement).<sup>110</sup>

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and 328, respectively. A resolution was submitted at the 1927 Women's Conference, rejecting *Frauenwelt*'s conceptualization.

<sup>108</sup> Lohmann, in *SPD-Parteitag 1924 Berlin*, 238.

<sup>109</sup> Klara Zils-Eckstein, in *SPD Parteitag 1927 Kiel*, 312.

<sup>110</sup> Lohmann, in *SPD Parteitag 1924 Berlin*, 238.

Yet others disapproved of the feuilleton (entertainment section) in *Frauenwelt*, calling it rubbish ('*Schund*'), and denying Juchacz's and the executive's claims that Socialist assumptions and lessons underlay the contents of the serial novels or other sections of the paper.<sup>111</sup> At the 1927 Kiel Women's Conference, Klara Zils-Eckstein, a woman functionary from Breslau, offered the following comment during her discussion contribution:

The literary content of *Frauenwelt* [sic] does not meet our expectations in any way. [...The paper] publishes serial novels that not a single person with some literary taste would buy. They are a terrible offense ("*Versündigung*") against women.<sup>112</sup>

One final point of contention was that *Frauenwelt* had a male editor. Women cadres, who consistently complained about discrimination against women in the assignment of party offices, believed that a woman should edit their women's paper, and that "a man could not possibly see into the souls of women" as stated by Genossin Selbert (likely in private to Lohmann at the 1924 Women's Conference).<sup>113</sup> Lohmann in response jokingly accused her of reverse sex discrimination but continued for years to hide his sex from *Frauenwelt* readers behind his first initial and full last name.<sup>114</sup> He also repeated what many male executives commonly claimed: that there was no qualified woman in the SPD to take over the responsibility of editing the popular women's magazine.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Toni Pfülf, in *SPD-Parteitag 1927 Kiel*, 323. Minna Todenhagen claimed that many German and international Socialist women cadres condemned the serial novel "Die vier Tage der Hanna Werth. Ein Leben im Spiegel" by Eva Klaar, which *Frauenwelt* brought from 25 Sept. 1926 through 1 Jan. 1927, as *Schund*, *ibid.*, 314; Kirschmann-Roehl, the co-editor of many of *Frauenwelt's* segments, also noted that *Frauenwelt's* entertainment section was worse than those of commercial papers. *SPD Parteitag 1927 Kiel*, 315.

<sup>112</sup> Zils-Eckstein, in *SPD Parteitag Kiel*, 312-13.

<sup>113</sup> *SPD Parteitag Kiel*, 237-238.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 319; and Frieda Fröbisch, in *SPD Parteitag Kiel*, 312.

Advocacy for more Socialist theory and contemporary parliamentary politics in either women's paper failed because the executive could refer to the existence of a variety of theoretical papers, the general functionaries' correspondence the *Mitteilungsblatt*, and the general dailies which delivered such material. However, as a result of the conflict-laden 1927 Kiel Women's Conference, during which Juchacz tried to but failed to prevent a vote on a petition to transform *Frauenwelt* entirely, women functionaries passed their petition for a female editor.<sup>116</sup>

When Toni Sender took over the editor position of *Frauenwelt* with its fifth edition of 1928, she adopted the party leadership's position on the functions and value of the popular magazine.<sup>117</sup> She nevertheless improved the paper's art and entertainment sections with the aim to culturally elevate its readers, and published more political articles and commentaries on women's topics. She also called on women functionaries to contribute material to *Frauenwelt* that cleverly and unobtrusively wove economic and political information into it in a language that even the "indifferent" could understand.<sup>118</sup>

Rousseau and Voltaire were the strongest trailblazers for the great French Revolution, which shared its spirit with the entire continent! Shouldn't our even greater ideal not also give wings to the noblest souls, firing up their fantasies and creative powers? [...] The clear logic and motivating rhetoric of the propagandist speak to the already awakened circles and bring them into the influence of our ideas. The penetrating, analyzing, describing, and creative design of an artist may find entrance into those souls which are not yet attracted by the political, but nevertheless belong to those that share our fate (Schicksalsgemeinschaft), and should be won to our community of believers and comrades in arms of tomorrow."<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Minna Schilling, Elise Thümmel, and Tony Pfülf, in *SPD Parteitag Kiel*, 320-321, 323 and 338.

<sup>117</sup> Sender, "Die Umgestaltung der Frauenwelt," *Die Genossin* 2 (Feb. 1928): 35-37, here 36.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

Judging by readers' and their husbands' responses, *Frauenwelt* succeeded in providing content homemaking women wanted to see and displaced bourgeois fashion and homemaking magazines out of some proletarian homes. Reader Elise Schumann from Magdeburg wrote:

"I am not going to miss the opportunity to thank you, the editors, and the artistic contributors for the good and worthy contents of the "Frauenwelt" [...] Every woman who wants to use her skills and her sewing machine to her advantage has to reach for the "Frauenwelt," this is its and our goal.<sup>120</sup>

And her husband K. Schumann added: "You have achieved something that I often failed to accomplish despite trying for 17 years; I congratulate you and wish you continued success."<sup>121</sup> Thanks to *Frauenwelt*'s fashion segment, he noted, his wife finally stopped her subscription to non-Socialist women's magazines.

The KPD's Münzenberg followed suit seven years later in 1931, when he published a seemingly independent Communist women's magazine, *Der Weg der Frau* (*Woman's Path*, *DWdF*), which was also in the style of commercial mass media, but nevertheless had significant differences as it maintained an expressly political message. The KPD had in the meantime created a replacement for *Die Kommunistin*, calling it *Die Kämpferin*, with content similar to *Die Kommunistin* of 1924 through 1926.<sup>122</sup>

Like *Frauenwelt*, *DWdF* was popular with readers. Reader, Leonie Künnecke from St. Gallen admitted that:

Even though my husband and I are unemployed, he allowed me to subscribe to the "Weg der Frau," using our unemployment support funds. This paper is the first that combines beauty, practical matters [homemaking], and class struggle. [...] Therefore, I participate in it. I give my copies to others. Perhaps those other women will subscribe to it too. I recommend the "Weg der Frau" to all women workers.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Elise Schumann, in "Frauenwelt," *Die Genossin* 1 (July 1924): 4-5, here 5.

<sup>121</sup> K. Schumann, in "Frauenwelt," *Die Genossin* 1 (July 1924): 4-5, here 5.

<sup>122</sup> This dissertation has not studied *Die Kämpferin* beyond a superficial look at some examples.

<sup>123</sup> Leonie Künnecke, in "Wir werben neue Freunde," *DWdF* 6 (Nov. 1931): 2.

And a bank worker Fr. S from Stuttgart described his and his wife's joy over discovering *DWdF*:

A few weeks ago, when I saw your magazine for the first time, it was the fourth edition, I immediately bought that copy and took it home to my wife. I can only tell you that we were very happy when we leafed through the magazine and outright devoured its contents. Already ten minutes later it was decided that we would subscribe to only the "Weg der Frau," and we unsubscribed from the bourgeois fashion publications. My wife is delighted by the "Weg der Frau" and recommends it to all.<sup>124</sup>

It is unclear if *Frauenwelt* and *DWdF* helped the leftist parties win more women members and voters. Both were nevertheless successful with readers, roughly half of whom were ordinary members of the parties. *Frauenwelt* had 120,000 subscribers in 1926-27, and *DWdF* had 150,000 or 200,000 (depending on the source) by mid-1932.<sup>125</sup> In either case, these were extraordinary numbers compared with *Die Kommunistin's* and *Die Genossin's* print runs (see Table 5). Only in 1914, at the height of its popularity, did Zetkin's Imperial-era *Die Gleichheit* have similar subscription numbers, at 124,000.<sup>126</sup>

### ***Frauenwelt* and *DWdF***

The bi-weekly *Frauenwelt* (with the subtitle: *Eine Halbmonatsschrift*) (1. March 1924 - March 1933) was published by the SPD's publisher J.H.W. Dietz and edited by Lohmann from March 1924 until early February 1928, thereafter by Sender.<sup>127</sup> *Der Weg der Frau* (June 1931-

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<sup>124</sup> Fr. S., in "Die Freude über Ihre Zeitschrift ist groß", schreibt uns eine Bankbeamtin aus Stuttgart," *DWdF* 6 (Nov. 1931): 31.

<sup>125</sup> Arendt, "Zur Frauenpolitik der KPD und zur Rolle der werktätigen Frauen im antifaschistischen Kampf im Frühjahr und Sommer 1932," *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 5 (1972): 814; *ibid.*, "Die kommunistische Frauenpresse," 87, here Arendt quoted from Willmann, *Geschichte der Arbeiter-Illustrierten-Zeitung*, 116; and Surmann, *Die Münzenberg Legende*, 204.

<sup>126</sup> Thönnessen, *The Emancipation of Women*, 134.

<sup>127</sup> See "Freude und Anregung für alle bringt jetzt die *Frauenwelt*," *Die Genossin* 2 (Feb. 1928): 34; and Sender, "Die Umgestaltung der *Frauenwelt*," *Die Genossin* 2 (Feb. 1928), 35-37.

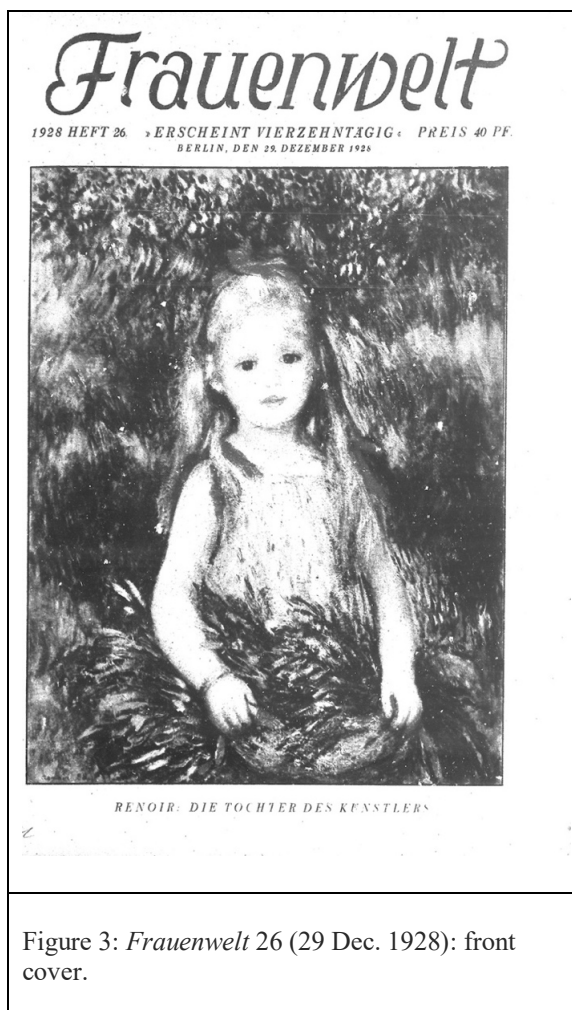


Figure 3: *Frauenwelt* 26 (29 Dec. 1928): front cover.



Figure 4: *DWdF* 6 (June 1932): front cover.

Jan. 1933, *DWdF*) was not officially published by the KPD but rather by Münzenberg, who was the head of the International Workers' Aid (Internationale Arbeiter-Hilfe, IAH), one of several front organizations of the Communist International (Comintern) in Moscow and the KPD. He was also a member of the KPD's Central Committee; the head of its propaganda (Agitprop) division; and the Party's delegate to the *Reichstag*.<sup>128</sup> Moreover, both Münzenberg's media empire and the KPD were funded in part by the Comintern in Moscow.<sup>129</sup> Many contributors to

<sup>128</sup> The Comintern and the KPD created front organizations that were Communist but not officially KPD so that they could attract people who would otherwise eschew the KPD.

<sup>129</sup> Gruber, "Willi Münzenberg's," 290; and McMeekin, *The Red Millionaire*, 163-173.

*DWdF* were KPD functionaries, and the paper was edited by Marianne Gundermann (pseudonym Johanna Rudolph, 1902-1974), a journalist and editor of the KPD's *Klassenkampf* (Class Struggle, from 1924-1930). Therefore, the paper can be rightly identified not only as a Communist but also as a closely affiliated KPD publication.

However, neither *Frauenwelt* nor *DWdF* displayed their party affiliation overtly with party initials on their pages (see Figures 3 and 4). Readers could nevertheless easily make out *Frauenwelt*'s leftist to progressive Social Democratic political leanings from its contents. The Communist bent of *DWdF* was even more apparent in its radical titles, in the captions to photos, and in other texts not only continuously criticizing current governments, and workers' living and workings conditions, but also holding up the Soviet Union as an ideal Communist state and society. Readers familiar with leftist politicians would also have recognized the names of SPD and KPD functionaries editing and contributing to the publications.

Nevertheless, on their surfaces, the leftist women's magazines looked in some ways like the commercial housewives and fashion illustrated, more so *Frauenwelt* than *DWdF*. This chapter will use *Berliner Hausfrau. Hackebeils Praktisches Wochenblatt für Alle Hausfrauen* (*The Berlin Housewife: Hackebeil's Practical Weekly Paper for All Housewives*), a non-Socialist illustrated magazine published by Guido Hackebeil and edited during Weimar by Dorothea Goebeler, to illustrate the leftist papers' commonalities to and differences from the commercial illustrated press. Like *Berliner Hausfrau*, *Frauenwelt* and *DWdF* featured many illustrations, entertaining material, a fashion section that incorporated sewing patterns in the more expensive edition of the paper, articles on home design, furnishing, homemaking, gardening (only *Frauenwelt*), pages on body culture, childrearing, advertising, and reader contributions. Despite

these similarities, *Frauenwelt* and *DWdF* carried political content, which made especially *DWdF* stand out as an illustrated, and popular-styled but still highly political women's periodical.

### Illustrations

Both periodicals attempted to attract with their easy-to-peruse and read and more engaging content.<sup>130</sup> Many full-page illustrations, both on the cover (see Figures 3 and 4) and inside pages pulled readers' attention to them and made for quick visual, often enjoyable or



Figure 5: *Berliner Hausfrau* 30 (24 Apr. 1930): front cover.

interesting 'reading.' The front cover and the fourth page of each letter-sized *Frauenwelt* always carried colorful lithographs of classic Dutch, German, and French master artists' creations; and contemporary modern (including abstract) artwork. Some were by Socialist artists like Hans Baluschek, known for his paintings of working-class people. Most of the illustrations depicted beautiful women, children, still lives, and natural landscapes, with photos of home interior furnishings increasingly added to this visual material toward and in the early 1930s.

Sender, as with Lohmann before her, wanted

to enrich and elevate working-class women's cultural experiences and knowledge by offering

<sup>130</sup> *Frauenwelt* was initially 20 pages long; beginning in 1928 4 four further pages were added to it. *DWdF* was 32 pages long.



them pieces of high art – and through that influence women on other important matters, such as Socialism and politics in general.<sup>131</sup>

*DWdF* also offered images of happy or engrossed children at play or discovery (as in Figure 4) and many depictions of Communist New Women in contemporary fashion wear at work or during exercise (see Chapter Four). Here the two leftist publications were similar to middle-class housewives' magazines, seeming to feed a widespread desire to consume images with endless variations of the New Woman in her fashion and exercise wear and at exercise.

However, whereas *Frauenwelt* and *Berliner Hausfrau* were consistent in bringing only cute or beautiful images of children and women on their front covers (see Figure 5), *DWdF* also



Figure 6: *DWdF* 2 (Feb. 1932): front cover.

delivered much more politically expressive front cover pages, such as in Figure 6, which depicted the arrest of a woman worker who had demonstrated against high food prices in the United States of America. The same can be said about the illustrations in *DWdF*'s interior. Many of its photos seemed 'action shots'. Extemporaneous photos were less usual in *Frauenwelt*, except for in photos of exercising women. *Berliner Hausfrau* also occasionally carried action photos, but nowhere near as many as in the

<sup>131</sup> See Vormschlag, "Inhalte, Leitbilder," 162.



## Fashion

Visual illustrations were also essential to the four to five fashion pages of the leftist papers, which looked a lot like the fashion segment of *Berliner Hausfrau* (see Figures 8 through 10). The large minimalist drawings of mannequins or photos of human models in typical fashion poses showcased women's, children's, and occasionally men's clothing for varying occasions, and were paired with small print information on ordering each item's sewing pattern and some advice on material and sewing. Editors and artists of all three papers used space in a similar manner: large illustrations in the foreground and a lot of white space in the background focused readers' attention on the mannequins or models and their clothes. Only some pages contained more text to explain specific handcrafting techniques.

The fashion pages with their illustrations were intended to satisfy readers' visual consumerist desires for haute couture worn by the New Woman, but also enable readers to sew clothing in the same styles as the illustrated clothing thanks to the sewing pattern sheet in the more expensive editions of the papers or available for individual ordering. However, even though every edition contained new clothing illustrations and instructions on how to produce them, thereby inducing consumerist desires, readers likely could not afford to, nor wanted to, sew all of the clothing models presented. As historians have noted, mass consumption of the newest technological and consumer products, including domestic appliances and ready-made clothing, had become a reality in the US during the interwar period. In Germany window shopping, the anticipation of mass consumption, and the actual mass consumption of cheap consumer items such as newspapers, magazines, and inexpensive paperback novels were the more common experience.

At a time of heightened of visual consumerism many readers probably mostly enjoyed



Figure 8: “Wie ziehe ich mich an?” *DWdF* 3 (Aug. 1931): 20.



Figure 9: “Zwischen Sommer und Herbst,” in *Selbst ist die Frau: Modenschau der Frauenwelt*, *Frauenwelt* 15 (July 1926): 249.

seeing new clothing designs and being knowledgeable about up-to-date styles (such as those shown in Figures 8 and 9). If they sewed clothes and other items, they likely did so at intervals befitting their finances.

Nevertheless, with their fashion pages, both publications participated in mass consumerist practices separate and beyond the mere printing and sale of mass political propaganda. Since *DWdF* was not officially a KPD women’s magazine – and perhaps also due to its arrival well after *Frauenwelt* had forged a path – no Party-internal strife is notable in KPD documents over

whether a popular women's magazine carrying sartorial recommendations was appropriate for a political party's propaganda.

*Frauenwelt's* trendy apparel section however prompted criticism by women functionaries as well as the occasional reader. As demonstrated above, at SPD women's conferences cadres petitioned against *Frauenwelt's* entire conceptualization, and therefore were against the fact that an SPD paper carried fashion pages and hence supported a capitalist practice based on mass consumerism seemingly unregulated by reason.

Others criticized specific aspects of *Frauenwelt's* *haute couture* segment: they pointed out that it was relatively uncritical of the advertising, frequent purchase, and sewing of clothing, and that it, equally uncritically, featured the same clothing styles that could be found in the non-Socialist press.<sup>132</sup> They would prefer, they argued, clothing in artistic, healthier, and functional styles, particularly criticizing the low waist and the long tubular dresses and skirts presented in the SPD paper from 1924 through 1926 (beginning in 1927, skirt and dress lengths became shorter and incorporated pleats for a less obstructed walk). Lohmann explained however that attracting readers required adopting contemporary fashion and slowly building improvements into them:

When we were deciding on the conceptualization of *Frauenwelt*, we asked ourselves how we could reach all those women proletarians, who at that time were [subscribing to and] reading other magazines just to get their fashion pages. At that time, there seemed to be no other solution than to adopt the best products of the dominant fashion. We need to

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<sup>132</sup> A reader criticized that *Frauenwelt's* models slavishly followed contemporary fashions by only offering dresses with a low waist at the hip and below, and argued that *Frauenwelt* should have the courage to stray away from dogmatic fashion demands. For her, the low waist did not correspond to the natural body shape of a woman and was, as a result, not healthy or functional. Anon., "Die lange Taille," *Frauenwelt* 19 (11 Sept. 1926): 300. In contrast, H. Z. claimed that the low waist was an invention by female proletarians and not by fashion designers, H. Z. "Kleidungsreform," *Frauenwelt* 13 (30 June 1928): 306. Margarete Hartig admitted that women's fashions are a capitalist practice, but insisted that women wearers of contemporary fashions were not merely following fashion blindly and that they instead influenced the fashions. She saw this in the market failure of the pant skirt ("Hosenrock"), Hartig, "Mode und Frauenbefreiung. Auch eine 'Modeplauderei'," *Frauenwelt* 22 (Nov. 1929): 514-515, here 514. Mila Ganeva has argued that interwar women's fashions positioned women as agents since women were among the designers, models, and fashion journalists, *Women in Weimar Fashion: Discourses and Displays in German Culture, 1918-1933* (New York: Camden House, 2008).

gradually criticize the dominant fashion so that after years of work we can elevate [our readers'] tastes. (That is very good!).<sup>133</sup>

*DWdF*'s and *Frauenwelt*'s haute couture sections also evidence, at least over time, some attention by editors and contributors to the issues surrounding leftist media touting fashion as well as to the specific sartorial recommendations they made. Under Lohmann, the SPD paper's fashion section was titled "Selbst ist die Frau: Modenschau der Frauenwelt" ("The woman gets it done herself: *Frauenwelt*'s Fashion Show"). This was a modification of the more common expression "Selbst ist der Mann" (The man is capable of getting things done by himself). With the substitution of the subject, the statement expressed a sense of women's self-confidence and independence through do-it-yourself skills in handcrafting, a very traditional feminine practice.

While feminist tones were in concert with many Socialist messages, the petit-bourgeois and middle-class connotations of handcrafting clothes at home when mass-produced ready-made wear (*Konfektion*) was available for purchase was a more polemical issue. Both women's magazines discussed with readers whether the home production of clothing and other items was anachronistic in an industrial-era of mass production, or if home crafting still had economic and other value. Readers contributed their own varying opinions on the issue (see Chapter 4).<sup>134</sup> Marxist ideology defined the continued home production of goods for the family's own use as non-productive since it was unpaid. However, the two popular publications' conceptualization – the fact that they carried handcrafting and sewing segments – acknowledged that the home

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<sup>133</sup> Lohmann, in *SPD Parteitag 1924 Berlin*, 238.

<sup>134</sup> "Nachwort der Redaktion," *Frauenwelt* 2 (Jan. 1925): 18; 'Anna-Maria Hülsenbeck from Bückeberg', "Gedanken über Frauenkultur und Frauenkleidung," *Frauenwelt* 2 (Jan. 1925): 48-49; and 'Frau Käthe Hippe from Stade', "Gedanken über Frauenkultur und Frauenkleidung," *Frauenwelt* 6 (Mar. 1925): 75; and Maria P. Koda, "Sollen wir Handarbeiten machen?" *DWdF* 2 (Feb. 1932): 23; and 'Eine Büro-Angestellte aus Stuttgart', "Sollen wir Handarbeiten machen?" *DWdF* 3 (Mar. 1932): 22; and "Nähstube 'Klara Zetkin'," *DWdF* 3 (Mar. 1932): 22. See also Vormschlag, "Inhalte, Leitbilder," 163;

production of goods was still economically vital to proletarian women's and their family's lives, and that certain aspects of it were both pleasurable and a matter of pride to women. At the same time, authors in both magazines insisted that handcrafting should be limited to essentials and that at the very least modern abstract and geometric designs should replace flowers as decorations on handcrafted items.

Under Lohmann, the fashion segment's changing subtitles frequently referenced the apparel's newness or trendiness (such as "*Die ersten Sommerkleider*," "The First Summer Dresses," "*Die neuesten Modelle*," "The Newest Clothing Models"), very much like *Berliner Hausfrau*.<sup>135</sup> It occasionally also suggested that some two-year-old clothing could be out of style and that their fabrics could be reworked into clothes in newer styles; although for the most part, the clothing instructions for reusing fabric from older clothing or curtains were meant to allow women with tight budgets to extend the life of a textile item.<sup>136</sup>

When Sender became *Frauenwelt's* editor, she removed both the title and any subtitle or other references to the fashion styles' 'newness' or trendiness. Presumably, she rejected the title's feminist connotations and associations with middle-class culture, and the habituating of readers to desire the newest styles. Under her editorship, only descriptive titles for the types of clothing shown and for the occasions for which they were suited headed the fashion pages.

*DWdF's* fashion segment was titled "What shall I wear?" ("*Wie ziehe ich mich an?*"). Here, subtitles identified – like *Frauenwelt's* fashion pages' subtitles under Sender – the season

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<sup>135</sup> "Die ersten Sommerkleider," *Frauenwelt* 6 (Mar. 1925): 83.

<sup>136</sup> "Neu für Alt. Ein modernes Kasackkleid aus einem unmodernen Sonntagskleid," *Frauenwelt* 16 (1924): 261; "Praktische Kleidung aus Zweierlei Stoff: Auch aus älteren Kleidern herzustellen," *DWdF* 2 (Feb. 1932): 20; and the response to K. Metscher, "Aus Altem wird Neues," *DWdF* 4 (Apr. 1932): 22.





Figure 10: “Unser Schneiderbriefkasten,” *DWdF* 1 (Jan. 1932): 22.



Figure 11: “Mode-Beilage,” *Berliner Hausfrau* 31 (28 Aug. 1930): unpaginated.

and for whom the clothes were intended; and offered characterizations of the clothes that fit into Weimar’s and Socialist cultural priorities, such as “Athletic Costume and Piece Dress Outfit” (“*Sportliches Kostüm und Jackenkleid*”) and “Practical Clothing” (“*Praktische Kleidung*”).<sup>137</sup> Therefore *DWdF*’s headers were similarly devoid of feminist, over-the-top mass consumerist, and middle-class connotations.

<sup>137</sup> “Sportliches Kostüm und Jackenkleid,” *DWdF* 1 (Jan. 1932): 22; “Sportgerechte Kleidung,” *DWdF* 1 (Jan. 1932): 22; “Praktische Kleidung aus Zweierlei Stoff: Auch aus älteren Kleidern herzustellen,” *DWdF* 2 (Feb. 1932): 20.



Editors and authors admitted that they were participating in a capitalist practice, including the promotion of quickly outdated clothing fashions. They argued, however, that the periodicals' low prices and their sewing patterns (see Figure 10) made it possible that even working-class women and their families, despite their much tighter budgets than those with money for ready-made clothing, could wear clothing in contemporary styles by sewing them.<sup>138</sup> They noted that sewing clothes at home offered women a better alternative to buying more expensive but lower quality ready-made clothing from the department store since readers could use higher quality fabrics.<sup>139</sup> In this way, the popular women's magazines participated in the left's uplifting of working-class peoples' lives to the standards of middle-class populations: proletarians could now dress at least as well as middle-class populations.

Especially *Frauenwelt's* editors and contributors argued that its readers could create clothing items that were healthier and more creative-artistic. Both *DWdF* and *Frauenwelt* presented clothing patterns designed by "Lyon," just like many non-Socialist fashion publications (although *Berliner Hausfrau* carried its own line, "Hackebeil Lindaschnitte," see Figure 11).<sup>140</sup> The SPD paper also showcased its "own line in the style of the current fashion"

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<sup>138</sup> Beginning with the fourth edition in 1924, *Frauenwelt* with the sewing pattern sheet, the A edition, sold for 30 Pfennige more than the at 10 Pf. priced B edition of the paper. Individual "Lyon-Cuts" sewing instructions could be ordered for 60 Pf. plus shipping per item and *Frauenwelt's* own designs' sewing instructions cost between 30 and 90 Pf. *DWdF's* regular copy sold for 20 Pf. in 1931 and the edition with the sewing pattern sheet could be had for 10 Pf. more. This means both the sewing instruction sheets, as well as the magazines, were affordable for especially the better-off working classes. The individual sewing patterns were easier to follow than the sewing pattern sheet ("Schnittmusterbogen"), which had overlapping and crisscrossing lines. That readers might have difficulties in understanding and interpreting the sewing pattern sheet was apparently recognized by Köster and she devoted one of her "Die schaffende Frau" sections to how to read and make use of the sewing pattern double sheet. See Köster, "Die schaffende Frau," *Frauenwelt* 3 (29 Jan. 1927): 44-45. See also Petition 1 at the SPD Women's Conference in Kiel to simplify the sewing pattern sheet so that more than seamstresses could read and use it. The same petition requested the individual of these sewing pattern sheets, promising that they had sales value on their own, *SPD-Parteitag 1927 Kiel*, 337.

<sup>139</sup> Sender, "Liebe Leserin!" *Frauenwelt* 5 (10 March 1928): 102. Kirschmann-Röhl noted that mass-produced clothing ("Konfektion") was often so cheaply made that it was not worth purchasing, whereas finished products of quality were too expensive for many consumers. "Was ist nun sozialistische Reform?" *Frauenwelt* 4 (1925): 48.

<sup>140</sup> Some of the other designers mentioned in *Frauenwelt* were Dora Kuttner and Hildegard Hamann.

(“Eigenkleider” or “Eigenmodelle” “in Anlehnung an die Mode,” and “F-cuts”) and designs by Aimée Köster (1869-?). Köster was a Socialist fashion designer, journalist, writer, and editor, who had produced the USPD-associated fashion magazine *Die schaffende Frau. Erste sozialistische Frauen- und Modenzeitung* (*The Productive/Creative Woman: The First Socialist Women’s and Fashion Newspaper*, 1919-1925).<sup>141</sup> From 1925 through 1927 *Frauenwelt* carried her two-page long handcrafting section with the same title as her former magazine;; although Sender eliminated Köster’s segment – presumably to reduce the fashion segment’s middle-class handcrafting messages.<sup>142</sup> Prior to this, incorporating Köster’s designs (who was known for her design and handcrafting talent and for her adherence to *Reformkleidung*, reform-clothing, promoted as healthy by the greater life-reform movement) allowed editors and contributors to claim in *Frauenwelt* that its selection of apparel involved critical considerations for creative designs (“*Künstlerkleider*”), women’s health, and function, such as women’s employment and exercise needs.<sup>143</sup>

Our fashion segment, which appears in every edition (as a fashion supplement in every other edition) brings principally *the best models of the fashion of the day*, and beyond that, strives to inspire our readers – through images and texts – to position themselves *critically* against the dominant fashion of today, to express *their own personal taste* and to recognize *the limits* of each fashion dictatorship along considerations of aesthetics, and social and personal conditions.<sup>144</sup>

At women’s conferences and in personal remarks, editors were more skeptical about readers’ desire to see creative clothing styles in *Frauenwelt*. Lohmann admitted at the 1924 SPD

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<sup>141</sup> See Vormschlag, “Inhalte, Leitbilder,” 125.

<sup>142</sup> See “An unsere Leserinnen!” *Frauenwelt* 20 (Sept. 1925): 311. In the first four editions of 1928, Köster’s page was no longer titled “Die schaffende Frau.”

<sup>143</sup> Anon., likely Kirschmann-Röhl, “Selbst ist die Frau. Modenbeilage der Frauenwelt,” *Frauenwelt* 1 (1924): 5; and Köster, “Die Herstellung eines Stilkleides,” *Frauenwelt* 2 (28 Jan. 1928): 45.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.; and Kirschmann-Röhl, “Grundsätzliches zur Frauenkleidung,” *Frauenwelt* 4 (1924): 61.

Women's Conference that many clothing items recommended in the women's paper were neither pieces of art nor reform clothes:

Then a word to the most polemical question, the fashion segment of *Frauenwelt* and the education [of readers] toward having an artistic taste [in fashion], about which woman comrade Selbert has spoken. We cannot be blind to reality. (Animated agreement.) We cannot overlook that 99 percent of all our women proletarians, the young and the old, are at the moment attached to the dominant fashion (audience commentary: that is right), and would not pick up a fashion magazine if it contained exclusively artistic women's clothing and culture. Even among the leading women comrades in our movement, when looking at this lit hall, more than half of them are bound to the dominant fashion. (Animated agreement.) To support my contention, I would name woman comrade Sender, who illustrates that one can be a class fighter and nevertheless dress oneself tastefully following the dominant fashion. (Commotion)<sup>145</sup>

What does not come to the forefront in Lohmann's or Kirschmann-Röhl's comments is that within their pages both magazines endowed interwar clothing designs – regardless of whether they were 'artistic' or of the various styles of reform clothing – with attributes beyond mere fashionability. Articles and images in the leftist papers established a direct link between modern functional women's clothing and women's emancipation, health, and progress, noting explicitly that fewer layers and skirts gave women greater mobility and hence made women's entrance into the world of employment and sports possible (see Chapter Four).<sup>146</sup>

### Entertainment

The majority of *Frauenwelt*'s pages consisted of entertainment.<sup>147</sup> It printed – in three to five-page-long segments per edition stretched over the course of several months – serial novels by mainstream to conservative authors such as Clara Viebig's "Die Schuldige," which could

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<sup>145</sup> Selbert did not mention *Frauenwelt* in her discussion contribution and likely made her remarks directly to Lohmann in a conversation. *SPD Parteitag 1924 Berlin*, 238.

<sup>146</sup> Margarete Hartig, "Mode und Frauenbefreiung. Auch eine 'Modeplauderei,'" *Frauenwelt* 22 (Nov. 1929): 514-515; and anon., "Zurück zum Dutt?" *DWdF* 10 (Oct. 1932): 10-11; anon., "Sind wir altmodische Sportler?" *DWdF* 8 (Aug. 1932): 29; and Henny Schumacher, "Frauenkleidung und Frauenbefreiung," *Frauenwelt* 18 (1924): 292-3.

<sup>147</sup> Vormschlag, "Inhalte, Leitbilder," 159.

have just as well been published in *Berliner Hausfrau*. Lohmann and Sender also brought works by German and international authors who were affiliated with Leftist movements, or socially critical, such as Swedish author Martin Andersen Nexø's "Der Lotterieschwede" and Hermann Heijermans's detective novel "Bluff!" Naturally, all the serial novels contained political messages, usually involving gender roles intersecting with class. However, readers had to interpret the stories for themselves. Usually, no editor's forewords or postscripts was offered to influence readers' interpretations of the stories.<sup>148</sup>

*DWdF* did not offer a serial novel, but it had many other entertainment sections in common with *Frauenwelt* and *Berliner Hausfrau*. Among these were: short stories, poems, jokes (*DWdF*: "Humor"), word and picture puzzles (*Berliner Hausfrau*: "Rätselecke," "Puzzle Corner;" *DWdF*: "Zum Kopfzerbrechen"), film, theatre, radio, and book reviews (*DWdF*: "Film und Rundfunk" and "Bücher, die uns angehen;" *Frauenwelt*: "Was gibt's im Film," and "Was ich lesen würde..."), and even some travel writing.<sup>149</sup> Both leftist papers also offered – like *Berliner Hausfrau* – children's sections or supplements (*Frauenwelt*: "Kinderland," "Children's Land;" *DWdF*: "Die Welt der Kinder," "Children's World," and a youth section "Jugendwelt," "The World of the Youth").<sup>150</sup> In addition, *Frauenwelt* brought some gardening advice ("Zwischen

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<sup>148</sup> There were a few exceptions. *Frauenwelt* announced two original serial novels in 1926: Eva Klaar's *Die vier Tage der Hanne Werth*, and Friedrich C. Kellermann's *Um das Kind*; claiming they were editors' concessions to reader demands, would deal with problems surrounding motherhood, institutional discrimination against unmarried mothers, women's right to family planning and being emotionally, perhaps also sexually and professionally, fulfilled. See "zwei große Originalromane," *Frauenwelt* 15 (July 1926): 232; Sven Elvestadt, "Der Mann der die Stadt plünderte," *Frauenwelt* 3 (8 Feb. 1930): 54-55; and Fanny Schülein, "Die Ledige," *Frauenwelt* 21 (19 Oct. 1929): 496.

<sup>149</sup> Dr. Lily Herzberg, "Das Frauenvolk der Jassai," *Frauenwelt* 4 (Feb. 1930): 82; and Karl Kautsky, "Im Lande der Verschleierten," *Frauenwelt* 21 (19 Oct. 1929): 492-493.

<sup>150</sup> The monthly 4-page "Kinderland" supplement turned magazine section, the "Selbst ist die Frau" segment, and potentially also *Frauenwelt*'s cooking column was edited by Kirschmann-Röhl and Elli Radke-Warmuth, both former editors of the *Gleichheit*'s supplements. See Vormschlag, "Inhalte, Leitbilder," 158.

*Laube und Siedlung*”) and many articles on child rearing in a regular column titled “*Die Kunst des Erziehens*” (“The Art of Childrearing”). With their one (*DWdF*) to two pages (*Frauenwelt*) of advertising, both leftist papers offered much less space to sales promotions than *Berliner Hausfrau*, which delivered more than six pages of ads, including many small business and personal ads.

Despite these commonalities, all of *DWdF*’s entertaining contents stood well apart from those of *Frauenwelt* and *Berliner Hausfrau*; they were always overtly political, often beginning with cynical, satirical, or facetious titles, such as: “*Das Paradies der Damen*” (“A Paradise for Women”), “*Es lebe die schöne Hoffnung*” (“Hope Springs Eternal”), and “*Strohütte als Winterhilfe*” (“Straw Hats as Winter Aid”).<sup>152</sup> Socioeconomic issues related to class, capitalism, and women’s rights themes predominated among the Communist paper’s political messages. Maria Leitner’s travel reports illustrate well how *DWdF* endowed even its entertainment section and travel articles with political messages. Instead of describing historic sight-seeing places, beautiful landscapes, or foreign cultural experiences, such as would be commonly found in *Frauenwelt* and *Berliner Hausfrau*, Jewish Hungarian-German Leitner traveled undercover through the US as a day laborer, describing up-close the everyday experiences and hard work-lives of women from the lower classes and disadvantaged ethnic and racial groups in the US.<sup>153</sup>

*DWdF* also delivered a regular series with short adventures and dialogues between two housewives “*Frau Gründlich und Frau Grämlich*” (“Mrs. Thorough and Mrs. Morose,” see

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<sup>152</sup> These titles are from just one edition of *DWdF*: Bruno Frei, “*Das Paradies der Damen*,” *DWdF* 1 (Jan. 1932): 7-8; L.G., “*Strohütte als Winterhilfe*,” *DWdF* 1 (Jan. 1932): 8; Gerd Rieger, “*Es lebe die schöne Hoffnung*,” *DWdF* 1 (Jan. 1932): 9-11; Dora Hofmeister, “*Der kleine Dingsda*,” *DWdF* 2 (July 1931): 6; and Gertrud Ring, “*Möbliertes Zimmer zu vermieten*,” *DWdF* 2 (July 1931): 9-11.

<sup>153</sup> Leitner, “*Die Schwesterin*,” *DWdF* 7 (Dec. 1931): 9-10; *ibid.*, “*Die Indianer von Costa Rica*,” *DWdF* 6 (June 1932): 10-11; and *ibid.*, “*Das Seidenkleid*,” *DWdF* 1 (June 1931): 7-9. This short report gave readers a look at the work lives of women servants of different races and origins employed by wealthy New York Riverside Drive families.

Figure 12) whose names characterized their bearers. Frau Gründlich (a convinced Communist New Woman) and Frau Grämlich (the politically ignorant wife of a lower-level civil servant) shared housewifely and other experiences together, during which Frau Grämlich's naïveté was

usually demonstrated.<sup>155</sup> This gave Frau Gründlich a chance to enlighten Frau Grämlich of the correctness of Communist, anti-war, anti-Weimar government views. These two characters and their dialogues were so popular that the KPD brought them to life in *Der Weg der Frau* public entertainment evenings.

### Body Culture and Homemaking

The fourth and fifth pillars of interwar popular women's publications were the topics of body culture and homemaking (with the first, second, and third pillars being illustrations, fashion, and entertainment). While *Frauenwelt* and



Figure 12: “Frau Gründlich und Frau Grämlich werden verhaftet,” *DWdF* 3 (Aug. 1931): 11.

*DWdF* also included articles on a large variety of matters related to women's issues, both leftist papers celebrated women's body culture, inundating their pages with images of women at

<sup>155</sup> The series “Frau Gründlich und Frau Grämlich” was signed ‘Erp’, which likely stood for Fritz Erpenbeck. See Surmann, *Die Münzenberg-Legende*, 288.

exercise next to articles, instruction, and advice on exercise and health (see Chapter 4).<sup>156</sup>

Similarly, all papers contained articles on modern architecture, rationalized-functional home design, home furnishing, and homemaking.

These contents included deeply gendered and classed political messages (see Chapters 4 and 6). Aiming to improve women's lives, as part of their greater goal of creating better living and working conditions for proletarians, *Frauenwelt's* and *DWdF's* authors and editors explicitly noted that working-class women should have equal access to the same body culture that women of the middle class, with more economic wealth and leisure time, could afford. Leftists also admitted that they aimed to improve the proletarian home environment by introducing technological advances and modern convenience.<sup>157</sup> However, they did not acknowledge with equal frankness that they advocated for the transformation of working-class families' home lives to resemble middle-class ones by relegating housework to women and identifying the kitchen as a women's only workspace, while recreating the living room as a male space (see Chapter Six).

The manner in which women enacted homemaking; whether, when, and how women treated their bodies; and how women related to their families were intensely debated political

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<sup>156</sup> In *Frauenwelt*, the regular health, hygiene, and sports sections were: "Die Kunst des Gesundseins," "The Art of Being Healthy" and "Sport und Körperpflege," "Exercise and Body Care;" in *DWdF* a single column covered all these topics: "Gesundheit und Hygiene," "Health and Hygiene." Some of the other topics in the papers were: Marie Harder, "Eine Kämpferin. Ellen Rey, gest. 25 April 1926, zum Gedächtnis," *Frauenwelt* 11 (May 1926): 163; Hans W. Fischer, "Vernunft gegen Gesetz," *Frauenwelt* 26 (28 Dec. 1929): 603; Oda Olberg, "Unsere Stellung zum Verbrechen," *Frauenwelt* 26 (28. Dec.1929): 608-609; Paula Kurgaß, "Frauen hinter Gittern," *Frauenwelt* 26 (28. Dec.1929): 609; Lenka von Koerber, "Erstmalig Bestrafte," *Frauenwelt* 1 (11 Jan. 1930): 3 and 5; Louise Diel, "Wie lebt die Berufsfrau in Amerika?" *Frauenwelt* 2 (25 Jan. 1930): 33-34; Hermine David, "Wohltätigkeit," *Frauenwelt* 2 (25 Jan.1930): 34-35; and Luise Kautsky, "Rosa Luxemburg als Frau," *Frauenwelt* 1 (Jan.1929): 5. For a list of the type of articles brought by *Frauenwelt* and their frequency in 1924 and 1932 see Vormschlag, "Inhalte, Leitbilder," 158-159. Link, "Die Bräuteschule," *DWdF* 7 (Dec. 1931): 15-17; Anna Seghers, "Was wissen wir von Jugend-Cliquen?" *DWdF* 7 (Dec. 1931): 7; Erika Böhm, "Frauen vor Schanghai," *DWdF* 5 (May 1932): 12; and anon., "Mütter! wir sind alle unschuldig: eine Stunde bei der Negermutter Ada Wright," *DWdF* 6 (June 1932): 3-4.

<sup>157</sup> Maria Rath, "Wohnung und Politik," *Frauenwelt* 4 (Feb. 1930): 77; Alice Simmel, "Die neue Küche," *Frauenwelt* 1 (Jan. 1929): 16; Bruno Asch, "Neue Wege im Wohnungsbau," *Frauenwelt* 2 (Jan. 1929): 34-35; and "Gedanken über das Erotische und die Frau," *Frauenwelt* 22 (Nov. 1929): 519.

issues during Weimar. However, women functionaries, who criticized Lohmann and to a lesser degree Sender for the lack of ‘politics’ in *Frauenwelt*, commonly overlooked these political issues within the paper because they were looking for class and Socialist politics to do with parliamentary and international politics. Others rejected its alignment of the proletarian housewife with middle-class perspectives on what women should center their attention and lives.

Offering a slightly diminished association of working-class women with homemaking (see Chapter Six), *DWdF* inserted overt class and Communist politics into both its body culture and homemaking pages. Numerous articles and commentaries complained about the exclusion of the working classes (especially women) from healthy body culture, healthier homes, home lives, and homemaking. Contributors lamented that proletarians, given high unemployment, low wages, and high food prices, could not afford sufficient quantity, quality, and diversity of foods they defined as essential (see Chapter Six); and they criticized traditional middle-class culture with its desire to keep women’s bodies covered up with layers of long clothing. They pointed out that this led to the exclusion of women from the world of work (see Chapter Four).<sup>158</sup> A large part of their body-cultural criticism targeted §§ 218 and 219 of the Criminal Code for keeping poor women hostage to their ever-fertile, yet depleted, bodies. They asserted frequent pregnancies and large families prevented women from accessing education, careers, and the opportunity to live out their natural need for sexual activity; thereby, causing instead illness, exhaustion, and a deformation of women’s bodies (see Chapter Five). Leftists had long bemoaned that the urban poor had insufficient to no access to outdoor exercise with sufficient sunlight, wind, and natural surroundings; and that proletarian families, lacking space, modern technologies, and provisions for hygiene at home (such as a bathroom, running hot water, and a

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<sup>158</sup> “Hunger ist der beste Koch,” *DWdF* 7 (July 1932): 16-17.



bed for each person) lived in unacceptable conditions in their homes (see Chapter Six). At a time when one's appearance was essential for obtaining and retaining white-collar jobs, Communists maintained that poor women could not correct, with cosmetic medical interventions, the damage done by all of these conditions.<sup>159</sup> *DWdF* contributors for the most part did not blame proletarians but rather middle-class German society, the Weimar government, and capitalism for the deficiencies and conditions they identified.

In a very strong distinction from *DWdF*, *Frauenwelt* offered many articles on hygienic, medically-appropriate, and pedagogically progressive child-rearing. While the occasional child-rearing article was also found in *Berliner Hausfrau*, it is clear that child-rearing was not a topic adopted or coopted from contemporary popular women's magazines. How the future generation was raised was extremely important to *Frauenwelt*'s editors and contributors, and judging from reader contributions in the "Wer weiß Rat...?" segment, also to readers. In contrast, few articles on childrearing in the home could be found in *DWdF*, which instead praised Soviet childcare facilities for providing state-of-the-art hygienic, medical, and pedagogical care to children. Therefore, it did not pressure women readers to devote more attention or time to childrearing, identifying them more as women workers.

### ***Frauenwelt* and *DWdF* as Collective Products**

*Frauenwelt* and *DWdF*, as well as *Berliner Hausfrau*, made a point to engage their readers, enticing them to become contributors to the magazine, and define their magazine as a collective product. Lohmann stated this desire in his initial 1924 remarks about *Frauenwelt* to readers:

This magazine, dear woman reader, does not want to be my or your, but *our* magazine. [...] We wanted to found the periodical of the woman, in which not an editor and a

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<sup>159</sup> *DWdF* published articles on socially-indicated cosmetic surgery to be paid for by health insurance ("Soziale Kosmetik") since the poor could not afford such cosmetic interventions.

predetermined staff decide its content and appearance ahead of time, but rather whose Gestalt and content is only formed because *all* readers feel like contributors, are willing to carry the responsibility for a collective magazine, and influence the form and content of the magazine through a continuous exchange of thoughts and opinions with editors.<sup>160</sup>

Very much like *Berliner Hausfrau*, *Frauenwelt* and *DWdF* provided regular columns for readers to contribute jokes and their funny experiences with children,<sup>161</sup> ask for legal and medical advice,<sup>162</sup> send in sewing questions and suggestions,<sup>163</sup> offer queries and recommendations for repairs and do-it-yourself projects in the home,<sup>164</sup> and submit a variety of other questions, answers, or comments on just about anything.<sup>165</sup> In *Frauenwelt*'s "Wer weiß Rat...?" column, readers directed their questions to "Elisabeth," who until 1930 was Elisabeth Kirschmann-Röhl (who, along with Elli Radke-Warmuth, also edited *Frauenwelt*'s "*Kinderland*" supplement, its fashion segment, and probably also the cooking and homemaking pages).<sup>166</sup> Readers were encouraged, initially with the aid of remuneration, to submit their answers to other readers' questions in this column. As a result, *Frauenwelt* readers asked for and provided information on career training, housing, legal, insurance matters, child-rearing, homemaking, and

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<sup>160</sup> Lohmann, "Diese Zeitschrift," *Frauenwelt* 1 (Mar. 1924): no pagination.

<sup>161</sup> *Berliner Hausfrau*: "Wer lacht mit?" ("Who Joins in the Laughter?"); *Frauenwelt*: "Sonnenlichter" ("Sunrays") *DWdF*: "Humor."

<sup>162</sup> *DWdF*: "Du und das Recht" ("You and the Law"); *Frauenwelt*: "Die Sprechstunde" ("The Consultation Hour"), which incorporated both legal and medical advice but was reduced to medical advice in "Medizinischer Briefkasten" ("Medical Mailbox"), with articles on specific legal issues offered occasionally, presumably in part as a response to readers' questions.

<sup>163</sup> *DWdF*: "Unser Schneiderbriefkasten" ("Our Mail Box for Sewing Questions").

<sup>164</sup> *Frauenwelt*: "Die Axt im Haus" ("The Axe in the House") and "Zwischen Schlafstelle und Heim" ("Between a Sleeping Place and a Home"); *Berliner Hausfrau*: "Kleine Reparaturen im Haushalt" ("Small Repairs in the Home").

<sup>165</sup> *Frauenwelt*: "Wer weiß Rat...?" ("Who Has Advice...?"); *DWdF*: "Briefkasten Der Weg der Frau" ("The Mailbox of Der Weg der Frau") and "Die Leserin hat das Wort" ("The Woman Reader Gets the Word"); *Berliner Hausfrau*: "Meinungsaustausch" ("Opinion Exchange").

<sup>166</sup> This column began with *Frauenwelt* 19 (Sept. 1926): 300.

relationship advice, but also offered their personal ads, and asked each other ideological questions about ethics, opinions, and social norms and behaviors.<sup>167</sup>

*DWdF* regularly published half to a full page with readers' positive comments about the magazine. Here readers described their local *DWdF* reader group meetings and their work to increase *DWdF*'s subscriptions in an effort to increase the paper's publication rate to twice a month.<sup>168</sup> In the columns "Die Leserin hat das Wort" and "Die Frau in Fabrik und Büro" ("The Woman at the Factory and the Office"), the Communist paper also printed readers' denunciations of the working conditions and wages at specific workplaces, conditions, and treatment at hospitals and unemployment offices, and the eviction of tenants from their apartments. As noted previously, the authenticity of some 'reader' letters is questionable due in part to the recurrent use of KPD slogans and generally edited letters. *DWdF* editors also used a variety of other techniques to impose their interpretation onto readers' narratives, making these contributions' originality appear manipulated (see Chapter Five).

Both women's publications also set up prize competitions. *DWdF*'s competition hardly presented any challenges: for example, in the first competition in 1931, it asked readers to identify well-known Leftist or left-leaning women in photographs (Luxemburg, Zetkin, and Kollwitz). This led to a high participation rate with 14,000 submissions, which increased to 26,000 in 1932.<sup>169</sup> Its prize competitions were a way for *DWdF* to advertise for itself, win

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<sup>167</sup> Early on readers asked each other for advice. Examples include: whether they should join friends in jazz and other modern dances and if a mother should advise against her daughter getting a bobbed haircut out of concerns her daughter might lose her position in domestic service. See "Tanzen," and "Bubikopf," *Frauenwelt* 19 (Sept. 1926): 300. For a personal ad, see "Freundschaft!" *Ibid.* 1 (Jan. 1932), 16; and Chapter 5.

<sup>168</sup> Surmann, *Die Münzenberg-Legende*, 204. See also "Frauennachmittage," *DWdF* 3 (Aug. 1931): 13; "Großes Gartenfest von Leserkreisen," *DWdF* 3 (Aug. 1931): 30; and "Kundgebungen im Ruhrgebiet," *DWdF* 3 (Mar. 1932): 13.

<sup>169</sup> "1,000 Frauen freuen sich!" *DWdF* 5 (Oct. 1931): 2; and "Das große Preisausschreiben," *DWdF* 5 (May 1932): 2. The participant number in the first prize competition was hand corrected from perhaps 12,000 to 14,000.

subscribers, and display its largess to proletarians by giving away ‘essential’ consumer goods and vacations to many winners. It then created human interest pieces about the winning women and their families in *DWdF*.

*Frauenwelt*’s prize competition was initially also easy and intended as a type of survey to help editors know what types of materials to offer in the future that would be well-received: it asked readers to submit their favorite *Frauenwelt* sections and contents.<sup>170</sup> Readers responded that they most liked *Frauenwelt*’s “Who has advice...?” column, followed by its illustrated cover pages with artwork, the serial novels, articles on health, child-rearing, and home design and lifestyle.<sup>171</sup> When Sender became its editor, *Frauenwelt* required more challenging contributions and the competition had didactic functions (as did some of the other content of the paper): readers had to submit essays containing their opinions on particular topics specified by the editor. Only winning essays were published.<sup>172</sup>

*Frauenwelt* and to a lesser degree *DWdF* functioned as communication platforms between readers, and between readers and editors, fulfilling their needs for information and representing themselves while performing their gendered and classed Social Democratic or Communist identities.<sup>173</sup> Through their participation readers usually defined themselves as women who advocated for greater rights for women and women workers and espoused progressive forms of child-rearing and companionate relationships between spouses, very much

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<sup>170</sup> “Das Ergebnis unseres zweiten Preisausschreibens,” *Frauenwelt* 13 (1924): 213-14.

<sup>171</sup> “Wie machen wir’s besser: Die Antworten auf unsere Weihnachtsfragen,” *Frauenwelt* 3 (29 Jan. 1927): 54.

<sup>172</sup> “Wie stehst Du zur heutigen gesetzlichen Form der Ehe?” *Frauenwelt* 26 (28. Dec. 1929): 614.

<sup>173</sup> See Olberg, “Unsere Stellung zum Verbrechen,” *Frauenwelt* 26 (28. Dec.1929): 608-609; Erhard Starke, “Das Problem des Verbrechens,” and Hans Marckwald, the chief editor of the Frankfurt/Main *Volksstimme*, “Willensunfreiheit und Verbrechen,” *Frauenwelt* 3 (8 Feb.1930): 58-59; Olberg, “Unsere Stellung zum Verbrechen: Ein Schlusswort von Oda Olberg,” *Frauenwelt* 8 (19 Apr. 1930): 185.

in the strains advocated by the articles and commentaries in *Frauenwelt* and *DWdF*. A Social Democratic sphere and collectivity came to life through especially *Frauenwelt*'s "Wer weiß Rat...?" segment.<sup>174</sup> Even though female cadres complained at SPD National Women's Conferences about a man editing the paper, in *Frauenwelt* itself, between 1924 and 1927, there was no indication that readers were aware of or complained about the editor's sex. What seems to have mattered to readers and subscribers was the focus on topics of interest to women in a light, entertaining, and yet somewhat educational format not available in most other Socialist publications. *Frauenwelt* and *DWdF* filled a niche within Socialist media, accepting women's domesticity and interests related to entertainment, fashion, homemaking, and matters of sexuality and family with a progressive Socialist/Communist tint.

### *Die Genossin*

Just months after the first printing of *Frauenwelt*, the SPD also began publishing *Die Genossin. Informationsblätter der Weiblichen Funktionäre der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands* (*The Female Comrade: Informational Papers of/for the Female Functionaries of the Social Democratic Party of Germany*, July 1924 – February/March 1933). It was edited from 1924 until March 1931 by Juchacz and then until February/March 1933 by Hertha Gotthelf (1902-1963), Juchacz's former secretary.<sup>175</sup> Over the years of its publication *Die Genossin* grew to be the functionaries' magazine par excellence as it offered useful information to women

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<sup>174</sup> Hans W. Fischer, Edgar Hahnwald, and Heinrich Schulz, the co-editor of the *Gleichheit*, were regular contributors to *Frauenwelt*.

<sup>175</sup> *Die Genossin* was published by the SPD's Vorwärts publisher in Berlin, see "Frauenwelt," *Die Genossin* 1 (1924): 4. Its printing was ended with a Prussian decree, announced on the radio on 28 February 1933, the day after the burning of the Reichstag, which temporarily prohibited Social Democratic publications. Reich prohibitions, confiscations of Social Democratic properties, and arrests of Social Democrats followed. See Koszyk, *Zwischen Kaiserreich und Diktatur. Die sozialdemokratische Presse von 1914 bis 1933* (Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 1958), 55.

functionaries throughout the Reich; serving them as a platform to communicate with each other and represent themselves and their activities. It thereby helped create a collective of women cadres, some of whom might otherwise have met only at annual women's conferences (if at all).

At the 1924 SPD Women's Conference in Berlin, Juchacz announced that *Die Genossin* was to print only topics related to women's issues. Neither Socialist theory nor so-called 'greater politics' on matters not immediately related to women's causes were to be part of *Die Genossin*'s content, because such materials could be found in many other SPD publications.<sup>176</sup> While these were points of contention throughout the paper's publication, Juchacz wrote in *Die Genossin*'s initial mission statement that she intended the magazine to be "an informative organ for ... female comrades" because women activists needed material in their work for the Organization and on behalf of women.<sup>177</sup>

She noted that *Die Genossin* could nevertheless also be useful for non-active SPD women members, who were interested in what SPD women functionaries were doing on their and others behalves, but could not get this information elsewhere.<sup>178</sup> However, even though the SPD had 153,683 female members in 1925, and 180,000 in 1928, *Die Genossin*'s circulation in 1925 was 12,000, which increased to 30,000 by 1926.<sup>179</sup> Copies of this publication were first sent to the

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<sup>176</sup> See Juchacz, in *SPD Parteitag 1924 Berlin*, 244-5; and *ibid.*, in *SPD Parteitag 1927 Kiel*, 305. *Die Genossin* only shifted its position slightly in the early 1930s when it called on readers to join the Eiserner Front, the SPD's paramilitary organization aimed to protect against Nazi violence.

<sup>177</sup> Juchacz, "Ein neues Frauenblatt," *Die Genossin* 1 (July 1924): 3-4, here 3. Criticism came from Minna Todenhagen at the *SPD Parteitag 1924 Berlin*, 233. At the Women's Conference of the 1925 Heidelberg SPD Congress, a 'Frau' Ziegler presented a petition from the Greater Leipzig women's organization demanding a third women's publication with Socialist theory to train women functionaries. *SPD Parteitag 1925 Heidelberg*, 165; see also the comments of a 'Frau' Stiegler from the Bremen organization, *SPD Parteitag 1927 in Kiel*, 308-9. In previous conference reports, women were referred to as 'Genossin' (woman comrade) as opposed to 'Frau' (Mrs./Ms.)

<sup>178</sup> Juchacz, "Ein neues Frauenblatt," *Die Genossin* 1 (July 1924): 3-4, here 3.

<sup>179</sup> See "Gesamtmitgliederbewegung in den Bezirken nach Quartalen," in *SPD Parteitag 1925 Heidelberg*, 42; K. Ludwig, "Bericht des Vorstandes: Agitation, Organisation und Kasse," in *SPD Parteitag 1927 Kiel*, 41-53, here 47;

regional organizational offices to be then further disseminated to local organizations. Given the SPD had 10,000 local organizations in 1924, most organizations would have received one or two copies of the paper. Even though women activists likely shared their copy with their women colleagues, it is safe to say that this paper mainly reached the elite of active SPD women functionaries and until 1926 also those of the AWO, with many of these cadres engaged in both organizations.<sup>180</sup>

*Die Genossin* quickly became an indispensable source of information and a communication platform for women functionaries at all levels. It published Juchacz' top-down instructions, guidelines, yearly reports from the National Women's Bureau, and the occasional directive from the party leadership.<sup>181</sup> For the first two years, it also published Juchacz's and other AWO Main Committee and local functionaries' instructions on how to set up local AWO groups and establish economically sound AWO children's and youth homes, daycares, and other welfare institutions.<sup>182</sup>

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and Thönnessen, *The Emancipation of Women*, 116 and 119. 1927 *Die Genossin*'s print run had reached 33,000 by 1927, see Juchacz in *SPD Parteitag 1927 Kiel*, 305. At the Kiel Women's Conference, a petition was submitted to rename *Die Genossin* to *Die Gleichheit* like Zetkin's paper; Juchacz rejected it. Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> AWO began publishing its own paper in 1926, the *Arbeiterwohlfahrt* (1926-1933, *AWO*), which was edited by Wachenheim, and by 1927 the paper printed and disseminated 10,000 copies to AWO functionaries. As a result, beginning in 1926 welfare-related articles in *Die Genossin* became less about practical work and more about laws and their implementation by bureaucracies.

<sup>181</sup> "Rednerkurse," "Frauenabende," and "Frauenleseabende," *Die Genossin* 4 (1 Oct. 1924): 95-96; "Die Reichsfrauenkonferenz und unsere Arbeit," "Richtlinien für unsere Arbeit," and "Parteitagsbeschlüsse," *Die Genossin* 2 (Aug. 1924): 35, 36, and 36-37 respectively; "Der Internationale Frauentag 1931," *Die Genossin* 7/8 (July/Aug. 1931): 246-274; "Jahresbericht 1928," *Die Genossin* 3 (March 1930): 102-143; "Die Frauenabende der Partei," *Die Genossin* 2 (Aug. 1924): 37; "Aufgaben der weiblichen Stadtverordneten," and "Richtlinien für die kommunalpolitische Mitarbeit," *Die Genossin* 1 (July 1924): 15 and 16 respectively; 15; "Schulungskurse," and "Aufgaben des Neuen Reichstages," *Die Genossin* 7 (July 1928): 226 and 231 respectively.

<sup>182</sup> Adelheid Torhorst, "Volksschule und Berufsschule im Rahmen der kommunalpolitischen Aufgaben," *Die Genossin* 7 (July 1928): 232-235; Käthe Frankenthal, "Städtische Gesundheitspflege," *Die Genossin* 7 (July 1928): 236-237; Max Fechner, "Vom Aufbau der Verwaltung," *Die Genossin* 7 (July 1928): 242-244; Minna Todenhagen, "Die Bedeutung kommunaler Deputationen und Ausschüsse," *Die Genossin* 7 (July 1928): 240-241; Julian Marcuse, "Aufgaben sozialistischer Bevölkerungspolitik," *Die Genossin* 7 (July 1928): 245-249;

Throughout the year, locally, regionally, and nationally active female functionaries of both the SPD (and the AWO from 1924 through 1925) offered their own accounts of their organizational activities. Among these were reports about regular local women's evening and sewing meetings for members, and a variety of public events for non-members, including popular entertainment or *Frauenwelt*-evenings, door-to-door and neighborhood membership drives, Christmas, other charitable activities, and rallies with speeches. In their reports, women functionaries illustrated how to create local organizations, and when and how best to stage member and public events to attract the largest number of attendees. One goal here was to motivate and teach each other how to do such work, especially when a successful method was found through trial and error.<sup>183</sup> The paper also published the regional organizations' yearly reports, transparently listing how many local women's groups existed in the region and their membership numbers.

In addition, leading regional and nationally-active cadres reported about their regional and central women's training courses on propaganda work such as oratory and journalistic skills, knowledge of Marxist theory, Party programs, its history, and that of their women's movement. Furthermore, *Die Genossin* announced planned women's conferences and other events of the SPD, the AWO, a variety of other organizations, bureaucratic institutions, and municipal governments; so that women functionaries in the Reich could submit additions to conference agendas and make plans to attend. Through conference and exhibition reports, those women who had not been able to attend still received summaries of speeches and learned who was who in the national and other regional and local organizations of the SPD, AWO, and other organizations.

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<sup>183</sup> Juchacz, "Ein neues Frauenblatt," *Die Genossin* 1 (1924): 3.



The journal became a forum for functionaries to debate social policies and women's causes. Throughout its publication years, *Die Genossin* offered articles, commentaries, and up-to-date exposés on a range of topics advocated for by the SPD and the AWO functionaries in parliamentary plenums and special committees. It informed readers on laws related to such topics, as well as their implementation by local through national bureaucracies and private charity organizations into which the AWO attempted to insert itself. Some of these 'women's issues' topics had to do with women's and children's healthcare, welfare; co-ed education for girls and boys, the separation of church and state in public education, and progressive pedagogies in schooling; sexual education and marriage counseling of youth and adults to prevent sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies; the anti-abortion §§ 218 and 219 of the penal code and contraception and sterilization; topics related to the regulation and supervision of prostitution, juvenile criminality and its treatment by the court system, laws relating to unmarried mothers and their offspring; the dismissal of pregnant unmarried civil servants, and women's employment and state regulation of it, to include the dismissals of so-called 'double earners' in early Weimar and then again during the post-1929 economic depression (see Chapter 3).<sup>184</sup>

Many book reviews in *Die Genossin* informed readers about the latest publications on these topics and provided insights into which positions leading women took on specific topics.

Juchacz also reprinted articles and information from a large variety of German newspapers and

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<sup>184</sup> Wachenheim, "Die Verfassung der Selbstverwaltung in Preußen," *Die Genossin* 8 (Aug. 1928): 260-265; Dr. Laura Turnau, "Ehe- und Sexualberatung," *Die Genossin* 8 (Aug. 1928): 265-268; Gertrud Hanna, "Gesetzliches Verbot der Arbeit verheirateter Frauen," *Die Genossin* 12 (Dec. 1928): 434-436; Elli Radtke-Warmuth, "Kind und Wohnung," *Die Genossin* 5 (May 1927): 151-153; Dr. Hilde Grünbaum-Sachs, "Sozialistische Vorerziehung für das Berufsleben," *Die Genossin* 6 (June 1927): 204-205; Luise Schroeder "Erweiterung des Mutterschutzes - ein Erfolg der sozialdemokratischen Reichstagsfraktion," *Die Genossin* 8 (Aug. 1927): 262-264; "Kirche und Frauenturnen," *Die Genossin* 10 (Oct. 1931): 340; and F. Schmalfeld, "Bericht über die deutschnationale Frauenversammlung im Konzerthaus am 18. September 1931," *Die Genossin* 10 (Oct. 1931): 337-339.

magazines.<sup>185</sup> Some of these were about non-Socialist women's movements in Weimar Germany and international women's organizations, activists, and their achievements.<sup>186</sup> This practice meant readers no longer had to do literature searches of their own to keep up with the latest on their topics of interest.<sup>187</sup>

Beyond providing social policy and organizational information for use and debate, *Die Genossin* worked as a representational platform for women functionaries. In her initial mission statement, Juchacz noted that the magazine was to be about illustrating not just how to set up effective organizational activities and what was achieved on behalf of women of all ages and conditions. It was also for active women functionaries to show their successful agency and illustrate to women readers "their work on behalf of and toward Socialism as their life's work."<sup>188</sup>

The women [who] cannot follow the problems and political facts well [...] want to see *who* accomplishes what on behalf of youth, the aged, and the invalids. Here, all those women who work hard and vigorously for the spread of Socialist thought among the entire world of women get a voice/to speak. If you worked successfully on an issue following a specific course of action and plan, then it is worthwhile to inform a wider circle of women about it so that they too can implement it.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> For an article Juchacz took from an unidentified Swiss publication see "Was versteht man unter Agitation," *Die Genossin* 3 (Sept.1924): 65.

<sup>186</sup> See the variety of international reporting in just the first edition: "Frauenwahlrecht in Belgien" *Internationale Nachrichten Die Genossin* 1 (July 1924): 27; "Frauenwahlrecht in Ungarn," *ibid.*; "Frauenwahlrecht in England," *ibid.*; "Eine Frauenschulwoche in Belgien," *ibid.*; "Eine internationale Arbeiterinnenkonferenz," *ibid.*, 29; "Aus der österreichischen Frauenbewegung," *ibid.*, 30; "Frauenarbeit im Völkerbund," *ibid.*, 31; "Internationale Frauenliga für Frieden und Freiheit," *ibid.*, 32; and "Eine Frau als Minister," *ibid.*, 26. Despite this international perspective, Juchacz always assigned a national identity to women, illustrating that Social Democrats thought in terms of national identities.

<sup>187</sup> "Anregung aus dem Frauenbureau," *Die Genossin* 4 (Oct. 1924): 94.

<sup>188</sup> Juchacz, "Ein neues Frauenblatt," *Die Genossin* 1 (July 1924): 3.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, emphasis in original.

In their organizational reports, the women functionaries appeared organizationally skilled and as a local to national avant-garde amongst women, as successful political activists, supporting each other in their work.<sup>190</sup> Article contributions defined the authors – whose names were listed increasingly in bylines – as intelligent and knowledgeable in their areas of expertise.<sup>191</sup> Frequent tables and charts in *Die Genossin* indicated that the editors and authors were professionals in their work, as they could interpret and use presumably objective and scientific statistical information as part of their articles and arguments, in addition to being able to understand and explain complex legal and bureaucratic language for articles on laws, parliamentary debates, and bureaucratic policies.<sup>192</sup> Readers were also able, or were learning, to interpret and use such data in their speeches and other organizational engagements. As a result, the act of reading *Die Genossin* and using its contents also defined readers as well-informed professionals. Leading functionaries from the local through regional organizations and the central SPD in Berlin peopled *Die Genossin*'s pages, presenting themselves as modern Socialist 'New Women' who heroically took up public spaces previously occupied solely by men and worked towards expanding women's rights.

And finally, the functionaries' magazine likely helped create, in Juchacz's words, a "mental bond that gives us a sense of belonging together," a sense of community of equals consisting of women functionaries with a similar purpose of expanding Social Democracy, social

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<sup>190</sup> G. Glöckner, "Unsere Landagitation," Aussprache *Die Genossin* 1 (Jan. 1932): 12-13; Tony Rinne, "Gründet Frauengruppen!" *Die Genossin* 2/3 (Feb./March 1931): 64; and L. Reichenbach, "Eine Anregung zur Ausgestaltung der geselligen Frauenabende," *Die Genossin* 12 (Dec. 1931): 391.

<sup>191</sup> Wachenheim, "Lebensfremde Gesetze," *Die Genossin* 1 (Jan. 1928): 5-10.

<sup>192</sup> Anna Geyer, "Frauenerwerbsarbeit. Nach den Ergebnissen der Berufszählung von 1925," *Die Genossin* 6 (June 1927): 179-182.

policies, and women's rights.<sup>193</sup> Yearly women's conferences served the same purpose, but many women functionaries in the local organizations could not attend the national and regional Party women's meetings.



Figure 13: *Die Genossin* 2 (1 Aug. 1924): front cover.

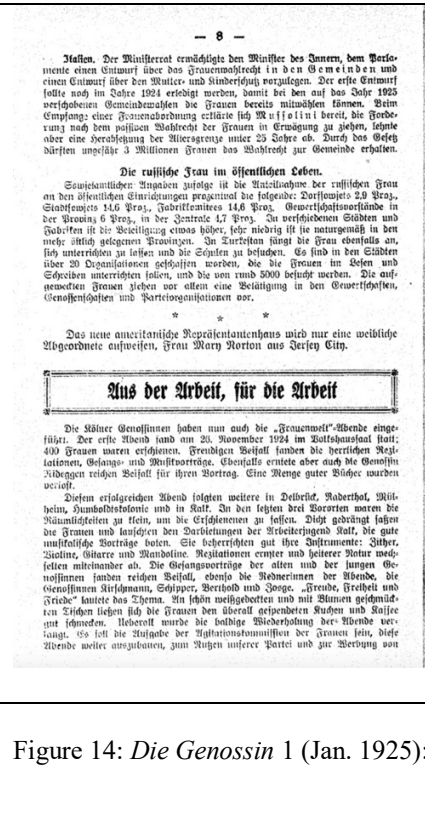
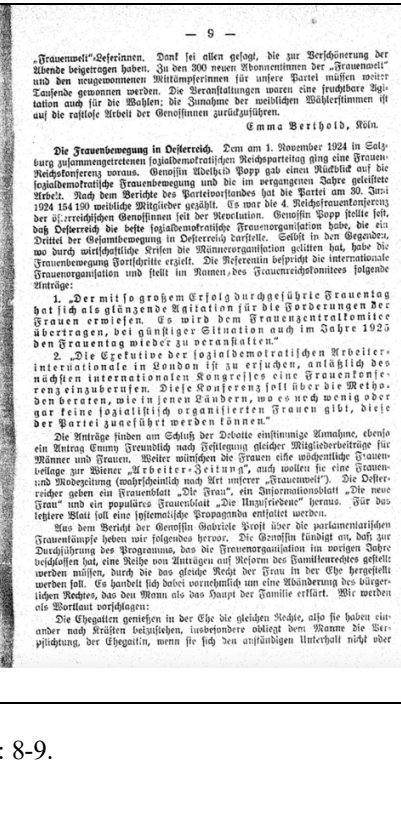


Figure 14: *Die Genossin* 1 (Jan. 1925): 8-9.



### Die Genossin's Format

The booklet-sized (“Oktavheft”) *Die Genossin* appeared once a month and consisted of 32 and during a two-year period of 48 pages.<sup>194</sup> With the exception of its cover page, which

<sup>193</sup> Juchacz, “Die Frauen und die Wahlen,” in *SPD Parteitag 1924 Berlin*, 230.

<sup>194</sup> *Die Genossin* was 48 pages long between November 1928 and December 1930. Juchacz and Gotthelf addressed readers in the traditional style, with the formal third person instead of directly in the second person as *Frauenwelt* and non-Socialist popular magazines had begun to do in interwar Germany. This made Juchacz and Gotthelf seem more professional but also somewhat impersonal. Addresses in the second person singular and plural appeared only in very few specific situations in *Die Genossin* of the 1930s, such as in Party leadership’s and Juchacz’s calls on cadres to engage stronger in subscriber, recruitment, and voter mobilization work, or to work against Nazi activities. See “Lest und verbreitet die “Frauenwelt” Das Blatt der sozialdemokratischen Hausfrau!” *Die Genossin* 7/8 (July/Aug. 1931): 279; “Hast du schon eine neue Genossin erworben?” *ibid.*, 241; and M.J., “Genossinnen!” *Die Genossin* 9 (Sept. 1931): 290.

made use of the advertising tactic of a lot of blank space as background with small amounts of text, the SPD women functionaries' paper had a very traditional, conservative, respectable, and increasingly professional but plain appearance with text only in German Fraktur scripts, which changed into an easier-to-read font in January 1933 (see Figures 13 and 14).<sup>195</sup> Differences in font sizes, styles, bold lettering, underlined wording, and the traditional extra spacing between letters (*Sperrdruck*) created visual variation, apart from tables and charts. The paper maintained that look throughout its publication years. However, its initial meager appearance – as if the editor lacked material to publish – changed as articles and commentaries submitted by leading functionaries became more numerous and longer, giving the paper a more professional and collaborative look.

While *Die Genossin* was not intended for perusing or light reading, thanks to its contents list on the cover page, readers could go straight to the articles and sections of interest to them and selectively read only those. An annually published index of articles suggested that editors believed the paper, far from being immediately obsolete and disposable like a newspaper, had continued relevance years later as a reference source.<sup>196</sup> Given *Die Genossin's* function and limited target audience, as well as its aim for respectability, the magazine carried very little advertising, and what it carried remained safely within the functionaries' and the Party's interests. There were regular advertisements for *Frauenwelt* which asked readers to help increase subscriptions to and even deliver the other SPD women's periodical. *Die Genossin* advertised the works of SPD and Arbeiterwohlfahrt functionaries, such as August Bebel's *Die Frau und der*

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<sup>195</sup> The only illustration in *Die Genossin* was an insert in the July 1932 edition intended to be cut out by readers and disseminated for the sake of attracting women to the Eiserne Front, *Die Genossin* 7 (July 1932): 162.

<sup>196</sup> See "Sachregister," *Die Genossin* 7 (Dec. 1929): 215-216.

*Sozialismus*, as well as movies and slide films produced by the Film and Slide Film Division of the SPD for use during SPD women's events.<sup>197</sup> On occasion *Die Genossin* also publicized Party jobs available, such as for a women's secretary for the regional organization of Greater-Thuringia in early 1928.<sup>198</sup> Getting its funding from the Party Executive, *Die Genossin* was neither concerned with making a profit, nor with increasing its readership; it only aimed to be useful to women functionaries, who received it for free.

### Conclusion

This chapter looked at the reasons why the SPD and the KPD and their associated bodies produced publications for women of lower socioeconomic strata. Printing party publications had long been a primary form of communication and representation for SPD Party functionaries and members, and a major tool for winning new members. In the first half of the Weimar Republic, the KPD's *Die Kommunistin* picked up the same triple target audiences, goals, and format as the original Kaiserreich-era SPD women's paper *Die Gleichheit*: to inform and train existing women members and functionaries of the SPD and to win more women to the organization. However, the complex assignment in a single paper was difficult to accomplish.

Due to women's suffrage in Weimar, there was a greater urgency to attract more women to the parties and their leftist ideologies. Therefore, both parties and their affiliated organizations experimented with popularizing their papers to attract a population used to entertaining and visually-attractive mass media. The KPD's *Die Kommunistin* of especially 1922 through April 1924 attempted to do this by adding illustrations, some entertaining content, political satire and

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<sup>197</sup> Bebel's original, published in 1893, was a best-seller and frequently reprinted in new editions. *Die Frau und der Sozialismus: die Frau in der Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft* (Stuttgart: Dietz, 1879); "Wir empfehlen...", *Die Genossin* 10 (Sept. 1925): 282; and "Filme und Lichtbilder für den Internationalen Frauentag," *Die Genossin* 5 (May 1930): 182.

<sup>198</sup> "Frauensekretärin," *Die Genossin* 2 (Feb. 1928): 39.

caricature into its pages, but its continued multi-fold mission and hence a lot of organizational material for cadres, its limited dissemination pathways, and internal party strife over the paper's desirable target audience, were not the best conditions for a women's paper to succeed.

The SPD was more successful with its women's publications in great part because it put out two different papers, each exclusively geared to the needs and interests of their more narrowed target audiences: *Die Genossin* only served women functionaries, delivering organizational and political information of use to them; *Frauenwelt*, on the other hand, diverted member and non-member women's reading practices away from non-Socialist publications and offered them women's causes politics and ideals, among which childrearing played a large role. However, it watered these down considerably with material on fashion, homemaking, body culture, and entertainment, all of which nevertheless contained political messages that readers had to interpret for themselves. Despite aiming to limit classed and gendered middle-class influences on women readers of commercial media, *Frauenwelt* itself offered a fair amount of middle-class and mass culture to proletarian women audiences for consumption, for which it was harshly criticized by some women cadres.

*DWdF* published by the KPD's media baron Münzenberg managed to fuse the characteristics of contemporary mass women's press with class and Communist politics at a much greater and more overt level than *Frauenwelt*. It incorporated, like *Frauenwelt*, popular attributes from the commercial press, such as fashion, entertainment, and illustrations – it further developed narrative strategies through action shots, photo series, and photo montages – to advance its criticism of the Weimar state and society, and propose Communist solutions.

While both popular-styled papers served the visual, consumerist, and communication desires of their readers, *Frauenwelt* was more successful in incorporating reader collaboration in

its many reader contribution segments that published a broad range of reader questions, answers, and comments. Even though roughly half of *Frauenwelt*'s readership were SPD members, its Social Democratic political content was subtle enough that even non-Socialists could have been attracted to this paper. *DWdF*'s unapologetically and overtly Communist demands involving class politics and women's rights had the potential to repel readers with frequent attacks on middle-class norms, employers, laws, and the government and its consistent upholding of the Soviet Union as a real-existing utopian state and society. With some exceptions, its reader contribution segments, very evidently manipulated by editors, and did not lead to the same wealth of reader exchanges as in *Frauenwelt* (see also Chapter Five).

The next chapter will investigate these five leftist women's magazines' contents, specifically their discourses on employment to determine whether the ideal femininity described therein was a proletarian woman.



### Chapter Three: Leftist Discourses on Women's Employment

As various scholars have illustrated, the New Woman in Weimar's popular media was a homemaker or a white-collar worker, be she a store clerk, secretary, professional artist, or actress; to an athlete, scientist, creator of fashion, writer, or journalist. She had petit-bourgeois to middle-class attributes: she wore clean and fashionable attire for work, and her work did not require physical exertion. Spatial mobility in connection with her employment (as with other activities), previously limited to men and working-class women, was a further attribute of the New Woman in mass culture.

This chapter investigates whether Social Democrats and Communists, who often criticized the middle classes as exploiting the working-class laborer, adopted the salaried worker or professionally-employed New Woman of mass culture for their ideal Socialist New Woman, or alternatively offered a proletarian version of her, as one employed in factories. Given Socialists' theories on women's employment as the gateway to women's emancipation, one would expect, as some scholars have claimed, leftists would have defined their Socialist New Woman as a proletarian, both in terms of working for wages as well as in being aware of her structurally imposed class identity. Similarly, one would assume that leftists would categorize women homemakers, as they usually did, as unemancipated and economically dependent women with narrow outlooks; and hence not ideal Socialist women.

This investigation summarizes leftists' theories on women's emancipation and employment, then relates such theories to gendered and classed narratives on women's waged jobs and professional careers within the leftist women's publications. The investigated 'texts' include images, captions, the presentation of authors' names and titles, and the contents of articles in all five of the magazines (*Die Genossin*, *Die Kommunistin*, *Frauenwelt*, *DWdF*, and

*AWO*). This chapter argues that of the two somewhat distinct Socialist New Women described by leftist narratives in women's publications, the woman described in association with employment was not a proletarian. Instead, she was a white-collar worker above store clerks and office secretaries in status: she was a professional, or a political or welfare activist engaged in the labor movement, within either of which she developed all of her mental capacities and talents to live a fulfilling life as a complete human ("*Vollmensch*").<sup>1</sup> She was, therefore, a middle-class woman (based on a structural understanding of class). Leftist women professionals, editors, activists, and a host of contributors to the publications described themselves and each other as model Socialist New Women, and portrayed women manual laborers in the most pejorative terms possible: as ignorant and narrow-minded apolitical masses (a *Lumpenproletariat*), excessively feminine beings belonging to a previous era, and decrepit victims of extreme capitalist exploitation.<sup>2</sup> Narratives in the women's publications simultaneously criticized *women's waged manual labor*, including factory labor, as *de-feminizing* forms of work, denying women workers conditions and treatment suited to female members of a twentieth-century progressive modern European civilization or '*Kulturgesellschaft*'.

Only Communists claimed that a proletarian Socialist New Woman existed, and only in the Soviet Union. Since the Soviet State rationalized factory labor, tailoring it to women workers' physiology and other needs, and provided state and communal services to pregnant

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<sup>1</sup> Clara Zetkin, *Der Student und das Weib* (Berlin: Verlag der Sozialistischen Monatshefte, 1899), reprinted in *Marxistische Blätter*, 3 (1995): 17-29, <https://www.marxists.org/deutsch/archiv/zetkin/1899/xx/student.htm> retrieved 15 Jan. 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Whereas leftists usually treated women workers as if they clearly belonged to a supposedly single working-class, scholars have shown that a single and unified 'working-class' with clear boundaries and unambiguous identities and loyalties did not reflect the diverse socio-economic and cultural realities of workers and their families.

women, wives, and mothers, in the Soviet Union even factory workers could have appropriately gendered and classed lives as Socialist New women.

Underlying leftists' rejection of Weimar's waged women laborers as New Women was the assumption that nearly all women were potential mothers, both in terms of their physiology as well as instinctual desires. However, leftists implied motherhood and the delivery and raising of healthy children required middle-classed and race-appropriate treatment of women at all times; including at the workplace. They saw women's physical labor as endangering women's health and pregnancies and, therefore, their unborn children's development. Consequently, heavy physical work by women presumably belonged to past societies and primitive contemporary societies outside Europe. Mental labor on the other hand did not hinder women's reproductive physiology while it simultaneously allowed women to develop their mental capacities. As a result, professional women and political and welfare activists, who achieved their positions through either self-taught or institutional learning, became independently acting, rational, and developmentally advanced human beings, i.e., Socialist New Women. Their well-paid professional jobs provided them with the economic might to hire child care and domestic support to combine employment and motherhood. Curiously, activists' own families' needs were usually not a topic in the publications despite their frequently unpaid organizational work.

### **Socialist Theories Regarding Women's Employment**

Karl Marx wrote very little about women. He envisioned women principally as homemakers, whose outside employment led to both women's and their families' "moral degradation," endangering children's survival due to inappropriate nutrition and care.<sup>3</sup> Marx

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<sup>3</sup> See Marx, *Capital* ed. Friedrich Engels, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, Marie Sacey and Herbert Lamm (1867-1883 repr. Chicago: William Benton, 1952), 192-195, here 193. Marx quoted a government investigator, "Dr. Edward Smith," who claimed that mothers working in factories, because they no longer could

asserted that industrialization placed women in the public space, where they and their husbands sold their labor, hinting that more than their labor was up for sale.<sup>4</sup> Working in unskilled and semi-skilled positions as “supplementary” workers, women experienced extreme exploitation since their wages were lower than adult male wages.<sup>5</sup> As a result, women workers also functioned as ‘dirty competition’ and wage depressors to the male working population.<sup>6</sup>

His contemporary, Social Democrat Ferdinand August Bebel (1840-1913), had a more supportive stance toward women’s employment. His widely popular *Die Frau und der Sozialismus* (*The Woman Under Socialism*) had dozens of reprints before WWI, with a reportedly eye-opening impact on women around the turn of the century, who would become active in the Social Democratic, and later the Communist, movement.<sup>7</sup> Bebel viewed women’s employment outside the home as a fact of life in modern industrial societies, understanding women’s need to supplement the family income. Focusing on factory employment of women, while neglecting a host of other long-standing employment sectors, he too argued that women were not suited for industrial labor; that white-collar employment was better for women; and that in a future Socialist society women workers could avoid victimization and the “degenerating” effects of hard labor on their bodies and families – and by extension on German society overall.<sup>8</sup>

The continuously increasing industrial occupation of the married woman has most fatal consequences, particularly during pregnancies, deliveries, and during children’s first

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breastfeed their children and take care of them while working away from home, gave their infants Godfrey’s Cordial containing laudanum (opium) to quiet and drug them. See also *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 424.

<sup>4</sup> Marx, *Capital*, 193 and 195.

<sup>5</sup> Marx, *Capital*, here 193, 192; *ibid.*, *Manifesto*, 423.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Die Frau und der Sozialismus* was in its 54th edition before 1914 and reprints continued to be published for decades further.

<sup>8</sup> Bebel, *Die Frau und der Sozialismus* (1878 repr. Berlin: Dietz, 1946), 26, 158-159, 161, 244, 256, 274-275.

years of life, since these rely on maternal breastmilk. During pregnancy, various illnesses develop, which have a destructive impact on both the fetus and the woman's organism, resulting in premature births and miscarriages. Once the child is born, the mother is forced to return to the factory as soon as possible so as not to lose her workspace to a competitor. The inevitable consequences for the poor little things are: neglected care, unsuitable nutrition, even complete lack of food; to stay quiet, the infants are given opiates. The consequences are mass deaths or declining health and stunted bodies; with one word, race degeneration.<sup>9</sup>

Like Marx, he viewed domestic labor as women's and not men's work, but also envisioned "central laundries" ("*Zentralwaschanstalten*") and "central food preparation institutions" ("*Zentralnahrungsbereitungsanstalten*"), coupled with a modernization of the home, which would make women's domestic labors near-obsolete in a future Socialist state and society.<sup>10</sup> Bebel relegated women's "social" emancipation and "equality" to a future Socialist society, where women would have access to scientific and technical education and careers, double standards on sexuality would be lifted, and women would enjoy full legal and political equality.<sup>11</sup>

Zetkin, a pioneer in the Social Democratic women's movement, re-defined women workers from supplementary to regular workers, and did not want to wait for a Socialist state to set up appropriate working conditions and wages for women workers.<sup>12</sup> She claimed that women's home production of goods for use by the family (the "dwarf economy") had become obsolete in industrialized societies with mass-produced consumer goods readily and cheaply

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<sup>9</sup> Bebel, *Die Frau*, 161.

<sup>10</sup> See his representation of men's housework in American "she towns" as social dystopia. *Ibid.*, 155, 158-159, 268, 273, and 511-513.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 25-30, and 172-298.

<sup>12</sup> Zetkin, "Frauenforderungen der Stunde," *Die Kommunistin* 1 (May 1919): 4-6.

available for purchase.<sup>13</sup> Industrialization structurally transformed the home economy and women's lives.

Mechanical production, which can dispense with muscular strength and skilled labor, made it possible to employ women in a large number of fields. The woman entered industries wishing to increase her family income. Female labor in the industry became a necessity in relation to the development of modern industries. [...] If one wants to make women into free human beings, into equal members of society like men, one needs neither abolish nor limit women's work, except in certain, very isolated exceptional cases.<sup>14</sup>

Zetkin initially demanded women workers' full equality to male workers at the First International Workers' Congress, but accepted protectionist measures for women workers as an accommodation when male Socialists at the Congress and in the German SPD rejected her demands. Zetkin then insisted that women's employment was beneficial to society if appropriately regulated to suit their allegedly weaker bodies and special needs as mothers and potential mothers.<sup>15</sup>

Zetkin, as also Bebel, claimed that women and women workers, in contrast to their male co-workers, were "doubly oppressed" not only by legal and political disempowerment but also by society-wide entrenched gender based social norms and practices cumulatively referred to by Bebel as women's "social oppression," and by Zetkin as women's oppression "by the man."<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, Zetkin, along with many other female Social Democratic and Communist activists like Ruth Fischer and Käthe Duncker, focused on women's economic dependence on their

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<sup>13</sup> Zetkin, "Frauenforderungen der Stunde," *Die Kommunistin* 1 (May 1919): 4-6, here 5; and *ibid.*, "Die Arbeiterinnen- und Frauenfrage der Gegenwart" (Berlin: Berliner Volks-Tribüne, 1889).

<sup>14</sup> See Zetkin, "The Female Labour Question," in *Protokoll des Internationalen Arbeiter-Kongresses zu Paris, abgehalten vom 14. bis 20. Juli 1889* original *Proceedings of the International Working-men's Congress in Paris* (Wörnberg: Wörlein, 1890) ed. Wilhelm Liebknecht at [https://www.marxists.org/history/international/social-democracy/1889/marxists-congress/friday\\_am.htm#zetkin](https://www.marxists.org/history/international/social-democracy/1889/marxists-congress/friday_am.htm#zetkin) retrieved 9 Jan. 2022.

<sup>15</sup> Bebel, *Die Frau*, 26, 262-265, and 280-281; and Zetkin, *Die Kommunistin* 1 (May 1919): 4-6.

<sup>16</sup> Bebel, *Die Frau*, 28-29, 54-121, and 126-132.

spouses as opposed to their lesser political, legal, and social rights for this oppression. They claimed the results of women's economic dependence on their husbands were: women's practical inequality with respect to their husbands, marriages sought by women as "economic safety institutions" ("*Versorgungsanstalten*"), and the stunting of women's personal development into individuals because of their mere relational identity and limited experience/knowledge of the world outside the home.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, working outside the home not only led to women's economic emancipation but also positively impacted their family relations. Outside employment allowed women to "freely" live out and "explore" their "individuality" toward becoming "free human being[s]" with a "personality," talents, strengths, intellects, and desires of their own.<sup>18</sup> As a result, the "woman emerged as social equal to her husband," and her broadened experiences, knowledge, and understanding "allowed the husband to confide his troubles to her, thereby reducing his stresses" and "allowing him to enjoy life more fully."<sup>19</sup> Women's emancipation through employment transformed women into more valuable partners to husbands as women now served their husbands in areas in which they previously had no understanding.

She doesn't want to serve her husband anymore. Instead, she wants to move forward toward high ideals. She demands to be the carrier and caretaker of *his* dreams, the comrade in his efforts and troubles, and the companion during *his* fights. She insists on being *at home in his* world and endeavors to open up the home as a new world to him.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> See Ruth Fischer, "Die Doppelexistenz," *Die Kommunistin* 4 (25 Feb. 1921): 25; and Käthe Duncker, "Fort mit der Erwerbstätigkeit der Ehefrauen?" *DWdF* 1 (June 1931): 6 and 15.

<sup>18</sup> See Zetkin, "The Female Labour Question"; *ibid.*, *Der Student und das Weib*, 13. On Zetkin's women's emancipation theory see also Setzu Ito, "Clara Zetkin in ihrer Zeit – für eine historisch zutreffende Einschätzung ihrer Frauenemanzipationstheorie," in *Clara Zetkin in ihrer Zeit: Neue Fakten, Erkenntnisse, Wertungen, Material des Kolloquiums anlässlich ihres 150. Geburtstages am 6. Juli 2007 in Berlin, 22-27*, ed. Ulla Plener (Berlin: Dietz, 2008).

<sup>19</sup> Zetkin, *Der Student und das Weib*, 13.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

In similarity to the middle-class home, the proletarian family dwelling would become a more welcoming place for men, who, as a result, would forego the pub and choose to be “participants, next to the woman, in improving the home and raising the children,” thereby making it possible for her to combine employment and family.<sup>21</sup> This new woman at home in the public world would also be a powerful creator of a utopian society of New Humans with admirable and altruistic qualities as individuals and members of a community.

She doesn't want to be a mere loyal guardian and caretaker of her children; she is proud to become a sculptor of humanity developed from her womb and lap. She aims to fight her way toward becoming a strong, free, clear-headed, and self-confident individual to transplant the seed for a complete human (“*Vollmenschentum*”), striving to become a full human as her most precious possession to her children. She wants to exist in the world and the home as a learning, enjoying, and impactfully-strong person with a character and personality of her own (“*Persönlichkeit*”) to raise her children into becoming strong persons with individual character and foresighted and warm-hearted social citizens. Contemporary culture should pulse through her veins and in her blood for her to continue to impact her children's lives instead of becoming a mere reified association with childly helplessness and caring maternal loyalty. Therefore, the woman should come out from the limited existence of nothing-but-homemaker! Open up the paths for the female sex to walk in the footsteps of educational models!<sup>22</sup>

Nevertheless, Zetkin also acknowledged that her theories on the effects of women's employment outside the home didn't entirely ring true in a capitalist society. Women workers, “who spent most of their strengths and time for their jobs can generally not offer their spouses and children what they deserved.”<sup>23</sup> In “bloody” and “painful conflicts,” women employed outside the home often had to decide whether to devote themselves to the family or to work, giving each “the bare minimum.”<sup>24</sup> Nonetheless, she insisted that women had to leave their homes and find outside employment in the here and now, before a Socialist society was

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<sup>21</sup> Zetkin, *Der Student und das Weib*, 13-14.



<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-15.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.



established, to begin the process of their emancipation. Zetkin’s theories would become major guidelines in how Social Democrats and Weimar Communists would describe their ideal Socialist New Woman.

	 <p>„Wir wollen, daß alles Geborene zu etwas Gewolltem, daß alle Kinder mit Liebe erwartet werden sollen. Sie seien willkommene Gäste am Tisch des Lebens!“          Von diesem Grundsatz ausgehend, leitet das Volkskommissariat für Gesundheitswesen in der Sowjetunion den Schutz für Mutter und Kind. — Säuglinge eines russischen Kinderheims werden zur Fütterung gefahren.</p>
<p>Figure 15: “Welcher Frau gehört die Zukunft?” <i>DWdF</i> 1 (June 1931): 12-13, here 12.</p>	<p>Figure 16: “Nur nicht ins Krankenhaus!” <i>DWdF</i> 2 (July 1931): 4-5, here 5.</p>

### The Socialist New Woman in the Soviet Union

In *Die Kommunistin* and *DWdF*, the Soviet Union served as the land of possibilities realized, where all women were already Socialist New Women because the Soviet State did everything to equalize women to men both in terms of legal rights and institutional support for ‘women’s’ domestic and maternal obligations (see Figures 15 and 16).<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Rüdiger Graf has argued that “[a]nticipating the future in the present” with the New Woman as the incarnation of the future already in the present was a common discursive practice in interwar Germany, with Communists describing the Soviet Union as a country of the future already implemented in the present. See “Anticipating the

*DWdF* defined its ideal Soviet femininity through photographs of mostly urban white-collar professional women, who seemed a less sexualized version of Weimar popular culture's New Woman. The most prominent positive *DWdF* images of Soviet women depicted them in 'action shots' during or after exercise and at work in white-collar professions, but not during manual labor (see Figures 15 -18, and 24); although, in texts, she was also described as a factory worker. These women were presented as existing New Women in the Soviet Union. They had the bobbed hair of the New Woman in the commercial culture and wore work or exercise clothes cut close to the body and in the so-called 'masculinized' and functional styles of Weimar fashions. They were however toned down, less sexualized, and more functional-rational than what the New Woman might be shown wearing in interwar German commercial media (see Chapter Four).

The functional work clothing and women's postures and movements caught in progress by the camera during their work day portrayed the white-collar Soviet/Socialist New Woman worker as self-confident, rational, technically trained, and hence professionally capable.<sup>26</sup> This was especially a statement about gender equality when the woman in the image performed duties in careers previously limited to men, such as engineering (see Figure 15). *DWdF* was eager to claim that co-education in the Soviet Union, as well as a variety of educational and other support services by the state, had by the early 1930s resulted in women's careers in engineering, scientific and clinical positions, and in children's hospitals and orphanages.

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Future in the Present: 'New Women' and Other Beings of the Future in Weimar Germany," *Central European History* 42 (2009): 647-673, here 666.

<sup>26</sup> See W. Fedorowa, "Heranziehung der Proletarierin zur Arbeit in Kleinkinderbewahranstalten u. -Schulen," *Die Kommunistin* 1 (Feb. 1926): 4.



Figure 17: *DWdF* 8 (Aug. 1932): front cover. Captions: "...we help to construct the socialist workplace, and after work, we gain new [...] through exercise and play."



Figure 18: *DWdF* 6 (Nov. 1931): front cover.

Captions under photos of exercising women, and some articles, claimed that Soviet women workers had greater access to body and leisure culture because the Soviet State made body and leisure culture affordable, including those sports involving travel and expensive equipment like skiing and flying (see Figures 17, 18, and 24). *DWdF*'s 'action shots' of healthy-looking young women self-confidently and happily enjoying exercise suggested women could enjoy leisure time and look forward to a bright future, with the Soviet states' active support.

On the face of it, these photos had nothing to do with women's employment. Yet the images implied that the work these women performed daily neither robbed them of the time nor the strength to exercise after work. Thus, these images suggested women's work in the Soviet

Union was organized to be physically and mentally doable without physical exhaustion or damage to the body and mind of a woman. Since the New Woman in the Soviet Union was not shown at home, it was also implied that she did not spend time doing housework; instead, her leisure time began right after clocking out of work.

*DWdF* offered few images of Soviet New Women at the factory, suggesting that by the 1930s, for German Communists, the ideal Soviet femininity engaged in white-collar professional work. Nevertheless, texts did refer to factory women workers as New Women. They usually mentioned women working on clean and organized factory floors, enjoying the 8-hour workday as did all other workers (except youth, who worked fewer hours), equal pay for female and male factory workers, two to four-week-long paid vacations, and a variety of “maternity protections” (“*Mutterschutz*”). These included for new mothers two half-hour-long breastfeeding breaks in addition to their lunch breaks, two months of state-guaranteed maternity leave before and after delivery, and financial benefits for pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers.<sup>27</sup> Already during the first half of the Weimar Republic, *Die Kommunistin* provided positive but heterogeneous descriptions of women factory workers. She appeared delicate-feminine, as in Figure 21, or robust, as in Figures 22 and 24. She sported short hair like the Weimar New Woman or wore her hair traditionally long, sometimes wearing a scarf, such as in figures 19 and 20. Her clothing varied and usually did not follow the fashions of the 1920s.

*Die Kommunistin* admitted that many Soviet women still worked in so-called ‘unskilled’ and manual jobs, which it and *DWdF* defined in the Weimar German environment as de-feminizing forms of work. In photos, women factory workers stood upright or were seated – but

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<sup>27</sup> “Stillpausen in Sowjetrußland,” *Die Kommunistin* 18 (15 Sept. 1923): 142; Frida Godt-Erlitch, “Schutz für Mutter und Kind. In Rußland,” *Die Kommunistin* 3 (Feb. 1925): 12; and “Was die deutschen Arbeiter aus Rußland erzählen,” *Die Kommunistin* 17 (Sept. 1925): 67.



Arbeiterinnen in der Fabrik in Sowjet-Rußland

Figure 19: “Arbeiterinnen in der Fabrik in Sowjet-Rußland,” *Die Kommunistin* Internationaler Frauentag Sonderausgabe (Mar. 1926): unpaginated.



Beim Lesen- und Schreiben-Lernen im Sowjet-Rußland

Figure 20: “Beim Lesen- und Schreiben-Lernen im Sowjet-Rußland,” *Die Kommunistin* Internationaler Frauentag Sonderausgabe (Mar. 1926): unpaginated.

neither bent over nor stretching beyond their height – and thereby fitting contemporary

expectations of appropriate working postures for women (Figure 19 and 21). None of the women appeared to be working physically hard. This implied a reorganization of the work processes resulting in machines or men taking care of heavy labor, leaving women factory workers to be treated like New Women even during manual labor.

However, authors in *Die Kommunistin* quoted Vladimir Lenin's claim that "women's economic serfdom will only disappear once their skill training increases," suggesting that women's manual labor would eventually be a thing of the past in the Soviet Union.<sup>28</sup> As "more and more women are incorporated into all branches of the economy and public administration" as a result of state initiatives, the plan was for Soviet women to increasingly enter skilled professions, and thereby fully fit expectations surrounding New Women's lack of physical labor.<sup>29</sup> Some of the state initiatives involved university and trade school quotas set up by the Soviet republics for women students and trainees, and specific remedial and continuing education courses made available to a range of women, which would create a more literate, skilled, and professional female workforce (see Figure 20).<sup>30</sup>

Years before *DWdF* relished contrasting the legal rights and living conditions of emancipated urban Russian women and Weimar's German women, *Die Kommunistin* used the same method, but also liked to emphasize Soviet women's legal rights and advantages after the Revolution contrasted with their lack of rights before the Revolution, especially of women in the more remote republics and rural regions of the Soviet State.

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<sup>28</sup> Tatjana Glebova and Dogador (?), "Heranbildung von Arbeiterinnen zur Qualitätsarbeit in Sowjet-Rußland," *Die Kommunistin* 17 (1 Sept. 1923): 133-134.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*; A. Kirdoda, "Unsere Lesehalle," *Die Kommunistin* 4 (Apr. 1926): 4; "Rationalisierung," *Die Kommunistin* 5 (May 1926): 3-4; and "Die Gleichstellung der Frau mit dem Mann in der Sowjetunion," *Die Kommunistin* 9 (Sept. 1926): 4.

We women workers, farmers, and women residents of the mountains of the southeast of Soviet Russia [...] we have already won our complete political freedom with our own hands. Now we lead a war on the economic front and eagerly learn to acquire knowledge in various sciences. [...] We also want to work in the Southeast to free our eastern sisters of the Muslim regions and the Caucasus Mountains from religion and enslavement by traditions.<sup>31</sup>

Articles in *Die Kommunistin* frequently claimed that egalitarian laws enacted by the Soviet State, top-down impositions that went beyond the written word, emancipated women who had previously been suppressed, limited, and enslaved by male family members and backward cultures and societies.

Before the Revolution, the Turkish woman was entirely enslaved. She had no rights, whether as an individual or in social life. She had no access to schooling or employment. Married off as a child by her father for the highest bidding young man, the growing girl, and the young woman was nothing more than a workhorse in the husband's harem. The work in the house, the field, and the livestock – were all burdened onto her shoulders. 'The woman has no soul', moral laws taught, was the societal equivalent of the dog, whose job it was to serve its master.

The Revolution of the workers and farmers of Russia also freed the Turkish woman in the Soviet Union. Monogamy became the law, schools for girls and women were established, and she was assigned a career; in short, the woman became man's equal in public life.<sup>32</sup>

As a result, in both images and texts, the Soviet New Woman in *Die Kommunistin* was much more diversely described than in *DWdF*. She could be a factory worker in non-fashionable clothing, but taking evening classes and professional training to improve her employment status, or a previously illiterate rural woman learning to read (see Figure 20). *Die Kommunistin* offered up the Soviet Union as a fairy-tale land for women workers where their work was more valuable than in capitalist countries, both for the woman herself who, as a result of her work combined with skill training and education, would gain her "independence, freedom, and equality;" but also

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<sup>31</sup> 'Arbeiterinnen, Bäuerinnen und Hochländerinnen des Südostens der R.S.F.S.R.', "Russische Arbeiterinnen an ihre deutschen Schwestern," *Die Kommunistin* 5 Internationaler Frauentag Sonderausgabe (Mar. 1925): 8.

<sup>32</sup> E.J., "Russische Fürstenabfindung. Im türkischen Frauenheim zu Baku," *Die Kommunistin* 6 (June 1926): 3-4, here 3.



In dem elektro-technischen Laboratorium.

Figure 21: “In dem elektro-technischen Laboratorium,” *Die Kommunistin* 17 (1 Sept. 1923): 133.

for Soviet society which would become “enriched” both culturally and economically.<sup>34</sup> *Die Kommunistin*’s favorite figure was the woman factory worker who was now factory director or city mayor due to literacy training and continuing education after adulthood (see Figure 22).<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Tatjana Glebova and Dogador (?), “Heranbildung von Arbeiterinnen zur Qualitätsarbeit in Sowjet-Rußland,” *Die Kommunistin* 17 (1 Sept. 1923): 133-134.

<sup>35</sup> See “Der rote Fabrikdirektor,” in “Wir Frauen wollen Sowjetrußland sehen...,” *Die Kommunistin* 7 (July 1926): 1; “Die Gleichstellung der Frau mit dem Mann in der Sowjetunion,” *Die Kommunistin* 9 (Sept. 1926): 4; Alma



According to both Communist publications, some of the actions that the Soviet State took to position women workers as equals to men involved the institutionalization of ‘women’s’ maternal and domestic obligations to allow women primary identities as Socialist workers and



professionals even if they had children – regardless of whether they were married or had a supporting partner. Even though *DWdF* never showed Soviet New Women as pregnant or with children, narratives in both magazines claimed that working women had no difficulties combining family and work. In addition to public laundries; and factory, school, and public cafeterias; free state-of-the-art infant care and daycare centers at the factories – staffed with doctors and pedagogically trained caretakers – supported working women and families who had obligations seen in capitalist states as being

private.<sup>36</sup> In such an environment, Soviet women presumably wanted to and chose to have children, with the implication that their children were being better raised, to become healthy and

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Schärer, “Deutsche Arbeiterinnen in Sowjetrußland. Es gibt keine Potemkinschen Dörfer im Arbeiterstaat!” *Die Kommunistin* 10 (1926): 4; and “Frauen auf leitende Posten,” *DWdF* 4 (April 1932): 12.

<sup>36</sup> *DWdF* 6 (Nov. 1931): title page; L.G. “Im Lande der befreiten Frau,” *DWdF* 4 (Sept. 1931): 16-17; “Zum Geleit!” *DWdF* 1 (June 1931): unpaginated; and “Die Gleichstellung der Frau mit dem Mann in der Sowjetunion,” *Die Kommunistin* 9 (Sept. 1926): 4; Alma Schärer, “Deutsche Arbeiterinnen in Sowjetrußland. Es gibt keine Potemkinschen Dörfer im Arbeiterstaat!” *Die Kommunistin* 10 (1926): 4; and Z. Mitnitzky (?), “Die Mittag-Essen Fabrik,” *Die Kommunistin* 13 (July 1925): 52.

happy members of society. Because contraception and abortion were legal in the Soviet Union, all children were the outcome of choice; they were wanted, Communists claimed.<sup>37</sup>



Arbeiterinnen beim Exerzieren in Sowjet-Rußland

Figure 23: “Arbeiterinnen beim Exerzieren in Sowjet-Rußland,” *Die Kommunistin Internationaler Frauentag Sondernummer* (Mar. 1926): unpaginated.

As evident in the quote by the “residents of the mountains of the southeast of Soviet Russia,” *Die Kommunistin* often defined the Soviet New Woman as an agent of her own emancipation: she helped ‘fight’ during the Revolution, and since then she worked to construct a Socialist society.<sup>38</sup> Among the activities *Die Kommunistin* defined as part of Socialist society-building was: membership in a union, a food cooperative, worker committees and councils,

<sup>37</sup> “Wir wollen Sowjetrußland sehen!” *Die Kommunistin* 7 (1926): 1-2, here 2.

<sup>38</sup> “Aufruf der Moskauer Arbeiterinnen aus Anlaß der Ruhrbesetzung,” *Die Kommunistin* 4 (15 Feb. 1923): 27.

Soviet aid organizations, Socialist circles, and local administration. *Die Kommunistin* offered the following story about Darja, a factory worker and mother of two.<sup>39</sup>

Darja works at a stockings factory. She is just under 30 years old and has two children. [...] She lives separated from her husband. He did not understand her when she became aware that she too could participate in the community's life. She has very little time. She is a [women worker's] delegate, a member of the workers' protection committee, the Red Aid, in the [factory] cell, as well as in several [political] circles. She feels she has to participate in all of these organizations to learn a lot and keep them going, and therefore is also a factory correspondent. She usually writes at night, when else should she do it?<sup>40</sup>

*Die Kommunistin* prioritized this type of 'public life' over leisure activities like body culture for the Soviet New Woman. The mere mention of going to the "club" and one photo of exercising women workers, whose outfits seem outlandish in comparison to the exercise clothing of the Weimar New Woman and the Soviet New Woman of the 1930s, sufficed for this publication (see Figure 23). Extensive and frequent discussions of Soviet New Women's civic and communal engagement was the standard, and offered such women as models to be emulated.<sup>41</sup>

It was therefore clearly not her appearance and clothing choices that defined *Die Kommunistin's* Soviet New Woman as an ideal woman, but her contemporary rights determined by the Soviet State. Her employment under the right working conditions, her engagement in learning and career training, and her civic engagement toward building a Socialist society were her *bona fides*. As a result, the Soviet New Woman in *Die Kommunistin* (between 1919 and 1926) was closer to the nineteenth-century emancipated New Woman, whose economic

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<sup>39</sup> "Wir Frauen wollen Sowjet-Russland sehen!" *Die Kommunistin* 7 (1926): 1-2, here 2; Marla Cogan, "Die Betriebskorrespondenz Darja," *Die Kommunistin* 7 (1926): 2; and "Die Gleichstellung der Frau mit dem Mann in der Sowjetunion," *Die Kommunistin* 9 (Sept. 1926): 4.

<sup>40</sup> Cogan, "Die Betriebskorrespondenz Darja," *Die Kommunistin* 7 (1926): 2.

<sup>41</sup> "Die Bolchewistin Anna," *Die Kommunistin* 1 (1 Jan. 1923): 7.

independence, education, career, and political organizational (civic activities) identified her as such.<sup>42</sup>



Figure 24: *DWdF* 12 (Dec. 1932): front cover. Captions: The female pilot Wolkowa, a former textile worker, begins her flight to Moscow at the airfield of Iwanowo-Nownessensk [?].

<sup>42</sup> Gesa Kessemeier, *Sportlich, sachlich, männlich: das Bild der Neuen Frau in den Zwanziger Jahren; zur Konstruktion geschlechtsspezifischer Körperbilder in der Mode der Jahre 1920 bis 1929* (Dortmund: Ed. Ebersbach, 2000), 19-25.

## Female Manual Laborers

Even though *Die Kommunistin* portrayed female manual laborers in the Soviet Union as economically, sexually, socially, and politically emancipated; it did not define Weimar German women workers, not even factory workers, in such a manner. On the contrary, all Communist and Social Democratic publications characterized manually laboring women as exactly the opposite of the New Woman: as exploited, excessively feminine, and irrational women; with neither working-class identities, nor economic, social, or sexual independence.

Popular cultural scientific discourses during Weimar claimed that a nation's civilizational advance – which touched on Social Darwinist understandings of quasi-biological civilizational development – was measured by its treatment of women, and evident in their working and living conditions. In step with these narratives, the New Woman in popular culture had come to symbolize the progressive woman of the future and future societies; in significant part because she lived a comfortable and pain-free life without heavy physical labor (other than during exercise), and was engaged in white-collar work within clean environments, allowing her to dress well. She enjoyed plenty of leisure time, recreational sports, travel, and commercial entertainment. Even though her white-collar employment and leisure activities were seen by advocates and critics of the New Woman as forms of 'masculinization;' many of the New Woman's attributes also describe middle-class gendered norms for femininity, including higher standards of hygiene, leisure, a variety of comforts, and lack of physical labor. Middle-class lifestyles had come to signify progress in interwar culture.

As noted by Lynne Frame, Weimar's popular-cultural scientific discourses scrutinized and regulated women's dress, hygiene, overall appearance, postures, and movements, claiming that women's individual evolutionary progress and character were legible from their appearance

and postures.<sup>43</sup> Among other things, these discourses suggested that heavy physical labor and specific postures, including being bent over or on hands and knees while cleaning, were no longer considered feminine. They were instead seen as a mark of the working classes, enslaved people, women from the past, and contemporary ‘uncivilized’ or ‘primitive’ cultures (hence racialized societies outside of Europe).<sup>44</sup>

Leftists adopted these discourses, and new standards on women’s physical labor and hygienic requirements when envisioning their Socialist New Woman. Since they saw themselves as the champions of the very working classes, and were working to improve their lot, they did not want working class women to belong to the group of the ‘uncivilized’. They therefore called out working-class women’s employment conditions and wages, in addition to their double and triple burdens at home, as hindering manually laboring women’s possibility of being New Women.<sup>45</sup>

They depicted so-called ‘unskilled’ to ‘low-skilled’ physical labor in Weimar Germany, which was the type of labor most employed women engaged in, in dismal terms: as intensely undesirable and exploitative forms of work.<sup>46</sup> They argued that many working conditions in agriculture, domestic employment, the home putting out sector (piece-work), and even factories were unsafe for women’s morality, their bodies, and current and future children. Consequently, they called for a paternalistic state to ensure – through top-down impositions and protectionist

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<sup>43</sup> Lynne Frame, “Gretchen, Girl, Garçonne? Weimar Science and Popular Culture in Search of the Ideal New Woman,” in *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*, ed., Katharina von Ankum, 12 - 40 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); and “Herr Doktor Hanhart engagiert,” *DWdF* 2 (1 Feb. 1932): 19.

<sup>44</sup> Hedwig Schwarz, “Die Denkende Hausfrau,” *Frauenwelt* 16 (9 Aug. 1930): 370-371.

<sup>45</sup> An article in *Die Kommunistin* claimed that “rationalization forces masses of women today to give up any type of cultural practices in addition to starving them and their families.” See “Wir Frauen wollen Sowjetrußland sehen!” *Die Kommunistin* 7 (July 1926): 1-2.

<sup>46</sup> Peter Maslowski, “Euer Frühling will erkämpft sein! Die Frauen und der 1. Mai” *DWdF* 5 (1932): 3-4.

prohibitions – that women did not work in some of these sectors, or if they did their working conditions be improved.

Communists thought of factories as having the potential to become the ideal work environment for women without a higher profession, evidenced in their descriptions of Soviet factories with women workers. They believed in the benefits of taylorization and rationalization when women workers' physiological needs were part of the rational calculations. Communists complained, however, that women's factory work as it existed during Weimar caused women workers physical and mental harm.<sup>47</sup> Among the damaging conditions, they listed women's heavy physical labor, and the repetitive and fast-paced hand and arm motions of monotonous labor, whether standing, seated, or bent over a conveyor belt or a machine. They also rejected women workers' more complex tasks requiring prolonged concentration, arguing either women in such jobs received insufficient breaks or were exposed to chemicals, dirt, noises, smells, and various unhealthy climatic conditions. Radical leftists also attacked long work hours past the 8-hour workday, on top of a long commute, that drained and weakened women's bodies, also exhausting them mentally.<sup>48</sup>

[B]ecause seasonal work on asparagus lasts at the most four weeks – women labor 15, 16, and even 18 hours per day. That means this is bone-breaking work. [...] Their fingers are forever wet, and their skin shriveled because cleanliness is a priority at such a factory. The women workers who sort the asparagus have to do the work while standing [...] And the woman, who stands at the sterilizer, the gigantic cauldrons where the preserving process happens, stands out for her completely gaunt (“*ausgemergelt*”) face. The work at

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<sup>47</sup> “Frauenarbeit und Volksgesundheit,” *Die Kommunistin* 4 (Apr. 1926): 3. While the 1891 Erfurt Program had called for the prohibition of night work for all with few exceptions; the 1921 SPD Goerlitz Program called for the limitation of night work for men but the express prohibition of night work for all women. “Das Goerlitzer Programm” in *Protokoll über die Verhandlungen des Parteitagess der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands abgehalten in Görlitz vom 18. bis 23. September 1921* (Berlin: Dietz, 1921), 3.

<sup>48</sup> “Du siehst geschäftig bei den Linnen...,” *DWdF* 3 (March 1932): 19. Erika Boehm, “Handgemalt auf Kopenhagener Porzellan,” *DWdF* 13 (Dec. 1932): 19; Link, “Die Frau in Fabrik und Büro: In der Zählerfabrik,” *DWdF* 1 (June 1931): 15; and Martha G. “Lohn niedriger als Fürsorgesatz: Streikende Frauen berichten,” *DWdF* 10 (Oct. 1932): 19.

the sterilizer is men's work, but what can she do? She is a widow and has to feed three children, and working at a machine gets paid 15 percent higher wages.<sup>49</sup>

While male manual laborers' bodies became strengthened by work (judging by images of muscular male proletarians), this did not happen in the case of women, whose bodies were consistently defined as weaker.<sup>50</sup> Whereas a limited amount of bodily exhaustion in women could be reversed through exercise and sufficient rest, many narratives on women's manual labor offered no such potential for recovery. Women's manual work drained their strengths beyond a replenishable point.<sup>51</sup> This led to women workers' premature aging, loss of feminine appearance, chronic physical and mental illness, and higher numbers of workplace accidents and deaths.<sup>52</sup> Communists were adamant that women factory laborers were not well compensated for taking such risks to their health and femininity; they commonly earned between 60 to 70 percent of men's wages for the same work. Therefore, Communists and Social Democrats demanded equal wages for the same jobs; but usually did not discuss the gendering of skill levels in manual labor.

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<sup>49</sup> Link, "In der Konserve," *DWdF* 2 (Feb. 1932): 19.

<sup>50</sup> "Die Steinschlägerin," *DWdF* 6 (June 1932), 19. Exercise in the fresh air was commonly portrayed as healthy for women, but employment in rock-crushing outdoors for women was described as causing illnesses. See also Dr. med Wilhelm Swienty, "Richtige Haltung fördert die Gesundheit," *DWdF* 7 (July 1932): 29.

<sup>51</sup> "Kriegsschauplatz Mitteldeutschland," *DWdF* 5 (May 1932): 15-17.; "Versüße dein Leben!" *DWdF* 5 (May 1932): 19; "Teile und Herrsche!" *DWdF* 3 (March 1932): 19; "8 Stunden in der Dunkelkammer," *DWdF* 4 (April 1932): 19; and "Der Arbeitsweg im Leben der Frau," *Frauenwelt* 5 (26 Febr. 1927): 52. Only when women workers struck or joined the Socialists movement leftists described women workers as strong with square faces and large hands. Golda Hartog, "Der Sieg bei Wertheim," *Die Kommunistin* 16 (15 Aug. 1922): 123.

<sup>52</sup> "Es gibt nur noch Minutenlohn," *DWdF* 1 (Jan. 1932): 19; Emilie Ehm, "Zur Frage der Doppelexistenz," *Die Kommunistin* 9 (10 May 1921): 68-69, here 69; and "Schutz der Arbeiterinnen im Betrieb," *Die Kommunistin* 5/6 (1 Mar. 1923): 36-37, here 36; Link, "In der Zählerfabrik," *DWdF* 1 (June 1931): 15; "In der Konserve," *DWdF* 2 (Feb. 1932): 19; Anna Siemsen, "Das unbekannte Deutschland: III. Thüringen und die Frauen" *Frauenwelt* 17 (1924): 268-269; Erika Boehm, "Handgemalt auf Kopenhagener Porzellan," *DWdF* 13 (Dec. 1932): 19; H. St. "Wir fordern Arbeiterinnenschutz!" *Die Kommunistin* 9 (10 May 1921): 66-67, here 67; "Du siehst geschäftig bei den Linnen..." *DWdF* 3 (Mar. 1932): 19; Erika Roehm, "Alle Räder stehen still," *DWdF* 10 (Oct. 1932): 8; "Bringt das Material an die Öffentlichkeit!" *DWdF* 6 (1 June 1932): 19; and "Es gibt nur noch Minutenlohn" *DWdF* 1 (Jan. 1932): 19.



Leftists also painted manual labor as incompatible with the pregnant body and young motherhood.<sup>53</sup> Reusing statistics and narratives intended to bolster populationist concerns, they asserted that the heavy work performed by pregnant women in difficult settings, such as pressing against machines or stretching to reach machine parts higher up, also damaged women's reproductive systems; leading to higher rates of lower abdominal complaints, miscarriages, premature births, and infant deaths. Activists concerned with creating eugenically healthy New Humans used the textile unions' grievances to suggest that women's waged work prevented the conception, gestation, delivery, and raising of eugenically healthy children.<sup>54</sup>

To assure women, particularly pregnant women, endured no hazardous working conditions, Marxists asked for special treatment for women workers – despite simultaneously demanding equal rights and wages for male and female workers doing the same work. They asked that all women be prohibited from working at night, with dangerous machinery, and with chemicals. Great advocates of modern technologies and taylorized-rationalized work processes, they demanded that such advanced technologies and methods be used specifically to reduce the physical burdens of factory labor on women by relegating the heaviest and dangerous work to machines or men and assigning only supervisory, light, and non-dangerous work to women under the most hygienic of environments.<sup>55</sup> They also sought special break rooms with benches or beds, additional time as needed to breastfeed infants during the workday, physicians in attendance providing free examinations, and female factory inspectors ensuring that such

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<sup>53</sup> See "Frauenforderungen der Stunde," *Die Kommunistin* 1 (1 May 1919): 4-6, here 5; and "Am laufendem Band," *DWdF* 1 (June 1931): 11.

<sup>54</sup>"Frauenforderungen der Stunde," *Die Kommunistin* 1 (1 May 1919): 4-6, here 5. See also Hauptvorstand des Deutscher Textilarbeiterverbandes, "Offener Brief: An die Herren Georg Kisker, Vorsitzender des Arbeitgeberverbandes der Deutschen Textilindustrie und Dr. Klaue, Syndikus," (ca. 1926).

<sup>55</sup> 'Dr. Viktor Engelhardt', "Die Arbeit am laufenden Band," *Frauenwelt* 26 (29 Dec. 1928): 615.

regulations for pregnant women were implemented.<sup>56</sup> Since many women workers ignored their protected leave before and after delivery, Socialists also asked for increased financial incentives for women workers to stay at home before and after delivery, and while breastfeeding their children. Communists and Social Democrats were essentially asking for the same conditions to be established in German factories as Communists claimed existed in Soviet factories.

Leftists criticized women's manual labor conditions in other employment sectors even more. Agriculture, the home industries, and domestic service were for the most part unregulated by the state; and institutionally guaranteed work hours, wages, and benefits agreed to between employers and workers' representatives/unions at factories usually did not apply to them. Socialists claimed this offered employers in these three branches opportunities to increase their profits by exploiting their workers further, while giving them the lowest wages and transferring some production costs to pieceworkers at home.<sup>57</sup>

Since Marxist theory posited that agriculture and the various home industries belonged to pre-industrial economies, leftists maintained that women workers in these sectors were most dehumanized by anachronistic labor requirements and environments characteristic of 'primitive' societies. *Die Kommunistin*, *DWdF*, and *Frauenwelt* frequently showed images of female farmworkers bent over in dirty environments.<sup>58</sup> They asserted that gender, national, and racial

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<sup>56</sup> Most of these demands were expressed by the Textile Workers' Union. On maternalist government protectionist measures for women factory workers see Dagmar Binkelbach, "Frauen in Der Gewerkschaft Der Deutsche Textilarbeiterverband (DTV) in den zwanziger Jahren," in Kristine von Soden and Maruta Schmidt eds. *Neue Frauen: Die zwanziger Jahre*, 40 – 47 (Berlin: Elefant Press, 1988); and Cornelia Osborne, *The Politics of the Body in Weimar Germany: Women's Reproductive Rights and Duties* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992).

<sup>57</sup> Anna Siemsen, "Das unbekannte Deutschland: Thüringen und die soziale Lage," *Frauenwelt* 17 (1924): 268-267; Lotte Prietzel, "Weihnachtspuppen," *DWdF* 1 (Jan. 1932): 13; "Bücher die uns angehen: Anna, das Mädchen vom Lande," *DWdF* 3 (March 1932): 24.

<sup>58</sup> Helene Simon, "Schnitter," *AWO* 12 (15 June 1929): 353-363.

transgression occurred as German women workers continued to perform heavy physical labor under unhygienic conditions such as was demanded of men, Eastern European workers, less developed and colonized societies outside of Europe, societies of the past, and even animals.<sup>59</sup> Leftists referred to women agricultural workers as “beasts of burden,” and “draft animals” (“*Lasttiere*”), and hence the opposite of New Women.<sup>60</sup> Such work supposedly also left women agricultural workers open to sexual exploitation by Eastern Europeans.

Communists and Social Democrats claimed the same regarding domestic workers and their male employers or their family members. They also portrayed domestic putting-out work as a relic from a past economic order that needed elimination. Communists maintained piece workers pulled long work hours of up to 20 hours per day, for which they enlisted children and elderly family members. Neither domestic servants work hours, nor those of agricultural workers (where seasons of no work alternated with months of long workdays), fit into leftists’ modernist ideal of the three-part division of the day: 8 hours each for work, sleep, and leisure activities.<sup>61</sup>

Leftists also had modernist hygienic, aesthetic, and organizational-political objections to working in and around the home and farm. They envisioned the factory as a quasi-public space where they could influence working conditions and a large population of workers simultaneously through workers’ councils, unions, and state regulations. Rural areas and private homes were out

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<sup>59</sup> Ernst Werner, “Die Steinschlägerin,” *DWdF* 6 (Nov. 1932): 19; and Siemsen, “Das unbekannte Deutschland: III. Thüringen und die Frauen” *Frauenwelt* 17 (1924): 268-269. On how the Imperial German state engineered the ‘foreignness’ of Eastern European laborers by insisting on only temporary residency and work permits and limiting Eastern European work permits to agricultural labor, see Ulrich Herbert and William Templer, *A History of Foreign Labor in Germany, 1880-1980: Seasonal Workers, Forced Laborers, Guest Workers* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993).

<sup>60</sup> Siemsen, “Das unbekannte Deutschland: III. Thüringen und die Frauen” *Frauenwelt* 17 (1924): 268-269; Arning, *SPD Parteitag 1929 Magdeburg*, 233; “Du siehst geschäftig bei den Linnen...,” *DWdF* 3 (March 1932): 19; and Curt Fritsch, “Landarbeit Sklavenarbeit,” *DWdF* 3 (Aug. 1931): 6-7.

<sup>61</sup> Martha Moritz, “Raubbau an der Frauengesundheit,” *Die Kommunistin* 16 (15 Aug. 1922): 126; and ‘Eine Hausangestellte aus G. schreibt uns’, “Die Freizeit der Hausangestellten,” *DWdF* 7 (July 1932): 13.

of Socialists' political reach, and access to those workers was at best piecemeal. Moreover, Socialists were appalled by a host of hazardous and unhygienic conditions they believed existed in working-class homes. They frequently called for the rationalization of proletarian homes and domestic work by including new technologies such as running water, electricity, central heating, vacuum cleaners; and new home and interior design modifications that supported the new hygiene requirements. Applying a modernist notion of dividing and classifying, leftist architects and activists also asserted that the home environment should be segregated as a space for consumption and for reproductive purposes, removed from activities of productive employment, and that this was characteristic of societal and historical progress.<sup>62</sup>

Communists also complained that women working in dirty environments, in all employment sectors but domestic service, could not follow the contemporary standards for the New Woman's hygiene and dress at work and in public spaces after work.<sup>63</sup> Besides criticizing the fact that women workers came in contact with pollutants, Communists found fault with workplaces not offering bath and shower rooms, or paid time to women workers at the end of their shifts to clean themselves before leaving the factory and entering public spaces.<sup>64</sup> Even at home women workers (and homemakers) could not perform hygiene rituals that had come to define womanhood, because their homes often lacked running hot water and bathrooms. Leftists like Helene [Henriette] Simon (1862-1947), a middle-class Jewish-German sociologist and AWO functionary, who likely only experienced poor hygienic conditions in the homes of welfare clientele, noted.

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<sup>62</sup> Gertrud Hanna, "Von der Heimarbeitsausstellung," *Die Genossin* (1925): 140-141.

<sup>63</sup> Ernst Werner, "Die Steinschlägerin," *DWdF* 6 (June 1932): 19; and "Bringt das Material an die Öffentlichkeit!" *DWdF* 6 (June 1932): 19.

<sup>64</sup> "Du siehst geschäftig bei den Linnen..." *DWdF* 3 (Mar. 1932), 19; "Acht Stunden in der Dunkelkammer" *DWdF* 4 (Apr. 1932): 19; and Georg W. Pijet, "Lene und das Radio" *DWdF* 6 (June 1932): 30.

Listen to this: in such a house [belonging to the middle to upper classes] (“Herrschaftshäuser”), one can quickly get clean. Hot and cold water, available as much as desired, soft cotton towels and a clothes’ warmer so hot that one could burn one’s fingers on it; soft brushes to rub the skin, and a wooden soap dish that smells of primroses. Now I know how the ladies manage to be so clean. Cleaning oneself has to be a pleasure for them. I wished they could see what it is like for us.<sup>65</sup>

Leftists’ narratives of women laborers’ employment conditions involved a variety of gendered discourses and meanings; some intersected further by class. On the one hand, activists argued that Weimar women’s manual labor environment was insufficiently gendered and needed to be adjusted. The New Woman in popular culture combined masculine and feminine as well as middle-class characteristics. She worked in public wearing masculine clothes but since she belonged to the middle class and was a white-collar worker, she did not engage in hard physical labor, followed middle-class gendered hygiene standards, and had access to many comforts and leisure. Leftists approved of the New Woman’s ‘masculinization’ in terms of her fashion wear, physical appearance, and adoption of male rationality and public presence, and recommended proletarian women appropriate these characteristics. They, however, did not depict women workers’ hard physical labor as with a positive effect, nor as a type of ‘masculinization’. Instead, they claimed hard labor should be performed by men or machines, and that women’s heavy physical work led to their de-feminization, early aging, and morbidity, contrasting negatively with the New Woman’s youthfulness and health. Thereby, leftists once again suggested that manual labor conditions in existence in Weimar Germany denied women workers the ability to follow contemporary and Socialist ideals of femininity and be New Women.

Leftists could have portrayed women workers as heroic and herculean, even as New Women who disciplined their bodies and endured hardships in a variety of conditions at work.

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<sup>65</sup> Helene Simon, “Sozialismus und Wohlfahrtspflege,” *AWO* 1 (Oct. 1926): 3-9, here 8.



Figure 25: Käthe Kollwitz, “Brot!” in “Frau! Mutter! Schwester!” Ed. Clauß Ölsnitz, (1924), title page of a flyer for the Dec. 1924 elections to the Reichstag.

However, they were frustrated with working-class women, in particular women workers. Despite reaching out a helping hand to women workers with their agenda to transform employment conditions, women workers didn't flock to the parties in numbers desired by Social Democrats and especially Communists. Perhaps, for this reason, leftists did not stop at merely criticizing employment conditions and wages for women workers, they denigrated women workers as well. In melodramatic images and written descriptions – in the hope that such emotional

appeals would more readily find reception among more emotionally-inclined women – leftists depicted waged women workers as a faceless mass of interchangeable working women (“*die Arbeiterin*”), who all thought and acted in the same manner. In leftist language, waged female workers and working-class homemakers – rather than being empowered individuals who made rational decisions about their lives – were anachronistically non-emancipated. They lacked self-confidence, character and ideological perspectives; and hence were pitiable “objects of sympathy

and pathos,” much like the sculptor Käthe Kollwitz’s realist figures of poor women (see Figure 25).<sup>66</sup> Activists denied that such workers had any power or individual agency to negotiate higher wages or working conditions unless they joined the labor movement. However, the “Du und das Recht” (“You and the Law”) section in *DWdF* illustrated (unintentionally it seems since the editors’ stated aim was to show employers’ power, ruthlessness, and lack of concern for their workers as well as employment courts’ biases towards employers) that domestic servants and other women workers did in fact negotiate with employers for more free time, increased pay, and additional benefits, by in part making use of new employment courts.<sup>67</sup>

The New Woman in popular culture was emancipated, rational, and therefore resourceful, in part as demonstrated by her ascension on the economic ladder into the world of white-collar work. In contrast to this image of the New Woman, leftists described women manual laborers as passive victims, tainting them with too much feminine emotionality and a lack of rationality. They endured discrimination, exploitation, and physical and mental degradation without trying to redress their victimization; and through their refusal to join the Communist organization they stymied salvation by the leftist vanguard.<sup>68</sup>

Activists argued that due to their low pay, ‘unskilled’ or ‘low-skilled’ employment in rationalized labor positions women workers, unlike craftsmen and skilled male workers, did not

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<sup>66</sup> See Weitz, “The Heroic Man,” 329; and B. T. [likely Thalheimer], “Warum brauchen wir Kommunisten eine Frauenbewegung,” *Die Kommunistin* 14 (11 Oct. 1919): 107-108, here 107; Behm, “Zur Frage der Doppelexistenz,” *Die Kommunistin* 9 (10 May 1921): 68-69; ‘Link’, “Und willst du nicht hungern, so brauch ich Gewalt,” *DWdF* 4 (Apr. 1932): 12; Juchacz, “Wahl-Jahr,” *Frauenwelt* 1 (Jan. 1928): 3; Anna Siemsen, “Das unbekannte Deutschland: Thüringen und die soziale Lage,” *Frauenwelt* 17 (1924): 268-267.

<sup>67</sup> “Das beklagte Verkehrsministerium,” *Du und das Recht* in *DWdF* 4 (Apr. 1932): 18; ‘Hausangestellte aus G.’, “Die Freizeit der Hausangestellten,” *DWdF* 7 (July 1932): 13; F., “Die Landarbeiterin,” *DWdF* 6 (Nov. 1931): 19; and Fridel Wolff, “Das Arbeitsgericht,” *DWdF* 6 (Nov. 1931): 18.

<sup>68</sup> ‘K’, “Dienen Lerne das Weib,” *DWdF* 9 (Sept. 1932): 19; “Du siehst geschäftig bei den Linnen...,” *DWdF* 3 (1 Mar. 1932): 19; and Ruth Fischer, “Noch einmal die Doppelexistenz,” *Die Kommunistin* 11 (10 June 1921): 85.

develop a sense of pride in either producing goods or accomplishing their work; hence they did not find personal fulfillment in their jobs.<sup>69</sup> Social Democrats and Communists portrayed women workers as though they were a *Lumpenproletariat*. Women workers were accused of changing workplaces frequently and expected to quit working and become ‘mere’ homemakers at the first opportunity, i.e., marriage. As a result, they did not form loyalties to their colleagues, workplaces, or the working class.<sup>70</sup> They betrayed their class by accepting low wages, refusing to join strikes or allow their husbands to participate in them, identifying with middle-class social sectors and cultures, and voting for conservative parties.<sup>71</sup>

Marxists usually identified a woman’s class belonging by her employment sector or by her husband’s or father’s employment sector. Their language on women manual laborers implied that while women from lower socio-economic strata were both born and married into their working-class position, just as they were born and acculturated into their gendered identities, women instinctually understood and embraced their female identities while entirely ignoring their working-class identity.<sup>72</sup> Only Social Democrats’ use of the expression “*schaffende Frauen*” to refer to both employed women and homemakers from lower socio-economic strata –

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<sup>69</sup> B. T., “Warum brauchen wir Kommunisten eine Frauenbewegung,” *Die Kommunistin* 14 (11 Oct. 1919): 107-108, here 107.

<sup>70</sup> Juchacz, “Die Frau in Politik,” 229. In essence, this was an outside-looking-in perspective of Socialists and Communists, and to some degree validated gendered perspectives of labor unions whose members usually envisioned male workers as the quintessential workers and female workers as flawed or deviating from the male standard. This was also a relatively middle-class perspective on women’s productivity in workplaces outside the home. Scholars agree today though that while women took time off to care for children, they often returned to work once children were school aged or older, and often to the same employers or at least the same employment sectors that they left when they had children.

<sup>71</sup> Lotte Prietzel, “Weihnachtspuppen,” *DWdF* 1 (Jan. 1932): 13; Siemsen, “Das unbekannte Deutschland: Thüringen und die soziale Lage,” *Frauenwelt* 17 (1924): 268-267; “Wieviel Metallarbeiterinnen werden vom Kampfe erfasst?” *DWdF* 1 (Jan. 1932): 19; and “Bücher die uns angehen: Anna, das Mädchen vom Lande,” *DWdF* 3 (Mar. 1932): 24.

<sup>72</sup> Communists argued that middle-class women were always fully aware of their classed position and acted as middle-class women following first their classed and then their gendered interests; as a result, they naturally participated in their husbands’ exploitation of the working classes.



likely in an attempt to avoid utilizing terms more frequently deployed by Communists, such as “female proletarians” (“*Proletarierinnen*”), and “the wives of workers” (“*Arbeiterfrauen*”) – suggested that women could have identities associated with production independent of household affiliation.

### **The “Double Earners” Debate**

In March 1919, the Weimar Coalition government – made up of the SPD, the Catholic Center Party (Zentrum), and the Democratic Party of Germany (DDP) – established the Demobilization decrees. These set up guidelines by which so-called “double earners,” married workers with working spouses, should be dismissed from their workplaces to make way for demobilized troops returning from the war.<sup>73</sup> Despite the neutral language, these decrees were used to fire female, not male, married workers, and were likely intended to be interpreted in that manner. Demands for married women workers to leave their posts for the sake of unemployed men flared up again, including among both male and female Social Democrats and Communists, after the world stock market crash in 1929.<sup>74</sup> With the decrees and advocacy for dismissal of women by the SPD leadership in government as well as many other leftists at workplaces, in factory councils, and unions, it was clearly demonstrated that they all viewed women workers primarily as supplemental workers and New Women who chose to work when they did not have to. They supposed the displaced women had a male breadwinner whose higher wages would

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<sup>73</sup> On the issue of how Weimar governments and leftists envisioned and treated women workers as wage depressors, and at best as a temporary crisis aid on behalf of the family or the state, see Carmen Tatschmurat, “‘Wir haben keinen Beruf, Wir haben Arbeit.’ Frauenarbeit in der Industrie der zwanziger Jahre,” in *Neue Frauen. Die Zwanziger*, 32-39. Tatschmurat and others have illustrated that women’s employment, while not on the rise overall as assumed during Weimar, was there to stay with nearly 35 percent of women employed, the great majority in agriculture and family enterprises as ‘helpers.’ See also Susanne Zeller, “Der Dank der Republik. Zur Entlassung von Frauen unter der Personalabbauverordnung,” in *Neue Frauen. Die Zwanziger*, 48-50. Especially the 1925 census was dissected by Social Democrats, see Juchacz, “Die Frau in Politik,” in *SPD Parteitag 1929 Magdeburg*, 220-221.

<sup>74</sup> E.H., “Doppelexistenz,” *Frauenwelt* 7 (26 Mar. 1927): 104.

offer their family more economic support than the wages of a woman working in the same job, and simultaneously their actions and narratives suggested that they preferred women in traditional roles, such as homemakers and mothers.<sup>75</sup>

In response, women Social Democrats and Communists reminded their all-female audiences in the women's magazines and at women's conferences (but usually not at general conferences with men in attendance) that the demobilization decrees and double-earner narratives discriminated against women workers' equal right to employment as enshrined in the Weimar Constitution of 1919 and Social Democratic and Communist programs.<sup>76</sup> Therefore, such policies and narratives tore a gender-rift within the labor movement, which had insisted ever since Zetkin joined the labor movement, that the Marxist fight was gender-blind and that issues of gender were subordinate to class.

In response, some men and women in the labor movement claimed that the entire matter was not about gender discrimination at all but rather about class transgression and an intra-

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<sup>75</sup> Juchacz called for financial support for women with 4 or more children to entice such women to stay at home. See "Die Frau in Politik," 231-232; A. M., "Die Hausfrauen und die Räte," *Die Kommunistin* 12 (11 Sept. 1919): 90-91, here 91; and Juchacz, "Wahl-Jahr," *Frauenwelt* 1 (1928): 3. Here Juchacz claimed that married women's employment has had severe effects on her family, describing women's employment like a disease with major side effects. Even though Bebel's and Zetkin's theories on women's employment continued to serve as the bases for Weimar-era Social Democratic demands for women's emancipation, in party conferences and in women's publications leading female Weimar Social Democrats referring to Lily Braun, a founding pioneer of the movement. Braun had advocated for and simultaneously sown doubts about women being able to combine employment and motherhood. Braun, *Memoiren einer Sozialistin I. Lehrjahre & II. Kampffahre* (Munich: Albert-Langen, 1909 and 1911).

<sup>76</sup> See Sender on reader opinions in prize competition essays, "Ein Nachwort zur Berufsarbeit der verheirateten Frau," *Frauenwelt* 7 (6 Apr. 1929): 147. Marie Arning reversed the usual descriptions of women's employment as supplementing male breadwinners' incomes. She described male spouses' waged employment as supplementing women's earnings. She asserted married women's right to employment regardless of their economic circumstances, but only after also claiming that no married woman is going to look for work unless economic necessity forced her. *1929 Magdeburg SPD Party Congress*, 233; "Doppelexistenz," *Frauenwelt* 5 (26 Feb. 1927): 75. During this congress the women adopted petition 160, which reasserted women's, including married women's, right to work. *1929 Magdeburg SPD Part congress*, 268. See also "Frauenkonferenz im Bezirk Westsachsen der KPD," *Die Kommunistin* 11 (1 June 1923): 85-86; and H. St. "Wir fordern Arbeiterinnenschutz!" *Die Kommunistin* 9 (10 May 1921): 66-67, here 67.

female dispute: married women workers were allegedly class transgressors because, being ‘supplemental’ earners, they accepted lower wages than unmarried women workers their age. Thereby, they created downward wage pressures for everyone, hence acting against the interests of their class. These same voices argued that young girls and single women, not male co-workers, pushed for their married female colleagues to be dismissed. Such narratives often attacked women workers as selfish flapper girls and New Women, implying they were gender transgressive women who acted as independent agents in their economic self-interest and worked because they wanted to have the funds to participate in the mass consumer and leisure culture.<sup>77</sup>

Others rejected this presentation and reasserted that women workers, especially married women workers, were passive victims; by such assignment identifying them as profoundly and securely feminine, and not gender transgressive and economically independent New Women. At women’s conferences and in women’s publications, activists repeatedly asserted that married women workers did not seek employment by independent and rational choice but were forced to work. These women’s families’ most basic economic needs; food for the dinner table, or making rent payments; were allegedly not met by their husbands’ income. Economic pressure – not desire for mass consumer items and leisure activities – led married women to seek work.<sup>78</sup>

In this vein, leftists also argued that rationalization had created gendered jobs, with women working for the most part in low-paid unskilled or low-skilled positions in gendered industries such as the textile and food industries, and such employment earned women workers low to starvation-level wages.<sup>80</sup> Such narratives implied women manual workers were not

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<sup>77</sup> On discourses classifying and characterizing types of women during Weimar see Frame, “‘Gretchen, Girl, Garçonne?’” 12 - 40.

<sup>78</sup> Link’, “Und willst du nicht hungern, so brauch’ ich Gewalt,” *DWdF* 4 (Mar. 1932): 12; Juchacz, “Wahl-Jahr,” *Frauenwelt* 1 (1928): 3; and Mathilde Wurm, in *SPD Parteitag 1927 Kiel*, 316.

<sup>80</sup> Kaethe Duncker, “Fort mit der Erwerbstätigkeit der Ehefrauen?” *DWdF* 1 (June 1931): 6 and 15.

economically independent New Women, and disassociated women's employment with extravagant or frivolous spending and consumption. Leftist women pointed out that employers used the Demobilization decrees and double earner discourses to reduce women's low wages even further by hiring female youth – the lowest paid in the hierarchy of wage earners – to replace fired married women workers.<sup>81</sup> And finally, women activists reminded audiences that most female workers, including married women workers, did not work in factories, but rather in agriculture and family businesses, in both cases as unpaid helpers – meaning these were not economically independent New Women anyway since they worked in environments antithetical to the New Woman and in dependent positions for their husbands' businesses or farms.<sup>82</sup>

Diving even deeper into characterizing women workers as passive victims, some female activists blamed married women workers – similar to how some female activists blamed women themselves and one another for the discrimination they experienced within their parties – for giving in too quickly and leaving their employment without a fight. The language suggested that women acted once again in too feminine ways, had a victim mentality, and were not New Women. Fired women workers who left their workplaces were labeled as non-emancipated, and secretly wishing not to work anyway; they were too ignorant to understand that their firing was a form of unjust gendered discrimination. Instead of insisting on their equal rights, they acted demurely and passively in typical female fashion, and left their employment without resistance.<sup>83</sup>

The occasional Communist language argued that when married women worked, they

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<sup>81</sup> Behm, "Zur Frage der Doppelsexistenz," *Die Kommunistin* 9 (10 May 1921): 68-69.

<sup>82</sup> Curt Fritsch, "Landarbeit Sklavenarbeit," *DWdF* 3 (Aug. 1931): 6-7.

<sup>83</sup> H. St. "Das Recht der Frau auf Arbeit," *Die Kommunistin* 6 (25 March 1921): 43-44, here 44; and H. St. "Wir fordern Arbeiterinnenschutz!" *Die Kommunistin* 9 (10 May 1921): 66-67, here 67.

prevented their families from suffering, which in turn deprived the Communist Party and a future communist revolution of supporting participants. This implied such Communist voices wanted women to become New Women in terms of employment and economic independence only after a communist revolution.<sup>84</sup> Similarly, in a more unusual published comment, *Die Kommunistin* suggested that it might not be a bad thing for married women not to work and therefore have the time to learn Socialist ideologies and participate in party life and politics; implying they should become Socialist New Women without working for wages or salaries.<sup>85</sup> This suggestion tied into widespread complaints and soul-searching by leftists about why women workers did not flock in greater numbers to the Social Democratic or the Communist Party. The usual answer was that working women were ignorant of politics and had no time to read about or participate in either politics or organizational life, given their double and triple burdens of waged work, domestic chores, and child-rearing. And, if they ever had free time, women workers were far too physically exhausted at the end of the day to be able to stand up to the mental challenge of reading about politics and attending organizational events.

The “Double Earners” debates show that some leftists contested the view that manual laborers were not New Women. In debates, they argued that women manual laborers, especially married women workers, were, in fact, New Women even if not Socialist New Women: they were self-centered like the New Woman in popular culture. They chose to work to afford the New Woman’s consumer lifestyles, including fashion and entertainment. Other narratives in the women’s publications rejected this portrayal. Their rebuttals ranged from insisting on women’s

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<sup>84</sup> Behm, “Zur Frage der Doppelexistenz,” *Die Kommunistin* 9 (10 May 1921): 68-69, here 69.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

right to work to depicting women as victims of economic circumstances and therefore as starkly feminine, meaning the opposite of New Women.

### Salaried Workers

The quintessential New Woman in popular media was a salaried worker, a store clerk, or an office worker. She worked in clean environments, dressed in Weimar fashions, and as a ‘flapper girl’ enjoyed partaking in the booming Weimar leisure industry from the movie theatre to dance halls, cafés, revues, and cabarets. According to scholars, after WWI, many young



women from lower socio-economic strata rejected domestic service and other employment sectors, choosing instead to work in offices and store counters.<sup>86</sup> They viewed this type of work –given the cleaner environment and nicer work clothes – as a rise in socio-economic status.<sup>87</sup>

Leftists argued, however, that despite their

fashionable looks, salaried workers were neither economically independent nor Socialist New

<sup>86</sup> Boak, *Women in the Weimar Republic*, 142-144 and 150-153; and Frevert, *Women in German History*, 176-184.

<sup>87</sup> Siegfried Kracauer, *The Salaried Masses: Duty and Distraction in Weimar Germany* (Frankfurt a.M.: Societäts-Verlag, 1930).

Women.<sup>88</sup> They pointed out that the salaries of white-collar workers were often less than the wages of women factory workers when calculating their expenses on new clothing and shoes – given employers expected them to dress well but did not give bonuses for such expenses.<sup>89</sup> Salaried workers often could not afford to rent their own apartments, and consequently had to live with their parents.<sup>90</sup> In the 1930s, *DWdF* frequently warned readers that unemployment awaited young white-collar trainees.<sup>91</sup>

For Social Democrats, salaried workers did not represent Socialist New Women because they did not have Socialist political outlooks. Instead of focusing on their personal education or political enlightenment, white-collar clerks wasted their earnings and free time participating excessively in Weimar's mass consumer and leisure culture. Moreover, they 'betrayed' the working classes by fraternizing with the sons of middle-class families in the hope of economic mobility.<sup>92</sup>

Communists claimed that salaried workers were sexually exploited by their bosses and therefore did not have control over their bodies the way their ideal Socialist New Woman should (see Figure 26).<sup>93</sup> Social Democratic discourses since the Imperial era had asserted that female

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<sup>88</sup> Louise Diel, "Wie lebt die Berufsfrau in Amerika?" *Frauenwelt* 2 (25 Jan. 1930): 33-34.

<sup>89</sup> "Kurfürstendamm-Betrieb," *DWdF* 9 (Sept. 1932): 13; Kleinstadt-Stenotypistinnen," *DWdF* 10 (Oct. 1932): 19; "Jeder muss sein Scherflein beitragen," *DWdF* 10 (Oct. 1932): 19; Erika Bühn, "Wir Mädchen in 'Schwarz-Weiss'," *DWdF* 12 (Dec. 1932): 19; and 'Fridel', "Die Krankenschwester," *DWdF* 5 (May 1932): 7-8.

<sup>90</sup> Susanne Suhr concluded that 84 percent of female salaried workers responding to a survey by the ZdA, a union for salaried workers, lived with their parents, see Charlotte R. "Wie lebt die weibliche Angestellte," *Frauenwelt* 25 (Dec. 1930): 592.

<sup>91</sup> "Meine Tochter soll mal was Besseres werden!" *DWdF* 3 (Mar. 1932): 14-15; "Herr Doktor Hanhart engagiert," *DWdF* 2 (Feb. 1932): 19. Communist narratives in *DWdF* discouraged readers from selecting white-collar job trade, secretarial, and other white-collar training and employment for their daughters.

<sup>92</sup> Juchacz, Käthe Fröhbrodt, and Pfülf, in *SPD-Parteitag 1927 Kiel*, 306, 311; and 323 respectively.

<sup>93</sup> See "Meine Tochter soll mal was Besseres werden!" *DWdF* 3 (Mar. 1932): 14-15; Gertrud Ring, "Möbliertes Zimmer zu vermieten," *DWdF* 2 (July 1931): 9-11.

factory workers and domestic servants commonly experienced sexual exploitation by supervisors and employers with power over them, with low wages creating additional pressures for women workers to supplement their income with occasional prostitution.<sup>94</sup> Communists transferred this narrative to salaried workers during Weimar.<sup>95</sup> Both *DWdF* and *Die Kommunistin* claimed that the wages of white-collar workers were so low that they too had to boost their salaries with sporadic prostitution.<sup>96</sup> Employers monetized the good looks and sex appeal of clerical workers to sell their merchandise and bosses frequently demanded sexual favors from office workers, especially ‘private secretaries’, as part of their job requirements such as in the following anonymous short story.<sup>97</sup>

‘As you can see’, he said while they talked about the job, ‘I am a bachelor and live alone in this apartment. Please feel free to look at it! I work nights a lot. You could live here. That would be the best. If we work well together, if we get along well together, I will, of course, increase your salary up to 150, to 200 Marks over time.’ She thinks for a second: ‘If I say no, the next one [job applicant] will agree to it. But I have to earn money. I am not an idiot.’ She agrees to be a private secretary for temporarily 80 Marks and a free apartment stay.  
He, therefore, buys not only a cheap laborer but also a girl.  
The [her] price is part of the monthly salary!  
For how many girls is this the start of a sad ending on the streets?<sup>98</sup>

Communists also countered any potential assumptions that white-collar employment was easier on women’s bodies and minds than manual labor, claiming that salaried workers were not young and healthy New Women with steeled bodies but rather women with disability looming in

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<sup>94</sup> Bebel, 160.

<sup>95</sup> “Herr Doktor Hanhart engagiert” *DWdF* 2 (Feb. 1932): 19.

<sup>96</sup> “Meine Tochter soll mal was Besseres werden!” *DWdF* 3 (Mar. 1932): 14-15.

<sup>97</sup> Hilde Buse, “Auf Stellungsuche,” *DWdF* 1 (Jan. 1933): 19; *DWdF* 7 (Dec. 1931): title page; and Peter Stecher’s title page illustration with caption “Das Weib als Ware!...” *Die Kommunistin* 17 (1 Sept. 1922): 129; and “Liebe Kommunistin!” *Die Kommunistin* 23 (1 Dec. 1922): 184.

<sup>98</sup> “Vom Menschenmarkt: Was weiblich Angestellte erleben,” *DWdF* 2 (July 1931): 19.



their near future. The seated position, repetitive movements at the typewriter, and constant noise from typewriters and telephone switchboards allegedly stressed women's bodies and nerves, leading to de-feminizing chronic illnesses and aging similar to manual labor in factories and elsewhere.<sup>99</sup>

In reality, stenotypists do heavy [physical] labor. It has been calculated that their muscle performance is 5000 to 6000 meters per kilogram. This is equivalent to carrying a weight of 50 kilograms between 100 and 200 meters. A while back, results of a survey about disabilities among steno-typists illustrated also that typing is amongst the most demanding jobs. Nervous stress symptoms (“*nervöse Überreizung*”) are a particular workplace illness. In addition to these mental/nerve problems, there are also several other problems: such as lower abdominal complaints and connective tissue inflammation in the fingers. Most stenotypists are so overworked at thirty years of age that we can speak of the beginnings of a workplace illness [...] The stenotypist has to do her work under the same conditions as the female worker, increasing exploitation and decreasing wages; the stenotypist has to do her job. The entrepreneur places the stenotypist in this most important matter at the same level as the female worker. Therefore, they have to join together in the fight.<sup>100</sup>

### **Professionals and Leftist Activists as Socialist New Women**

The treatment of female political activists, welfare and social work professionals and volunteers, as well as of other women professionals; such as physicians, psychologists, lawyers, teachers, journalists, artists, and bureaucrats; stood in stark contrast to descriptions of waged women workers in the leftist women's magazines. Here, these women had an existence as emancipated and rational subjects with individual agency – even if many of them were unremunerated for some or much of their work. The activists and professionals presented themselves as Socialist New Women regarding their emancipation, occupations, and political/welfare activism. Their self-portrait relied for the most part on the written word. Few images of the Socialist professional

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<sup>99</sup> “Was ist eigentlich so anstrengend an ihrer Arbeit?” *DWdF* 1 Sondernummer: Angestellte (Jan. 1933): 9; and “Frisieren, Ondulieren, Haarwaschen,” *DWdF* 1 Sondernummer: Angestellte (Jan. 1933): 19 and 31; “Schwerarbeit = Maschinenschreiben,” *DWdF* 5 (May 1932): 19; and Dr. Georg Benjamin, “Raubbau an der Gesundheit,” *DWdF* 1 (Jan. 1933): 28.

<sup>100</sup> “Schwerarbeit = Maschinenschreiben,” *DWdF* 5 (May 1932): 19.



Figure 27: "Unsere Erwählten: Die weiblichen Reichstagsabgeordneten der Sozialdemokratischen Partei," *Frauenwelt* 8 (1924): 129. The title reads: Our elected [women] Female SPD members of the Reichstag [One of the two German national parliamentary bodies].

# Freunde und Mitarbeiter am „WEG DER FRAU“



**Käthe Kollwitz**  
deren packende Zeichnungen und Radierungen proletarischer Mütter und Kinder allen arbeitenden Frauen bekannt sind.



**Peter Maslowski**  
Verfasser einer Anzahl Bücher und Broschüren gegen die Kulturreaktion, die weiteste Verbreitung gefunden haben.



**Lene Overlach**  
vertritt als Reichstagsabgeordnete besonders die Interessen der weiblichen Angestellten wie überhaupt aller schaffenden Frauen.



**Dr. Paula Brupbacher**  
Zürcher Schriftstellerin und Frauenärztin, kämpft in der Schweiz für Abschaffung des § 218.



**Dr. Wilhelm Swienty**  
bekanntester Arzt der Berliner arbeitenden Bevölkerung, der Leiter unserer Rubrik: Ärztlicher Ratgeber.



**Maria Reese**  
Als Mitglied des Reichstages trat sie wegen der arbeiterfeindlichen Politik der Sozialdemokratie von dieser zur KPD. über.



**Maria Leitner**  
schildert in spannenden Reportagen fremde Erdteile und die Gegensätze von Luxus und Armut in Amerika.



**Martha Arendsee**  
kämpft in vorderster Front gegen die Verschlechterung der Sozialversicherungen und des Fürsorgewesens.



**Käthe Duncker**  
setzt sich seit Jahrzehnten ein für die Schulung der Frauen innerhalb der Arbeiterbewegung.



**Frau Magda, Prag**  
enthüllt als Kennerin des Arbeiterlebens besonders das Kinderleiden in der Tschechoslowakei.



**Charlotte Wichmann**  
Zigarettenpackerin, führte mit ihren Kolleginnen einen erfolgreichen Lohnkampf.



**Dr. Alfred Apfel**  
steht als Verteidiger von Dr. Kienle und Wolf an hervorragender Stelle in der Bewegung gegen § 218.

Figure 28: "Freunde und Mitarbeiter am 'Weg der Frau'," DWdF 1 (June 1931): inside front cover.

and political and welfare activists were published in the women's magazines, although Socialists led and participated in many public events during the heyday of amateur photography and illustrations in print media. Those few published photos and illustrations of Socialist professionals depicted them – unlike most other images of the New Woman in the publications – usually only from the waist or chest up, placing them into a virtual pantheon of busts of important and famous figures, usually men (see Figures 27-29).<sup>101</sup> In some of the photos and illustrations, activists were in traditional feminine looks and traditional clothing (see Figure 27) while others were shown with masculine attributes, short bobbed hair, and wearing Weimar fashion (see Figure 28). The lack of images of this Socialist New Woman also gave the impression that she was somewhat disembodied and brainy, an intellectual *Gedankenmensch*. Her appearance and dress were mostly irrelevant to her identity as an emancipated, progressive-modern, and intellectual Socialist New Woman. Her work involved helping other women become emancipated New Women, whether through information tied to their scientific expertise or through their political and welfare activism and bureaucratic engagement.

Kessemeier has argued that this intellectual professional and political/welfare activist was a continuation of the nineteenth-century ideal New Woman, whose markers were economic independence thanks to a profession, political activism, and intellectual or scientific endeavors.<sup>102</sup> Unlike the New Woman of the 1920s, the nineteenth-century New Woman was not defined by her physical appearance, adoption of fashions, age (youth), health status, athleticism, and homemaking styles.<sup>103</sup> Until February and March 1933, leftist women's publications

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<sup>101</sup> This was apparently also the case for the New Woman in non-Socialist publications – apart from within their sports and fashion pages. Famous, wealthy, or aristocratic women were shown from the waist or chest up in non-Socialist illustrated women's publications. See Kessemeier, *Sportlich, sachlich, männlich*, 44 - 49.

<sup>102</sup> Kessemeier, *Sportlich, sachlich, männlich*, 18-25.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

presented both (or even all three) New Women within their pages: the progressive intellectual, professional, scientific, and politically active New Woman; the New Woman from popular media, characterized by her appearance and leisure activities (Chapter Four); and the pedagogically progressive parent (Chapter Five) and rationalized homemaker (Chapter Six). The Socialist publications therefore never switched away from their original ideal femininity; they just added new ideals to their existing ones.

In their reports about their political activities and speeches, in articles and advice columns on politics, health, exercise, child-rearing, and homemaking, in editorials, eulogies and birthday commemorations for other leftist women; women activists provided some direct and indirect information that they viewed themselves, each other, and other women professionals as Socialist New Women. As shown, they commonly described blue-collar employment, which they usually referred to as a “job” (“Erwerbstätigkeit”), as undesirable slavish physical labor that did not provide women workers with a sense of self-fulfillment, mainly a source of money. Conversely, they described professional careers and mental labor, including the labor Socialist political and welfare activist engaged in – even when unremunerated – in very different terms: as a “career” (“*Beruf*”), a life-long and “fulfilling” (“*lebensausfüllende Tätigkeit*”) calling (*Berufung*), and as the expression of an individual’s natural talents further developed over years of self-disciplined learning and training.<sup>104</sup> This could happen through institutional post-secondary education or self-taught learning (of ‘higher’, i.e., middle-class culture) and political and welfare activism in

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<sup>104</sup> Ruth Löwenstein, “Berufswahl,” *Frauenwelt* 5 (8 Mar. 1930): 110; Luise Kautsky, “Luise Zietz,” *Frauenwelt* 2 (25 Jan. 1932): 27 and 29, here 27; Juchacz, “Die Frau in Politik und Oekonomie,” in 1929 *Magdeburg SPD Parteitag*, 228-229; *ibid*, “Zum Geleit,” *AWO* 1 (1 Oct. 1926): 1-2; *ibid*, “Ein neues Frauenblatt,” *Die Genossin* 1 (1924): 3; Gulliver, “Vorkämpferinnen: Marie Juchacz,” *Frauenwelt* 14 (9 July 1932): 321; and Käthe Duncker, “Fort mit der Erwerbstätigkeit der Ehefrauen?” *DWdF* 1 (June 1931): 6 and 15. That this view of classed women’s employment was widespread see Tatschmurat, “Wir haben keinen Beruf, wir haben Arbeit,” 34.

the public sphere and (non-commercial) public spaces. Individual character development and the flourishing of one's talents were not possible through manual labor and homemaking alone, they alleged.

Professional careers were portrayed as ideal forms of employment for women, but sometimes with the caveat that only the rare woman had the capacity for a profession, such as Ruth Löwenstein said:

[I]f you want to take careers as a fulfilling occupation, not as a mere job, you will see that only very few are 'called' for such a career. One doesn't choose this type of career; fate places humans into positions where they can develop their abilities to the fullest extent.<sup>105</sup>

Contributors frequently referred to their ideal woman as "*die Frau*" ("the woman"), "*die Frau von heute*" ("today's woman"), "*die befreite Frau*" ("the emancipated woman"), "complete human beings" ("*Vollmenschen*"), and "people with [a unique] character" ("*Persönlichkeiten*"). This connotation of the term *Persönlichkeit* had been offered already in 1906 by the radical women's rights activist and head of the Bund für Mutterschutz und Sexualreform Helene Stöcker, by Zetkin in her published speeches, and in 1920 by the Russian revolutionary and women's rights advocate Alexandra Kollontai.<sup>106</sup> These demanded a new basis for love, sexuality, and marriage: the coming together of two independent beings, with each of them, including the woman, having developed a personality as a result of having a career. During Weimar, the term *Persönlichkeit* was commonly used for distinguished male public figures, such as the German Foreign minister Walther Rathenau, a member of the German Democratic Party (DDP). *Vollmenschen* and *Persönlichkeiten* established men as the standard to which women

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<sup>105</sup> Ruth Löwenstein, "Berufswahl," *Frauenwelt* 5 (8 Mar. 1930): 110.

<sup>106</sup> Stöcker, *Die Liebe und die Frauen* (Minden, 1906), 150; Kollontai, *Die neue Moral und die Arbeiterklasse* (Berlin: Seehof, 1920), both quoted in Kessemeier, *Sportlich, sachlich, männlich*, 23 and 29; and Zetkin, "Der Student und das Weib."

professionals and political activists must now live up, and both terms implied that the people described were unique beings with character.<sup>107</sup> Since Socialists saw men with professions as *Vollmenschen* but claimed that full-time homemaking and motherhood prevented women from becoming such *Vollmenschen*, it was these men's professions and public presence that allowed their interests and talents to come to full fruition toward becoming *Vollmenschen*.

According to Frame and Katie Sutton, Weimar's popular discourses were influenced by turn-of-the-century and early twentieth-century scientific theories on constitutional biology and non-scientists' postulations about underlying essences in humans that caused the differences in sex, sexuality, and what we view today as gender.<sup>108</sup> One such theory by Viennese philosophy student Otto Weininger asserted "each individual is biologically 'bisexual', consisting of unique proportions of 'male' (M) and 'female' (W) components. Depending upon the balance of 'M' and 'W', they can be placed along a hierarchical continuum that descends from the 'ideal' (manly) man to the 'ideal' (feminine) woman, although he notes that these 'pure extremes exist only in theory.'<sup>109</sup> According to Sutton, Weininger claimed that "excessive proportions of 'M' ... led certain women to strive for emancipation."<sup>110</sup>

Classification schemes for various 'types' of women discussed widely in Weimar popular culture, such as the 'Gretchen', 'Garçonne', and 'Girl' types, relied on such theories as advocated by Weininger. They ascribed differing amounts of 'M' and 'F' to women's

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<sup>107</sup> 'Dr. Olga Essig', "Frauenerwerbsarbeit und öffentliche Berufserziehung in Hamburg," *Die Genossin* 2 (Feb. 1929): 57-59. Essig reviewed here a work by Dr. Gertrud Hermes who typed women and claimed that working-class women were not *Vollmenschen*.

<sup>108</sup> Frame, "'Gretchen, Girl, Garçonne?'" 16-22; and Sutton, *The Masculine Woman in Weimar Germany* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011), 18.

<sup>109</sup> Weininger, *Geschlecht and Character* (Sex and Character, 1903), quoted in Sutton, *The Masculine Woman*, 18.

<sup>110</sup> Sutton, *The Masculine Woman*, 18.

phenotypes, which included women’s body shapes but also their chosen apparel, hairstyles, postures, gestures, facial mimicry, and a whole host of behaviors. According to Frame, the term *Vollweib* in popular and scientific discourses could describe traditional femininity with strong maternal instincts and a New Woman who combined maternal and other feminine attributes with the Weimar principles of “*Sachlichkeit*,” scientific objectivity, rationality, and pragmatism thought to be masculine.<sup>111</sup> This combination of attributes allegedly led to New Women combining careers in formerly masculine professions with being ideal wives and mothers.

Leftists’ narratives show that they too had adopted scientific and popular discourses on feminine and masculine characteristics: they viewed rationality and interest in public discourses

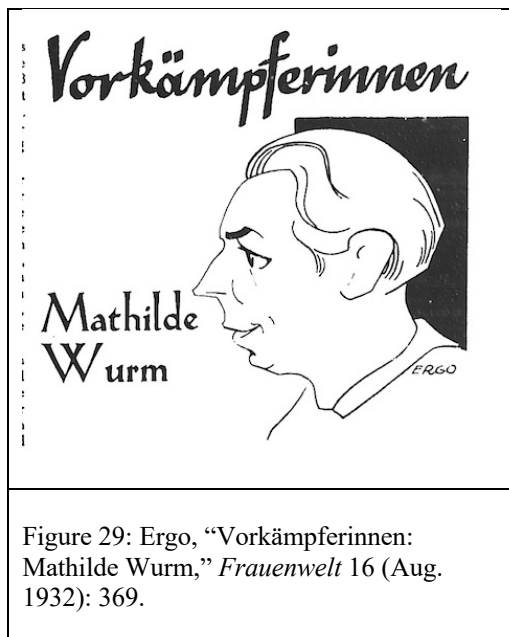


Figure 29: Ergo, “Vorkämpferinnen: Mathilde Wurm,” *Frauenwelt* 16 (Aug. 1932): 369.

as masculine attributes; while emotionality, irrationality, a strong sense of and love for family, and an appreciation for aesthetics were to them essential feminine attributes.<sup>112</sup> Leftist contributors valued what they believed to be their own balance of feminine and masculine attributes, calling it *Vollmensch* instead of *Vollweib*. Whereas *Vollweib* in popular culture suggested that the women referred to were the epitome of femininity, Socialists’ use of *Vollmenschen* and

*Persönlichkeiten* for women implied that such women had appropriately reduced their levels of

<sup>111</sup> See Frame’s discussion of P. Mathes’s work “Die Konstitutionstypen des Weibes, Insbesondere der intersexuelle Typus,” in *Biologie und Pathologie des Weibes*, ed. J. Halban and L. Seitz, 5 vols. (Berlin: Urban and Schwarzenberg, 1924), 3: 1-112; in Frame, “‘Gretchen, Girl, Garçonne?’” 18.

<sup>112</sup> Dr. Helene Turnau, “Unterhaltung über menschliche Angelegenheiten,” *Frauenwelt* 14 (12 July 1930): 324; anonymous but likely Juchacz, “Der Zweck der Frauenabende,” *Die Genossin* 3 (Sept. 1924): 69-70; and *ibid.*, “Jugendgerichtshilfe,” *Die Genossin* 3 (Sept. 1924): 83.



female emotionality and other instinctual female behaviors by adding masculine attributes of economic independence, self-assertiveness, scientific objectivity, and rationality (see also Figure 29).<sup>113</sup> Socialists, therefore, did not consider this kind of mixing of gender attributes as gender transgression.

In the classification schemes of Weimar discourses, this type of woman, an intellectual *Gedankenmensch*, was less bound by her female physiology.<sup>114</sup> Consequently, in theory, a woman with a career could be a *Vollmensch* even if she was single and had no children. Nevertheless, Socialists assumed that a desire for motherhood was an instinct in all women, and therefore implied strongly that professional women, political/welfare activists, who lived fulfilling lives but who had no child or children, lacked something (see Chapter Five).

Leftist activists' main claim to being ideal women related to their public engagement in the labor movement (including through their contributions to the organizations' women's magazines), its welfare organizations, and with bureaucracies and parliaments, as well as their professional achievements and expertise (see Figure 30). Even though men also regularly contributed to leftist women's publications, most of the magazines carried many articles and columns written or edited by women functionaries with expertise in specific areas discussing not only their desired policies but also the current state of laws in those particular areas. To name just a few women activists and some of their areas of expertise: Gertrud Hanna (Maria Helene Gertrud Hanna, 1876-1944, the SPD-affiliated Free Union's (ADGB) Women's Secretary) and Anna Geyer (née Elbert, 1893-1973, member of the SPD, USPD, and KPD, Leipzig city

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<sup>113</sup> See Henny Schuhmacher, "Beruf und Mutterschaft," *Frauenwelt* 1 (Jan. 1925): 8-9; and the editorial header to "Wir wollen keinen Krieg!" *DWdF* 1 (Jan. 1925): 4.

<sup>114</sup> See Frame, "'Gretchen, Girl, Garçonne?'" 26 and 16.



Figure 30: “Ms. Ella Auerbach: The first Female Lawyer at the Court of Appeals,” *Frauenwelt* 8 (21 Apr. 1928): 180. Auerbach was not a Socialist activist. Socialists had helped bring about the use of “Frau” for unmarried women, as opposed to the previously used neuter word “Fräulein,” which implied that unmarried women were not women yet.

counselor, journalist and editor) wrote about issues related to women’s employment, wages, and unemployment. Juchacz and Louise Schroeder (Louise Dorothea Sophie Schroeder, 1887-1957, the head of Berlin’s Senate, “Oberbürgermeister,” AWO functionary and teacher at its school, and member of the National Convention and *Reichstag*, 1919-1933) published articles on protective legislation for women workers, including pregnant women workers. The latter also discussed a variety of community support services for mothers and infants, unemployment insurance, laws and legislation on single mothers, and STDs. Toni Pfülf (Antonie Pfülf, 1877-1933, member of the National Convention and the *Reichstag*, 1919-1933) and Helene

Simon (1862-1947, autodidact, member of the Fabian society, cofounder of the AWO and teacher at its school) wrote about youth care and welfare matters. Adele Schreiber-Krieger (1872-1957, Austrian-German economics student and feminist who joined the SPD before WWI) published articles on international women’s rights organizations and their events. Wurm and Sender explained economic policies to readers in an understandable manner. The latter also published articles and editorials on foreign policy and regularly called on women readers to participate in elections. Anna Siemsen wrote about girls’ and women’s secondary education and

Thuringian geography, society, economy, and culture.<sup>115</sup> And last but not least, physician Reni Begun contributed many articles on health.

Whereas authors in *DWdF* took on more muted roles behind their topics since many authors of articles remained unidentified or just listed through initials or pseudonyms; contributors to *Die Kommunistin* (from 1921 to early 1924), *Die Genossin*, and *Frauenwelt* likely gained some prominence over time among their readers. Members of the KPD National Women's Bureau, KPD Regional Women's Secretaries, and Social Democratic and AWO activists seemed ever-present in these women's publications as authors' names were increasingly offered in prominent bylines in particular in *Die Genossin* and *Frauenwelt*. Bylines and authors' titles, such as "higher civil servant (?)" ("*Regierungsrat*"), deputies to national or state parliaments ("*M.d.R.*" or "*M.d.L.*"), doctorates, and M.D.'s endowed legitimacy to authors as experts and professionals but also celebrity status as successful women functionaries. The activists turned bureaucrats and parliamentarians now had power and access to directly interact with government bureaucrats and institutions, and their actions had state-wide to national impacts.<sup>116</sup>

A few leading women Socialists came from middle-class backgrounds where women were traditionally expected to get married and engage full-time in homemaking. These activists had instead acquired professions, some originating, or just studying and working in other German-speaking countries where women had access to university education. To name a few: Wachenheim, coming from a middle-class Jewish family, went for a career in welfare administration. She became a higher civil servant in Berlin (*Regierungsrat*), a Prussian

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<sup>115</sup> Siemsen, "Das Kräuterweiblein," *Frauenwelt* 6 (22 Mar. 1928): 132.

<sup>116</sup> Anna Siemsen, "Frauenabbau," *Die Genossin* 1 (July 1924): 15; and "Thuringen," *Die Genossin* 2 (Aug. 1924): 44.

Parliamentary member, Arbeiterwohlfahrt's (AWO) Central Committee (*Hauptausschuß*) member, and the editor of the *AWO* magazine. Käthe Frankenthal, also born to a middle-class Jewish family, studied medicine as among the first women to do so, joined the Austrian army during WWI as a physician when the German military would not accept women as officers, worked as a physician for the city of Berlin, and became a member of the Berlin City Council and the Prussian Parliament (*Landtag*). Exiled from Lodz for her Socialist activities, German teacher Edda Tennenbaum (pseudonym Else Baum) collaborated on *Die Gleichheit* with Zetkin and became a Communist International women's representative in Moscow, Berlin, and Hamburg, while co-editing *Die Kommunistin* between 1921 and early 1924.

While Ph.D.'s in political science, economics, pedagogy, social work administration, and physicians made up a small but prominent minority, many leading women were teachers, accountants, business and trade workers, journalists, and office secretaries.<sup>117</sup> Among these was Antonie Pfülf, whom a *Frauenwelt* contributor described with a mixture of feminine and masculine attributes:

[As] the daughter of a higher officer, [she] had to own massive amounts of courage and character strength in the [18]90s to let go of a feudal education, aristocratic lifestyle, servants, governesses, and brilliant social outlooks as if these were trivial matters. A severe clash with the parents likely transpired when the young girl disclosed her life's goal to them: Antonie wanted to be an elementary school teacher [in public schools "Volksschule"] [...] This tender woman with a weak and easily susceptible constitution/body ("Körperlichkeit") has a fanatic work discipline. [...] In this female comrade, the most ordinary working-class woman notices the self-sacrificing devotion and the absence of any pretentiousness. This entirely non-sentimental woman is above all what we call a decent sort ("*anständiger Kerl*"). She has carried out a brilliant job behind the scenes in the law committee, with untiring and tough perseverance, and applied, again and again, her special legal knowledge in the areas of criminal and marital law to advance the Social Democratic position.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Some of the functionaries with Ph.D.'s were Olga Essig, and Hertha Sturm (real name Edith Schumann); Anna Margarete Stegman was a neurologist.

<sup>118</sup> Gulliver, "Vorkämpferinnen: Antonie Pfülf," *Frauenwelt* 15 (25 July 1932): 344. The term "Kerl" is masculine in German and its use for a woman is significant.

Most women activists had originated in working-class milieus, often as homemakers. Once their children were in school ages or older, the activists started volunteering for the leftist parties. Some had been workers, like Juchacz, a seamstress by profession before becoming a paid Women's Secretary at the Cologne SPD organization – a rare position for women in the SPD. During Weimar, Juchacz was a member of the SPD leadership, edited *Die Genossin*, was a co-founder and head of the AWO and became a member of the National Convention and *Reichstag* (1919-1933). She was the first woman ever to give a speech in the German parliament.

As Juchacz's career path illustrates, by Weimar, leading women activists had left waged jobs and homemaking behind to have plenty of practice as full-time political activists, organizers, public speakers, journalists, bureaucrats, as well as state and national parliamentarians. Nevertheless, even Ph.D.'s sometimes continued working as secretaries, stenographers, and translators for the organizations because their functionary positions in the women's sections were often unpaid.<sup>119</sup>

Long after having achieved middle-class economic comforts, male party leaders still liked to claim publicly that they were 'workers.' Leading Social Democratic women with by then middle-class comforts and privileges did not do so. In eulogies and dedications on the occasions of functionaries' birthdays, they preferred highlighting each other's professional and political-organizational achievements, describing each other as among a growing number of women who had personally broken through gender and class barriers, an avant-garde of pioneers ("*Vorkämpferinnen*"), "conquerors," and liberators of women, continuously battling – in persistent and disciplined hard work – resistance to their work by male colleagues, other parties'

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<sup>119</sup> See Brigitte Suder and Regan Kramer. "Communism and Feminism," *Clio, Women, Gender, History* 41 "Real Socialism" and the Challenge of Gender, trans. by Regan Kramer (2015): 126-139.

politicians, bureaucrats, or social expectations in general.<sup>120</sup> Von Ankum has illustrated that the disciplined and dogged pursuit of a goal despite obstacles was part of the New Woman's characterization in popular literature.<sup>121</sup> 'Gulliver' (a pseudonym) described Mathilde Wurm (1874-1935) using some of these descriptions.

Back then, women were not allowed to create or participate in political organizations. Only the tireless work of the generation of women around Mathilde Wurm won women freedoms and rights over time, including political equality [...] In 1920, her husband died. Mathilde Wurm took on his parliamentary mandate and continued his life's work. With expert knowledge and extremely hard work, she fought as a speaker for Social Democrats for reduced prices for food products and against increases in taxes and tariffs<sup>122</sup>

Fitting also with interwar discourses on the New Woman's 'new objectivity' and rationality, Social Democratic activists described each other as rational-objective ("*sachlich*"), decision-makers, "knowledgeable," and with specialized expertise ("*sachkundig*"). They then proved this in their articles illustrating how to do organizational work and advocating for and discussing laws, citing experts, legal paragraphs, scientific language, surveys, and statistics through charts and tables.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Gertrud Hanna, "Tochter und Beruf," *Frauenwelt* 3 (11 Feb. 1928): 51; S. or G.? H., "Frauenberufe," *Frauenwelt* 3 (11 Feb. 1928): 53-54. Juchacz, "Zum Geleit," *AWO* 1 (Oct. 1926): 1-2, here 2; "Die Reichsfrauenkonferenz und unsere Arbeit: Die Reichsfrauenkonferenz," *Die Genossin* 2 (Aug. 1924): 35; and Sender, "Liebe Leserin," *Frauenwelt* 5 (Mar. 1928): 102-103.

<sup>121</sup> von Ankum. "'Motherhood and the New Woman': Vicki Baum's stud. Chem Helene Willfuor and Irmgard Keun's Gilgi - Eine von Uns," *Women in German Yearbook* 11 (1995): 171-188.

<sup>122</sup> Gulliver, "Vorkämpferinnen: Mathilde Wurm," *Frauenwelt* 16 (Aug. 1932): 369. See also "Clara Zetkin 75 Jahre," *DWdF* 7 (July 1932): 4.

<sup>123</sup> See Käthe Duncker, "Fort mit der Erwerbstätigkeit der Ehefrauen?" *DWdF* 1 (June 1931): 6 and 15; Pfuelf, "Die Disziplin der Fürsorgeanstalt," *AWO* 1 (Oct. 1926): 14-19, here 15; Geyer, "Frauenerwerbsarbeit. Nach den Ergebnissen der Berufszählung von 1925," *Die Genossin* 6 (June 1927): 179-182; Wachenheim, "Die Verfassung der Selbstverwaltung in Preußen," *Die Genossin* 8 (Aug. 1928): 260-265; Dr. Laura Turnau, "Ehe- und Sexualberatung," *Die Genossin* 8 (Aug. 1928): 265-268; Hanna, "Gesetzliches Verbot der Arbeit verheirateter Frauen," *Die Genossin* 12 (Dec. 1928): 434-436; Elli Radtke-Warmuth, "Kind und Wohnung," *Die Genossin* 5 (May 1927): 151-153; Dr. Hilde Grünbaum-Sachs, "Sozialistische Vorerziehung für das Berufsleben," *Die Genossin* 6 (June 1927): 204-205; Schroeder "Erweiterung des Mutterschutzes - ein Erfolg der sozialdemokratischen Reichstagsfraktion," *Die Genossin* 8 (Aug. 1927): 262-264; "Eine Frau als Minister," *Die Genossin* 1 (1924): 26; "Internationale Frauenliga für Frieden und Freiheit," *Die Genossin* 1 (1924): 32. Socialist activists frequently lauded

In their reports about their activities, Communist female activists asserted they were courageous organizers, orchestrating marches and demonstrations of women to town halls and parliamentary buildings in protest. In one example, *Die Kommunistin* printed a report by Gotha activist Ida Heller and in a foreword, the editor expressed hope that readers would emulate Heller's and her colleagues' courage and actions: "...our female comrades give us [...] such an exemplary picture of the work of an active, fearless women's group that led to their prosecution, ... that we hope the Gotha women comrades will find many emulators."<sup>124</sup> Heller too characterized herself as a heroine and successful agitator for rallying a price control commission ("*Frauenteurungskommission*," likely made up mostly of KPD cadres) through public spaces and into factory properties in Gotha, where she and the members of the price control commission engaged in public pressure negotiations with employers.<sup>125</sup> As a result of the spectacle Heller and the price control commission orchestrated, they achieved an ad hoc factory workers assembly, where she gave a speech on starving families to an audience of male workers whose wives had just delivered their lunches. When she and the price control commission tried to repeat this success at another workplace, they were arrested by the police and charged with trespassing. Not deterred by this outcome, Heller professed that she was looking forward to defending herself in

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discussions at women's conferences and courses as having a "high level," of objectivity and know-how. See "K.-R." [likely Elisabeth Kirschmann-Roehl], "Unser Bevölkerungspolitische Kongreß," *AWO* 2 (15 Oct. 1926): 50-52, here 51. "Richtlinien für die kommunalpolitische Mitarbeit," *Die Genossin* 1 (1924): 16; "Aufgaben der weiblichen Stadtverordneten," *Die Genossin* 1 (June 1924): 15; "Schulungskurse," *Die Genossin* 7 (July 1928): 226; "Aufgaben des Neuen Reichstages," *Die Genossin* 7 (July 1928): 231; Adelheid Torhorst, "Volksschule und Berufsschule im Rahmen der kommunalpolitischen Aufgaben," *Die Genossin* 7 (July 1928): 232-235; Frankenthal, "Städtische Gesundheitspflege," *Die Genossin* 7 (July 1928): 236-237; Minna Todenhagen, "Die Bedeutung kommunaler Deputationen und Ausschüsse," *Die Genossin* 7 (July 1928): 240-241; "Erfahrungen aus der Arbeit," *Die Genossin* 7 (July 1928): 249-250; "Fortsetzung des Berichts über die Bezirksarbeit 1927," *Die Genossin* 7 (July 1928): 251-253; Wachenheim, "Wie entsteht ein Gesetz?" *Die Genossin* 3 (Sept. 1924): 69.

<sup>124</sup> Editor's foreword to "Die Justiz gegen den Gothaer Kontroll-Ausschuß," *Die Kommunistin* 9 (1 May 1923): 69-70, here 69.

<sup>125</sup> Ida Heller, "Die Justiz gegen den Gothaer Kontroll-Ausschuß," *Die Kommunistin* 9 (1 May 1923): 69-70.

court, with Communists commonly using court proceedings against them as propaganda opportunities.

Activists described even their regular organizational work, as a “fight,” and tried to entice ordinary audiences and readers to join it, such as Sender here:

While the previous year was one of confusion and a step back, let us turn the newly begun year 1931 into one of self-determination and an attack, and with it, the beginning of our complete liberation! When all the women of the working population (“*Volk*”) want this goal and engage themselves in unison, ready for anything; who could oppose such enormous power? Therefore, our motto for 1931 is: attack the enemy; true camaraderie in our rows!<sup>126</sup>

Lest audiences might find women activists too masculine and too much like the New Woman in popular culture, in eulogies, and birthday wishes activists described each other with a combination of feminine and masculine attributes, such as in Pfülf’s characterization above.<sup>127</sup> In a commemorative article on Zietz (née Körner, 1865-1922, the SPD’s first female member in the Executive Committee in 1908, USPD Executive member, and Reichstag delegate 1919-1922), Luise Kautzky (née Ronsperger, 1864-1944, Karl Kautzky’s wife, translator, journalist, and Berlin City Council member for the USPD, 1919-1924) described her simultaneously as a “courageous” and properly “demure” (“*brav*”) woman who devoted until her last breath the “love of a warm heart” and tireless labor to the Social Democratic Party.<sup>128</sup>

To avoid accusations of gender transgression, activists also did not discuss in the women’s magazines any personal practices and perspectives that broke traditional norms for women but belonged within popular characterizations of the New Woman. Frankenthal never

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<sup>126</sup> Sender, “Liebe Leserin!” *Frauenwelt* 1 (Jan. 1931): 9; leftist women commonly referred to their women’s magazines as a “medium for the fight” (“Kampforgan”), see Juchacz, “Zum Geleit,” *AWO* 1 (1 Oct. 1926): 2.

<sup>127</sup> See Gulliver, “Vorkämpferinnen: Marie Juchacz,” *Frauenwelt* 14 (9 July 1932): 321.

<sup>128</sup> Kautzky, “Luise Zietz,” *Frauenwelt* 2 (25 Jan. 1932): 27 and 28.



mentioned that she liked to smoke cigars, enjoyed the occasional drink at bars, and neither desired to be a wife or mother nor thought of herself as having their necessary qualities.<sup>129</sup> Only in her memoir published in American exile did she admit that while she could “order a diet,” she “could neither prepare food nor serve it smilingly.”<sup>130</sup> Sender – whose physical appearance and dress frequently earned her commentaries from male colleagues as the most fashionably dressed Socialist woman activist – also only discussed her preference for a bohemian lifestyle in her memoir but not in *Frauenwelt*.<sup>131</sup> And in 1920, Hertha Sturm rejected the KPD leadership’s imposition of aid work for political prisoners and their families onto the KPD Women’s Bureau, suggesting her view that welfare type of work had nothing to do with organizational work for winning more women members to the KPD. In *Die Kommunistin* she never addressed her rejection of the Executive Committee’s association of welfare work with women.

Socialist women activists also constructed their own identities as Socialist New Women by contrasting themselves to others. This is another reason why they characterized working-class women – and not just manual labor and its conditions – in starkly negative terms opposite to their descriptions of themselves and each other (see above).<sup>132</sup> Their patronizing comments about working-class women, such as Sender’s here to women readers of *Frauenwelt* on the occasion of national elections illustrates how activists thought of themselves and ordinary working-class women.

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<sup>129</sup> Frankenthal, *Der dreifache Fluch*, 25-27, 31 and 55.

<sup>130</sup> Frankenthal, *Der dreifache Fluch*, 57-58.

<sup>131</sup> Lohmann, in *SPD Parteitag 1924. Protokoll mit dem Bericht der Frauenkonferenz* (Berlin: Dietz, 1924), 238; and Sender, *The Autobiography of a Rebel* (New York: The Vanguard Press, 1939), 18-24.

<sup>132</sup> See Clara Henriques, “Psychologische Schwierigkeiten und Möglichkeiten sozialistischer Wohlfahrtsarbeit.” *AWO* 15 (1 Aug. 1927): 454-461; and “Die Reichsfrauenkonferenz und unsere Arbeit: Die Reichsfrauenkonferenz,” *Die Genossin* 2 (Aug. 1924): 35.

Today, *Frauenwelt* comes to you not to offer you entertainment, inspiration, distraction, and pleasure. It comes to you to provide you with advice, to help you with a decision that is so important for you and the entire productive population; a decision that indeed has given you a headache/puzzled you (“*Kopfzerbrechen bereitet*”). You have to perform as a female citizen – but you haven’t had much practice in it: among the younger ones, many are allowed to use their right [to vote] for the first time.<sup>133</sup>

### Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated that leftist discourses on women’s employment did not present German women workers, not even German women factory workers or the typical salaried workers from popular media, as ideal Socialist New Women. They instead presented women professionals and leftist political and welfare activists as ideal Socialist New Women: as emancipated and rational and fulfilled complete humans, who combined both feminine and masculine attributes and practices.

Socialists’ theories on women’s emancipation advocated for since the late nineteenth century, such as by Zetkin, presumed all women’s employment would lead to their economic independence and hence their emancipation. Weimar-era leftist narratives in women’s publications, however, differentiated between waged work, lower-level clerical work and professional employment. They claimed low wages and working conditions denied women workers and lower-level white-collar workers the possibility to become independent Socialist New Women because these types of work damaged their bodies and prevented them from having time for self-education and an expanded outlook. A professional career, or a political and welfare engagement, on the other hand, brought personal development, self-fulfillment, and hence emancipation they argued, leading to identities as Socialist New Women. Socialists, therefore, envisioned their New Woman as a middle-class woman, who engaged in mental, not physical

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<sup>133</sup> See Sender, “Liebe Leserin!” *Frauenwelt* 9 (5 May 1928): 195.

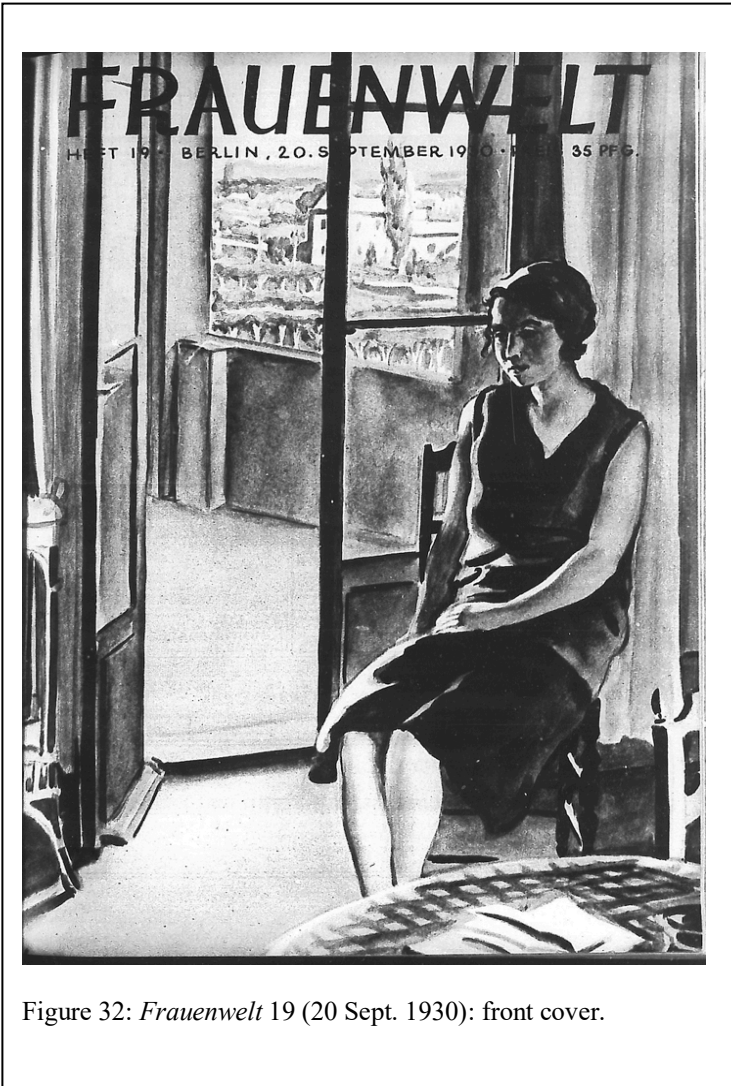
labor. The next chapter will introduce another ideal woman that inhabited the leftist women's papers and had more commonalities with the New Woman in popular culture.

# Selbst ist die Frau Modenschau der Frauenwelt



Figure 31: "Selbst ist die Frau: Modenschau der Frauenwelt," *Frauenwelt* 4 (1924): 59.

As seen in Chapter Three, the written word in Social Democratic and Communist women's publications described professional women and leftist political or welfare activists as ideal women, or Socialist New Women.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, the popularly held Social Democratic *Frauenwelt* and Communist *DWdF* were full of positive-connoted illustrations of women neither



at work nor in political or welfare activism. Instead, women's appearance, leisure time, child-rearing, and homemaking practices were in focus (see Figures 31 and 32). Clearly, these images depict other leftist ideals of womanhood. This chapter investigates *Frauenwelt's* and *DWdF's* images and texts for Social Democratic and Communist ideals of femininity to do with women's appearance and body culture.

As discussed in Chapter Two, leftists published popular women's magazines in an attempt to meet

female readers' existing consumer needs and tastes for mass media while also providing them

<sup>1</sup> I refer to a "Socialist New Woman" as characterizing both Communists' and Social Democrats' imagined ideals of femininity because both termed their utopian community a 'Socialist' society. While the overall time frame for this dissertation is May 1919 to March 1933, the illustrated magazines were published between 1924 and early 1933. Therefore, my discussion of the Socialist New Woman's looks and leisure activities is limited to between 1924 and March 1933.

with some leftist political messages. As a result, *Frauenwelt* and *DWdF* contained a varying mixture of entertainment, fashion, and didactic information on politics and numerous other topics, among them homemaking, childrearing, health, and sports. I assume editors and authors selected images and texts for publishing because they either believed the particular contents fit fully within readers' tastes or reflected a compromise point between the inclinations and goals of editors, authors, and readers. Since the papers' reception was positive and readers chose to subscribe to them, this dissertation also assumes that *DWdF*'s and *Frauenwelt*'s contents indicate to a great extent interwar readers' preferences.

Consequently, this chapter discusses images and textual descriptions of women as leftists' (including editors', authors', and readers') preferences for how Social-Democratic and Communist-leaning women readers, presumably working-class housewives, workers, and salaried women workers, should look, what they should wear, and how they should spend their free time. This chapter points out any discrepancies between the Communist and the Social Democratic imaginations of their Socialist New Woman and provides their rationalizations for their particular choices. It also compares leftists' ideal femininity with those proposed in commercial mass culture, mostly as delineated in other scholarship but also through a comparison with some narratives in *Berliner Hausfrau*.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For works on the Weimar New Woman see *Hart und Zart. Frauenleben 1920-1970* (Berlin: Elefanten Press, 1990); Kristine von Soden and Maruta Schmidt, *Neue Frauen. Die Zwanziger Jahre* (Berlin: Elefanten Press, 1988); Erik Norman Jensen, *Body by Weimar: Athletes, Gender, and German Modernity* (Oxford UP, 2010); Gesa Kessemeier, *Sportlich, sachlich, männlich. Das Bild der 'Neuen Frau' in den Zwanziger Jahren. Zur Konstruktion geschlechtsspezifischer Körperbilder in der Mode der Jahre 1920 bis 1929* (Dortmund: Ed. Ebersbach, 2000); Adam Stanley, *Modernizing Tradition: Gender and Consumerism in Interwar France and Germany* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 2008); Katie Sutton, *The Masculine Woman in Weimar Germany* (New York: Berghahn, 2011); Atina Grossmann, "Girlikultur or Thoroughly Rationalized Female: A New Woman in Weimar Germany?" in *Women in Culture and Politics: A Century of Change* edited by Judith Friedlander, Blanche Wiesen Cook, Alice Kessler-Harris, and Carrol Smith-Rosenberg, 62-80 (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986); Katharina von Ankum, *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); *ibid.*, "Motherhood and the 'New Woman': Vicki Baum's *stud. chem. Helene Willfüer* and Irmgard Keun's *Gilgi-eine von uns*," *Women in German Yearbook: Feminist Studies in German Literature and Culture* Vol. 11 eds. Sara Friedrichsmeyer and Patricia Herminghouse (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995): 171-188; and Alys Eve

Leftists envisioned their ideal woman – when not focusing on issues of employment or political or welfare engagement – with very similar attributes as the New Woman in commercial popular culture. Social Democrats and Communists wanted to elevate working-class women’s appearances and lifestyles (*Lebenskultur*) and took the middle-class New Woman and her *Lebenskultur* as their model, with some caveats. The Socialist New Woman presented in *Frauenwelt*’s and *DWdF*’s images and texts had ‘masculine’ short bobbed hair, more ‘feminine’ wavy in the early 1930s. She was androgynously slender, and she wore most of the same clothing styles and items as the popular-cultural New Woman. In the 1920s, these styles and clothes were connoted ‘masculine’ while feminine-understood cuts predominated in the early 1930s. Leftists also used most of the same explanations as commercial media for why women should wear Weimar’s fashion-wear. They claimed that short hair and clothes in Weimar styles rationalized women’s need for clothing as they were healthy, practical, and a major factor in women’s emancipation because they facilitated women’s participation in public life, previously a prerogative of men. In particular exercise and swim clothes enabled the female wearer’s body, historically concealed and confined behind many layers of clothing, to have maneuverability and skin exposure to the elements in accordance with modern popular health and hygiene dicta.

Leftists also reasoned working-class women had a “right to leisure time,” and leisure, body culture, and healthier bodies should not be exclusive prerogatives of the middle classes.<sup>3</sup> They recommended that proletarian women adopt most of the middle-class New Woman’s leisure time practices (excluding her commercial leisure pursuits) to benefit their bodies and

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Weinbaum and Modern Girl Around the World Research Group, *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization* (Durham: Duke UP, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> Hans W. Fischer, “Das Recht auf Freizeit,” *Frauenwelt* 12 (15 June 1929): 267.

minds. Working-class women should incorporate travel for their cultural enrichment and health; discipline and steel their bodies within the labor movement's sports organizations to withstand modern industrial and urban life stressors; and regularly perform extensive middle-class gendered rituals of hygiene. Together, these activities would ensure proletarian women's bodies were healthy, youthful, and streamlined-thin just like the body of the New Woman in popular culture.

Social Democrats and Communists believed women's control over their bodies through exercise and leisure culture was part of women's personal and socio-cultural pathway toward emancipation. By publicly engaging in physical leisure activities women freed themselves in body and mind from traditionally gendered impositions on women that limited their public presence. Women partaking in sports and travel thereby exhibited their emancipation to others.

Despite the emancipatory and masculine-connoted language to describe their Socialist New Woman's looks and activities, Social Democrats and Communists were concerned with maintaining her secure femininity, not unlike broader cultural unease with the New Woman's gender-bending behaviors. Leftist discourse on sports and hygiene insisted that women's bodies were aesthetic objects that should look elegantly and gracefully beautiful, and therefore feminine, at all times. They also argued that women's bodies were primarily designed for reproduction; they were weaker than men's bodies; and needed careful scientific treatment as prescribed by experts. Women should avoid clothing items and sports types and intensities that were too masculine, could damage their bodies, or endanger their feminine appearance. Along the same lines, they recommended women should gain enough masculine self-confidence to travel and participate in outdoor sports with others while exposing their bodies in revealing



exercise clothing but insisted on women staying securely shy of an ego that enjoyed spectators' attention for their person and their physical achievements.

	
<p>Figure 33: The Eton Style. “Blusen und Röcke,” <i>Frauenwelt</i> 27 (31 Dec. 1927): 426.</p>	<p>Figure 34: <i>DWdF</i> 3 (Aug. 1931): front cover.</p>

### Women’s Emancipation through Short Hair

Both leftist women’s magazines were littered with visual illustrations of positively-connoted women during leisure. These could be found on title pages and within the magazines’ advertising, fashion, and entertainment segments, and paired with a host of articles on health, fashion, travel, hygiene, and sports. Like the hair of the New Woman in non-Socialist popular culture, these women’s hair was always cut short into a bobbed or pageboy style (*Bubikopf*), which varied from a very short and masculine-understood ‘Eton’ (Figure 33) to more chin-length looks (Figure 34). Women’s hair in *Frauenwelt* and *DWdF* became wavy in the late 1920s and early 1930s (Figure 60), taken to connote greater femininity.

Mainstream and leftist media didn't depict the *Bubikopf* as an accidentally chosen hairstyle. Instead, they welcomed it as a significant milestone in women's emancipation, claiming it made hair care easy and thereby facilitated women's participation in all aspects of modern life, especially those formerly limited to men, such as white-collar employment, sports, and travel.<sup>4</sup> In leftist language – as within discourses in mass media – the *Bubikopf* freed women from “unnatural” “burdens” placed on them by earlier long-haired and elaborate fashion demands and gendered norms of beauty which had required women to spend time for and bear with the weight of fancy coifs.<sup>5</sup> Even though short hair needed frequent cutting, with the 1930s wavy style requiring time-consuming styling and possibly uncomfortable night rest with materials rolled in one's hair, leftists labeled the *Bubikopf* as a ‘natural’ hairstyle. For them, the *Bubikopf* also demonstrated to others women's inner “transformation,” or emancipation, self-confidence, and a modern rational-objective-pragmatic – and hence masculine – outlook on life.<sup>6</sup>

In mainstream media, this masculinization through the straight bobbed hairstyle, in particular the Eton, was associated by some with homosexuality and criticized as symbolizing women's rejection of both their female sex and gendered obligations.<sup>7</sup> Leftists avoided discussions about homosexuality in part by prioritizing chin-length styles over the Eton.

*Frauenwelt* contributor Dorothea Hansen's quote below illustrates how leftists insisted that even

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<sup>4</sup> See Dorothea Hansen, “Frisurenunfug,” *Frauenwelt* 3 (11 Feb. 1928): 56-57. On the emancipatory and functionalist significance of the *Bubikopf* as also other fashion attire and looks see Sabine Hake, “In the Mirror of Fashion,” in *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*, edited by von Ankum, 185-201, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); and Sutton, *The Masculine Woman*, 27- 44.

<sup>5</sup> Hansen, “Frisurenunfug,” *Frauenwelt* 3 (11 Feb. 1928): 56 and 57; anon., “Zurück zum Dutt?” *DWdF* 10 (Oct. 1932): 10-12, here 12; and Margarete Hartig, “Mode- und Frauenbefreiung: Auch eine Modeplauderei,” *Frauenwelt* 22 (2 Nov. 1929): 514 - 15.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> See Sutton, *The Masculine Woman*, 34 and 47.

as women adopted some of men's rights, looks, and practices, they did not intend to replace men. They continued to be feminine in their essence and social roles.

The woman of *our* century is different, *should* be different, and has to *become* different. Having the same value and rights as the man, she should stand next to him, and like him steeling her body in wind and sun; and in the peaceful mental competition [with the man], she should conquer her place as the man's companion, mate, and comrade. For this, she needs a *free head*, a *warm heart*, and a healthy body. She does not require the heavy load of an artificial or partially natural hairstyle, which pressures and burdens the free human being while she tries to lift her head in self-confidence and freedom to the sun and the stars.<sup>8</sup>



<sup>8</sup> Hansen, "Frisurenunfug," *Frauenwelt* 3 (11 Feb. 1928): 56 and 57, here 57.



Figure 37: “Praktische Moden. Mit Handarbeit und monatlicher Handarbeitsbeilage,” *Berliner Hausfrau* 38 (23 June 1927): 9.



Figure 38: “Selbst ist die Frau,” *Frauenwelt* 14 (2 Juli 1927): 219.

### Women’s Emancipation through Weimar Fashion Wear

Interwar women’s fashion was remarkably different from women’s fashion as little as 40 years before. Nineteenth-century women’s wear included long dresses with hoop skirts and petticoats, both made with extensive fabric lengths, worn over crinoline cages and stiff corsets made of whalebone, wood, steel, and cane. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, a variety of life reform (*Lebensreform*) movements became popular, involving hiking, biking, travel, nudism,

vegetarianism, and the reform dress (*Reformkleid*, see Figure 35).<sup>9</sup> In conjunction with the reform corset – a thin fabric camisole – the reform dress was promoted as healthier and more comfortable women’s wear because these were worn looser on the body and did not restrict movement including that of the chest cage while breathing. Wartime and post-war fabric shortages, women’s entry into white-collar employment, and their resulting need for professional but practical clothing led to newer clothing styles in dark and drab colors with less fabric.

By 1924 narrow and long tubular sleeveless to short-sleeved dresses that came down to the ankles, and diverse jumpers, blouses, sweaters, and vests worn over slim skirts had become fashionable (see Figure 31). According to Koch, Jensen, and Kessemeier, the increasing popularity of sports among women created a need for clothing that would allow even greater mobility, activity, and comfort for the wearer.<sup>10</sup> The tubular skirts became pleated and shortened to just below the knee, with clothes from men’s wardrobes such as pants, knickerbockers, and shorts also introduced as women’s clothing items for sports (see Figures 38 through 40). Single and double-breasted jackets completed women’s two to three-piece tailored daytime outfits (see Figure 36). In the 1930s, skirts became longer again, understood as more feminine.

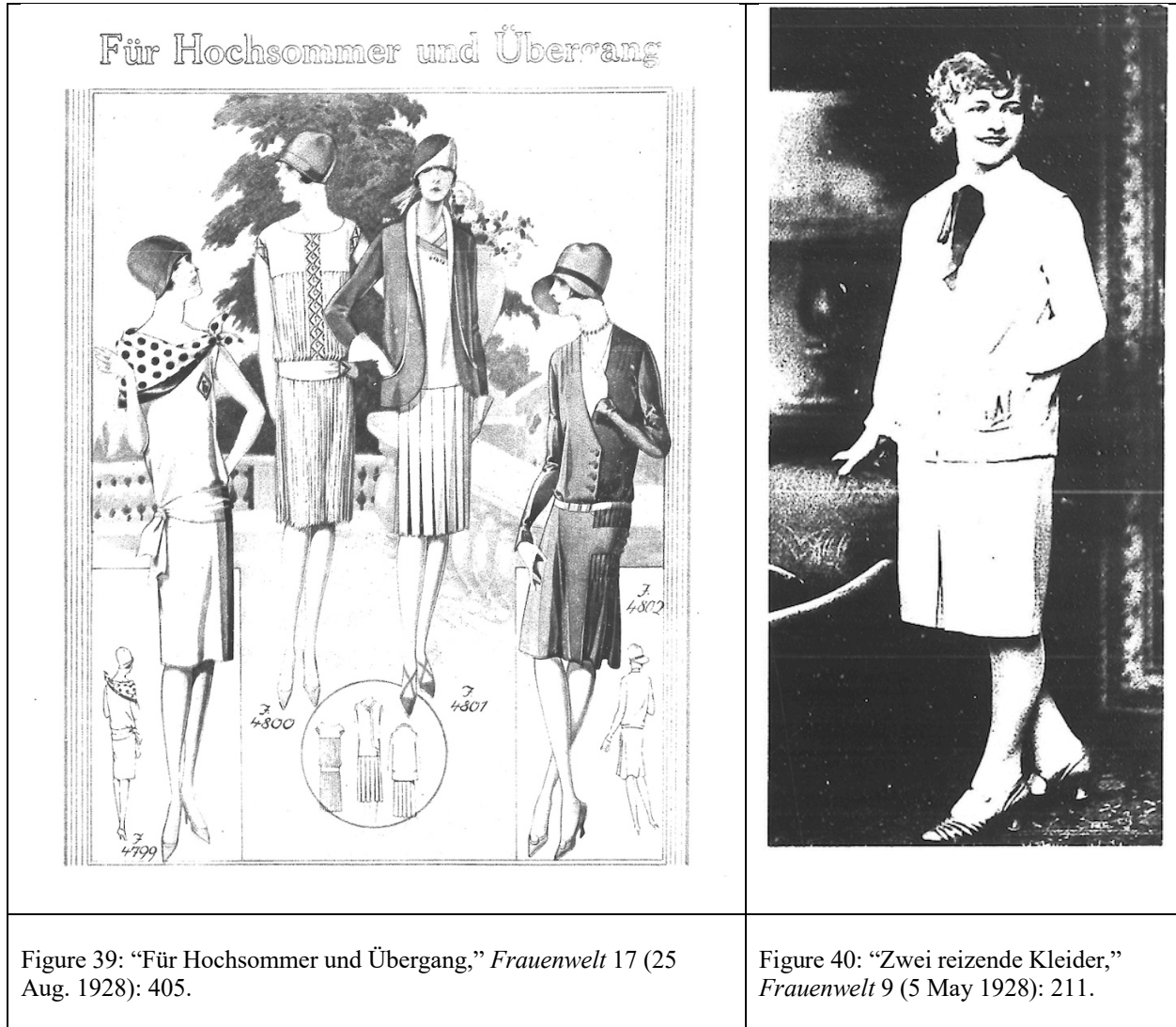
As Kessemeier has illustrated, commercial papers’ fashion narratives consistently claimed that Weimar fashion followed a modernist aesthetic of the ‘natural,’ ‘simple,’ ‘rational-functional,’ and “athletic” (“*sportlich*”) with the terms simple and rational-functional connoting masculinity during Weimar.<sup>11</sup> In commercial magazines, the ‘masculinization’ of women’s

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<sup>9</sup> On *Lebensreform* movements see Chad Ross, *Naked Germany: Health, Race and the Nation* (Oxford: Berg, 2004); and Rudy Koshar ed., *Histories of Leisure* (Oxford: Berg, 2002); Florentine Fritzen, *Gesünder Leben: Die Lebensreformbewegung im 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2006); and Michael Hau, *The Cult of Health and Beauty in German: A Social History, 1890-1930* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> Jensen, *Body By Weimar*, 35; and Kessemeier, *Sportlich, sachlich, männlich*, 219-226.

<sup>11</sup> “Sportliches Kostüm und Jackenkleid,” *DWdF* 1 (Jan. 1932): 20.



fashion was not merely implied; fashion writers explicitly described Weimar women’s wear as masculine. Even when the New Woman wasn’t shown wearing men’s clothing, her close-fitting clothing deemphasized her breasts and displaced the visible waistline from its natural location down to the hips (until about 1928). Tight-fitting cloche hats and high-heeled pointy-tipped pump-style shoes added to the creation of a straight boyish or androgynous silhouette.<sup>12</sup> And the visibility of her legs below the skirt was taken to connote masculinity.

<sup>12</sup> Kessemeier, *Sportlich, sachlich, männlich*, 120.



Stanley noted that the New Woman's masculine or androgynous clothing disassociated her from her traditional gender roles of childbearing and childrearing, eliminated "sexual difference," and was, therefore, a deeply "political statement."<sup>13</sup> Yet by the late 1920s and progressing into the early 1930s, the same clothing items that had previously been seen as masculine were increasingly considered unisex, and lost their gender-transgressive connotations, according to Kessemeier.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, a more feminine appearance with visible curves was sought in the fashion styles of the 1930s as waistlines rose toward the natural female waist and longer skirts once again hid women's legs.

Apparel presented in *Frauenwelt* and *DWdF* looked a lot like the clothing styles in commercial fashion papers, such as *Berliner Hausfrau* (compare Figures 37 and 38). The mannequins and human models of the leftist papers were depicted as wearing low-waisted and sleeveless to long-sleeved jumper dresses coming down to the shin in the 1920s (Figure 31), rising to just below the knee toward the end of the decade (Figure 39), and lengthening again in the early 1930s (see Figure 43). The dress was sometimes replaced by three-piece outfits consisting of a blouse, often with a built-in cloth belt tied at the hip, topped with a vest, tie, blazer jacket, or a long sweater, worn over a pleated skirt.

Leftists also adopted popular narratives surrounding the attributes and functions of interwar fashion-wear. However, instead of expressly stating that the clothes were 'masculine', leftists only implied the clothes' masculinity by highlighting their simplicity and practicality. In titles, subtitles, and texts in the fashion segments, editors and authors described the presented

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<sup>13</sup> Stanley, *Modernizing Tradition*, 4.

<sup>14</sup> Along the same lines, the thin and slender body shape of the New Woman was no longer understood to be androgynous or masculine but rather as erotic and feminine. Kessemeier, *Sportlich, sachlich, männlich*, 117-118.

clothing items as easy to sew, combine, practical to wear, and functional: as suited for particular occasions, seasons, or body sizes (thin women, “schlanke Frauen;” and overweight women “starke Frauen”).<sup>15</sup>

Social Democrats and Communists also presented Weimar clothing styles as healthy. The narrow and long early 1920s clothes required their wearer to have a streamlined body. The New Woman in commercial media achieved this either with the aid of elastic bodices and other shape wear that reduced curves – or through an “internalized” and more “authentic,” ‘natural’, and less artificial ‘corset’: exercise (discussed below).<sup>16</sup> Some leftist narratives, however, derided elastic and tight clothing articles as unhealthy. *Frauenwelt*’s and *DWdF*’s fashion pages generally replaced corsets and elastic wear with ‘healthier’ unshaped and loose silky or cotton brassieres, camisoles, and underpants, but the occasional sewing instructions, ads, and reader questions about shapewear and bras with minimizing impact were nevertheless printed.<sup>17</sup> Leftists also recommended a t-shirt and shorts or a leotard (“*Hemd hose*”) for women’s practical sports attire and one-piece bathing suits. These were described as without ‘feminine’ frills and decorations but fully revealed arms and legs to ensure the greatest exposure to ‘healthy’ sunlight, wind, and water (see Figure 41).<sup>18</sup>

Leftist narratives also presented interwar fashion styles as more truthful and natural.

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<sup>15</sup> “Praktische Ueberkleidung für Regentage im Sommer: Einige Vorschläge für kleidsame Formen,” and “Frühjahrskleider für Schlanke und Starke,” *Frauenwelt* 7 (7 Apr. 1928), 163, and 164, respectively; and “Für den Herbst,” and “Kleider für stärkere Frauen,” *DWdF* 4 (Sept. 1931), 20.

<sup>16</sup> Kessemeier, *Sportlich, sachlich, männlich*, 97-118, 121, and 196; Koch, “Sachlich, Sportlich, Sinnlich,” 18-19; and Gerard F. Sherayko, “Selling the Modern: The New Consumerism in Weimar Germany” (Ph.D. Diss., Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1996), 218. 250-251. The bodices and garters could also hold silk stockings in place, in popular culture an important marker of the New Woman’s access to luxury goods.

<sup>17</sup> Aimée Köster, “Büstenhalter,” in *Die schaffende Frau*, *Frauenwelt* 1 (Jan. 1926): 15; “Mädchenleibchen,” *Frauenwelt* 2 (Jan. 1926): 31; and “Hüfthalter mit Büstenhalter,” *Frauenwelt* 18 (3 Sept. 1932): 430.

<sup>18</sup> See “Sind wir alt-modische Sportler?” *DWdF* 8 (Aug. 1932): 29.



# Für den Wassersport

## Badeanzüge

J 4595, Gr. 44. Badeanzug aus weißem Trikot für das Leibchen und blau-weiß gestreiftem Trikot für das kurze Beinkleid. Stoffverbrauch 0,55 m weißer, 150 cm breit; 0,60 m gestreifter, 140 cm breit.



SK 121, Gr. 46 und 48. Badeanzug, bestehend aus einem schwarzen Trikothöschchen und langer Bluse aus weißem Trikot; schwarze Blenden und ein Ledergürtel mit Schnallenschluß statten die Bluse aus. Stoffverbr. 1,70 m weißer, 1,25 m dunkler, je 150 cm breit für Gr. 48.

SK 125, Gr. 42, 44 und 46. Badeanzug, aus einem schwarzen Trikothöschchen und einer glatten weißen Trikotbluse bestehend. Ein Gummigürtel deckt den Ansatz des Beinkleides. 0,60 m weißer, 1 m dunkler Stoff, je 150 cm breit für Gr. 44.

SK 125, Gr. 44. Hübscher Badeanzug aus leichtem gemusterten Stoff für die schlichte Bluse und einfarbigem Stoff

für das kurze Beinkleid. Einfarbige Blenden schmücken die Bluse am Ausschnitt und an den Ärmelrändern. Stoffverbr. 1,40 m einfarbiger, 1,80 m gemusterter, je 100 cm breit.

SK 133, Gr. 44. Bademantel, bestehend aus gemustertem und einfarbigem Frottierstoff. Letzterer ergibt den eingehaltenen Schalkragen, die Blenden sowie den breiten Ansatz und die Ärmelaufschläge. Schmäler Bindegürtel. Besonders vorteilhaftes Muster zur Verwendung von Resten. Stoffverbr. 1,55 m gemusterter, 2,15 m einfarbiger, je 150 cm breit.

Lyon-Schnitte 95 Pf.

Figure 41: "Für den Wassersport: Badeanzüge," *Frauenwelt* 12 (16 June 1928): 284.

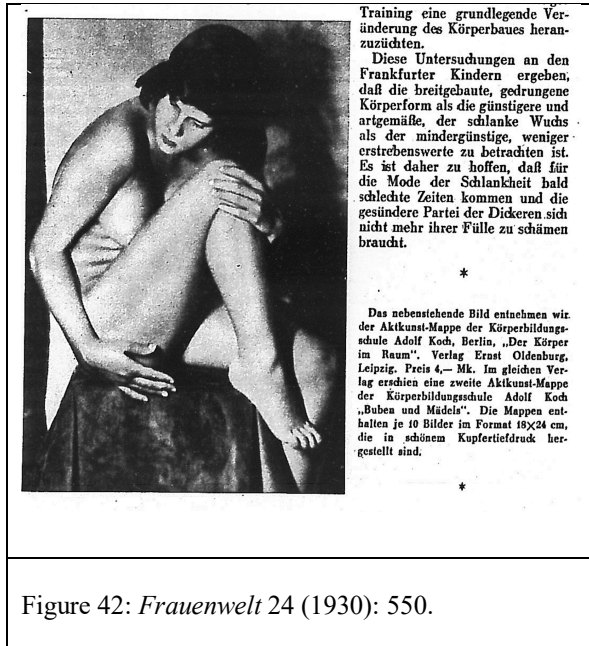


Figure 42: *Frauenwelt* 24 (1930): 550.

During the second half of Weimar, *Frauenwelt* and *DWdF* published an increasing number of illustrations of naked to near-naked women befitting the body shape of the New Woman (see Figure 42). The display of the beautiful female body for voyeuristic and aesthetic appreciation and inspection by others had become part of leftist women's culture and was also part of interwar broader popular culture and the nudist

movement.<sup>19</sup> These associated the aesthetically pleasing human body with high art (not artificiality) and nature at its highest evolutionary development. In contrast, they characterized the excessively clothed body as both unhealthy and an artificial act of concealment and falsehood, with physical modesty labeled as a middle-class false sense of shame and prudery.<sup>20</sup> They argued that uncovering the body, literally by wearing fewer and shorter clothing in Weimar styles and figuratively by observing the body in detail and speaking openly about its beauty, functions, and needs (see Chapter Five), demonstrated a greater level of truthfulness and acceptance of the body as a natural phenomenon.

<sup>19</sup> See Eugen Tyrill, "Der Wert des schönen Körpers: Entwicklungen und Konsequenzen," *Frauenwelt* 20 (4 Oct. 1930): 459 and 461; Alfred Käseberg, "Körperkultur des Weibes," *Frauenwelt* 11 (1 June 1929): 252-253; and "Wasser hat keine Balken," *DWdF* 6 (June 1932): 29.

<sup>20</sup> Alfred Käseberg, "Körperkultur des Weibes," *Frauenwelt* 11 (1 June 1929): 252-253; the editorial comment to Ernst Tape's, "Reaktionäre Reform" *Frauenwelt* 2 (15 Jan. 1925): 18; Hanna, "Wenn die Mutter mit den Kindern in das Strandbad geht!" *DWdF* 2 (July 1931): 7-8; D., "Die Befreiung der Frau im Spiegel der Kleidung," *Frauenwelt* 22 (22 Oct. 1927): 341-342; Henny Schumacher, "Frauenkleidung – Frauenbefreiung," *Frauenwelt* 18 (1924): 292-293. See also Ross, *Naked Germany*, 8-9; and Michael Cowan and Kai Marcel Sicks eds., *Leibhaftige Moderne: Körper in Kunst und Massenmedien 1918 bis 1933* (Bielefeld: Transkript, 2005).

Social Democrats and Communists identified clothing in Weimar fashion styles also as emancipatory – again not unlike broader culture. They noted that nineteenth-century sartorial norms requiring women to wear excessive clothing lengths and layers had reduced women’s range of motion, geographic mobility, and life experiences.<sup>21</sup> Consequently, they claimed that removing excessive clothing had emancipatory functions: shorter and less clothing, such as in contemporary fashion wear, expanded the female body’s range of movement overall and widened its access to the public world of employment, consumption, leisure, and sports. Revealing but functional daytime and sportswear was hence defined as liberating to both the female body and mind, and opening up opportunities to her.

Veering away from broader popular-cultural narratives, leftists also claimed that nineteenth-century and older sartorial styles requiring women’s bodies to be heavily cloaked were part of an intentional middle-class strategy to oppress working-class women and exclude them from public life. Therefore, Weimar fashion wear helped end not only women’s economic dependence on men (through women’s employment) but also their enslavement by traditional middle-class culture.<sup>22</sup>

Since the Socialist New Woman’s clothing and hairstyle looked very much like those of the New Woman in commercial popular culture, the Socialist New Woman did not have any indicators of working-class belonging; on the contrary, she also looked entirely middle class.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Margarete Hartig, “Mode und Frauenbefreiung: Auch eine ‘Modeplauderei’,” *Frauenwelt* 22 (Nov. 1929): 514-515.

<sup>22</sup> D., “Die Befreiung der Frau im Spiegel der Kleidung,” *Frauenwelt* 22 (22 Oct. 1927): 342; and “Wenn einer eine Reise tut,” *DWdF* 8 (Aug. 1932): 4-5, here 5.

<sup>23</sup> Hake, *Women in the Metropolis*, 185-201. Grossmann described the New Woman in commercial culture as “classless.” See “The New Woman, The New Family and the Rationalization of Sexuality,” 1; and Koch, “Sachlich, Sportlich, Sinnlich,” 17.

The stylized mannequins in *Frauenwelt* and *DWdF* emphasized this attribute even further: they sported dainty and pointy hands and feet and stood idly, implying a lack of manual labor and the presence of middle-class leisure time. They also had elongated necks and frequently held their heads in a slightly raised position. Some readers interpreted these poses as “artificial” or “arrogant” (“*affektiert*”) and therefore as middle-classed.<sup>24</sup>

Despite leftists language on women’s emancipation, *Frauenwelt* and *DWdF* followed wider mass cultural discursive attempts to reign in and obscure women’s presence in the world of employment felt as threatening to some.<sup>25</sup> The mannequins and human fashion models displaying clothes were never presented at work, although the clothes could have been worn during white-collar work at the office.<sup>26</sup> Except for very few work clothes and aprons, the fashion wear was, however, not suited for factory work, domestic service, or agricultural labor. For the most part, the clothes appeared to be for use during urban leisure.<sup>27</sup>

Some *Frauenwelt* readers noticed this and wrote to the editor that they viewed the outfits as too ostentatious and altogether unsuited for working-class women.<sup>28</sup> In response, the editor

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<sup>24</sup> ‘P.R., Magdeburg’, *Frauenwelt* 14 (July 1924): 226. The raised heads were also possibly intended to mimic real life where women had to raise their heads slightly to be able to look past hats with brims pulled far down their foreheads.

<sup>25</sup> Stanley, *Modernizing Tradition*, 3-6 and 142-146.

<sup>26</sup> The rare fashion segments’ titles associating the New Woman with employment without actually depicting a workplace in the backgrounds were: “Sonderheft: Berufs- u. Hauskleidung,” *Frauenwelt* 17 (1924): 277; “Haus- und Berufskleidung,” *Frauenwelt* 1 (Jan. 1925): 13; “Arbeitskleidung und Schürze,” *DWdF* 5 (Oct. 1931): 20; “Berufs- und Straßenkleider,” *Frauenwelt* 13 (25 June 1932): 308; and “Arbeitskleidung für Frauen und Männer,” *Frauenwelt* 25 (12 Dec. 1931): 594-595.

<sup>27</sup> “Blaudruckkleider fürs Haus,” *Frauenwelt* 5 (26 Feb. 1927): 75. Compare with the Soviet New Woman shown at work in “Welcher Frau gehört die Zukunft?” *DWdF* 1 (June 1931): 12; “Nur nicht ins Krankenhaus!” *DWdF* 2 (July 1931): 5; “Für Brot, Frieden und Freiheit,” *DWdF* 3 (Mar. 1932): 35; “Die Kinder sind unsere Vorgesetzten,” *DWdF* 7 (July 1932): 14-15, here 14; and “Wir Frauen wollen Sowjetrußland sehen...” *Die Kommunistin* 7 (July 1926): title page.

<sup>28</sup> ‘P.R., Magdeburg’, *Frauenwelt* 14 (July 1924): 226. The raised heads were also possibly intended to mimic real life where women had to raise their heads slightly to be able to look past hats with brims pulled far down their foreheads.

published a painting by Hans Baluschek (1870-1935, a Socialist artist who commonly focused on working-class subjects in his paintings) created specifically for publication in *Frauenwelt*. In his painting, Baluschek had dressed his female figures in the very clothing items printed in a previous *Frauenwelt* edition. The editor then took Baluschek's working-class subjects in Weimar apparel as proof that readers could give *Frauenwelt*'s clothing styles a try without being taken for middle-class women or class-transgressing working-class women.<sup>29</sup>

Since Social Democrats and Communists were advocating for working-class women to dress like middle-class ones, they felt the need to establish boundaries and differentiate their Socialist New Woman from the popular cultural one. They did so by defining their Socialist New Woman as a truer, more rational (and hence more masculine) woman than the bourgeois New Woman, and in the process provided ideals of femininity that variously intersected with classed and masculine-gendered attributes. Avoidance of excessive consumerism, identified as irrational (with connotations of middle-class femininity), played a role, as also the characterization of some consumer items and behaviors as too masculine. Neither *Frauenwelt* nor *DWdF* illustrated women wearing pants (and smoking cigars or cigarettes connoting middle-class excess) except to display middle-class New Women who allegedly went too far in their gender-transgressive behaviors, such as in Figure 44. The Communist fashion pages also eschewed knickerbockers, jewelry, large and extravagantly decorated hats, and fur sewn into collars and skirt hems, presumably because of their connotations of aristocratic to middle-class excess.<sup>30</sup> More justifiable 'necessities', such as small bags, gloves; scarves, belts, and pump-style pointy-tipped

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<sup>29</sup> 'P.R., Magdeburg', *Frauenwelt* 14 (July 1924): 226.

<sup>30</sup> See Kessemeier, *Sportlich, sachlich, männlich*, 95.

# Wie ziehe ich mich an?

Im *Herbst* Sporthostium  
W 356, Anzug mit Lagen  
oder kürzerer Jacke und dem  
bedeuten Rock. Ohne den  
Leidenschaft, mit tiefer ge-  
stellten Bevers auch für alle  
Damen vorteilhaft. Erforder-  
lich Größe III, etwa 3,75 m  
Stoff 140 cm breit. Schnitt  
Größe II, III, IV vorrätig.

## SOMMERLICHES FÜR JUNGE FRAUEN UND MÄDCHEN

W 319, Helles Shantung oder Wollstoffkleid mit Passen  
und Miederrockaufleitung. Schulterstück aus blau-weißem  
Tupfen-Foulard. Kurz ärmelig, auch aus diesem Stoff zu  
arbeiten. Nacktknöpfe. Erforderlich Größe I, etwa 3,90 m  
Stoff 80 cm breit. Schnitt Größe I, II vorrätig.

W 350, Blau-weißes Foulardkleid. Rotgepasste Volant-  
in Ärmeln und Haften. Weißer Organd Westendatz. Mit  
langen Ärmeln auch für re-  
feren Frauen geeignet. Schnitt  
für Größe I und II vorrätig.

W 391, Jung-  
mädchenkleid  
aus Vesta  
Wäschele  
oder leichtem  
Wollstoff.  
Ständerhohl-  
nähte. Ab-  
stehend da-  
fütterlose Be-  
lengelecken.  
Schnitt für  
11-16 Jahre  
Größe 0 vor-  
rätig.

## ROCK UND BLUSE

W 368, Blauweiß getupfte Marocaibluse  
mit Kragenschal und Pattrausschlüß. Erforder-  
lich Größe II, etwa 1,75 m Stoff 100 cm  
breit. Schnitt Größe II, III, V vorrätig.

W 357, Miederrock aus  
blauem Marocain. Auch  
als Trägerrock zu ar-  
beiten. Dazu Puffärmel-  
blüschchen aus rot-weißer  
Kunstseide. Schleifen-  
Garnitur. Schnitt  
Größe 0, II.

20

Figure 43: "Sommerliches für junge Frauen und Mädchen," *DWdF* 8 (Aug. 1932): 20.

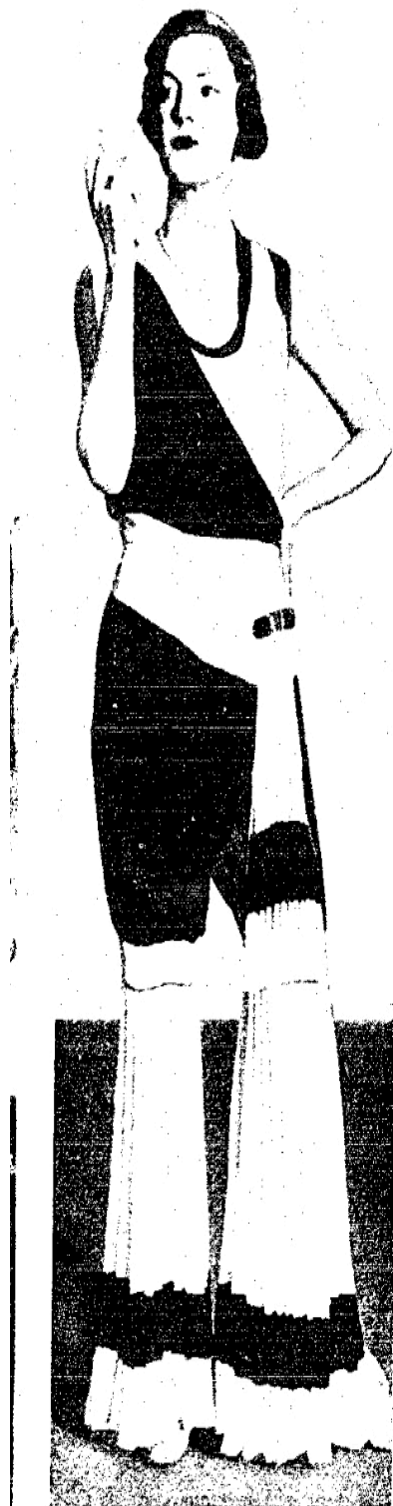


Figure 44: "Welcher Frau gehört die Zukunft?" *DWdF* 1 (June 1931): 12.

# DER WEG DER FRAU

## NUMMER 7

BERLIN, 1. DEZEMBER  
Jahrgang 1931

Erscheint jeden Monat  
Ausgabe A, ohne Schnitt-  
muster, Preis 20 Pfg./  
Ks. 1.60  
Ausgabe B, mit Schnitt-  
muster, Preis 30 Pfg./  
Ks. 2.50



### AUS DEM INHALT

Wenn Hitler regiert / Jede 11.  
Frau ohne Mann / Hygiene  
bei der Heilsarmee / Was  
wissen wir von Jugend-  
Cliquen? / Die Bräuteschule /  
Frau Gründlich und Frau  
Grämlich / Die Schwestern  
Zu unserem Titelbild:  
Da hat sie nun soviel ge-  
lernt und bekommt doch  
keine Arbeit. Denn sie ge-  
hört, trotz der auffälligen An-  
preisung ihrer Kenntnisse,  
zu dem Millionenheer der  
Stempelbrüder, das der Ka-  
pitalismus weder beschäfti-  
gen noch ernähren kann

Figure 45: *DWdF* 7 (Dec. 1931): front cover.

shoes in 'rational' low to medium-height heels were more common in *DWdF* and *Frauenwelt*.

Communists also differentiated their Socialist New Woman from the bourgeois New Woman in commercial culture by claiming that there were important lines of distinction between any 'natural' or innocent eroticism of the Socialist New Woman as a result of her adoption of a Weimar wardrobe (and an athletic lifestyle, see below) and a false or functionalized eroticism of the middle-class New Woman. According to Sutton and Kessemeier, Weimar fashion discourses in commercial media insisted that in the afternoon and evening, the New Woman change from her masculine clothing, behaviors, and identity into extremely feminine and sexy ones.<sup>31</sup> In her off-hours, she should wear long evening dresses with revealing backs, deep décolletages, and leg-exposing slits, and act demurely and erotically feminine in her social situations with the opposite sex. While leftists advocated for female gender norms that included women's sexual subjecthood (see Chapter Five) Communists criticized the middle-class New Woman's self-presentation as a sexual object through revealing evening wear and sexualized poses and behaviors for the sake of contracting employment, marriage, or a financial-sexual arrangement as the functionalized eroticism of an unemancipated woman.<sup>32</sup> Both Communist and Social Democratic fashion pages eschewed such clothing items and sexualized or seductive-feminine poses, except for in Communist presentations intended to denigrate these as undesirable effects of bourgeois-capitalist culture (see Figure 45).

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<sup>31</sup> Kessemeier, *Sportlich, sachlich, männlich*, 206; and Sutton, *The Masculine Woman*, 75.

<sup>32</sup> See a commentary by actress Ingeborg Franke, from the theatre Troup 1931, "Sexual-Star oder Gleichberechtigter Mensch," *DWdF* 2 (Feb. 1932): 30; Maria Leitner, "Die Schwestern," *DWdF* 7 (Dec. 1931): 9-10; "Die Bräuteschule," *DWdF* 7 (Dec. 1931): 15-17; 'Charlotte', "Meine Tochter soll mal was Besseres werden," *DWdF* 3 (Mar. 1932): 14-15; and Figure 45.



**Schlanker-aber ohne Quaden!**  
 Was tun manche Leute nicht alles um schlanker zu werden. Sie schwitzen, hungern, turnen, ja sie nehmen sogar Gifte, die den Körper ruinieren können. Mit dem Jostlich empfohlenen

**Dr. Emil Hübler's Hüftstützmittel** geht es viel angenehmer und heiliger. Eine Tasse Tee jeden Morgen macht schlank und elastisch, erweicht das Blut und ist dabei sehr bekömmlich und wohl-schmeckend. Paket Mk. 1.50, Kur-päckung (6 Pack. Inhalt) Mk. 5.00, Einzelstück: Mk. 2.25 u. Mk. 11.25. In Apotheken und Drogerien.

**FRONSTOCKS KNUKUTEE**  
 „Hermes“ Fabrik pharm. konz. Pröp. München 99, Gütlerstr. 7

**Für ältere und stärkere Damen**

J 4427. Gr. 46 u. 50. Kleid aus Tweed. Den in Hüfthöhe angebrachten Blenden schließen sich die dem Glockenrock eingearbeiteten Glockenteile an. Wäsche mit Jabot aus weißem Crêpe de Chine. Stoffverbr.: etwa 3,75 m, 130 cm breit; 0,55 m Crêpe de Chine, 100 cm breit für Gr. 46.

J 4428. Gr. 46 u. 50. Hübsches Festkleid aus mittelfarbigen Marozin. Der Glockenrock ist mit einer entgegenliegenden Hüftspanne versehen. Kragen, Jabot und Ärmelgarnituren bestehen aus feiner Spitze. Stoffverbr.: etwa 4,00 m, 130 cm breit für Gr. 46.

J 4429. Gr. 46 u. 50. Apartes Kleid aus feinstem Wollstoff. Kragen, Ärmelvorstoß und Einsatz bestehen aus weißer Seide. Rock mit vorn eingearbeitetem Faltenstil. Knopfbesatz. Stoffverbrauch: etwa 3,25 m, 130 cm breit für Gr. 46.

J 4430. Gr. 46 u. 50. Tuchmantel, in der Verarbeitung so gehalten, daß er besonders schlank macht. Die Blenden am Vorderteil und an den Ärmeln sind in Blasen abgetrahlt. Kragen und Aufschläge aus Seal-Kanin. Stoffverbrauch: etwa 3,75 m, 130 cm breit f. Gr. 46. Lyon-Schmitte 1 Mk. zusätzlich 12 Pf. Poete. Auf dem Schnittpreis jetzt 10 Proz. Ermäßigung.

68

Figure 46: “Für ältere und stärkere Damen,” *Frauenwelt* 3 (8 Feb. 1932): 68.



F 6617. Größe 44 und 46. Grifffeld

Figure 47: “Für starke, für Schlanke,” *Frauenwelt* 6 (12 Mar. 1927): 91.

## The Socialist New Woman’s Body and Body Culture

To a great degree, Eric Weitz’s claim that Communist media for general audiences defined their ideal Socialist New Woman very much “[I]like her bourgeois counterpart, [... as] youthful, healthy, slender, athletic, erotic, and most definitely not pregnant” holds true for ideals

of femininity presented in both *Frauenwelt* and *DWdF*.<sup>33</sup> Women fitting this description graced the pages of every edition (see Figures 32 and 38 - 42). According to such images, the ideal Socialist New Woman was between her teenage years and mid-thirties. She had an androgynously thin and athletic body with long legs and arms and sported tanned, taut, supple, and healthy-looking skin. This ideal body shape was presented with photographs of exercising women and drawn fashion mannequins, whose proportions, such as their long arms, legs, torsos, and necks, were unrealistically exaggerated for emphasis (see Figure 60).<sup>34</sup> According to Jensen and Kessemeier, the long legs symbolized (masculine) mobility and active participation in Weimar's public life.<sup>35</sup> The "lean and streamlined efficiency" of the New Woman's body connected to Weimar's modernist demands for the functional and rational (both coded masculine) while avoiding the superfluous (feminine). The New Woman had to carry no extra fat that could hinder her white-collar employment, sports activities, and travel.<sup>36</sup>

Contributors to leftist women's magazines were aware that many readers likely did not have the kinds of ideal bodies presented in most images. Both papers occasionally depicted older, shorter, and overweight women, and regularly offered clothes in Weimar's fashion styles for such women (see Figures 46 and 47, 49 and 50).<sup>37</sup> Images and texts generally implied and

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<sup>33</sup> Weitz, "The Heroic Man," 333. See also "Wer kann Skilaufen," *DWdF* 1 (Jan. 1932): 29.

<sup>34</sup> According to Burcu Dođramacı, mannequins with stretched, elongated bodies were common in non-Socialist fashion drawings of the 1920s as well, intended to express an elegant but androgynous body. "Mode-Körper zur Inszenierung von Weiblichkeit in Modegrafik und -fotografie der Weimarer Republik," in *Leibhaftige Moderne: Körper in Kunst und Massenmedien 1918 bis 1933*, edited by Michael Cowan and Kai Marcel Sicks, 119-135 (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2005), here 119, 121, and 126-7.

<sup>35</sup> Jensen, *Body By Weimar*, 6; and Kessemeier, *Sportlich, sachlich, männlich*, 97 - 125.

<sup>36</sup> Jensen, *Body By Weimar*, 6.

<sup>37</sup> "Für stärkere Damen," *Frauenwelt* 17 (22 Aug. 1931): 403; and "Kleider und Mäntel für die ältere und stärkere Dame," *Frauenwelt* 1 (9 Jan. 1932): 19.

even explicitly stated that these body shapes and conditions were undesirable and blamed a combination of natural and manmade conditions as their causes.<sup>38</sup>

<p><b>Das ist sie</b></p> <p>die Preisträgerin im größten Schönheitswettbewerb aller Zeiten. Ihre Körperteile sind nebenstehend festgehalten. Es ist wiederum ein Beweis dafür, daß die <b>vollschlanke Figur</b> gesiegt hat. Uebertriebene Magerkeit wirkt unschön. Abhilfe schaffen Sie mit „<b>Eta-Tragol-Bonbons</b>“. Die unschönen Knorpelvorsprünge an Wangen und Schultern schwinden. <b>Pfund für Pfund nehmen Sie zu, an allen Körperteilen zeigt sich Fettansatz</b>, Unbehagen und Unlust weichen und nach ein paar Wochen hat das bisherige schwächliche Aussehen einer <b>vollen, ebenmäßigen Erscheinung</b> Platz gemacht. <b>Durch den Genuß der „Eta-Tragol-Bonbons“ läßt sich das Körpergewicht in einigen Wochen um 10–30 Pfund erhöhen</b>. Zugleich schaffen sie aber auch, indem sie die roten Blutkörperchen vermehren, Nervenkraft und Blut.</p> <p>Schachtel Mark 2.50 gegen Nachnahme. Zu beziehen von der <b>„Eta“, chem.-techn. Fabrik, Berlin-Pankow 68, Borkumstr. 2</b></p> <p>Größe 167cm Gewicht 116 Pfd Hals 33cm Arm 25cm Brüste 86cm Taile 67cm Hüfte 95cm Schenkel 51cm Wade 34cm Knöchel 21cm</p>		<p><b>SIND WIR ALT-MODISCHE SPORTLER?</b></p> <p>Wenn wir uns heute vergegenwärtigen, in welchem Aussehen vor etwa 20 Jahren ge- wandelt wurde, so schütteln wir wohl mit dem Kopf und sagen: „Ne, so etwas gibt's ja heute glücklicherweise nicht mehr. Wir sind ja schon ein ganz Teil weiter.“ Aber haben wir uns wirklich schon ganz von den alt- modischen Badekostümen frei gemacht?</p>
<p>Figure 48: “Das ist sie,” <i>Frauenwelt</i> 3 (9 Feb. 1929): 50. The caption reads: “This is her: the winner of the greatest beauty contest of all times.”</p>	<p>Figure 49: ‘Hanna’, “Wenn die Mutter mit den Kindern in das Strandbad geht!” <i>DWdF</i> 2 (July 1931): 7.</p>	<p>Figure 50: “Sind wir altmodische Sportler?” <i>DWdF</i> 8 (Aug. 1932): 29.</p>

Authors explained that pregnancy, childbirth, manual labor, and gendered and classed socioeconomic, cultural, and institutional injustices led to poor women’s “misshapen” or “deformed” (“*mißstaltet*”) bodies, as well as to illness and early aging.<sup>39</sup>

To remedy these effects, activists like Communist author ‘Hanna’ insisted that even older and overweight proletarian women expose their not-so-pleasing bodies to healing sunlight, wind,

<sup>38</sup> Hanna, “Wenn die Mutter mit den Kindern in das Strandbad geht!” *DWdF* 2 (July 1931): 7-8, here 7.

<sup>39</sup> Dr. Julian Marcuse, “Etwas zum Kapitel Frauensport,” *Frauenwelt* 13 (18 June 1927): 191.

water, and middle-class aesthetic critics while adopting the New Woman's revealing exercise wear and healthy body culture.<sup>40</sup>

Mother underwent a real onion transformation. She 'de-skinned' herself. First, she took off her stockings – and the Philistines ["*Spießler*"] complained. [...] Now that mother worked her way to the bathing suit; she isn't bothered by the Philistines' complaints. [...] Look! This is our worker's wife/working-class woman ["*Arbeiterfrau*"], who became deformed by her many pregnancies and by excessive workloads. You have no right to blather about an aesthetic sense. The woman needs air, water, and sunshine to accomplish her heavy workload during the week.<sup>41</sup>

As other scholars have illustrated, leisure and body culture played a heightened role in interwar Germany as the newly-instituted 8-hour workday increased workers' spare time. Adding to the labor movement's wide variety of recreational options available since the late nineteenth century, a booming leisure industry tempted interwar populations with more ways to spend their time and money.<sup>42</sup> Popular leisure practices ranged from the consumption of mass print media to newer types of urban entertainment, such as cinemas, cabarets, revues, music, and dance halls, of which Berlin alone had 899 in 1930.<sup>43</sup> While most working-class women limited their consumption of urban commercial entertainment to mass print media out of necessity, they could, however, participate to varying degrees in a complex body culture movement involving sports and hygiene, and to a lesser degree in travel.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Gleber referred to women as the "objects of the gaze." See "Female Flanerie, 72; and Patrice Petro, "Perceptions of Difference: Woman as Spectator and Spectacle," in Akum ed. *Women in the Metropolis*, 41-66.

<sup>41</sup> Hanna, "Wenn die Mutter mit den Kindern in das Strandbad geht!" *DWdF* 2 (July 1931): 7-8, here 7.

<sup>42</sup> H. Wunderer, *Arbeitervereine und Arbeiterparteien: Kultur u. Massenorganisationen in der Arbeiterbewegung, 1890-1933* (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus, 1980); and W. L. Guttsman, *Workers' Culture in Weimar Germany: Between Tradition and Commitment* (New York: Berg, 1990).

<sup>43</sup> Helen Boak, *Women in the Weimar Republik* (Manchester Univ. Press, 2013), 257.

<sup>44</sup> Stanley, *Modernizing Tradition*, 146-173; Koshar, *Histories of Leisure*; Jensen, *Body by Weimar*, 146-147; and Ross, *Media and the Making of Modern Germany: Mass Communications, Society, and Politics from the Empire to the Third Reich* (Oxford UP, 2008), 127-140. Boak lists a third of Weimar Germany's youth as members of youth clubs, with a third of those members being girls, 256. According to Christiane Eisenberg, 200,946 women were members of gymnastics associations in 1930 and 761,387 of sports associations, constituting 25.3 percent and 5.8

The New Woman during leisure and body culture was a favorite subject in Weimar's popular media, showing her while shopping, attending dance halls and movies, and exercising and traveling. Such images enshrined leisure activities into the New Woman's characteristics. Leftists, as also other middle-class critics, however, viewed commercial leisure culture as inferior and without regenerative or emancipatory impacts on women. Even though *DWdF* and *Frauenwelt* contained movie review sections, many reviews criticized American, European, and German movies' plot lines as far-fetched, imitative-repetitive, and unworthy of seeing.<sup>45</sup> Both Social Democrats and Communists claimed that most movies contained "bourgeois-capitalist" messages with brainwashing and even addictive effects on women (see Chapter Two).<sup>46</sup> They, therefore, discouraged cinema-going except to view German and Soviet movies that offered leftist perspectives and depicted the realities of war or the lives of the poor. Communists also noted that radio programming, controlled by the state, was too conservative-reactionary and uninformative for working-class women.<sup>47</sup>

Even as both leftist papers fed into readers' consumerist desires for popular culture, both aimed to redirect readers toward better and more wholesome leisure activities. As thoroughly as they rejected Weimar's commercial leisure culture, leftists advocated for working-class women to take up widely popular body-cultural leisure activities, including travel, sports, and rituals of hygiene. All three types of activities illustrated leftists' desire to elevate proletarian women's

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percent of the members respectively. See Eisenberg, "Massensport in der Weimarer Republik," *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 33 (1993): 160, quoted in Boak, *Women in the Weimar*, 261 and 284.

<sup>45</sup> D.F., "Der weiße Schatten," *Frauenwelt* 3 (8 Feb. 1930): 64.

<sup>46</sup> Stanley, *Modernizing Tradition*, 146-173.

<sup>47</sup> "Die Frauenstimme der Deutschen Welle," *DWdF* 3 (Aug. 1931): 30. Kate Lacey agreed that nationally and regionally run radio programming did not offer many programs for working-class women. *Feminine Frequencies: Gender, German Radio, and the Public Sphere, 1923-1939* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 57-64.

lifestyles to those enjoyed by middle-class women and to improve working-class women's bodies' health and look in analogy to those of the New Woman in popular culture.

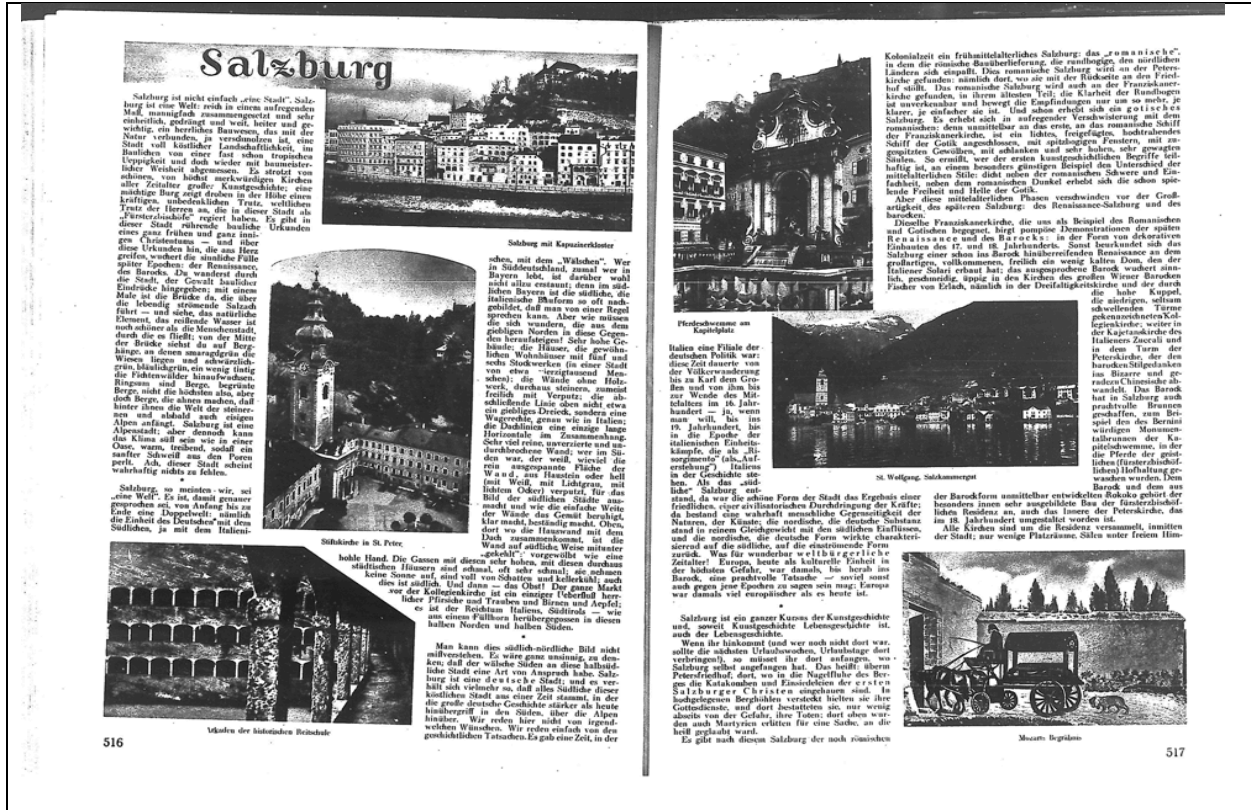


Figure 51: “Salzburg,” *Frauenwelt* 21 (3 Nov. 1928): 516-517.

## Travel

Social Democrats and Communists saw travel not as a luxury but rather as vital for all working-class women's (and their families') bodies and minds. They argued that urban living conditions, long work hours at work and in the home, and insufficient funds deprived proletarian women of healing exposure to fresh air, sunlight, water, natural surroundings, and leisure in the green, which, in combination with a variety of other factors, led to poor physical and mental health.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Hedda Zinner, “Wenn einer eine Reise tut...” *DWdF* 8 (Aug. 1932): 4-5.

Therefore, both leftist papers enticed readers to travel incorporating walks through woodlands, along mountains, coastal areas, as also historic cities in German and European cities (see Figure 51).<sup>49</sup> *DWdF* encouraged pilgrimages as far as the Soviet Union. Both papers offered low-budget ways for proletarians to be able to travel: working-class women with less time and money to spare should take shorter and more local day hikes or regional weekend backpacking trips with their families or organizations of the labor movement. For such purposes, the papers offered sewing patterns for backpacks and taught readers which items were essential to pack.<sup>50</sup> In *Frauenwelt*'s "Wer weiß Rat...?" section, numerous readers asked for or offered rooms and other properties as less expensive vacation rentals.<sup>51</sup> *DWdF* also gave away paid vacations to families of three during its prize competitions, with editors noting that they had no tolerance ("Verständnis") for luxuries but that the travel prizes were necessities.<sup>52</sup> And a variety of exposés on countries and cultures on other continents, too far for workers to visit, also attests to leftists' desire to expand proletarian women's geographic and cultural horizons through virtual travel.

### Sports

Toward the end of the 1920s and during the early 1930s, *Frauenwelt* and *DWdF* (only in the early 1930s) published an increasing array of articles on sports, with action shots of young

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<sup>49</sup> See the series by Anna Siemsen, "Das unbekannte Deutschland," beginning with *Frauenwelt* 13 (1924): 206-208; "Italien in Deutschland," *Frauenwelt* 8 (16 Apr. 1932): 180-181; "Kopenhagen," *Frauenwelt* 2 (25 Jan. 1932), 36-37; Dr. Wilhelm Hausenstein, "Prag," *Frauenwelt* 1 (Jan. 1932): 10-11; and Mm., "Ski-Fahrt im Riesengebirge," *Frauenwelt* 4 (21 Feb. 1931): 84-85.

<sup>50</sup> Stanley, *Modernizing Tradition*, 148 and 160.

<sup>51</sup> Berta in Altona, "Ferienaufenthalt," *Frauenwelt* 12 (13 June 1931): 276; and Anna Bratfisch, "Ferien," *Frauenwelt* 12 (13 June 1931): 276.

<sup>52</sup> See "Unser Großes Einführungs-Preis Ausschreiben," *DWdF* 2 (July 1931): inside cover page.



# Körperkultur des Weibes

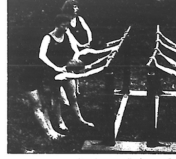
Von Alfred Käseberg

Was soll und ist im allgemeinen Gymnastik für das schaffende Volk? Gymnastik ist Erziehung, durch die zunächst der Körper in seiner Gesamtheit gelehrt wird mittels entsprechender Bewegungen, die im weiteren nicht nur die körperliche Wohlfühlbarkeit fördern, sondern im besonderen Maße die seelisch-geistigen Lebenskräfte fördert zu entwickeln.

Damit ist gesagt, Leibesübung ist eine durchsichtige, ideale, harmonische Mensch-



Strecken der vertikalen Hauptmuskulatur.



Der krumme Rücken muß weg.

Leibesbildung. Für ihre stufensteigende Grundlage sind absolute, geistliche Momente von nur sekundärer Bedeutung. Die Primarfrage ist nicht: Wie sieht es aus? sondern: Was ist es? Dabei sind sich eine erfolgreichere Leibespflege der Arbeiterschaft immer aufbauen müssen und die Gymnastik, die dem natürlichen Bewegungsinstinkt entgegenwirkt, Verantwortungsbewußtsein gegen sich und die menschliche Gesellschaft anregt, Lebensfreude und Individualität jedes einzelnen weckt. So fassen wir das Zusammenwirken unserer Körperkulturen und geistigen Erziehung zusammen: Wir tunen, spielen und sporteln, um körperliche Hemmnisse zu überwinden, den Körper gesund zu erhalten, um geistig-seelische Hemmnisse zu be-



Körner-Körperkultur, sondern durch gerechte Leibesübung stetiger: Elastizität

rität, einer freigelegten Menschheitsbildung den Weg zu zeigen. Um uns zu lösen von den traditionellen, bürgerlichen Gesellschaften und Moralbegriffen, um der Vertiefung der sozialistischen Weltanschauung willen.

Rückbildung an Sitzen, und Moralprediger hat die Frau bei der Pflege ihres Leibes nicht zu nehmen. Auch nicht auf jene, die die Vernachlässigung der heiligen Weiblichkeit fürchten. Trotz Sport und Botschaft wird es Weib bleiben, schon um die Gesundheit und die dem Weib eigene, besonders Gefühlslehre willen. Und die da glauben, Gymnastik nur, um ein drossel, nach Leibes- und Bewegungsfähigkeit, Lebenspotenziale, Gebär-macht, zu machen, sind ebenso hinverbrannte Idioten, wie alle Sittprediger und Moralprediger. Es ist auch nicht wahr, das Wort vom adäquaten Geschlecht. Dagegen sprechen schon die Funktionen des weiblichen Organismus (Menstruation — Geburt), die infolge ihrer, vom Manne



Beckenbildung.

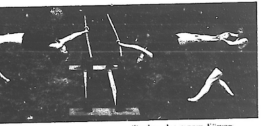
Mit gestreckten Hüften in den Knieen beugen.

grundveränderten Lebensäußerungen ein von Manne nie erreichtes Maß Seelen- und Körperkultur erfordert. Die Menschheit als solche, als Geschlecht, erzieht sich durch eine entsprechende Erziehungsmethode, eine überlieferten Weltanschauung. Der geistige Extrakt der Leibesbildung der Frau wäre also ein sich körperlich und geistig er-gänzendes Bildungssystem, das in ihr die Bewußtsein ihres Geschlechts und ihrer Würde wahrhaftig, ihr Sinn für Besserung der Lebensverhältnisse und damit das beste Mittel, nämlich einen gesunden Geist, einen gestählten Körper zum Kampf um den Auf-stieg der Arbeiterklasse gibt. Daff nun hinter sich lassen noch ein sehr großer Teil unserer Frauen, in Verkennung der Zusammenhänge des Weltgeschehens zum an-deren für hinstelnd, das sie nicht selbst sein, unsere geistige Bildungsbewegung zu

schließen. Diese mangelnde Ueberricht, die dürftige Perso-nalbildung gerade unserer Frauen ist das Produkt einer jahrtausend lang geduldeten Erziehungsmethode, die wohl dem Manne allen Recht gab, der Frau aber alles nahm. Diese Erkenntnis sollte uns aber Augen offen, mit erhöhtem Kräfteaufwand für die Emanzipation des Weibes einzutreten.

In der Art der sportlichen Betätigung ist der Frau nur soweit eine Grenze gesetzt, als Rücksichten auf seine aus-gesunde und organisierte Konstitution und die damit im Zusam-menhang stehende Lebensäußerungen erfordern. Jeder Mensch sollte lernen, spielen und schwimmen. Auch das Weib, Ausgenommen natürlich pathologisch bedingten. Der besondere Körperbau der Frau (breites Becken), bedingt durch die natürliche Bestimmung zur Mutterchaft, und die ver-schiedenen, beim Manne nicht vorhandenen Organe, verlangt natürlich in der sport-lympanastischen Körperkultur eine besondere Beachtung. Das lockere Schwerepunkt der Hüfte mit Rücken- und Schultergürtel müs-sen Anpassungen jeder Frauengymnastik sein. Neben der Gesichtsbehandlung der Haut, die der Jünglichkeit der Gelenke, muß Wert auf Einwirkung auf die organische Ent-wicklung gelegt werden. Forderung der Her-zschlagkraft, des Gesamtstoffwechsels, und Längsmaßigkeit, des Gesamtstoffwechsels.

Obwohl man in den letzten Jahren das Interesse der Weibes an der Pflege ihres Körpers und Geistes wesentlich gewonnen ist, entspricht es bei weitem noch nicht dem Interesse einer gesundem Erziehung der Arbeiterklasse. Viele Arbeiterinnen sind für zu alt und unbehilflich, Andere für zu kampftun und wieder andere sind zu stolz, um in Gymnastik-Leibesübungen zu treten. Diese lassen in die privaten Gymnastikvereine und zahlen. Und es sei die gesagt, daß falsche Arbeit und rückständige Herren-schaft des Mannes viele von Bekehr der Leibesübungen, standpunkt des Mannes viele von Bekehr der Leibesübungen, Freude abhalten. — Diese Hindernisse lassen sich, wenn



Strecken des ganzen Körpers



Krümmung der Hauptmuskeln

## Was gibt's im Film?

„Der Krieg im Dankel.“ Kino-Hoch-Spannung! Eine Spionagegeschichte aus dem letzten Krieg. Als bester Spion russische Spionin die sympathische (das ist eigentlich zu wenig) Grete Garbo. Die Zauderer stöhnen, weil sie wenig zu sehen, im Vordergrund steht eine Liebes-geschichte, die nicht unangebracht ist, und es wird hübsch musiziert, aber das ist nicht die Sache. Regie und Zusam-menhang sind glänzend, denn das haben die Amerikaner als Filmkönige heraus. Der Titel ist sehr geschmackvoll und passend gewählt (ganz ohne Betrug). Der Film ist vor allem künstlerisch wertvoll, denn die Garbo, die nicht in allen Bildern gefällt, zeigt sich zuweilen als voll-kommene Schauspielerin.

„Was kostet Liebe.“ Nicht nur der Kritiker, auch das Publikum nimmt diesen und so manchen Film nicht ernst. Mitten in der Verführung hört man Leute lachen, obwohl der Regisseur etwas ganz anderes in den Zuschauern zu Eisen gedachte. Es soll nicht immer wieder auf die ge-danklichen Laskheit beschränkt werden, aber sie decken darüber tausend langweilige Bilder. Was kostet Liebe? Darüber wird nicht weiter berichtet, aber immer-hin bricht einer jungen Tänzerin das Herz, weil ihr Ge-gensatz und gefunden wird und auf diesen Wunsch sich seinem beiderseitigen Frust zu trennen. Das arme Mädchen springt in die See, wird aber gerettet und die ganze Sache dem reifen Othello bekannt, der nun heimlich ein herzerwählendes Arrangement trifft nichts weiß der Neffe, aber das Mädchen wird gesund, wird im Haus ge-

bracht, dem Neffen in die Arme. Ueberraschung — Glück — selbige Filmende.

„Die neue Heimat.“ Rudolph Schildkraut in guter Maske, als russischer Auswanderer, dem Amerika zur neuen Heimat wird. Eben die gute Maske verdient zur neuen Heimat wird, um nichts vormachen lassen. Dieser russische Auswanderer hat nur eine Hoffnung: Dieser amerikanische Bürger zu werden. Als er es wird und dem amerikanischen Bürger zu werden, ist er ein glücklicher Richter, der ihn vereidigt, eine Karte überbringt, weil er nicht, daß ein Amerikaner zu werden eine zu geistiger Stunde in Wirklichkeit tretende Hilfsmittel hinüber-Sing, und spät, nach vielen Jahren, wird er wieder frei, weil der wirkliche Täter hockt. Sacco und Vanzetti haben vielleicht in ganz verzweifelter Stunde einmal ein solches Wunder erlitten. Man muß an die beiden Hingerichteten denken, wenn man in Bildprogramm dieses Films liest: ... doch seine Kraft liest, angezogen, er weiß, daß die neue Heimat große Opfer (???) von ihm und den Seinen gefordert hat, aber er spürt, daß diese neue Heimat genau so wie er als Mensch danach strebt, gerecht zu sein und das Recht zu bekommen. Aber die Wirk-lichkeit sagt: als eine ganze Welt gegen das Urteil Sacco-Vanzetti protestiert, diktieren amerikanische Richter nicht daran, gerecht zu sein. Auch der Film sollte den Weg zur Selbstkritik finden, ist das zurecht verlangt? Aber an-gedacht ist dumm.

„Dinge.“ Militärfilm sind noch immer die große Mode. Oleg Tschudow kann es auch nicht machen, wiewohl ihr größere Filme besser seien. Sie werden es vielleicht selber und verküppelt dabei wahrscheinlich diese Dinge, die Frau eines französischen Generals in Napoleons Heer, mehr, als daß sie sie beneidet. Wir wollen auf ihren nächsten Film warten und ihr dann gern sagen, ob die neue Rolle ihr besser steht. Sie ist eine unserer Besten.

Figure 52: Alfred Käseberg, "Körperkultur des Weibes," *Frauenwelt* 11 (1 June 1929): 252-253.

# Die Frau erholt sich



SOLL DIE FRAU SPORT TREIBEN?

Eine Gruppe Arbeitersportlerinnen bei gymnastischen Übungen.

Figure 53: "Die Frau erholt sich," *DWdF* 1 (June 1931): 22.



young women exercising in outdoor and natural settings wearing only leotards or shorts and t-shirts.

The repeated images and articles on women's exercise established outdoor exercise, even more than travel, as a necessity for proletarian women's health, vitality, and youthfulness (see Figures 52 and 53). They argued that regular exercise in nature, any kind of weather, and in revealing clothes formerly belonging to men's wardrobes, helped regenerate, rejuvenate, strengthen, and steel working-class women's bodies. Whereas the images generally depicted young women, whose immaculately healthy bodies seemed untouched by poverty or harsh living and working conditions, texts connected sports to working-class and lower white-collar women's employment. They claimed that sports helped nerves and strengths to recover after these became depleted at the rationalized industrial workplace, at the office with the mechanized typewriter and the telephone switchboard, and in the dismal working-class home lacking modern conveniences. For leftists, as also in popular culture, exercise was an absolute necessity, "a site of resistance to modernity" and assured working-class women stayed healthy to continue their daily working routines under persistent environmental stressors.<sup>53</sup> An unidentified author in *DWdF* described working-class women's bodies' need for exercise as follows:

The performance demands on those who are still employed become greater all the time. This stresses the nerves to the breaking point, and no one dares anymore to become sick. When the body resists such demands, people force it to endure until the end of the workday. Afterward, at home, one is allowed to fall dead sick onto the bed to be back at one's duty station the next morning despite everything. Preventing being entirely dragged down and maintaining one's strengths for work becomes urgently necessary. One method to do so is gymnastics.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Jenson, *Body by Weimar*, 6.

<sup>54</sup> Dr. Grete Frankenstein, "Guter und Schlechter Sport," *Frauenwelt* 7 (1929): 154-155, here 154; and "Jeden Tag Gymnastik," *DWdF* 2 (Aug. 1931): 28.

**Wo sind Sie zu dick??**

Endlich ist es der Wissenschaft gelungen, ein wirksames Mittel gegen unschöne Fettpolster zu finden. Gerade an den sichtbaren Körperstellen, wie Hals, Kinn, Wade und Knöchel, bildet sich meist eine Fettschicht, die auch die beste Gestalt unschön und plump erscheinen läßt. **Vergleichen Sie nebenstehende Schönheits-Normalmaße an Ihrer Figur und entfernen Sie alle unschönen Fettpolster mit Schlankol.**

Das neue wissenschaftliche Fettzehrwasser Schlankol wird einfach an der Stelle eingerieben, an der Sie abmagern wollen, und in wenigen Stunden verschwindet an dieser Stelle alles Fett. **Der Wadenumfang verringert sich z. B. in einer Nacht um über 2 cm.** Schlankol löst jeden Fettansatz mit sofortiger Wirkung, nur durch äußerliches Einreiben. Kein Einnehmen oder dergl., dabei garantiert unschädlich, auch bei zarter und empfindlicher Haut. **Starke Hüften, Brust, Bauch oder Doppelkinn und jedes andere lästige Fettpolster schwindet sichtbar.** Ueber Nacht angewandt, staunen Sie am Morgen über den Erfolg. — **Eine schlanke Gestalt macht Sie um Jahre jünger, bleiben Sie also schlank und jung, aber nicht durch unnötige Anstrengungen oder lästige, gefährliche Hungerkuren.** Gebrauchen Sie einfach Schlankol. **Machen Sie sofort einen Versuch und schreiben Sie noch heute. Probeflasche 100 g Inhalt RM. 2.80, Normalflasche RM. 4.80, Doppelpackung RM. 7.80.** Versand gegen Nachnahme oder Voreinsendung in Briefmarken durch die „KOSMA“, Fabrik kosmetischer Erzeugnisse, G. m. b. H., Berlin SW 68/745, Ritterstraße 54.

**Fett-Zehrer „Schlankol“**  
Das neue Entfettungs-Wasser für Damen und Herren

Figure 54: “Fett-Zehrer ‘Schlankol’,” *Frauenwelt* 21 (17 Oct. 1931): inside front cover.

**SPORT UND KÖRPERPFLEGE**

**Selbstverteidigung**

In letzter Zeit häufen sich die Fälle, daß besonders proletarische Frauen und Mädchen von politischen und kriminellen Gegnern überfallen werden. Um nun in dem unheimlichen Kampf Mann gegen Frau auch zu unterliegen, müssen unsere Frauen in Mitleid der Abwehr greifen.

Die wirksamste Selbstverteidigung ist die Erlernung des Jiu-Jitsu. Diesen Sport kann man als den Wehrsport der Schwachen bezeichnen. Seine Weisheit besteht darin, den Angreifer durch bestimmte Griffen und Schläge kampfuntüchtig zu machen.

Die Geschichte dieses Sportes ist schon sehr alt. Zuerst wurde Jiu-Jitsu von den Chinesen ausgeübt und später von den Japanern übernommen, welche ihn zur höchsten Vollkommenheit ausbildeten. Erst in neuerer Zeit wurde diese „ehrenvolle Waffe des Ostens“ in Europa populär. Auch in den Reihen der oben Arbeitenden sind diese Kampfsportübungen beim Jiu-Jitsu-Sport verrichtet man auf jedes Gerüst und jede Waffe. Seine Erlernung ist auch für die schwächste Frau möglich, erfordern ist nur eine systematische Ausbildung, deren Gang hier folgender ist: Zunächst muß eine allseitige Körper- und Gemütsbildung.

Von großer Wichtigkeit ist ferner die Erlernung von Handlungswegweisen, mit deren Hilfe man den Gegner in einige Zeit lähmen kann. Dem breiten Raum nehmen aber die verschiedenen Griffen ein. Ihre Zahl ist so reichhaltig, daß man auch den geschicktesten Angreifer durch kampfuntüchtig machen kann. Um aber zu einem vollen Erfolge zu gelangen, ist ferner wichtig, daß man die gegen Schlag und Griff empfindlichen Körperstellen des Gegners genau kennt. „Doppelte Aufmerksamkeit ist hierbei notwendig.“ Diese erforderliche geistige und körperliche Bewusstseinsbildung hat die Jiu-Jitsu-Sportübungen die notwendige Bedeutung. Gelegenheit zur Erlernung des praktischen Selbstverteidigung finden Sie in Berlin in den Kursen der „Kampfsportvereine“ in der „Kampfsport“-Halle in C 28, Mühlentstraße 24 III.

So wird auch ein starker Gegner von Fall abgebracht

Das ist der sogenannte „Kampfgriff“: Bei oder Kampf mit Griff

Die Arbeiter-sportlerin weiß, wie sie den Kopf abwehrt, so, anderen kein

Ein scheinbar „unwider“ wird gewalttätig abgegriffen

Auch der sogenannte „Kampfgriff“ ist ein wirksames Selbstverteidigungsmittel

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Figure 55: *DWdF* 2 (July 1931): front cover.

Figure 56: “Selbstverteidigung,” *DWdF* 3 (Aug. 1932): 29.

Most images depicted thin women during exercise, suggesting that physical exercise played a vital role in constructing the slender, toned, and beautiful body of the Socialist New

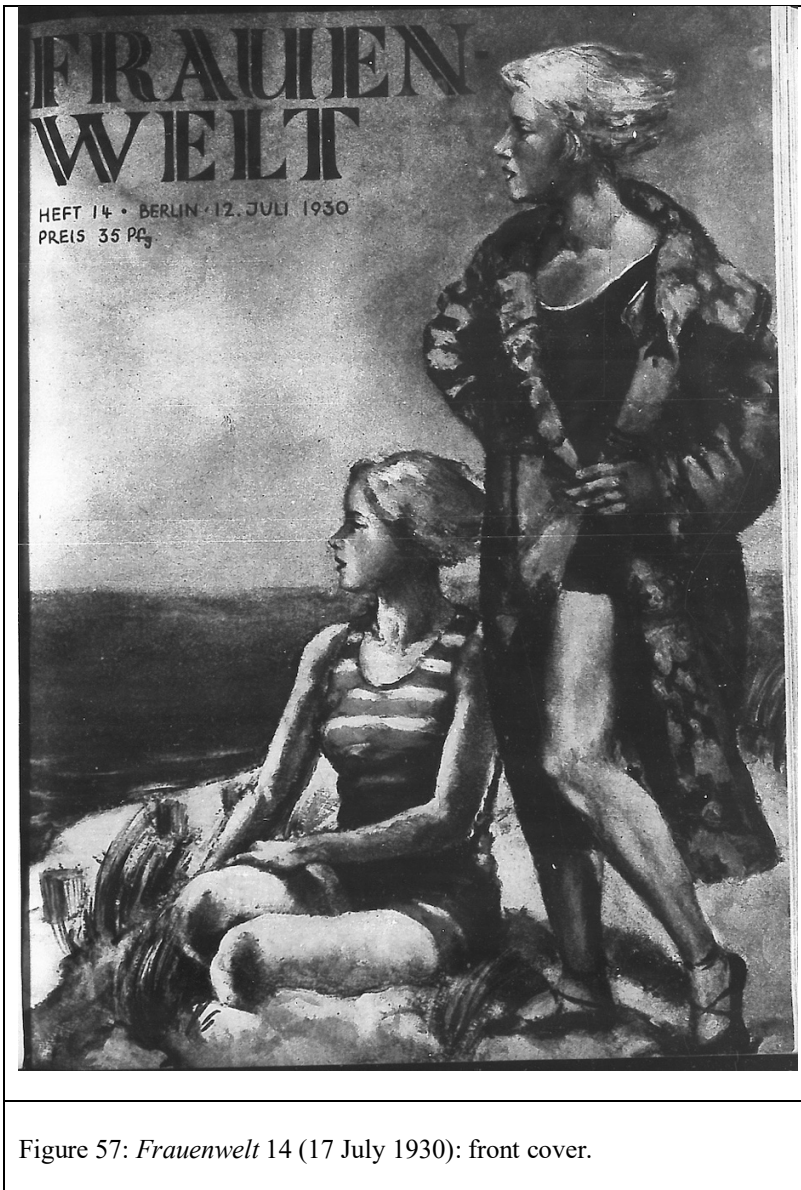


Figure 57: *Frauenwelt* 14 (17 July 1930): front cover.

Woman (see Figures 52, 53, and 55). Leftist recommendations for even overweight women to do sports and become healthier implied exercise had the capacity to reshape and improve their bodies. And ads for tees and other products further impressed on readers that slender bodies were expected of them (see Figure 54).

At the same time, images and the language on sports and health conflated being healthy with being beautiful (see Figure 57); as exemplified by this contribution from Friedrich Wendel

(1886-1960), an SPD journalist, editor, and caricaturist for the Party's satirical publications

*Lachen Links* and *Der wahre Jacob*:

A healthy mind can only exist in a healthy body! A healthy body naturally forms itself into a harmonious, beautiful body.<sup>55</sup>

Beauty, health, and youthfulness in turn were connected to competitiveness at the workplace, especially by Communists, who claimed that employers and potential employers used all three factors to make decisions on whom to hire, keep, and fire. Authors thereby pressured readers into picking up exercise.

Social Democrats and Communists asserted that athletic activities improved not only women's health and physique but also their internal or mental attributes, such as their levels of self-confidence.<sup>56</sup> Leftists had long claimed that centuries of discrimination had caused women to have low levels of self-confidence. During Weimar, they prescribed, among other things, middle-class body-centered individualism through sports to increase women's self-esteem. Since regular exercise improved and strengthened women's bodies and increased their capacities and skills, women became aware of their bodies' abilities and consequently, gained greater self-assurance.<sup>57</sup>

Social Democratic and Communist language on sports transmitted emancipatory messages.<sup>58</sup> Outdoor sports 'pulled' homemaking proletarian women out of the confines of their

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<sup>55</sup> Wendel, "Weiblich Schönheit," *Frauenwelt* 19 (1924): 310-311, here 311.

<sup>56</sup> *DWdF* 12 (Dec.1932): front cover; and Franz Leschnitzer, "Nutzt den Winter für Körperkultur," *DWdF* 12 (Dec. 1932): 29.

<sup>57</sup> "Soll die Frau Sport treiben," *DWdF* 1 (June 1931): 22; and Dr. Grete Frankenstein, "Guter und Schlechter Sport," *Frauenwelt* 7 (1929): 154-155, here 154.

<sup>58</sup> *DWdF* 12 (Dec.1932): front cover; and Franz Leschnitzer, "Nutzt den Winter für Körperkultur," *DWdF* 12 (Dec. 1932): 29.

domesticity, and for that reason alone was an “important weapon in [...women’s] fight for independence from the man.”<sup>59</sup> Manually laboring women and those shopping for groceries long had a presence in urban public spaces. However, even with the rise of white-collar work among women and the arrival of Weimar leisure and consumer industries, women’s forays into public urban spaces may still have been somewhat “limited and circumscribed,” with the street serving, in Anke Gleber’s words, mainly as “a space of transition en route to functional purposes.”<sup>60</sup>

In this context, leftist narratives on women’s outdoor sports on the one hand aimed to redirect housewives and young working-class and salaried women away from urban commercial entertainment, and thereby discursively limit women’s enjoyment of urban spaces.<sup>61</sup> On the other hand, the same language implied that proletarian women should be more than mere harried trespassers in the city. They should practice and accept the idea that their bodies could leisurely take up, especially green, outdoor spaces and experience a greater level of freedom of movement, despite potentially gendered and political attacks on their newfound freedoms and public presence (see Figure 56).<sup>62</sup> This public presence could then become expanded from sports to organizational and political engagement, such as Socialist demonstrations and rallies, some of which combined sports culture and political expression into one public spectacle.

Scholars have claimed that, in the context of the Weimar Republic’s failure to provide full legal equality for women, discourses in commercial and leftist popular women’s media used

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<sup>59</sup> “Soll die Frau Sport treiben,” *DWdF* 1 (June 1931): 22.

<sup>60</sup> For a discussion on socio-cultural perceptions of women’s presence in public spaces and the policing of women’s movement outdoors see Gleber, “Female Flanerie and the Symphony of the City,” in *Women in the Metropolis*, 67-88, here 69 and 71; and *ibid.*, *The Art of Taking a Walk: Flanerie, Literature and Film in Weimar Culture* (Princeton NJ: Princeton UP, 1999).

<sup>61</sup> “Waldlauf,” *DWdF* 4 (Apr. 1932): 29; and “Vom Handballspiel,” *DWdF* 2 (Feb. 1932): 29.

<sup>62</sup> In one article *DWdF* suggested working-class women take up Jiu-Jitsu for self-defense against potential sexual harassers and Nazis. “Selbstverteidigung,” *DWdF* 3 (Mar. 1932): 29, see Figure 56.

women's body culture (their ability to control, discipline, and strengthen their bodies) as a substitute for women's institutionalized equality.<sup>63</sup> Leftists, and in particular Communists, were strong proponents of women's full legal equality and demanded reforms to the Imperial-era Civil Code which disadvantaged women within marriage. However, despite their continued efforts throughout Weimar, leftists were minimally effective in advancing women's rights beyond suffrage.

Perhaps not necessarily as a result of their failure, nor as a substitute for improved women's legal rights, as argued by Kautz, leftists believed women's control over their bodies through exercise and leisure culture was part of women's personal and socio-cultural pathway toward emancipation, as well as healthier and more enjoyable lives.<sup>64</sup> Narratives in the two leftist popular women's magazines argued that working-class women had a "right to leisure time" and that emancipated women were recognizable by the fact that they took such time for themselves to engage in leisure and body culture.<sup>65</sup> Socialists claimed that by publicly engaging in physical leisure activities women freed themselves in body and mind from traditionally gendered impositions on women that limited their public presence.

### **The Socialist New Woman Remains Feminine**

Despite the emancipatory language, leftist discourses on women's body culture also limited working-class women's freedoms by insisting on the femininity of their bodies and

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<sup>63</sup> See Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonts, "Beyond Kinder, Küche, Kirche: Weimar Women in Politics and Work," in Bridenthal, Atina Grossmann, and Marion Kaplan eds., *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany*, 33-65 (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984); Elizabeth Kautz, "The Fruits of her Labor: Working Women and Popular Culture in the Weimar Republic" (Ph.D. Diss. University of Minnesota, 1997), 11-16; and Hake, "In the Mirror of Fashion," 193.

<sup>64</sup> Kautz, "The Fruits of Her Labor," 12.

<sup>65</sup> Hans W. Fischer, "Das Recht auf Freizeit," *Frauenwelt* 12 (15 June 1929): 267.

minds. This was in great part because Social Democratic and Communist ideals of womanhood overlapped with broader popular cultural gender norms. As other scholars have illustrated, in the context of an increase in the popularity of sports among women in Europe, mirrored in popular culture many commentators worried about the potential impact of women's adoption of masculine practices (and appearances) on the future survival of the German *Volk*. For some critics, the New Woman's engagement in sports threatened the traditional gender order and demonstrated Germany's sociocultural degeneration. For others, images of the fit New Woman's evident "survival and success in modern society" thanks to her body culture seemed to offer a path toward the eugenic regeneration of the German nation after the loss of WWI.<sup>66</sup>

Therefore, Interwar sports discourses in popular culture not only celebrated women's near-equal participation in sports but also aimed to assure women would continue to be feminine and fulfill their reproductive obligations. Consequently, they framed and curtailed women's athleticism by gendering sports types and women's bodies, and by surveilling and medicalizing women's athletic activities and bodies.<sup>67</sup> "Performance-oriented and competitive sports, motorsports, and individual sports were gendered masculine by popular sports narratives, which in turn highlighted the easygoing, carefree, distinctly non-competitive nature of women's participation in sports."<sup>68</sup> These suggested women's engagement in 'masculine' sports and high intensities of exercise was unwomanly, led to unfeminine bodies (see Figure 58), and was dangerous to women's health and that of their potential offspring.<sup>69</sup> Often male sports and

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<sup>66</sup> Stanley, *Modernizing Tradition*, 2- 4; and Jensen, *Body By Weimar*, 4, 8 50-51.

<sup>67</sup> Stanley, *Modernizing Tradition*, 148 and 174; and Jensen, *Body By Weimar*, 50-97.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Sutton, *The Masculine Woman*, 72-73.

# SPORT UND KÖRPERPFLEGE

## Welche Sportarten sind unweiblich?

Der Kampf gegen das „verzerzte Frauentum“ geriet im „Wettkampf“, für die „weibliche Eigenart“ des Frauentums war und ist ständiger Inhalt aller Tagungen und Erlasse der Frauen-Vertreter im bürgerlichen und reformistischen Sport. Besonders die Deutsche Turnerschaft in ihrer reaktionären Einstellung konnte sich niemals genug tun, allen ernsthaften kämpferischen leistungsorientierten Sport der Frau abzulehnen und nur die süßliche Hühneressle sogenannter rhythmischer Chöre und kitschiger Trödel-Hopserien für die „deutsche Frau“ zu propagieren.

Leider kann sich diese ganze reaktionäre Denkrichtung mit der Parole: „Dem Jungen die Heißhühner, dem Mädchen die Puppe“ noch immer der Unterstützung weider Kreise, insbesondere der Angestellten und vieler Frauen aus den Mittel- und oberen Schichten erfreuen. Sogar möchte ein derartiger „Frauentum“ schon längst ohne Anhang dastehen. Aber immer noch und immer wieder hört man auch von proletarischen Eltern sagen: „Das ist doch nichts für Mädchen, das ist nur was für'n Mann!“

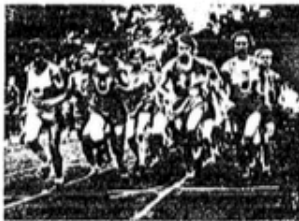
Auf Mißverständnis und Mißverständnis stößt die Techniker selbst in proletarischen Sportorganisationen besonders oft bei den Fragen des Wettkampfes, der sportlichen Disziplin und der Kampfarten. Energieiches Training und Einsatz aller Kräfte für eine sportliche Leistung – das erscheint oft als unweiblich. Dabei ist gerade die Disziplinierung und Selbstüberwindung in Training und Wettkampf eines der besten Mittel, die vielen Frauen anzuverleihen, aber auch nicht klar erkannte Nachgiebigkeit und Furchtlosigkeit in den täglichen Fragen zu überwinden. Das gleiche gilt auch von den Fragen sportlicher Disziplin. Immer wieder kämpfen die Arbeiter mit Anschauungen, als ob Ordnung in treten und Marschieren, Einordnen, Einreihen, gegebener Anweisungen Durchführung, die eine Frau nicht exakt und pünktlich, sondern mit nur „halber Kraft“ und desto mehr lächelnder „Großzügigkeit“ erledigen könnte. Dabei ist es durchaus möglich und notwendig, daß die Frau beispielsweise in den Übungen der Selbstverteidigung (Jiu-Jitsu) ausgebildet wird.

Die Frage, welchen Sport Mann oder Frau betreiben und welchen sie meiden sollen, wird sich nur nach deren körperlicher Leistungsfähigkeit richten. Von diesem Gesichtspunkt scheiden allerdings einige Sportarten als unbrauchbar für die Frau aus. Das sind solche, bei denen Verletzungen der Brust oder der Unterleibsorgane eintreten können, also: Boxen und Fußballspiel. Weiter besondere Verhältnisse darüber hinaus noch diese oder jene Sportart verbieten, muß von Fall zu Fall der Sportart entscheiden. Herzschäden, Fettleibigkeit, Nervosität, Atmungsbeschwerden oder Schädigungen der Gelenke verlangen spezielle Berücksichtigung.

Darüber hinaus sollte aber jede Frau einsehen und solche Einricht verbreiten helfen, daß Festhalten an „typisch weiblichen“ Leibesübungen nur jenen reaktionären Kräften zugute kommt, die die werktätigen Frauen aus heilsten von jedem Kampf von ihrer Befreiung und von jeder Solidarität mit den Männern im „ranken und rohen“ Klassenkampf fernhalten wollen.



Das Spiel in der Mannschaft entwickelt den Gemeinschaftsinn.



Die Disziplin wird gestärkt; das ist auch für Frauen nützlich.



Im gymnastischen Sprung

Man sieht, warum Boxen für die Frau nichts taugt

**Für alle?**

Jawohl, auch für Sie!

wird das

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**Mummelhaus**

(Schluß von Seite 17)

„Du war ja Mummelhaus nur ein Zuchtprodukt, eine Ware, ein Lebewesen. Für Wegner war er ein Familienangehöriger, ein Freund, ein Kamerad.“

Am Ende siegte die kalte Erwägung: Sterben muß er doch! Begraben wäre schade, denn wir haben Hunger.

Onkel Willi trug Mummelhausen in den Keller, das Geschäft der Exekution zu verrichten. Die Hinterbliebenen saßen um die leere Stallkiste und sagten nichts.

Am Dienstag gab es Mummelhaus. Aber es war keine Freude dran. Frau Wegner konnte überhaupt nichts anrichten. Den Kindern kam beim ersten Bissen der Ekel. Wegner verdrückte ein paar magere Stücke. Er legte die Gabel hin: „Ich kann nicht weiter! Ich komme mir wie'n Menschenfresser vor! Häus, man ah, Mutter!“ Mummelhaus blieb ungeschoren.

Das haben wir Wegner, von ihrem Mummelhaus erzählt.

„Ja“, sagte Wegner, „so ist das.“ Für die Kleinen war das ne Tragödie. Aber so ist es doch mit uns armen Leute. Nicht mit de bescheidensten Freuden sind unsere Kinder gesegnet. Da denken den Brecken seine, die haben Hunde, Angorkatzen, was weiß ich. Aber bei uns armen Stempelbruder ist nich mal Platz nicht für ein kleinen Hausfreund!



Figure 58: “Welche Sportarten sind unweiblich?” *DWdF* 2 (Feb. 1933): 29. The caption reads: “One can see why boxing is not suited for the woman.”

medical experts prescribed detailed regimes of moderate levels of exercise and rest and specific types of sports to women. In the process, they limited women’s sports choices and gendered



exercising women's bodies in traditional ways. Women had to choose sports types that maintained their feminine bodies and look.

Social Democratic and Communist authors fully adopted the gendered view of women's bodies, sports types, and intensities of physical exercise, and therefore also a need for expert surveillance of women's athletic endeavors and bodies. Just as leftist activists had long insisted that women were a more delicate and more easily damageable set of workers than men, whose bodies' youth, health, beauty, and reproductive functions employers and the state had to preserve through special protective measures (see Chapter Three), many sports articles and expert health advice in *Frauenwelt* and *DWdF* insisted that women could not pick up just any sports. They maintained that the female body had to look feminine even while women practiced sports, that women's bodies' primary function was reproduction, and that as a result, it was more frail than male bodies. Women should therefore select non-aggressive, non-competitive, and low-intensity, but enjoyable physical recreational activities. Despite their advocacy for women's emancipation and increased self-confidence, leftists also expected women to maintain womanly internal attributes: women should choose only individuality-subduing physical activities. They, therefore, limited the levels of middle-class individualism women could practice during their athleticism.

Image after image depicted women during gymnastic exercises in outdoor settings. Texts redoubled that especially gymnastics, but also hiking and non-competitive swimming, and to a lesser degree rowing, handball, and running, were healthy, safe, and enjoyable sports choices for women.<sup>70</sup> Other sports were ambiguously described or infrequently presented in images and texts. Non-competitive skiing was portrayed as enjoyable but unaffordable for most working-

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<sup>70</sup> Alfred Käseberg, "Körperkultur des Weibes," *Frauenwelt* 11 (1 June 1929): 252-253; "Waldlauf," *DWdF* 4 (Apr. 1932): 29; "Vom Handballspiel," *DWdF* 2 (Feb. 1932): 29; and Franz Leschnitzer, "Nutzt den Winter für Körperkultur," *DWdF* 12 (Dec. 1932): 29.

class women unless they lived in the Soviet Union.<sup>71</sup> According to Jensen, golf and tennis had formerly been coded aristocratic and associated with “flirtation and afternoon socializing,” but during Weimar, tennis became the “hallmark of the emerging ‘New Woman’” expressing her “competitiveness, independence, and a hard, muscular physicality.”<sup>72</sup> Presumably because of these attributes, by the third edition, *DWdF* stopped printing tennis or golf rackets in the hands of fashion mannequins.<sup>73</sup> *Frauenwelt*’s fashion mannequins, however, continued to be shown with these sports paraphernalia even though neither paper ever offered any photos of female tennis players.

The leftist magazines discussed women’s motorsports, soccer, competitive swimming, boxing, and even bicycling with explicitly prohibitive language (see Figure 58).<sup>74</sup> Social Democrats and Communists described these aggressive or competitive sports that highlighted (middle-class/capitalist) individual achievement through record-breaking practices as masculine, irrational, and hazardous to women’s feminine appearance, health, and reproductive organs.<sup>75</sup> In Weimar’s public discourses, gender equality was usually not understood to mean the sameness of the sexes or genders, but rather their complementarity. Both the middle-class women’s movement and the labor movement shared this view, as expressed in an anonymous author’s

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<sup>71</sup> See image and captions in Marianne Gundermann, “Für Brot, Freiheit und Frieden,” *DWdF* 3 (Mar. 1932): 3-6, here 4; and Tr. H., “Wer kann Schilaufen,” *DWdF* 1 (Jan. 1932): 29.

<sup>72</sup> Jensen, *Body By Weimar*, 16.

<sup>73</sup> See “Wie ziehe ich mich an?” *DWdF* 1 (June 1931): 16; and “Wie ziehe ich mich an?” *DWdF* 2 (July 1931): 20.

<sup>74</sup> “Welche Sportarten sind unweiblich?” *DWdF* 2 (Feb. 1933): 29; “Die Frau erholt sich: Soll die Frau Sport treiben,” *DWdF* 1 (June 1931): 22; Dr. Grete Frankenstein, “Guter und Schlechter Sport,” *Frauenwelt* 7 (1929): 154-155, here 154;

<sup>75</sup> See captions under one image in the section “Sport und Körperpflege,” *DWdF* 2 (July 1931): 28; “Jeden Tag Gymnastik,” *DWdF* 2 (July 1931): 28; “Gymnastik-Film,” *DWdF* 3 (Aug. 1931): 28; “Soll die Frau Sport treiben,” *DWdF* 1 (June 1931): 22; Julian Marcuse, “Etwas zum Kapitel Frauensport,” *Frauenwelt* 13 (18 June 1927): 191; and Alfred Käseberg, “Körperkultur des Weibes,” *Frauenwelt* 11 (1 June 1929): 252-253.

comments: “We are fighting for women’s equality, not for women to imitate all of men’s idiotic behaviors.”<sup>76</sup> Communists nevertheless claimed that the German middle-class women’s movement aimed for the sameness of the sexes and found evidence for their claim in women athletes who engaged in competitive, aggressive, motorized, or individual sports. They portrayed these as women who were both too masculine and simultaneously only pretended to be emancipated and men’s equals in physical strengths and economic might, while in truth depending on their boyfriends or husbands to sponsor their expensive sports practices.<sup>77</sup>

The wrong effect of women’s sports is noticeable. The female race car and boat driver, the female fencer and jockey, and the winner in women’s swimming and skiing embody the masculinized woman who likes to present herself at the center of society. Her boyfriend or husband pays for her sports expenses. Without her benefactor with a well-paid job, the ‘independent’ bourgeois athletic woman is simply not imaginable.<sup>78</sup>

As this quote also indicates, Communist and Social Democratic narratives on sports worked to contain the levels of self-centeredness and self-confidence women gained through sports so that these never reached the same levels as in men. Leftists argued women should subdue their individuality and not place their strengths, skills, and competitive ambitions at the center of crowds’ and sports fans’ attention. Women’s individual sports that attracted viewing fans during public sports spectacles held class and gender-transgressive dangers for female athletes by ballooning their sense of self-worth towards vanity and self-conceit.

Even though sports represented a form of middle-class body-centered individualism, Communists wished for it to lead to altruism and leftist political engagement, especially among

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<sup>76</sup> “Am Rande der neuen Kultur” *Frauenwelt* 16 (1924): 250-251.

<sup>77</sup> “Soll die Frau Sport treiben?” *DWdF* 1 (Jan. 1931): 22. This fits within leftists’ common characterization of middle-class marriages as exchanges of women’s economic support in return for sex (*Versorgungsehen*, see Chapter Five).

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

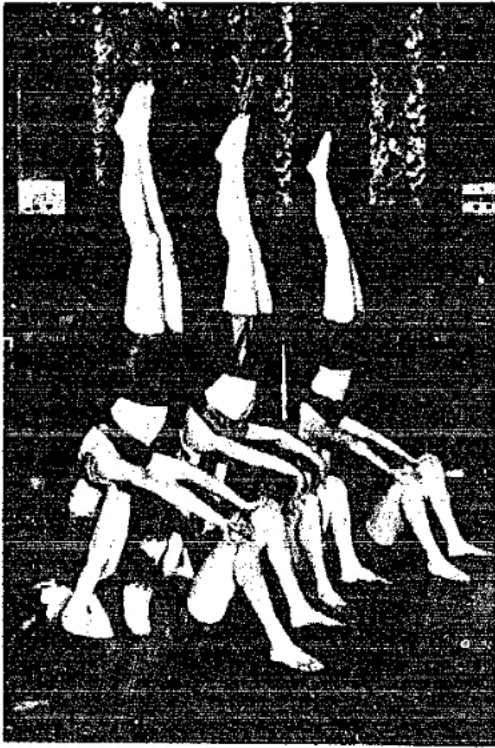
women. Most illustrations on sports displayed women exercising together with other women, and texts suggested women's athletic experiences should take place ideally within a Social Democratic or Communist collective. Leftists commonly presumed working-class women lacked awareness of their working-class identities (see Chapter Three). They described the domesticity of women simultaneously as selfless labor and part of a narrow 'self-centered' cosmopolitanism around the family, the supposed opposite of altruism for a broader working-class or Marxist collective. Communists claimed that women, who engaged in group sports in Communist sports clubs learned to cooperate with and 'subordinate' ("Einreihen" or "Einordnung") themselves to the collective, and thereby developed altruistic perspectives.<sup>79</sup> In sports clubs of the labor movement, exposure to leftist ideologies awakened proletarian women to their working-class identities and interests in Communist politics. This was working-class women's path to becoming both athletic and politicized Socialist New Women.

The photos of women during gymnastic exercises commonly presented them in the same outfits and moving in choreographed unison (see Figures 52, 53, and 59). Each individual athlete disappeared in the uniformity of outfits and simultaneous movements: women's bodies seemed repetitions or copies of each other. The simultaneity of arms and legs implied the exercising women together constituted a larger organic being with many extremities moving simultaneously.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> "Die Frau erholt sich: Soll die Frau Sport treiben," *DWdF* 1 (June 1931): 22.

<sup>80</sup> "Die Frau erholt sich: Soll die Frau Sport treiben," *DWdF* 1 (June 1931): 22. See also Jonathan O. Wipplinger, "Syncopating the Mass Ornament: Race and Girlkultur," in *The Jazz Republic: Music, Race, and American Culture in Weimar Culture*, ed. Wipplinger, 115-140 (University of Michigan Press, 2017); Kate Elswit, "Accessing Unison in the Age of Its Mechanical Reproducibility," *Art Journal* 68, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 50-61; Karl Toepfer, "Nudity and Modernity in German Dance, 1910-30," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 3, no. 1 (1992): 58-108; and Nadine Rossol, "Performing the Nation: Sports, Spectacles, and Aesthetics in Germany, 1926-1936," *Central European History* 43 (2010): 616-638.



*Kraft und Gesundheit bei der Gymnastik.*

Figure 59: "Sport und Körperpflege," *DWdF* 7 (Dec. 1931): 29.

Even as the photos celebrated women's emancipation, leisure, freedom of mobility, and enjoyment of sports, the similarity to the Tiller Dance troops was unmistakable. Women were not free to move just as they wanted, they had to make sure to coordinate and fit their movements to those of the group. These images obscured women's individuality in favor of emphasizing a single unified collective made up of many components that were mere repetitions of each other. The message was that even as women picked up some level of individualism with sports, they should limit it in favor of a sense and obligation that they were part of a collective.

Leftist language on sports also insisted on the femininity of women's bodies even during sports: women had to choose enjoyable sports during which they could maintain their beautiful and elegant looks. Social Democrats and Communists imagined the body of their ideal Socialist woman, thanks to her participation in body-cultural activities, as stronger than that of the Kollwitzean working-class homemaker or worker (see Chapter Three and Five), but still as weaker, "more tender and more complicated-built" than male bodies.<sup>81</sup> With few exceptions, the illustrations of physically active women did not highlight their muscles and strengths, nor did

<sup>81</sup> Dr. med. Wilhelm Swienty, "Richtige Haltung fördert die Gesundheit," *DWdF* 7 (July 1932): 29. Stanley has illustrated that this understanding of women's weakness permeated wider popular discourses on women's consumption, sports, and leisure, see *Modernizing Tradition*, 176.

they ever depict exercising women in a state of physical exhaustion. In focus were women's gracefully and elegantly beautiful female bodies in motion, women balancing their bodies, and presenting enjoyable objects to see. Similarly, fashion illustrations in either of the two popular leftist women's magazines never depicted the mannequins, even when wearing exercise clothes and holding sports gear, in active sports positions (see Figure 60).<sup>82</sup> In texts too, narratives repeatedly insisted that sports were for the fun and entertainment of women in addition to their healing, rejuvenating, and beautifying benefits.<sup>83</sup> In one such text, an unnamed author in *DWdF* acted like a sports commentator describing women's gymnastics meeting as a fun event to entice readers to join gymnastics groups:

Inside the gym? Yes, and there it will be just as much fun as outside. [...] Well, it looks like an enjoyable situation; the guests are received with a loud cheer. [...] One accommodates only slowly to the gay hustle and bustle. After finding the friend from the gymnastics section at "work," the last bit of timidity disappears, and one joins the exercising crowd. [...] There are then a few fun gymnastics games at the end, and once again, exuberant happiness can be heard echoing through the gym.<sup>84</sup>

Leftist language was concerned with women's bodies safety and that of their potential offspring and suggested that sports had the potential to overtax women's weaker bodies. Experts, therefore, commented on the intensities of exercise, specific movements, and the frequencies and lengths of breaks women should take while exercising.<sup>85</sup> Jensen has illustrated that the "close monitoring of the athlete's body" was part and parcel of Weimar-era competitive sports and

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<sup>82</sup> See "Für den Übergang und Herbst," *Frauenwelt* 14 (9 July 1932): 331.

<sup>83</sup> Eugen Tyrill, "Der Wert des schönen Körpers: Entwicklungen und Konsequenzen," *Frauenwelt* 20 (4 Oct. 1930): 459 and 461; and Kessemeier, *Sportlich, sachlich, männlich*, 126.

<sup>84</sup> "Vom Hallensport," *DWdF* 6 (Nov. 1931): 29.

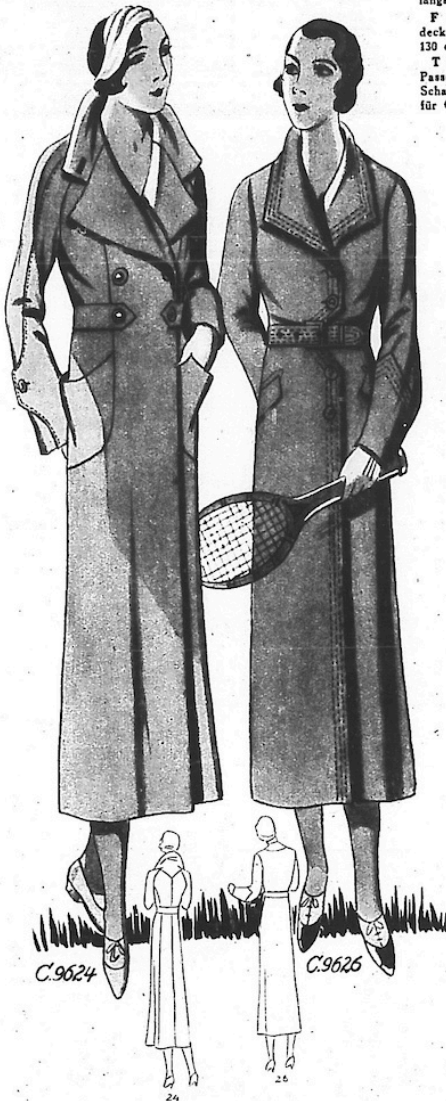
<sup>85</sup> Anon., "Sport und Gleichgewicht," *DWdF* 10 (Oct. 1932): 29; Swienty, "Richtige Haltung fördert die Gesundheit," *DWdF* 7 (July 1932): 29; "Medizinball," *DWdF* 4 (Sept. 1931): 28; and Hertha Polemann, "Frisch bleiben! – Wodurch?" *Frauenwelt* 7 (Apr. 1931): 149.

# Für den Uebergang und Herbst

C 9624. Gr. 42 u. 44. Sportmantel im Raglanschnitt aus Wollflausch. Die Vorder-  
teile können hochgeknöpft werden. Ein seitlich angeknöpfter Gürtel greift über den  
längsteiligen Rücken. Stoffverbr.: etwa 3,85 m, 130 cm breit, für Gr. 44.

F 9526. Gr. 44. Sportlicher Mantel aus Wollflausch mit Zierstepperei. Patten  
decken die seitlichen Tascheneingriffe. Gesteppter Gürtel. Stoffverbr.: etwa 3,25 m,  
130 cm breit.

T 1396. Gr. 44 u. 48. Fescher Mantel aus genopptem Phantasiewollstoff. Das mit  
Passenteilung versehene Modell zeigt kleine Capes, die den Ärmeln aufliegen.  
Schalkragen und doppelreihiger Knopfschluß. Stoffverbr.: etwa 3,50 m, 130 cm breit,  
für Gr. 44.



T 1397. Gr. 42 u. 46. Der aus Phantasiewollstoff gearbeitete Mantel ist mit  
zweierlei Material garniert. Im Rücken aufgesteppte Blenden. Eine schöne Ver-  
arbeitung zeigen Taschen und Ärmel. Stoffverbr.: etwa 3,90 m, 0,10 m heller, 0,20 m  
dunkler Besatzstoff, je 130 cm breit, für Gr. 46.

Lyon-Schnitte 1 Mk., zuzüglich 12 Pf. Porto.  
Auf die Schnittpreise jetzt 10 Proz. Ermäßigung.

Das ideale Kopfschmerzmittel. Wir verfügen heute gegen dies schmerz-  
volle Leiden über eine Reihe von Mitteln, aber nirgends lauten die Urteile  
so begeistert als bei Togat, wobei in die Waagschale fällt, daß die Versuche  
meist angestellt wurden, als die anderen Kopfschmerzmittel versagten. Es  
dürfte daher von allgemeinem Interesse sein, die Aufmerksamkeit auf dieses  
Mittel zu lenken.

331

Figure 60: "Für den Uebergang und Herbst," *Frauenwelt* 14 (9 July 1932): 331.

mimicked the study of the worker's body at the workplace.<sup>86</sup> And according to Frame, popular-scientific language posited that women's bodies, health, and lives were strongly determined by their female biology, all of which were to some degree outside of their own manipulation. Discourses consequently suggested that women and their non-competitive athletic activities needed to be under the supervision of physicians and sports experts.<sup>87</sup>

*Frauenwelt* and *DWdF* adopted this "medicalization of the [female] body."<sup>88</sup>

Contributors asserted that women's reproductive functions had to be prioritized during physical activities and that safely creating and maintaining a healthy female body was a craft and science requiring special health regimes determined by experts. Dr. Julian Marcuse (1862-1942), psychiatrist, SPD functionary, and frequent contributor to the SPD women's papers, explained in one of his articles why women gymnasts should forgo strength exercises in favor of stretching exercises and rest:

The body proportions of the sexes are different, with the lumbar section of the female backbone making up 32.8 percent of the entire spine, while the same section constitutes only 31.7 percent of men's bodies. In [women's] gymnastics, the task is not strength training but rather a combination between stretching and resting the abdominal muscles, which strengthens and animates the lumbar region and the blood circulation of the hips. Much too little attention has been paid to these preconditions, and it has to be the main task of methodical gymnastics for the female sex to follow these guidelines strictly.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Jensen, *Body By Weimar*, 7.

<sup>87</sup> Frame, "'Gretchen, Girl, Garçonne?'" 33. Stanley argues that popular discourses similar to the leftist ones here implied "that women were dependent on masculine guidance to participate in public life." 176.

<sup>88</sup> On the "medicalization of the body" in Weimar see Atina Grossmann, "'Satisfaction in Domestic Happiness': Mass Working-Class Sex Reform Organizations in the Weimar Republic," in *Towards the Holocaust: the Social and Economic Collapse of the Weimar Republic*, edited by Michael Dobkowski and Isidor Wallimann, 265-293, (Westport, Conn: Greenwood, 1983), here 278.

<sup>89</sup> Dr. Julian Marcuse, "Etwas zum Kapitel Frauensport," *Frauenwelt* 13 (18 June 1927): 191.



## Hygiene

Expert advice in *DWdF* and *Frauenwelt* also reached into the area of hygiene and feminine skin, hair, facial, and body care. During Weimar, popular discourses conflated health with beauty and widespread popular scientific ‘knowledge’ in “constitutional biology” (“*Konstitutionsbiologie*”) asserted that individuals’ exterior appearances, such as their body and facial shapes and sizes, their aesthetic qualities, and even body postures while seated, standing, and in motion, provided direct information about their intellect and personalities, grounding such attributes and behaviors in biology.<sup>90</sup> Going beyond individuals, such discourses “identified the biological profile of a population as the main determinant of social progress and ills, and doctors or biologists as the most viable leaders in efforts towards social improvement.”<sup>91</sup>

If women wanted to be part of an advanced social-biological collective of modern civilization, they should follow experts’ advice not only on exercise but also on exclusively feminine and middle-class rituals of hygiene and body care, which required time, access to modern medicine, as well as modern conveniences in their homes, such as a bathroom with a shower, a tub, or at least running cold and hot water. Only when meticulously cared for with

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<sup>90</sup> Friedrich Wendel, “Weibliche Schönheit,” *Frauenwelt* 19 (1924): 310-311; Wilhelm Hausenstein claimed that gymnastics led to women’s and their offspring’s beauty, “Etwas über Gymnastik,” *Frauenwelt* 26 (29 Dec. 1928): 611 and 616, here 611.

<sup>91</sup> Frame, “Gretchen, Girl, Garçonne?,” here 33 who quoted from Alfredo Niceforo, *Anthropologie der nichtbesitzenden Klassen: Studien u. Untersuchungen* (Leipzig: Maas & Van Suchtelen, 1910); Ernst Kretschmer, *Körperbau und Charakter: Untersuchungen zum Konstitutionsproblem und zur Lehre von den Temperamenten* (Berlin: J. Springer, 1929); Kurt Kolle, “Der Körperbau der Schizophrenen: Ein Beitrag zum Thema “Körperbau und Charakter,” *European Archives of Psychiatry and Clinical Neuroscience* 72, no. 1 (1925): 40-88; H.A. Adam, *Körperbau und Seelenlage: ein Überblick über die biologische Verwandtschaft zwischen Körperform und Wesenskern des Menschen* (Stuttgart: Franckh, 1930); M. Gurewitsch, “Motorik, Körperbau und Charakter,” *Archiv für Psychiatrie und Nervenkrankheiten* 76, no. 1 (1926): 521-532; P. Mathes, “Die Konstitutionstypen des Weibes, Insbesondere der intersexuelle Typus,” in *Biologie und Pathologie des Weibes: Ein Handbuch der Frauenheilkunde und Geburtshilfe*, ed. J. Halban and L. Seitz, 5 vols., 3:1-112 (Berlin: Urban & Schwarzenberg, 1924); Gerhard Venzmer, *Sieh dir die Menschen an! Was die biologische Verwandtschaft zwischen Körperform und Wesenskern des Menschen verrät* (Stuttgart: Franck’sche Verlagshandlung, 1930). See also Julia Schafer, “‘Der wahre Jacob’ und ‘Kikeriki’. Jüdische und proletarische Körper in satirischen Zeitschriften der zwanziger Jahre,” in Cowan and Marcel eds., *Leibhaftige Moderne*, 322-338.

clean, lean, taut, supple, tanned, and wrinkle-free skin without imperfections could women ensure they looked beautiful, such as Dr. Wilhelm Swienty argued, a regular contributor to *DWdF*'s "Health and Hygiene" ("*Gesundheit und Hygiene*") and "Exercise and Body-Care" columns ("*Sport und Körperpflege*").<sup>92</sup>

To maintain taut skin and to make minor wrinkles disappear, we recommend mornings and evenings hot face compresses, preferably with the aid of a rubbing towel [...]. After a few weeks of this procedure, previously existing parasites and other pimples will usually have disappeared.<sup>93</sup>

In another article, he or an anonymous author endorsed massaging every night for five minutes olive oil on one's face to remove wrinkles.<sup>94</sup> Yet another author claimed "[s]team-baths tighten the skin" and remove wrinkles, while others touted the benefits of cold showers.<sup>95</sup> And if all that did not help, Swienty and other physicians explained the benefits of "Surgical Beauty Care" ("*Operative Schönheitspflege*") paid for ideally by health insurance because youthfulness and beauty were not only indicators of one's character and biological evolutionary progress, but were also competitive factors in the job market.<sup>96</sup> Some readers were concerned about fitting within the new ideals for health and beauty and sent in their queries on how to improve or

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<sup>92</sup> The title of *Frauenwelt*'s body care section was "The Art of Being Healthy," "Die Kunst des Gesundseins," see *Frauenwelt* 1 (1924): 4; 'Dr. med.' Edith Rosenkranz, "Bedeutung und Pflege des Auges" *Frauenwelt* 1 (1928): 10; "Schütze, nähre, und pflege die Haut mit Eukutol!" *DWdF* 4 (Apr. 1932): 31; "Sauberkeit ist Luxus," *DWdF* 6 (June 1932): 28; "Kleine Hilfsmittel zur Körperpflege," *DWdF* 1 (Jan. 1933): 29; and Helene Simon, "Sozialismus und Wohlfahrtspflege," *AWO* 1 (1 Oct. 1926): 3-9. On this issue see Kessemeier, *Sportlich, sachlich, männlich*, 125; and Kautz, "The Fruits of Her Labor."

<sup>93</sup> Swienty, "Wie pflege ich das Gesicht?" *DWdF* 3 (Mar. 1932): 28.

<sup>94</sup> Anon. or Swienty, "Gesichtspflege mit Olivenöl," *DWdF* 2 (July 1931): 28.

<sup>95</sup> "Dampfbäder straffen die Haut," *DWdF* 7 (Dec. 1931): 29.

<sup>96</sup> Swienty, "Operative Schönheitspflege," *DWdF* 3 (Aug. 1931): 28; "Chirurgische Kosmetik: Raffung Erschlaffter Hautgewebe," *DWdF* 4 (Sept. 1931): 28; and Dr. Fritz Weiß, "Verjüngung und Verschönerung durch soziale Kosmetik," *DWdF* 4 (Sept. 1931): 16 and 27.

maintain their looks including through consumables, clothing items, sports, and medical to surgical interventions.<sup>97</sup>

While leftist experts recommended cleanliness rituals and advocated for certain foods as beneficial, and both *DWdF* and *Frauenwelt* regularly printed some ads for beauty, weight loss, acne, anti-hair loss, and other products, articles on health and hygiene did not advocate for beauty and health as the end result of consumer items.<sup>98</sup> Swienty, for example, strongly advised readers not to use makeup and lipstick, claiming they had harmful substances that could cause allergic reactions, asthma, and even loss of vision. Teaching readers middle-class hygiene, he also cautioned readers from sharing lipstick through which syphilis and tuberculosis could be spread.<sup>99</sup>

Overall, such content worked to instill in readers that the female body and its segments were malleable objects in need of itemized investigation, maintenance, and potentially reshaping, following detailed instructions by experts. Some of these messages painted threatening outcomes from loss of productivity to severe health problems and death if readers ignored their bodies and continued with just their habitual “mechanical hygiene practices” as opposed to following expert-advised rituals for “correct cleanliness” (“*richtiger Sauberkeit*”).<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> See ‘Frau Else J.’, “Medizinischer Briefkasten,” *Frauenwelt* 22 (Nov. 1929): 515.

<sup>98</sup> FrI. Frida Kirchner, *Frauenwelt* 1 (1928): 23; an ad for Dr. Richter’s Frühstück’s Kräutertee claimed “being this is not fate,” “Dicksein ist nicht schicksal,” *DWdF* 7 (July 1932): 32; “Haarfärbekamm,” *Frauenwelt* 21 (17 Oct. 1931): 482; “Fett-Zehrer Schlankol,” *Frauenwelt* 21 (17 Oct. 1931): 482; “The woman, who does not age,” “Die Frau, die nicht älter wird,” *DWdF* 2 (Feb. 1932): rear cover; and “Welche Lust, schlank zu sein!” *DWdF* 2 (Feb. 1932): 32.

<sup>99</sup> Swienty, “Gefahren der Kosmetik,” *DWdF* 2 (July 1931): 28.

<sup>100</sup> Swienty, “Bakterienkrieg auf der Drachenhaut,” *DWdF* 6 (June 1932): 28-29; Susi Bork, “Körperpflege und Schonung der Frau,” *Frauenwelt* 20 (3 Oct. 1930): 471-472; “Kleine Hilfsmittel zur Körperpflege,” *DWdF* 1 (Jan. 1933): 29; “Welche Arbeit strengt die Hausfrau am meisten an?” *Frauenwelt* 17 (22 Aug. 1931): 400; Hedwig Schwarz, “Die Denkende Hausfrau,” *Frauenwelt* 16 (9 Aug. 1930): 371-372; E. Kirschmann-Röhl, “Körperpflege ist Gesundheitspflege,” *Frauenwelt* 8 (April 1925): 110; “Die Sprechstunde” *Frauenwelt* 1 (1928): 10; and Prof. Alfred Grotjahn, “Das Gesundheitsbuch der Frau,” *Frauenwelt* 1 (12 Jan. 1929): 23.

Both images and written body culture content helped create a “growing fascination with looking” and suggested women readers should feel “constantly aware of their physicality,” combined with a “heightened sense of being on display.”<sup>101</sup> Women were taught, and wanted, to think of and treat their bodies as objects perceived and evaluated by themselves and others for their health, youthfulness, athletic look, beauty, and other aesthetic qualities.<sup>102</sup> These practices were described as overdue attention that women should pay to their bodies and were coded as “self-assertive” and emancipatory in both leftist and non-Socialist popular discourses.<sup>103</sup>

### Conclusion

During the Weimar Republic, the young, thin, healthy, athletic, and fashionably-dressed New Woman with short hair was everywhere within a booming popular culture industry. Her masculine appearance and her enjoyment of leisure activities in often urban spaces were some of her major defining attributes. In their desire to improve working-class women’s minds, bodies, and lifestyles, both Communists and Social Democrats adopted the New Woman from commercial popular culture almost in her entire *Gestalt*. This means that leftist ideals of femininity were very middle-classed and contained nearly the same combination of masculine and feminine attributes and leisure activities as the New Woman in commercial culture.

The Socialist New Woman envisioned by *DWdF* and *Frauenwelt* was androgynously slender and youthful, but also erotically healthy and beautiful in appearance. She sported the

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<sup>101</sup> Helen Grund, *Vom Wesen der Mode*, 5, quoted in Mila Ganeva, *Women in Weimar Fashion: Discourses and Displays in German Culture, 1918-1933* (Rochester, N.Y.: Camden House, 2008), 101; Doğramaci has described it as a “viewing hungry audience,” “Mode-Körper,” 119.

<sup>102</sup> For a discussion of women’s objectification in sports see Paul Willis, “Women in Sport in Ideology,” in *Sport, Culture and Ideology*, edited by Jennifer Hargreaves (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982); and Kautz, “The Fruits of Her Labor,” 17.

<sup>103</sup> Ganeva, *Women in Weimar Fashion*, 101.

same styles of clothing and short haircut that the New Woman in commercial culture did for the same practical, healthy, and emancipatory functions prized in popular culture. While she eschewed the commercial leisure industries (apart from artistic, critical, and realistic movies) that the New Woman in commercial culture enjoyed, she exercised outdoors, preferably with other women and men from the labor movement, to manipulate and discipline her body into the ideal shape, strength, and health but also to enjoy the freedom to move. She learned that the female body was an object to be seen and appreciated for its aesthetic qualities and adopted middle-class gendered body care practices to attain an immaculately clean, healthy, and beautiful look for her skin, hair, and face. Like the middle-class New Woman in popular culture, she also traveled for her health and cultural enrichment.

As also narratives in commercial culture, Socialists were concerned with maintaining their somewhat masculinized Socialist New Woman's secure femininity. They, therefore, detailed which looks and behaviors were excessively gender-bending and warned proletarian women from adopting such attitudes and behaviors. Among these was the wearing of particular pieces of clothing and the selection of sports types that were too masculine for women's bodies and minds. Social Democrats and Communists maintained that the physically active Socialist New Woman listened to experts' advice on how not to damage her female, and hence feebler than the male, body existing primarily for reproductive purposes. Even though sports were for increasing her self-confidence, the Socialist New Woman had to subdue her individuality in favor of altruism to avoid growing an excessively masculine and middle-classed individualistic ego.

Despite her attractiveness, this Socialist New Woman, as also the New Woman in popular culture, appeared to be single and non-pregnant. Nevertheless, the popular Social

Democratic and Communist magazines carried many images of children, with *Frauenwelt* also containing numerous articles on childrearing. The next chapter discusses this seeming contradiction and how the Socialist New Woman ideally related to her sexuality, the opposite sex, and traditional gender roles involving marriage and child-rearing.

Chapter Five: The Socialist New Woman in Private

## Kleidung für werdende Mütter

F 9437

F 9436

F 9435

F 9434

F 9433

F 9432

F 9431

F 9430

F 9430. Gr. 44 u. 48. zeigt uns ein leicht zu erweiterendes Kleid aus kleingemustertem Wollmusselin. Hellfarbige Batistplissée ergibt die Garnitur. Der Rock ist glockig geschnitten. Der vordere Knopf ist versetzbar, wodurch das Kleid erweitert werden kann. Stoffverbr.: etwa 3,40 m, 0,35 m Garniturstoff, je 100 cm breit für Gr. 48.

F 9431. Gr. 42 u. 46. Frauenkleid in schlankmachender Form aus reinem Jersey mit weißem Aussatz. Leicht zu ändern der vorderer Schluß. Stoffverbr.: etwa 3,30 m, 0,25 m Kragstoff, je 100 cm breit für Gr. 46.

F 9432. Gr. 40 u. 44. An diesem praktischen Kleid, aus Rock, Weste und Bluse bestehend, kann der Schluß leicht verändert und der stärker werdenden Figur angepaßt werden. Material ist diagonalgestreifter Wollstoff. Die Bluse ist aus weißem Batist hergestellt. Die Weste hat kurze Ärmelchen. Stoffverbr.: etwa 3,10 m, 100 cm breit; 2,20 m Blusenstoff, 80 cm breit für Gr. 44.

F 9433. Gr. 42 u. 46. Der Morgenrock, aus Wollmusselin oder Kunstseide bestehend, ist vorn besonders weit geschnitten und wird nur durch den Gürtel geschlossen. Kragen und Ärmelglocken sind aus weißem Batist mit Hohltahtverzierung. Stoffverbrauch: etwa 3,25 m, 0,25 m Batist, je 100 cm breit f. Gr. 46.

F 9434. Gr. 44 u. 48. Frühjahrsmantel aus Diagonalwollstoff. Das Modell greift vorn weit übereinander, ist ohne Knopfschluß gearbeitet und wird durch Schnallengürtel geschlossen gehalten. Stoffverbr.: etwa 4,35 m, 130 cm breit f. Gr. 48.

F 9435. Gr. 44 u. 48. Leibchen aus Drell mit vorderem Knopfschluß und eingestellten Gummiteilen. Stoffverbr.: etwa 0,40 m, 100 cm breit; 0,50 m Gummistoff f. Gr. 48.

F 9436. Gr. 42 u. 46. Leibhalter mit Gummiteilen und verstellbarem Gurt. Stoffverbr.: etwa 0,60 m, 80 cm breit; 0,22 m Gummistoff, 30 cm breit; 2,80 cm Band, 4 cm breit f. Gr. 46.

F 9437. Gr. 44. Büstenhalter, zum Stillen leicht zu öffnen, aus festem Wäschestoff. Stoffverbr.: etwa 0,40 m, 90 cm breit.

F-Schnitte 90 Pl., für F 9435, 9436 und 9437 20 Pl. zuzüglich 12 Pl. Porto. Auf die Schnittpreise jetzt 10 Proz. Ermäßigung.

190

Figure 61: "Kleider für werdende Mütter," *Frauenwelt* 8 (Apr. 1932): 190. The title reads: "Clothing for pregnant women."

Social Democratic and Communist women's magazines consistently depicted ideal women as youthful, beautiful, and healthy-erotic and yet also as non-pregnant and somewhat androgynously as Chapter Four has shown.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, images of children were very common in *Frauenwelt* and frequent enough in *DWdF*, and both offered clothing for children and children's segments, with *Frauenwelt* also providing frequent articles on childrearing. Given this seeming contradiction, in this chapter, I ask how leftists proposed women deal with their sexuality and the related topics of pregnancy, contraception, and abortion, as well as motherhood, marriage, and divorce. Narratives on body culture demanded an increased level of middle-class individualism from women even as they also limited such self-centeredness with traditional views on the female body. Did such egocentrism and gendered views of women's bodies extend into the realm of sexuality, relationships, and motherhood? Chapters Three and Four have shown that leftists aimed to elevate working-class women's lives toward middle-class existences, practices, and appearances. Did middle-class outlooks also impact women's sexuality and relationships?

To answer these questions, this chapter investigates all leftist women's publications introduced in this dissertation (*Die Kommunistin*, *Die Genossin*, *AWO*, *Frauenwelt*, and *DWdF*) even as *Frauenwelt* and *DWdF* are once again in focus. Going beyond an analysis of the usual articles, ads, and illustrations, this chapter examines, to a greater degree than previously, reader contributions to *Frauenwelt* and *DWdF*. As a result, my conclusions have greater representative value for readers' perspectives even though previous chapters also assume that mass media both

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<sup>1</sup> The illustration in Figure 61 depicts the rare clothing for pregnant women in *Frauenwelt*, but the mannequins do not look pregnant.



mirror and prescribe societal perspectives and practices.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter argues that both Social Democratic and Communists editors, authors, and readers demanded that women be seen by society in general and by their partners as sexual beings with sexual desires and needs of their own. They therefore argued that heterosexual relationships should be based on mutually-satisfying sex, other shared interests and practices, as well as an egalitarian relationship, which in the case of Communists could remain outside of the formal bounds of marriage. Both Communists and Social Democrats also called for a separation of sex from reproduction to assure women could enjoy sexual intercourse without being immediately confronted by potential consequences.

Moreover, leftists asserted the primacy of motherhood but choice for women in advanced European and North American societies, and recommended a reduction in the number of offspring to one or two in a belief that such reduction led to improvements in the survival rates and genetic quality of children as well as in the quality of life for both mothers and children. Communists argued that motherhood was a responsibility women could accomplish even during their years of employment with the aid of childcare institutions. Social Democrats insisted that all mothers should become full-time homemakers for the first 7 years of their children's lives. Whereas both Social Democrats and Communists advocated for laws that would make divorce easier, Social Democrats were willing to postpone divorce and shelve women's needs for companionate relationships for the sake of their children's happy upbringing.

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<sup>2</sup> On "the inseparability of any society's historical 'reality' from its forms of cultural representation" see Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire, and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2003), 32; Vanessa R. Schwartz noted that "[m]ass culture works through a dialogue between its producers and consumers," *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-Siecle Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 12.

## Reader Contributions

Since the original letters readers sent to the publications are not available, this chapter relies only on published reader contributions, which must be evaluated cautiously due to editorial selectivity, censorship, and manipulation. In its regular section titled “*Die Leserin hat das Wort*” (“The female reader has a say/gets to speak”), which usually took up a full page, *DWdF* solicited and published readers’ opinions, criticism, and personal experiences on topics of readers’ choosing and sometimes on topics suggested by editors in response to reader correspondence and articles.<sup>3</sup> Judging by only positive reader reception to the admittedly popular magazine (in mid-1932, 150,000 or more copies of *DWdF* were sold) one nevertheless has to assume that *DWdF* editors received but did not print negative reader comments.<sup>4</sup>

Editorial selectivity, censorship, and potential manipulation are also visible in the full overlap in topics between reader letters and common Communist political causes, such as the classed treatment of working-class patients in hospitals, tenants’ expulsions from their apartments, high food prices, and the multi-faceted exploitation of women workers by employers. There is the possibility and even the likelihood that some ‘reader’ letters were written by local women functionaries, while others were possibly authentic reader letters that were however edited by *DWdF* before publication.<sup>5</sup> *DWdF* editors usually printed only small segments of readers’ submissions, frequently paraphrased the original wording, and framed readers’ letters

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<sup>3</sup> *DWdF* sometimes replaced the reader letter section title “*Die Leserin hat das Wort*” with a quote from a reader’s contribution, such as “*Die Freude über Ihre Zeitung ist groß*” (“We are very pleased with your magazine”). See *DWdF* 6 (Nov. 1931): 31.

<sup>4</sup> Arendt, “Zur Frauenpolitik der KPD und zur Rolle der werktätigen Frauen im antifaschistischen Kampf im Frühjahr und Sommer 1932,” *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 5 (1972): 814; Surmann claimed 200,000 copies of *DWdF* were published in July 1932, *Die Münzenberg Legende*, 204.

<sup>5</sup> Some published reader letters in *DWdF* contain phrases suspiciously similar to common slogans used by Communist functionaries. Unless the letters contain details about readers’ lives, suggesting the letters are authentic, I have generally excluded such contributions from my analysis.

with titles of their choosing. Editors thereby imposed their interpretations onto readers' potentially complex or ambiguous messages.

*Frauenwelt* also invited readers to communicate with editors and other readers. Readers' opinion essays on particular subjects posed by editors in prize competitions can be considered among the more 'manipulated' reader contributions.<sup>6</sup> Social Democratic editors and the evaluating commission valued the political and didactic functions of the category. They selected the winning essays and only published those that supported editors' positions, visible in published articles.<sup>7</sup>

*Frauenwelt* printed many other much less manipulated reader contributions, which provide an authentic window into readers' private lives. In its regular sections "*Wer weiß Rat...?*" ("Who has advice"), "*Zwischen Laube und Siedlung*" ("Between a Pavilion/Garden Home and a Settlement Home"), "*Zwischen Schlafstelle und Heim*" ("Between a Place to Sleep and a Home"), "*Praktische Winke*" ("Practical Tips"), "*Die Axt im Haus*" ("An Axe in the Home"), and "*Die Sprechstunde*" ("The Consultation Hour/Office") renamed and reduced to "*Medizinischer Briefkasten*" ("Medical Mailbox") by 1928, *Frauenwelt* published readers' letters requesting and giving financial, educational-career, child-rearing, relationship, housekeeping, cooking, minor repair, and gardening advice.<sup>8</sup> For a brief period in 1926, the paper even paid

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<sup>6</sup> *DWdF* also had prize competitions, but they are of lesser value in illustrating readers' opinions. For example, one competition asked readers to identify who the women on a set of three photos were.

<sup>7</sup> See Sender, "Das Ergebnis unseres Preisausschreibens," Rose Flanz, "I. Preis," and Anna P. "III. Preis," *Frauenwelt* 24 (30 Nov. 1929): 565; and compare the editorial foreword and the content of the prize-winning essays by Cläre Kleineibst "Wie stehst Du zur heutigen gesetzlichen Form der Ehe? II. Preis," *Frauenwelt* 26 (28 Dec. 1929): 614; and by Martha Starossen and Trude Wiechert in "Wie stehst Du zur heutigen Form der Ehe," *Frauenwelt* 1 (11 Jan. 1930): 10.

<sup>8</sup> "Zwischen Laube und Siedlung" was renamed "Laube und Siedlung" by early 1928. In February 1928, Sender, as the new editor of *Frauenwelt*, initially dropped many participatory segments only to then return them, and provide the popular "Wer weiß Rat...?" section more space as needed between one half and a full page.

readers for their printed answers. In the early 1930s, readers also submitted their personal ads to the “*Wer weiß Rat...?*” section searching for partners. All along, in that column, readers asked for other readers’ opinions on topics of their choosing.

Except for reader mail containing medical questions – where only physicians’ answers were printed – *Frauenwelt* published nearly the entire received correspondence in the original wording and removed mainly personal identifiers such as the first and/or last names of readers. Judging by the broad range of topics in reader mail, the Social Democratic magazine appears to have printed close to all submissions, although the editor admitted to censoring readers’ opinions when these conflicted with the SPD’s position against physical punishment. Unacknowledged further censorship is possible or even likely.

Until 1930 the column’s editor was Elisabeth Kirschmann-Röhl (née Gohlke, 1888-1930, SPD delegate to the 1919 National Convention and Prussian Landtag, 1921-1930, and Juchacz’s sister). After her death, an anonymous editor continued the column under the pseudonym ‘Elisabeth.’ ‘Elisabeth’ sometimes provided the initial answer to readers’ inquiries, but these were generally followed by readers’ answers over the course of the next editions. In 1926, at the start of the “*Wer Weiß Rat ...?*” column, reader exchanges on a particular subject were limited to 3 editions. Later they were extended through five editions of the paper (meaning 2.5 months), with the editor determining an endpoint to debates and occasionally providing concluding editorial comments, which thereby also functioned as editors’ framing of the subject.<sup>9</sup>

Since readers chose what to ask about and were expected to respond to advice requests; *Frauenwelt*’s reader contribution columns effectively became a forum to express and exchange views on a wide range of questions, knowledge, opinions, wishes, practices. They, therefore,

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<sup>9</sup> See editorial note above Dr. Helmut von Bracken, “Seht, wir Wilden sind doch bess’re Menschen!” *Frauenwelt* 12 (June 1925): 173.

illustrate which issues were of interest to readers, many of which are topics in investigation here. Despite the broad array of subjects discussed, self-censorship surrounding sexual intercourse can be assumed, and some readers did not want either their first or last name printed with their letters. Nevertheless, many of these reader contributions to both magazines make evident that neither Social Democrats nor Communists viewed sexuality, marriage, divorce, pregnancy, contraception, abortion, motherhood, and childrearing to be entirely private matters. Instead, authors and readers debated, sometimes disagreed, but often agreed on what they believed to be the best perspectives and practices on these themes, sometimes identified as a Socialist lifestyle (“*Sozialistische Lebensgestaltung*”).<sup>10</sup>

### **The Sexed Body**

Social Democratic and Communist sex educators, reformers, physicians, eugenicists, and political and welfare activists all claimed that before Weimar, girls’ and women’s sexuality had been limited and controlled by institutionalized traditional middle-class double standards. Identifying humans as essentially “sexual beings” (*Geschlechtswesen*), and sexual intercourse as an “indispensable” (“*unentbehrlichen*”) instinctual physiologic need, leftists argued that ignorance about and repression of the sexed body and its physiological processes and needs engendered mental anguish and “hysteria” in children, adolescents, and adult women.<sup>11</sup> They asserted it was time to treat the female body and its hetero-sexuality – but not homosexuality – as subjects for open, pragmatic, and honest study and discussion.<sup>12</sup> Although leftists disagreed over

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<sup>10</sup> Kleineibst, “Wie stehst Du zur heutigen gesetzlichen...: II. Preis,” *Frauenwelt* 26 (28 Dec. 1929): 614.

<sup>11</sup> Judith Grünfeld, “Sexuelle Not oder Not der Liebe,” *Frauenwelt* 18 (8 Sept. 1928): 423-424, here 423; and *ibid.*, “Mütter und Töchter: Wandel der Geschlechtssitten,” *Frauenwelt* 11 (1 June 1929): 249 - 251, here 251.

<sup>12</sup> Dr. R.K., “Hygiene der Menstruation,” *Frauenwelt* 20 (6 Oct. 1928): 469 and 471, here 469; and Grünfeld, “Sexuelle Not oder Not der Liebe,” *Frauenwelt* 18 (8 Sept. 1928): 423-424; Edith Rosenkranz, “Die Unfruchtbarkeit der Frau,” *Frauenwelt* 12 (4 June 1927): 181.

when teenage girls were mature enough for sexual intercourse, activists, reformers, and readers insisted that girls in their upper teenage years and women had an equal right to pre-marital sexual experimentation and complete sexual satisfaction during sexual intercourse within and without marriage.<sup>13</sup>

Leftists demanded that age-appropriate sex education for children, adolescents, and adults be provided by parents, schools, and in sex education and marriage counseling clinics.<sup>14</sup> Ads for and reviews of books on the healthy female body, with sexuality deemed part of human health, appeared in *Frauenwelt*, and women's reading lists created by the Social Democratic publisher J.H.W Dietz and containing books on women's health and sexuality were frequently printed.<sup>15</sup> The women's publications also directly offered education on the sexed body and sexuality. In straightforward language, physicians described "normal" processes of puberty and menstruation and discussed when physiological processes became "abnormalities" or medical problems.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Käte Lindemann, "Neue Jugend," *Die Genossin* 1 (Jan. 1928): 19-21.

<sup>14</sup> Among these were Max Hodann's *Bub und Mädels. Gespräche unter Kameraden über die Geschlechterfrage* (Rudolstadt: Greifenverlag, 1926); *ibid.*, *Bringt uns wirklich der Klapperstorch? Ein Lehrbuch für Kinder lesbar* (Rudolstadt: Greifenverlag, 1928); "Kommunale Sexualberatung," *Die Genossin* 1 (Jan. 1925): 18; *DWdF* published the location and opening hours of a Communist sex advice center in Berlin-Lichtenberg, "Beratungsstellen des Vorbereitenden Einheitskomitees der sexualpolitischen Organisationen," *DWdF* 4 (Apr. 1932): rear cover.

<sup>15</sup> H. or K.W. (? Initials are partially illegible), "Ein Buch über sexuelle Not und sexuellen Fortschritt," *Die Genossin* 12 (Dec. 1931): 393. Possibly Wachenheim reviewed here Sofie Lazarsfeld's *Wie die Frau den Mann erlebt. Fremde Bekenntnisse und eigene Betrachtungen* (Leipzig: Schneider, 1931).

<sup>16</sup> See an ad for Magnus Hirschfeld and Richard Linsert's contraceptive advice brochure, "Empfängnis-Verhütung, Mittel und Methoden" *DWdF* 1 (Jan. 1933): 30; an ad for Dr. med. Paull's, *Die Frau* mentioned it discussed everything around the female body, its sex organs, menstruation, pregnancy, contraception, and prostitution, "*Frauenwelt* 3 (29 Jan. 1927): 30; an ad for Fritz Brupbacher's [and Jussuw Meyer's], *Liebe, Geschlechts-Beziehungen und Geschlechts-Politik* (Berlin: Neuer Deutscher Verlag, 1930) in *DWdF* 4 (Apr. 1932): rear cover; ad for Emil Höllein's, *Gebärzwang und kein Ende* (Berlin: Universum-Bücherei für Alle, 1930) in *DWdF* 4 (Apr. 1932): rear cover; and for J.H.Dietz's women's reading list "Die Frauenbibliothek," *Die Genossin* 3 Special Party Congress Edition ( Mar. 1929): 97-98. For discussions of women's physiological processes see 'Frau H. F.,' "Medizinischer Briefkasten," *Frauenwelt* 11 (30 May 1931): 256; Begun, "Wann ist eine Frau unfruchtbar?" *DWdF* 7 (July 1932): 28; Dr. Med. Wilhelm Swienty, "Schwangerschaft," *DWdF* 2 (Feb. 1932): 28; Susi Bork, § 218 - Geburtenregelung," *Frauenwelt* 2 (24 Jan. 1931): 33; Marcuse, "Einiges über Schwangerschaftsverhütung," *Frauenwelt* 4 (18 Feb. 1933): 80-81; Wilhelm Swienty, "Die gesunde Frau: Wie der monatliche Zyklus bei der Frau zustandekommt," *DWdF* 1 (Jan. 1932): 26. For ads for contraception see "Gummiwaren," and "Verhütung der

Menstruation is a sign that the non-fertilized egg has died, which is visible in a four to five days-long secretion of blood from the uterus through the vagina, repeated on average every 28 days.<sup>17</sup>

Readers also didn't mind the public discussion of their anonymized questions related to hygiene, health, sexuality, and cosmetic issues. Frequent reader queries about how to treat vaginal infections, control one's fertility, lose weight to fit contemporary beauty ideals, and reverse graying hair suggest these topics were of widespread interest.<sup>18</sup> Readers sought and received relationship advice from other readers. When legal expertise was needed in relationship concerns, unnamed legal professionals answered questions on divorce, child custody, financial, and property matters.

Only the sexual act and orgasms were not referred to in entirely candid language in both articles and reader letters. Instead, it was rendered mainly physiologically, such as by the Berlin municipal physician and Jewish Social Democratic political activist Käte Frankenthal.

During each sexual act, a man produces 200 to 300 million sperm cells, of which only a single sperm is needed for the fertilization process, everything else is reserve material. [...] The regeneration of the male sperm cells is rapid; the healthy man can have frequent sexual intercourse over the course of a month. Women's reproductive material is much more precious: only a single egg ripens per month in a woman. Her sexual life, including the frequency of her sexual intercourse, does not impact the production of her reproductive material.<sup>19</sup>

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Schwangerschaft," *DWdF* 1 (Jan. 1932): rear cover. For an abortion provider ad see "Ungewollte Schwangerschaft," *DWdF* 1 (1 Jan. 1932): 18; and "Ungewollte Schwangerschaft! Ich helfe Ihnen," *DWdF* 2 (1 Feb. 1932): 32.

<sup>17</sup> Dr. R.K., "Hygiene der Menstruation," *Frauenwelt* 20 (6 Oct. 1928): 469 and 471, here 469.

<sup>18</sup> See "Medizinischer Briefkasten," section to 'Frau H.F.,' and Frau H.N. *Frauenwelt* 11 (30 May 1931): 256; the response by medical advice columnist to a question by A.W., *Frauenwelt* 13 (27 June 1931): 303; Agnes asking in the "Wer Weiß Rat...?" section if wearing a bra during her pregnancy would prevent her breasts from sagging later on, in "Schwangerschaft," *Frauenwelt* 3 (7 Feb. 1931): 62; "F.B. 13" *Frauenwelt* 22 (Oct. 1930): 520; and "Elisabeth-Leipzig," "Mundgeruch," *Frauenwelt* 18 (6 Sept. 1930): 399.

<sup>19</sup> Frankenthal, "Die biologische Tragödie der Frau," *Die Genossin* 1 (Jan. 1928): 10-13, here 13.

Orgasms were usually alluded to with metaphors or circuitous language like “fireworks,” “full sexual satisfaction,” “[o]nce he has completed the sexual act,” and “for the man, a single moment of strength expression.”<sup>20</sup> Similarly, despite printing several photos and drawings of naked women intended as aesthetic portrayals of the healthy and slender female body, and despite verbal descriptions of sexual organs and their functions, the publications generally didn’t offer illustrations of the internal female anatomy. Presumably, this was to stay clear of Article 184.3 of the Civil Code, which banned the advertising and display or publication of “obscene” material. By the same token, images of life partners in the same scene were extremely rare in women’s publications (for a rare image of a couple in *DWdF* see Figure 62).



Figure 62: “Die Leserin hat das Wort,” *DWdF* 4 (Sept. 1931): 13.

In line with broader scientific-popular discourses, some Socialist physicians and authors gendered men’s and women’s sexuality; and identified girls’ and women’s moods, outlooks,

<sup>20</sup> Frankenthal, “Die biologische Tragödie der Frau,” *Die Genossin* 1 (Jan. 1928): 10-13, here 13. See also Olberg, “Ein ärztliches Frauenbüchlein,” *Frauenwelt* 9 (2 May 1931): 204; H.M., “Periodische Enthaltung — eine neue Methode zur Empfängnisverhütung,” *Frauenwelt* 22 (29 Oct. 1932): 515 and 518.



interests, and behaviors as directly and wholly impacted, even controlled, by their female reproductive physiology, which they claimed was a natural and automatic phenomenon.<sup>21</sup>

Authors like Franckenthal identified female sexual physiology – and sometimes slipping into women’s sexuality – as involuntary, passive, and disconnected from women’s awareness and voluntary choices and associated it with childbearing and child-rearing.

Beginning with sexual maturity, from the moment of the first egg’s ovulation, until the sex life is extinguished, continuous processes of development and dying happen in the sexual organs of the woman, which put a stamp on her whole personality. [...] These processes are reflected in the human psyche. It is entirely different with women. The woman plays a passive role during sexuality (“*Geschlechtsleben*”). She does not influence her fertility [...is ], passive during fertilization, followed by a long time caring for the budding life and the sacrificing of her interests [...] The sex drive is of course present also in the woman, but it is generally not as powerful and all-dominating as in the man with his infinite and enormous amounts of fertility and his prioritized role as progenitor.<sup>22</sup>

On the other hand, they described male sexual physiology and sexuality as frequent, active, powerful, connected to conscious and voluntary decision-making, and with god and artist-like potency.

The man plays an active role during sexual intercourse. His fertility and productivity, in the deepest sense of the word, can be controlled by his will (“*ist nicht unabhängig von seinem Willen*”) [...] Such is the fundamental difference in the lives of the sexes: for the man, a single moment of strength expression (“*Kraftentfaltung*”), which reoccurs frequently and leaves him with a sense of creative power (“*das Gefühl schöpferischer Kraft gibt*”).<sup>23</sup>

Franckenthal also claimed that whereas men’s sex drive was long-lived and consistent between puberty and death, women’s sex drive came to an end (presumably with menopause, a

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<sup>21</sup> Franckenthal, “Die biologische Tragödie der Frau,” *Die Genossin* 1 (Jan. 1928): 10-13, here 13. For a description of the eighteenth and nineteenth century two-sex model which gendered women’s physiology and their roles in sex as well as identified women as entirely controlled by their reproductive physiology, see Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge and London Harvard University Press, 1990).

<sup>22</sup> Franckenthal, “Die biologische Tragödie der Frau,” *Die Genossin* 1 (Jan. 1928): 10-13, here 13.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

term that was not mentioned) and their bodies were depleted when they reached their 40s.<sup>24</sup> Many readers agreed that forty-year-old women were old and had “worn-out” (“*verbraucht*”) bodies as a result of “sacrificing” them to their husbands, pregnancy, child-rearing, and homemaking.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, other reader submissions illustrated women’s desire to divorce their husbands, start new lives involving employment outside the home, and in some cases find new partners. This suggests that not all Socialists believed women’s sexual lives were over in their forties.<sup>26</sup>

Despite the different characterizations of female versus male sexuality, Socialist activists’ identification of the sex drive as a natural and automatic phenomenon justified their demand that sexuality had to be practiced by men and women alike. Frankenthal and other authors like Judith Grünfeld (1888 - ?), a Viennese-German economist, asserted mature girls and women had an equal right to sexuality outside marriage, and that Weimar’s young generation of women already made use of this right and were therefore sexually emancipated. Grünfeld ascribed rational decision-making and matter-of-fact attitudes among Weimar’s girls and young women toward their sexuality.

Today’s young girl demands the same measure of freedom and independence as those granted to boys by their families [...] It is a fact today — one of which mothers concerned have not the slightest knowledge — that youth of all social strata already have sex with 15 to 16 years of age before the onset of emotional maturity. While their mothers felt forced by social expectations to maintain their virginity for marriage, most girls have thoroughly emancipated themselves from this idea and acted accordingly.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> “Unterhaltungspflicht,” *Frauenwelt* 6 (12 Mar. 1927): 91; and A.M. “Unterhalt,” *Frauenwelt* 7 (26 Mar. 1927): 106-7.

<sup>26</sup> ‘Eine Leserin’, “Scheidung,” *Frauenwelt* 19 (15 Oct. 1932): 446; and ‘Eine Unglückliche’, “Was soll ich tun?” *Frauenwelt* 25 (9. Dec. 1932): 592.

<sup>27</sup> Grünfeld, “Mütter und Töchter: Wandel der Geschlechtssitten,” *Frauenwelt* 11 (1 June 1929): 249 - 251, here 249.

Whereas women previously had to hide that they might have sexual desires of their own, they could now act upon these. Accordingly, in her memoir, Frankenthal wrote in the same casual manner in which she related her daily horseback riding and playing piano before attending her work at the clinic, that she satisfied her body's periodic need for sex but offered no specifics.<sup>28</sup> Leftist commentators welcomed Weimar's more relaxed sexual norms as more honest, "objective," "rational," daring, and appropriate to the modern era.<sup>29</sup> Illustrating this sexual evolution or revolution, they submitted their personal ads looking for sexual partners, while only slightly obscuring these as quests for 'acquaintances', 'friends', 'travel partners', and 'pen pals' ("Gedankenaustausch"). Some of these reader ads were as follows:

*Friendship.* Which comrade, 26 to 30 years old, would like to be a fun-loving and loyal friend to an equally fun-loving, slender blonde, 25 years old? Preferably from Berlin.<sup>30</sup>

And:

*Cloverleaf.* Three friends and members of the SAJ., 21 to 22 years old, seek the acquaintance of three female comrades (preferably in the youth movement) from Leipzig or the surrounding.<sup>31</sup>

Many such submissions, as well as other reader requests for relationship advice, implied young women engaged in sexual activity outside of marriage and no longer associated sexual

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<sup>28</sup> See Frankenthal, *Der dreifache Fluch: Jüdin, Intellektuelle, Sozialistin. Lebenserinnerungen einer Ärztin in Deutschland und im Exil* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1981), this was originally submitted to a Harvard competition called "Mein Leben in Deutschland vor und nach dem 30. Januar 1933," 96-103. According to Wickert, Frankenthal was in a long-term sexual relationship with the already married Franz Künstler. See Wickert, *Unsere Erwählten*, 1:119.

<sup>29</sup> R.G., "Partner gesucht...", *Frauenwelt* 21 (18 Oct. 1920): 491; and H. or K.W. "Ein Buch über sexuelle Not und sexuellen Fortschritt," *Die Genossin* 12 (Dec. 1931): 393.

<sup>30</sup> E.H., "Freundschaft," *Frauenwelt* 5 (Mar. 1933): 111.

<sup>31</sup> Anonymous, "Kleeblatt," *Frauenwelt* 5 (Mar. 1933): 111. The SAJ was the Socialist Workers' Youth Organization (Sozialistische Arbeiterjugend)

intercourse exclusively with marriage.<sup>32</sup> Some of these sexually active girls and women did not want to marry yet. Others did not plan on marrying their current sexual partner or rejected marriage overall as their life goal. Several reader letters suggested that single and married women had sexual partners who were already married to another.<sup>33</sup>

Leftists justified such positions on sexuality not only with references to natural and automatic processes but also claimed that sexual experience and satisfaction during teenage years and adulthood was a “strong source of happiness and vitality in life,” and necessary for human maturation.<sup>34</sup> The Socialist physician Karl Kautsky added that sexual pleasure was an ameliorative, as it counteracted the debilitating aspects of women’s allegedly “unnatural” working conditions and allowed them a measure of “social health” in modern industrial conditions.<sup>35</sup> Bebel, a founding and leading figure in the Imperial-era SPD and its demands for women’s rights, had claimed: “the satisfaction of the sex drive is a necessity for the physical and mental-emotional development of the man as well as of the woman.”<sup>36</sup> He and others professed that sexual experience, sexual satisfaction, and regular social contact with the opposite sex were necessary for the optimal physical, mental, intellectual, and emotional health of girls and women.

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<sup>32</sup> Anonymous, “Freundschaft,” and ‘Eine Freidenkerin’, “Freundschaft,” *Frauenwelt* 1 (7 Jan. 1933): 14; ‘Eine Freidenkerin’, “Freundschaft,” *Frauenwelt* 20 (1 Oct. 1932): 471; anonymous, “Briefwechsel,” *Frauenwelt* 21 (15 Oct. 1932): 497; anonymous, “Wer wandert mit uns,” *Frauenwelt* 1 (Jan. 1933), 14. On the issue of changing sexual norms as also on abortion, see Cornelia Osborne, *Cultures of Abortion in Weimar Germany* (Berghahn Books, 2007).

<sup>33</sup> ‘Fleißige Leserin der *Frauenwelt*’, “Unglückliche Eltern,” *Frauenwelt* 9 (4 May 1929): 208; “Eine Mitfühlende Leserin,” *Frauenwelt* 10 (18 May 1929): 232; and K.L., “Rechtsauskunft,” *Frauenwelt* 3 (8 Feb. 1930): 65.

<sup>34</sup> Grünfeld, “Mütter und Töchter: Wandel der Geschlechtssitten,” *Frauenwelt* 11 (1 June 1929): 249 - 251, here 249; and Grünfeld, “Sexuelle Not oder Not der Liebe,” *Frauenwelt* 18 (8 Sept. 1928): 423-424.

<sup>35</sup> Olberg reviewed here Karl Kautsky’s *Soziale Hygiene der Frau, eine sozial-medizinische Darstellung des weiblichen Geschlechtslebens* (Prag: Parteivorstand der Deutschen Sozialdemokratischen Arbeiterpartei in der Tschechoslowakischen Republic, 1931) “Ein ärztliches Frauenbüchlein,” *Frauenwelt* 9 (2 May 1931): 204.

<sup>36</sup> Bebel, *The Woman Under Socialism*, quoted in Grünfeld, “Mütter und Töchter: Wandel der Geschlechtssitten,” *Frauenwelt* 11 (1 June 1929): 249 - 251, here 251.

A Socialist trope related that, as girls developed crushes on boys, (who were presumed to be naturally more interested and informed in politics and a variety of other public matters), girls participated in their boyfriend's activities, learning about and then becoming interested in the topics of interest to boys.<sup>37</sup> In this way, girls' premarital sexual relationships led them to expand their horizons potentiating their becoming politically aware Socialist world citizens.

Wachenheim's memoir published many decades later, includes this theme. It describes her entry into Socialist ideology and politics through her relationship with Ludwig Frank (1874-1914), a lawyer, SPD Youth Movement leader, and *Reichstag* delegate. As the daughter of an upper-middle-class Jewish family converted to Protestantism, Wachenheim's education was not intended to secure her a career but rather eligibility in the upper-class protestant marriage market. Rejecting this as her life's goal, Wachenheim entered a social welfare school taught by famous non-Socialist women's rights advocates Alice Solomon and Gertrud Bäumer.<sup>38</sup> Despite her acquisition of economic independence, Wachenheim did not know politics and deeply regretted this after meeting Frank:

The first year of our friendship was hard for me because I felt my shortcomings. Being with me was for Frank, besides a pleasure, also always a disappointment. I was constantly depressed about how I had nothing to say about all the political problems they discussed and was afraid to say anything.<sup>39</sup>

She then learned about the labor movement and its politics, becoming a member of the SPD in 1914 expressly to end her feeling embarrassed during meetings with Frank (by then her fiancé) and his Social Democratic colleagues at the Josty café. After Frank's death at the war

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<sup>37</sup> Klara Blum, "Mädchenbrief," *Frauenwelt* 10 (14 May 1932): 226-227.

<sup>38</sup> Wachenheim, *Vom Großbürgertum zur Sozialdemokratie. Memoiren einer Reformistin* (Berlin: Colloquium Verlag, 1973), 27-32. Bäumer was the leader of the Federation of German Women's Association (Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine) from 1910 to 1919.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 39. By the time Wachenheim met Frank, he had been an SPD member for 12 years.

front in the same year, she became active in the local SPD women's organization. She went on to combine her schooling in welfare work (*Fürsorgerin*) as well as her experience in the wartime National Women's Service (*Nationaler Frauendienst*) with her Social Democratic engagement when she cofounded the AWO, edited its publication with the same name, and became a Berlin city counselor (*Regierungsrat*) and delegate to the Prussian Parliament (*Landtag*, 1928-1933).<sup>40</sup>

Social Democrats and Communists suggested that relaxed sexual norms allowing for premarital sex among girls and women led to more ideal, companionate, relationships, an idea made famous internationally by Ben Lindsey and Wainwright Evans in their work *The Companionate Marriage*, translated into German in 1928.<sup>41</sup> Criteria for a companionate relationship involved the couple's equality, friendship, and shared outlooks, interests, and activities, but also reached into the sexual realm. Communists and Social Democrats like Olberg (1872-1955), a feminist intellectual and journalist, contended a companionate relationship was based on "ethical sexual intercourse – even if the two sexual partners are unmarried."<sup>42</sup> Ethical sexual intercourse required "voluntary mutuality in bestowing and allowing to be bestowed [with] sexual satisfaction," meaning that women, too, should acknowledge their sexual desires,

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<sup>40</sup> She also cofounded the AWO's welfare school in 1929 and taught some of its courses. After the end of WWII, she returned from her American exile to help create the West German welfare system. Her short relationship with Frank impacted most of her adult life's engagement in politics.

<sup>41</sup> Ben B. Lindsey and Evans Wainwright, *The Companionate Marriage* (1927, Garden City, 1929), its translation *Die Kameradschaftsehe* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1928). For a discussion on controversies surrounding this movement in the American context see Rebecca L. Davis "Not Marriage at All, but Simple Harlotry:" The Companionate Marriage Controversy," *The Journal of American History* 94, no. 4 (Mar., 2008): 1137-1163. Lindsey continued a movement begun in the late nineteenth century toward marriage reform, in part by British sexologist Havelock Ellis, see Davis, "Not Marriage at All..." 1143; and Theodor Hendrik van de Velde's *Die vollkommene Ehe. Eine Studie über ihre Physiologie und Technik* (Leipzig: Benno Konegen, 1926) offering sex education for adults.

<sup>42</sup> Olberg, "Ein ärztliches Frauenbüchlein," *Frauenwelt* 9 (2 May 1931): 204.

enjoy sex, and have orgasms.<sup>43</sup> Women should no longer view sex and sexuality as a male sphere of activity and only “sacrifice” themselves to the needs of males while being passive in the sexual act.<sup>44</sup>

In support of such notions, a *DWdF* article “Do frigid women exist?” by Dr. J. Meier led, according to Meier, to (unpublished) reader letters, including by reader Ida B. from Berlin, describing their experiences with “sexual frigidity” and being left “unsatisfied” during sex with their partners.<sup>45</sup> In his published response, Dr. Meier insisted that reader Ida B. had a “right and duty, to expect full *camaraderie* from [...her] husband,” and that he should not let her do “without something that he gets from living with her.”<sup>46</sup> While avoiding the word orgasm and satisfaction, Dr. Meier insisted that married women, regardless of their age, had a right to orgasms and that it was both a husband’s and a wife’s responsibility to ensure this.

Leftists alleged an inability to engage in sexual activity and reach orgasms due to the male partner’s lack of understanding of girls’ sexual needs led to physical and emotional distress in youth (“*Jugendnot*”) and hindered their normal development.<sup>47</sup> They also diagnosed such afflictions as a result of the lack of affordable apartments for young couples. Due to an absence

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 204; anon., “Gedanken über das Erotische und die Frau,” *Frauenwelt* 22 (Nov. 1929), 519. For a very liberal Communist perspective on women’s sexuality offered outside of the women’s magazines, see Elfriede Friedländer/Ruth Fischer, *Die Sexualethik des Kommunismus: Eine prinzipielle Studie* (Vienna: Verl.-Genossenschaft “Neue Erde,” 1920). For a discussion of wider Communist perspectives on women’s sexuality, see Eric D. Weitz. “The Heroic Man and the Ever-Changing Woman: Gender and Politics in European Communism, 1917-1950,” in *Gender and Class in Modern Europe* edited by Laura L. Frader and Sonya O Rose, 311-352.

<sup>44</sup> Hugo Ramm, “Die Bäuerin,” *Die Genossin* 9 (Sept. 1931): 298-300.

<sup>45</sup> Dr. J. Meier, “Unbefriedigtsein und Geschlechtsskälte: Unterredung zwischen Frau und Arzt,” *DWdF* 5 (Oct. 1931): 28.

<sup>46</sup> Dr. J. Meier, “Es geht vielen Frauen so,” *DWdF* 5 (Oct. 1931): 28-29, here 28. Emphasis mine.

<sup>47</sup> ‘Eine die lange dieses Schicksal teilte’, “Jugend, die es schwer hat,” *Frauenwelt* 4 (18 Feb. 1933): 75-76.

of privacy in parents' apartments, young couples were forced to sexual abstinence, i.e., could not take care of their "hygienic needs," as claimed by Juchacz below.<sup>48</sup>

For many families, this [lack of their own apartment] means tortuous and tormenting limitations in their movement, in the most simple and natural satisfaction of their cultural and hygienic needs.<sup>49</sup>

Sexual abstinence in adult women purportedly resulted in "the crippling of their sexuality," which for Communists and Social Democrats alike meant that women's "lives had nothing to offer to them" and ultimately led to their "physical and emotional-mental shriveling" into virgin 'spinsters'.<sup>50</sup> *DWdF* depicted a visualization of such a "spinster" in a thin middle-aged "Nazitante," a derogatory term for an older female member of the Nazi party. She was described as skinnier and more angled than the New Woman and as without a heart, suggesting she was non-feminine, sexually undesirable, and non-maternal.<sup>51</sup>

Most commonly, the publications discussed sexual abstinence among adult women in connection with so-called "surplus women" ("*Frauenüberschuß*"), who, due to a skewed sex ratio in the population since the end of WWI, presumably had no potential marital partner available to them. Physician and frequent contributor Reni Begun claimed that every eleventh woman and Social Democratic activist Louise Schroeder alleged one in four Weimar women in marriageable ages, was such a surplus woman.<sup>52</sup> Given the breadth of the problem, Begun and

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<sup>48</sup> Juchacz, "Frau und Wohnung," *Die Genossin* 1 (Jan. 1927): 14-16

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, here 14.

<sup>50</sup> Reni Begun, "Jede 11. Frau ohne Mann," *DWdF* 7 (Dec. 1931): 4; Hans Domeyer, "Ein Dasein ohne Zweck," *Frauenwelt* 3 (Mar. 1932): 59 and 62; and Louise Schroeder repeated at the 1927 Women's Conference in Kiel that some single women are "lonely," "empty," and "without a purpose," *SPD Parteitag 1927 Kiel*, 326.

<sup>51</sup> "Frau Grämlich will Frau Gründlich reinlegen" *DWdF* 6 (1 June 1932): 15.

<sup>52</sup> Reni Begun, "Jede 11. Frau ohne Mann," *DWdF* 7 (Dec. 1931): 4. The 1925 census came up with 2.25 million more women than men according to Louise Schroeder, "Die alleinstehende Frau," *Die Genossin* 1 (Jan. 1928): 17-19. Osborne lists 2 million more women than men in the German population after WWI. *The Politics of the Body*, 81-82.



Schroeder rejected what they labeled as ridiculous middle-class expectations that such ‘excess’ women should not have extra-marital sex since they could not possibly find a marital partner to contain sexual intercourse within marriage.<sup>53</sup> Socialists thereby defined single women and unmarried mothers as having been denied the opportunity to marry and, hence, as victims of circumstances beyond their control. Therefore, these narratives on surplus women justified changing gender and sexual norms, such as single womanhood and sexual activity outside marriage.<sup>54</sup>

The short story “Pauline” by artist and writer Gertrud Ring (née Schroeder 1897 - ?), published in *DWdF*, highlighted Leftists’ positions on the impact of sex on especially single women.<sup>55</sup> In the story, Pauline was a young woman with “shriveled” feet, which gave credence to the villagers’, the narrator’s, and presumably, her own, assumption she would never have a male suitor.<sup>56</sup> And yet, she naturally wished for romance and sex, expressed in the story by her envy of dancing couples at the local pub she secretly observed from outside the pub. To the surprise of the villagers, she gave birth to an out-of-wedlock child whom the villagers referred to as “a piece of bad luck.” For blissfully happy Pauline, however, her baby was living proof that despite her physical ‘abnormality’ she experienced sex. The narration implied that Pauline was not likely to ever be the object of a man’s (likely drunken) passion again, but having experienced sexual passion even just once in her life meant she would be a happier, more fulfilled, and complex woman and mother.

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<sup>53</sup> Schroeder, “Die alleinstehende Frau,” *Die Genossin* 1 (Jan. 1928): 17-19, here 17.

<sup>54</sup> Juchacz in “Sozialistischer Kulturbund,” *AWO* 2 (15 Oct. 1926): 57.

<sup>55</sup> “Pauline,” *DWdF* 4 (Apr. 1932): 9-10.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

## Conflicting Positions on Girls' and Women's Sexuality

Some contributors to the Social Democratic magazines were of different minds about when sexual activity was appropriate for girls and women and were concerned with unbridled or mechanical female sexuality disconnected from love or marriage. Despite celebrating the younger generation's sexual freedoms, in her above quote, Grünfeld implied that girls needed "emotional maturity" before having sex and assumed that 15 and 16-year-olds hadn't achieved this yet.<sup>57</sup> Many other Social Democratic voices, especially in *AWO*, were concerned about young teenage girls' (and boys') 'premature' sexual activities, fearing they led to sexual promiscuity, prostitution, and concomitant diseases like syphilis.<sup>58</sup> They described early sexual activity to be the result of parental neglect and crowded living conditions in poor families' homes.

Grünfeld also established the specter of girls and women's excessive sexual practices, seeing superficial relationships based on sexual intercourse as widespread. Social Democratic commentators asserted that sexual intercourse should be linked to love.<sup>59</sup>

Without wanting to generalize too much, one must admit that anyone can see that women of all social sectors and all relevant ages worry a lot less about engaging in physical love. *Deep emotional affection* is no longer seen as a necessary prerequisite to sexual intercourse. Entirely in the spirit of our era, people replace the depth and steadfastness of emotional love with the frequency and variety of erotic experiences.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Grünfeld, "Mütter...", *Frauenwelt* 11 (1 June 1929): 249 - 251, here 249.

<sup>58</sup> See H. Hellinger's review of William Stern's, *Jugendliche Zeugen in Sittlichkeitsprozessen, ihre Behandlung und psychologische Begutachtung* (Leipzig, 1926), *AWO* 1 (1 Jan. 1927): 31-32; Martha Schipper, "Soziale Arbeit – Arbeiterwohlfahrt – Kinderelend: Das Jugendgerichtsgesetz," *Die Genossin* 1 (Jan. 1925): 20 -21; Dora Fabian, "Probleme der Frauenbewegung: Ein Arbeitsdienstjahr der Frau," *Die Genossin* 4 (Apr. 1925): 101-102; Marcuse, "Schützt die Frau ...," *Die Genossin* 2 (Feb. 1928): 40-42; Antonie Kähler, "Soziale Arbeit-Arbeiterwohlfahrt: Die Wohnungsfürsorgerin," *Die Genossin* 3 (Mar. 1925): 86-88; and Sofie Götze, "Neun Millionen Betten in Deutschland zu wenig," *Die Genossin* 10 (Sept. 1925): 292.

<sup>59</sup> Grünfeld, "Sexuelle Not oder Not der Liebe," *Frauenwelt* 18 (8 Sept. 1928): 423-424, here 423.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

“One-sided” and “[s]uperficial erotization” in early teenage years could allegedly lead to “emotional dulling,” during which the “soul literally shrivels up,” culminating in psychological and physical problems.<sup>61</sup>

Women, who settle for at least having the needs of their body satisfied, while the soul starves, frequently commit rape to their inner being without their male partners and the superficial observers noticing this.<sup>62</sup>

Others assessed such focus on sex as a loss of rational and civilizational control over sexuality or a primitivization of sexuality (“*sexuelle Verwilderung*”).<sup>63</sup>

One reader’s husband disapproved of his daughter’s premarital sexual relationship even though the relationship involved emotional bonds and shared activities within and outside the SAJ, reasons why the mother saw this relationship as an ideal and companionate relationship. The father, however, insisted his daughter finish acquiring job skills toward her economic independence and move out from the parental home before having a sexual relationship, with the implied expectation that marriage comes before sex.<sup>64</sup>

Extra-marital affairs and even marriages to divorced and widowed men were also a matter of dispute among readers and authors contributing to *Frauenwelt*. The parents of some women engaged in such relationships disapproved of their adult daughters’ sexual partner choices.<sup>65</sup> These wished to constrain only women’s sexual freedoms since there were no such advice requests about sons. A discussion about whether women, more so than men, punished

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<sup>61</sup> Grünfeld, “Mütter...,” *Frauenwelt* 11 (1 June 1929): 249 - 251, here 251; and *ibid.*, “Sexuelle Not oder Not der Liebe,” *Frauenwelt* 18 (8 Sept. 1928): 423-424, here 423.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> See Marcuse, “Schützt die Frau und das kommende Geschlecht,” *Die Genossin* 2 (Feb. 1928): 40-42, here 41.

<sup>64</sup> M. in Dresden, “Freundschaft,” *Frauenwelt* 10 (16 May 1931): 228.

<sup>65</sup> See ‘Ein Leser auf dem Land,’ “Wie denkt Ihr Frauen darüber,” *Frauenwelt* 5 (5 Mar. 1932): 108; and responses such as by ‘Helene in Württemberg’ and ‘Anna in Schlesien’ in *Frauenwelt* 7 (2 Apr. 1932): 160.

married women's sexual indiscretions with gossip illustrated that some Socialist readers continued to uphold sexual double standards. They condoned or excused married men's sexual digressions while simultaneously expecting iron steadfastness from married women, identifying these as anchors of their families' long-lasting existence and well-being.<sup>66</sup>

Communist and Social Democratic activists also conformed to more traditional expectations of sexual practices by simply not writing about their personal lives and practices in the Socialist women's publications. In their autobiographies, usually written after the end of Weimar, they more willingly related (even if still in ciphers) their own and others' norms-breaking sexual lives.<sup>67</sup> For example, years after Frank's death, Wachenheim was in a long-term relationship with the already-married Hans Staudinger, and *Frauenwelt's* editor Toni Sender was Robert Dißmann's girlfriend even though he was married.<sup>68</sup> Hertha Kraus, a social scientist and welfare administration official in Cologne who submitted articles to *AWO*, had a long-term homosexual relationship with Gertrud Schulz but never addressed the subject of same-sex love in her writings.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> See 'Helene in Württemberg', *Frauenwelt* 7 (2 Apr. 1932): 160.

<sup>67</sup> Ruth Fischer, who in 1919 briefly worked in the KPD's women's bureau and its *Die Kommunistin*, published her views on *Communist Sexual Ethics (Die Sexualethik des Kommunismus)* in a separate work in which she argued that humans by nature are polygamous and only monogamous as a result of their 'civilization' within societies and that therefore it should be left up to the individuals to decide, without forms of social and state discipline — except for in cases to do with sexual violence and sexually transmitted diseases — how to live out their sexual lives. See Friedländer/Fischer, *Die Sexualethik*, 49. Communists were at times attacked for their sexual norms. See Anonymous, "Geschlechtsmoral in Sowjetrußland," *Die Kommunistin* 10 (June 1925): 40.

<sup>68</sup> See Christl Wickert, *Unsere Erwählten: Sozialdemokratische Frauen im Deutschen Reichstag und im Preußischen Landtag 1919 bis 1933* (Göttingen: SOVEC, 1986), 1: 120-121.

<sup>69</sup> See Gerd Schirmmacher, *Hertha Kraus — Zwischen den Welten. Biographie einer Sozialwissenschaftlerin und Quäkerin, 1897-1968* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2002), 20. For articles by Kraus, see "Freiwillige und sinnvolle Sparsamkeit," *AWO* 3 (1. Nov. 1926): 72-75; *ibid.*, "Das Problem der Pflichtarbeit in der kommunalen Arbeitsfürsorge," *AWO* 18 (1930), 545-551; and *ibid.*, "Erwerbslosenfragen in USA," *AWO* 8 (1932): 243.

Homosexuality was not a topic in the women's publications at all, even though well-known homosexual authors and advocates for reforming §175 of the Penal code (the paragraph criminalizing sodomy) published articles in *Frauenwelt*, *Die Genossin*, and *AWO*. One of these advocates was Magnus Hirschfeld, the co-founder in 1897 of the first German organization promoting homosexual rights, the Scientific Humanitarian Committee (Wissenschaftlich-Humanitäres Komitee), and of the Institute for Sexual Research in 1919.<sup>70</sup> Readers either understood or concurred, and therefore did not write about homosexuality. Only a single reader submission in *Frauenwelt* possibly indicates a same-sex partnership between two Jewish women in their 40s: a licensed nurse and a woman, "who is a good housekeeper and very hardworking and businesslike," who wanted to move from the Taunus region to a large city where they would apparently work and live together.<sup>71</sup>

### **Contraception, Abortion, and Sterilization**

Despite Frankenthal's association of women's sexual physiology with childbearing, Social Democrats and Communists adamantly insisted that separating sexual intercourse from reproduction was essential for girls and women to experience sex as a satisfying activity. Leftists' uncoupling of procreation from sex went further by linking it to their goal of constructing New Women. To ensure women could live modern, eugenically healthy, happy, and fulfilled professional, political, and leisure-filled lives until they were ready for the joys and obligations of motherhood, Social Democrats and Communists insisted women best prevent pregnancies and "regulate births" ("*Geburtenregelung*"), or "rationalize sex" – meaning women

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<sup>70</sup> For a discussion on the role of Hirschfeld in the social construction of an innately understood homosexual identity from what had previously been seen as merely sexually excessive to perverted same-sex acts, see Robert Beachy, "The German Invention of Homosexuality," *The Journal of Modern History* 82, no. 4 Science and the Making of Modern Culture (Dec. 2010): 801-838.

<sup>71</sup> "Wer will uns?" *Frauenwelt* 10 (16 May 1931): 232.

should have fewer and only planned pregnancies.<sup>72</sup> This would give women time to take care of their own bodies and minds before and after the arrival of their children, recover from pregnancies, and assure that their offspring grew up with sufficient maternal attention and in a more appropriate socio-economic and material environment.

Given their memberships in coalition governments with Catholic Centrists (Zentrum) and the conservative German People's Party (DVP), Social Democrats were careful to only make politically achievable demands concerning reproductive rights, calling for the legalization of contraceptive advertising, and some also for the de-criminalization of first-trimester abortions performed by specialists in clinical settings.<sup>73</sup> Whereas at women's conferences, some Social Democratic women activists also demanded the legalization of all abortions, articles in *Die Genossin* and *Frauenwelt* insisted that abortions were dangerous to the health of the mother and should not be used as a habitual form of birth control. Even though abortions were illegal and so was advertising for contraceptives, both Social Democratic and Communist women's magazines

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<sup>72</sup> Hedwig Schwarz, "Geburtenregelung," *Frauenwelt* 22 (22 Oct. 1927): 335; E.C. "Die neue Mutterschaft: Geburtenregelung als Kulturproblem," *Frauenwelt* 15 (27 July 1929): 350-353; Marcuse, "Einiges über Schwangerschaftsverhütung," *Frauenwelt* 4 (18 Feb. 1933): 80-81. For works on the Weimar advocacy for the rationalization of sex see Willem Melching, "'A New Morality': Left-Wing Intellectuals on Sexuality in Weimar Germany," *Journal of Contemporary History* 25, no. 1 (Jan. 1990): 69-85; Atina Grossmann, *Reforming Sex: The German Movement for Birth Control and Abortion Reform, 1920-1950* (Oxford UP, 1995); *ibid.*, "'Satisfaction is Domestic Happiness': Mass Working-Class Sex Reform Organizations in the Weimar Republic," in *Towards the Holocaust: the Social and Economic Collapse of the Weimar Republic* edited by Michael N. Dobkowski and Isidor Wallimann, 265-293 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983); Renate Bridenthal, Grossmann, and Marion Kaplan eds., *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984); Grossmann, "The New Woman, the New Family and the Rationalization of Sexuality: the Sex Reform Movement in Germany, 1928-1933" (Ph.D. Diss. Rutgers University, 1984); Peter Weingart, "The Rationalization of Sexual Behavior: The Institutionalization of Eugenic Thought in Germany," *Journal of the History of Biology* 20 Nr. 2 (Summer 1987): 159-193; and in the Austrian context Helmut Gruber, "Sexuality in 'Red Vienna': Socialist Party Conceptions and Programs and Working-Class Life, 1920-34," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 31 (Spring 1987): 37-68.

<sup>73</sup> See anonymous, "Wieviel Kinder? Eine objektive Darstellung des Problems der Geburtenregulierung. Unter Benutzung der neuesten, zum Teil noch unveröffentlichten, Statistiken." *Frauenwelt* 9 (3 May 1930): 201 and 206; Walter Friedländer, "Sittlichkeit und Strafrecht," *AWO* 4 (Feb. 1928): 108-111; and Susi Bork, "§ 218 -- Geburtenregelung?" *Frauenwelt* 2 (24 Jan. 1931): 33.

regularly offered barely obscured ads for condoms as well as more obtusely phrased ads for abortion providers (see Figure 63).

**Ich helfe Ihnen** Anzeigenschluß  
 Gummi, Tropfen, Tee Preisbroschüre durch für die nächste Nr. am  
 Wobbehan & Weber G.m.b.H. Berlin W 39 199 4. 1. 1932

**Umsonst** senden wir Ihnen uns. illustr. Katalog über hyg. u. sanitäre Gummi-Artikel.

**Sanitätshaus Medico**  
 Nürnberg A. 5  
 Karolinenstraße 49.

**Hygiene-Artikel**  
 Preisliste gratis  
 Herta-Versand, München  
 Marsstraße 2511.

**Gummiwaren**  
 hyg. Art. Sensationspreis.  
 Katalog gratis. Gummi-Kühler  
 BERLIN N 65 117

**Wenn ich das tragen könnte!**  
 Sie schänken sich das jedes Kleidungsstück elegant und vornehm wirkt, das ist ein verführerischer Wunsch.

**Dr. Ernst Richters Frühstückskräutertee**  
 das angebotene, arztlich empfohlene Morgengetränk, hilft dazu, Ihr schmerzhaft, gut, erfrischt das Blut und bringt das träge Fett zum Schwitzen. Sie nehmen langsam ab, werden gesünder, glücklicher und fühlen sich jung und wohl. Paket Mk 2,-, Kurpackung (6fach) Mk 10,-, extrastark Mk 2,50, Mk 12,50. In Apotheken und Drogerien.

**DR. ERNST RICHTER'S FRÜHSTÜCKSKRAUTERTEE**  
 „Hermos“ Fabrikpharm. k. u. m. Präparate  
 München 161, Gullstraße



Figure 63: Ads for contraceptive “rubber goods” (“Gummiwaren”), “hygiene articles,” and abortion assistance “I will help you” (“Ich helfe Ihnen”) in *DWdF* 1 (Jan. 1930): rear cover. This ad became more explicit over time, mentioning aiding with pregnancy.

Throughout the Weimar era, but notably in 1931, Communists undeterredly demanded abortion at any stage of gestation be legalized. They asserted that girls and women had the right to control their bodies (“*Dein Körper gehört Dir!*”) and should not be punished whether they had the procedure in a hospital or at home.<sup>74</sup> They further demanded abortions be offered free of

<sup>74</sup> *Dein Körper gehört Dir!* Interview mit Dr. Else Kienle,” *DWdF* 1 (June 1931): 2; Alfred Apfel, *Abtreibung oder Verhütung? Die Geschichte einer Broschüre*,” *DWdF* 1 (June 1931): 3; *ibid.*, “Abtreibungsprozesse und kein Ende,” *DWdF* 4 (Sept. 1931), 6-7; anon., “Die Agentin und der Paragraph,” *DWdF* 1 (Jan. 1932): 4-5; Begun, “Aerztin und §218,” *DWdF* 3 (Mar. 1932): 28; K. Duncker, “Um die Abtreibungsstrafe,” *Die Kommunistin* 5 (May 1926): 2; anon., “Aus der Organisation: Zum Kampf gegen die Paragraphen 218/219,” *Die Kommunistin* 13 (1 July 1922): 101; and anon., “Aus der Organisation: Frauenreichsausschuß-Sitzung,” *Die Kommunistin* 4 (15 Feb. 1923): 31. On this, see also Grossmann, “German Communism and New Women: Dilemmas and Contradictions,” in Helmut

charge by medical professionals at public hospitals, and women have the option to undergo voluntary sterilization to limit their fertility.

The previously mainly middle-class ideal of the nuclear family with one to two children had become the norm by Weimar, meaning most middle-class and working-class couples were already separating sexual intercourse from procreation.<sup>75</sup> However, in broader public discourses, the New Woman was frequently attacked for her practices of “free love” without consequences. She was depicted as selfishly seeking her pleasure to the point of hedonism and gender confusion, and as refusing to fulfill her maternal ‘obligations.’<sup>76</sup>

Social Democrats and Communists, therefore, felt compelled to justify their assertion women could rightfully practice a separation of sexual intercourse from reproduction. They used a variety of strategies and explanations. One of their primary justifications involved a selective valorization of natural processes vs. rational civilizational control over them. As demonstrated above, late nineteenth-century through Weimar-era scientific narratives claimed that women

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Gruber and Pamela Graves eds. *Women and Socialism, Socialism and Women: Europe Between the Two World Wars* 135 - 168 (New York: Berghahn Books, 1998).

<sup>75</sup> See anon., “Wieviel Kinder...,” *Frauenwelt* 9 (3 May 1930): 201 and 206. See also Ute Frevert, *Women in German History: From Bourgeois Emancipation to Sexual Liberation* (New York: Berg, 1989), 158 and 185-190; and Helen Boak, *Women in the Weimar Republic* (Manchester UP, 2013), 207-232.

<sup>76</sup> See Cornelia Usborne, “Rebellious Girls and Pitiably Women: Abortion Narratives in Weimar Popular Culture,” *German History* 23, no. 3 (Aug. 2005): 321-338; Adelheid von Saldern, “Modernization as Challenge: Perceptions and Reactions of German Social Democratic Women,” in Helmut Gruber and Pamela Graves eds. *Women and Socialism...*, 95-134 (New York: Berghahn Books, 1998), 118-119; Lynne Frame, “‘Gretchen, Girl, Garçonne?’ Weimar Science and Popular Culture in Search of the Ideal New Woman,” in *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture* edited by Katharina von Ankum, 12-40 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Anke Gleber, “Female Flanerie and the Symphony of the City,” in *Women in the Metropolis...*, 67-88; Geiger, Ruth-Esther, and Sigrid Weigel eds., *Sind das noch Damen? Vom gelehrten Frauenzimmer-Journal zum feministischen Journalismus* (Munich: Frauenbuchverlag, 1981); Renate Bridenthal, Grossmann, and Marion Kaplan, *When Biology*, 13; Berghaus, “Girllkultur;” Sutton, *The Masculine Woman in Weimar Germany* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011); Dorothy Rowe, “Desiring Berlin: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Germany,” in Marsha Meskimmon and Shearer West eds., *Visions of the “Neue Frau:” Women and the Visual Arts in Weimar Germany*, 143-164 (Menton, England: Scholar Press, 1995); and Maria Tatar, *Lustmord: Sexual Murder in Weimar Germany* (Princeton UP, 1995).



were entirely subject to their reproductive physiology, which was supposedly especially

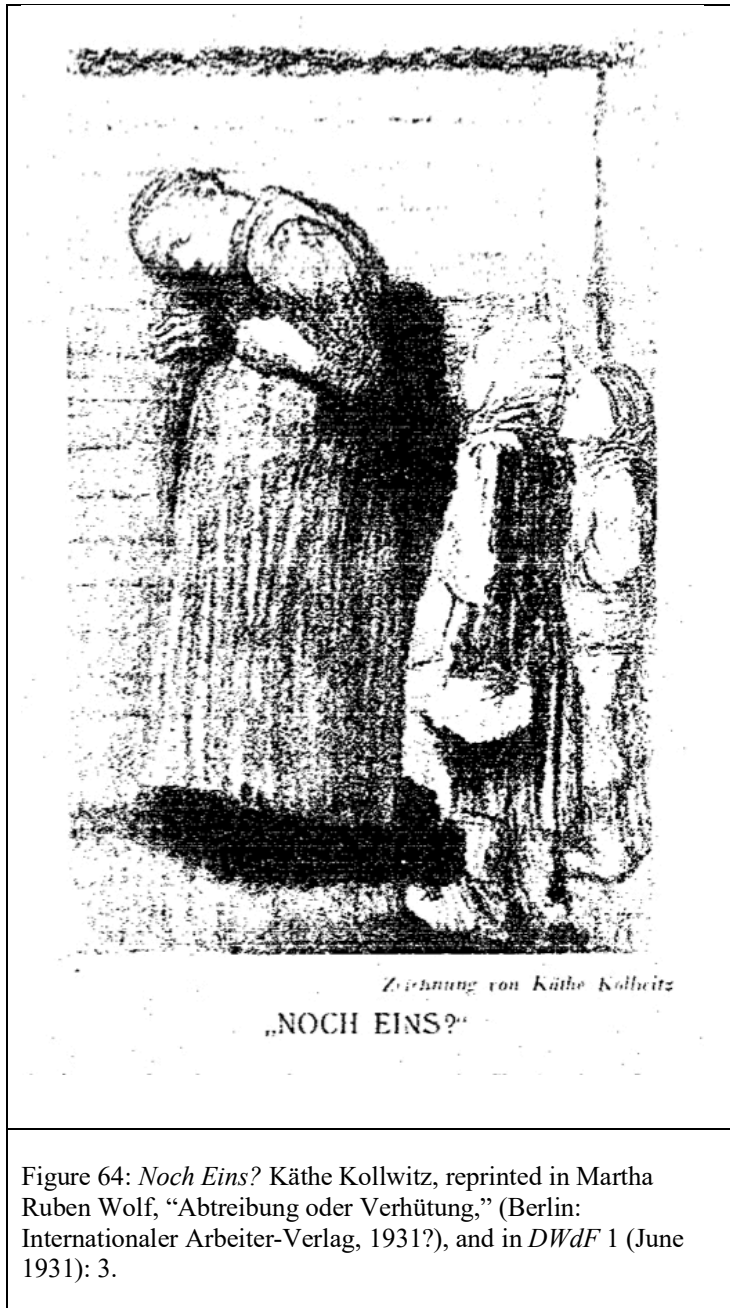


Figure 64: *Noch Eins?* Käthe Kollwitz, reprinted in Martha Ruben Wolf, “Abtreibung oder Verhütung,” (Berlin: Internationaler Arbeiter-Verlag, 1931?), and in *DWdF* 1 (June 1931): 3.

manifested during pregnancy. We have also seen that leftists evaluated sexuality as a positive natural, instinctual drive that had to be allowed to express itself. When it came to pregnancy however, Social Democratic and Communist narratives suggested – not unlike broader popular discourses – those instinctual biological processes taking control over women’s bodies and lives, creating “birthing machines” (“*Gebärmaschine*”), belonged to previous historical eras, the exterior of Europe among less developed or “primitive” societies, and past working-class societies.<sup>77</sup> Women living in “civilized societies”

<sup>77</sup> Ernst B. Weithaas, “Elternschaftsverantwortung,” *Frauenwelt* 10 (May 1927): 143; anon., “Zwang zur Geburt,” *DWdF* 5 (May 1932), 8; E.C., “Die neue Mutterschaft: Geburtenregelung als Kulturproblem,” *Frauenwelt* 15 (27 July 1929): 350-351; and Hans W. Fischer, “Völkerebstmord?” *Frauenwelt* 11 (21 May 1930): 243. According to Nancy Nenno, some scientific discourses in broader public discourses, including those by Freud, also portrayed the female body in modern European urban spaces as a “liminal space, a meeting-place for the primitive and the civilized.” Such primitivity was endowed with both negative and positive attributes, such as vitality, energy, naturalness. “Femininity, the Primitive, and Modern Urban Space: Josephine Baker in Berlin,” in *Women in the Metropolis*, 145-161, here 146.

# Die Kommunistin

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

Nr. 11

Die Kommunistin erscheint am 1. und 15. jeden Monats.  
Eingangsnummer 50 Hfg. Die Vorkosten betragen 2,50 Mkt. ohne Postgebühr.

Berlin, 1. Juni 1922

Verlag: VVA, Vereinigung Internationaler Verleger - Kullback & Co. G. (Krause Verlag), Berlin SW 68, Platanenallee 17. — Herabsetzung für die Arbeiter: Werthe Krenkel, Berlin

Jahrg. 4



Wozu der kapitalistische Staat immer mehr Menschen braucht!



Was der Staat für die proletarischen Kinder tut!

Figure 65: "Wozu der kapitalistische Staat immer mehr Menschen braucht! Was der Staat für die proletarischen Kinder tut!" *Die Kommunistin* 11 (1 June 1922): title page.

("Kulturvölker" and "Kulturländer"), with which Social Democrats and Communists meant mainly economically developed Western/ Northern European and North American nations,

should instead exercise rational and civilizational control over their bodies.<sup>78</sup> They should prevent and reduce the number of pregnancies with the aid of contraception, abortion, and voluntary sterilization (the latter two mainly Communists).

Communists used the pitiable, physically unappealing, and down-cast Kollwitzian working-class woman – burdened with a swollen abdomen and at least two other children, all dressed in rags and presumably poorly fed – to illustrate their position that allowing nature to maintain control over women’s bodies was highly damaging to women’s and their children’s happiness, health, and modern beauty (see Figures 64 and 65).<sup>79</sup> They argued that twentieth-century European capitalist society, supported by the ‘warmongering’ German government and the ‘reactionary’ church, artificially created and maintained this anachronistic working-class woman.<sup>80</sup> By keeping her ignorant through the criminalization of advertising for contraceptives, and by prohibiting abortion in paragraphs 218 and 219 of the Weimar Penal Code, these forces in power kept her hostage to her everbearing reproductive system.<sup>81</sup> The government did so, according to Communists, not in her and her offspring’s interests, but rather to continue wage-depressing labor competition among the poor masses (for the sake of capitalists’ profits the government was supporting), and to have enough human “cannon fodder” for future wars (see Figure 65).<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Julian Markuse, “Mutterschaftsnöte,” *Frauenwelt* 19 (22 Sept. 1928): 444 and 447; and Hirschfeld, “Freie Ehe,” *Frauenwelt* 23 (17 Nov. 1928): 538-539.

<sup>79</sup> M.G. “Dein Körper...,” *DWdF* 1 (June 1931): 2; and Clara Bohm-Schuch, “Geburtenregelung,” *Die Genossin* 3 (Mar. 1929): 88-89.

<sup>80</sup> S., “Gegen die Pfaffenherrschaft,” *Die Kommunistin* 19 (1 Oct. 1922): 146-147.

<sup>81</sup> The Penal Code’s Pornography laws in § 184.3 could be linked to contraception advertising, associating its use with prostitution and extra-marital sex. See Osborne, *The Politic of the Body*, 80.

<sup>82</sup> Anon., “Paragraph 218,” *Die Kommunistin* 16 (Aug. 1925): 63.

Social Democrats and Communists prioritized – in sync with broader interwar discourses – the quality of the population, of both mothers and offspring. As scholars have illustrated, this new ethos was in stark contrast to the prewar prioritization of pronatalist and populationist demands. By Weimar, pregnancy had come to be seen as an abnormal health burden to women in broader and leftist discourses. Social Democratic and Communist physicians, and welfare, political, and labor activists frequently reported that giving birth, and having miscarriages and abortions – without the care of medical professionals – threatened women’s health and survival as death rates due to childbed fever increased, even doubling in the 1920s.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, they argued with each occurrence of pregnancy the female body was further depleted of its strengths (“*Raubbau*”), cumulatively making it seriously ill and hindering a woman’s ability to take care of herself and her children.<sup>84</sup> One article illustrated that a Dr. Merck, when accused by a court of having performed unnecessary sterilizations on women, justified his actions by claiming he saved sick women by preventing them from having further debilitating pregnancies.<sup>85</sup> According to him as well as the author of the article, only sterilization allowed the women’s health to recover.

In each case, Dr. Merck argued that [voluntary] sterilization was medically necessary. As a conscientious physician, he could not permit the women to endure further pregnancies, given their poor health. However, the gentlemen from the ivory tower [“*Herren Universitätsprofessoren*”] were of a different opinion. They merely read the women’s files and saw the women only after their sterilization had caused a blossoming of their health. Since the women no longer appeared severely sick, these expert witnesses claimed that the afflictions of the sterilized women could not have been severe enough to necessitate sterilization [...] However, is there an easily recognizable line between mild and severe illnesses in all cases? In reality, every one of these women suffered from a

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<sup>83</sup> Anon., “Bevölkerungspolitisches: Gesundheitsstatistik,” *Die Genossin* 1 (Jan. 1925): 17.

<sup>84</sup> See Dr. H. Grünbaum-Sachs, “Erholungsfürsorge für kinderreiche Mütter,” *AWO* 2 (15 Jan. 1928): 54-55.

<sup>85</sup> H.R., “Unfruchtbarmachung ist strafbar! In Deutschland,” *DWdF* 8 (Aug. 1932): 6-7, here 6.

brutal disease named hunger, unemployment, undernourishment, and living conditions beneath the dignity of a human.<sup>86</sup>

Other physicians too claimed that only by using contraception and having access to abortion and sterilization (Communists) at state-of-the-art hospitals with trained specialists – and not at home settings provided by “quacks” (“*Kurpfuscher*”) – could working-class women rest and regenerate their bodies before, between, and after pregnancies, to return them to a healthy and youthful looking state.<sup>87</sup>

Communists also maintained that limiting women’s fertility through easy access to legal pregnancy prevention and termination gave women time to devote to themselves, to acquire an education, a career, and valuable culture, in addition to participating in Socialist politics. Women thereby worked on “their enormous world-transforming task” of creating a utopian Socialist society of the New Human, which involved more than birthing and raising healthy children.<sup>88</sup> Reform-minded activists argued the practice of “regulating births” also granted women and their partners time to establish companionate relationships and lead fulfilled intellectual, sexual, and emotional lives before the arrival of the first child.<sup>89</sup>

Social Democrats and Communists also pointed out that abortion – despite its illegality – was a mass phenomenon among all social sectors, with Weimar commentators estimating nearly 1 million abortions performed in 1928. Communists in particular saw a major split in access to

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> See Apfel, “Abtreibungsprozesse und kein Ende,” *DWdF* 4 (1 Sept. 1931): 6-7; anon., “Frauen in Not,” *DWdF* 4 (1 Sept. 1931): 7; Fritz Schiff, “Frauen in Not,” *DWdF* 6 (1 Nov. 1931): 16-17; Henriette (“Reni”) Begun, “Wann ist eine Frau unfruchtbar?” *DWdF* 7 (July 1932): 28; and an anonymous author advocated for limiting the number of children but against doing so with abortion, “Wieviel Kinder...,” *Frauenwelt* 9 (3 May 1930): 201 and 206.

<sup>88</sup> Hedwig Schwarz, “Geburtenregelung,” *Frauenwelt* 22 (22 Oct. 1927): 335.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

safe abortions along socio-economic lines. Claiming middle-class women bribed highly trained doctors in private clinics to discretely end their pregnancies or sterilize them, they asserted that women of lower socioeconomic sectors (“*Minderbemittelte*”), without similar funds, were less adept at circumventing laws.<sup>90</sup> Communists, therefore, characterized the criminalization of abortion and sterilization and the advertising of contraceptives as targeted forms of policing only working-class women’s sexual freedoms.

The court’s explanation for its verdict is as follows: “A sterilization for these reasons goes against the moral and religious views of the largest portion of the population: when the normal consequences of sexual intercourse are eliminated this broadly, the danger exists that sterilized women will follow their [animal] sexual drive in an uninhibited manner, resulting in a loosening of sexual morals [“*Verwilderung auf sexuellem Gebiet*”]. Therefore, only the propertied classes appear to be allowed to enjoy sexual pleasure, an experience that in proletarian women breaks proper social norms.”<sup>91</sup>

As made evident above, one Social Democratic and Communist strategy was to associate contraception, abortion, and sterilization (the latter only in Communist discourses) with married women and mothers. Far from being single libertine women rejecting their maternal obligations by prioritizing their next dance hall visit or other popular leisure practice, women in need of fertility control were poor working-class wives who were already mothers of multiple children but without the financial resources to feed and care for yet another child.<sup>92</sup>

*Lectures on morality, pious expressions, reactionary legal paragraphs, or aggressive nationalist language cannot fabricate a desire to have children. No amount of coaxing will work where the economic conditions do not permit it. In such situations, the refusal to have a child is due to an inability to raise it. Today, the working-class woman no*

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<sup>90</sup> Marcuse, “Einiges über Schwangerschaftsverhütung,” *Frauenwelt* 4 (18 Feb. 1933): 80-81; anon., “Die Abtreibungsparagraphen müssen fallen,” *Die Kommunistin* 8 (15 Apr. 1922): 59-60; Apfel, “Abtreibung...,” *DWdF* 1 (June 1931): 3; *ibid.*, “Abtreibungsprozesse und kein Ende,” *DWdF* 4 (1 Sept. 1931): 6-7; anon., “Frauen in Not,” *DWdF* 4 (1 Sept. 1931): 7; Fritz Schiff, “Frauen in Not,” *DWdF* 6 (1 Nov. 1931): 16-17; and anon., “Wieviel Kinder...,” *Frauenwelt* 9 (3 May 1930): 201 and 206.

<sup>91</sup> H.R., “Unfruchtbarmachung...,” *DWdF* 8 (Aug. 1932): 6-7, here 6.

<sup>92</sup> Dr. Kienle justified abortion with women’s socio-economic and health conditions, and not as a principle and women’s right. M.G. “Dein Körper...,” *DWdF* 1 (June 1931): 2.

longer knows how to procure essential goods her family needs. Unemployment, the lack of affordable apartments, and miserable living conditions force the masses to maintain small families. Only bitter poverty can artificially curb the powerful reproductive drive. Where the socioeconomic conditions are healthy, where no exploitation exists anymore, there is no population loss. The Soviet Union, with a population of 150 million, has a yearly population increase of 3.5 million and a birth rate of 42.5 per thousand people.<sup>93</sup>

Communists, therefore, called on the Weimar State to legalize abortions chosen for economic reasons. Using language from eugenics, Communist and Social Democratic voices supported this demand by claiming that children born to families unable to provide sufficient nutrition to all of their children could not grow up to be “healthy, viable, and productive humans” (“*lebenstüchtige Menschen*”) but instead suffered hunger, illness, and premature death.<sup>94</sup> Social Democrats claimed and Communists implied that contraception also prevented the gestation and birth of “inferior children” (“*minderwertiger Kinder*”).<sup>95</sup> Planning and

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<sup>93</sup> Dr. Med Reni Begun, “Der Wille zum Kinde,” *DWdF* 1 (Jan. 1932): 26.

<sup>94</sup> Anonymous but likely Juchacz, “Kommunale Sexualberatung,” *Die Genossin* 1 (Jan. 1925): 18. Eugenicists, or ‘race hygienists’ believed the German population showed symptoms of physical and mental ‘degeneration’. They proposed ‘positive’ eugenic measures in the form of encouragements toward the bearing and raising of healthy children among those they believed were biologically and culturally, i.e., the socio-economically, superior (the middle classes). These measures were to be combined with ‘negative’ eugenic measures – such as marriage prohibitions, forced or voluntary sterilization, and isolation in mental or corrective institutions – to limit the reproductive capacities of those they believed had ‘hereditary defects’, were ‘degenerate’, ‘inferior’, or ‘unfit’ for reproduction. Among these they placed “cripples,” criminals, sexual ‘deviants’, alcoholics, the homeless, vagrants, people with venereal diseases, and poorly-defined “feeble-minded” and “asocials;” most tended to be members of the poor and working classes. For a discussion of German eugenics see Paul Weindling, *Health, Race, and German Politics between National Unification and Nazism, 1870 – 1945* (Cambridge UP: 1989), 6; and Sheila Faith Weiss, “The Race Hygiene Movement in Germany,” *Osiris* 3 (1987): 193-236, here 204. Weiss and Weindling argue that eugenicists and believers in race hygiene spanned the political spectrum, including Social Democrats but few Communists. The term “degeneration” was first used by psychiatrist Bénédict Augustin Morel in the middle of the nineteenth century. See Frank W. Stahnisch, “The Early Eugenics Movement and Emerging Professional Psychiatry: Conceptual Transfers and Personal Relationships between Germany and North America, 1880s to 1930s,” *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History = Bulletin Canadien D'histoire De La Medecine* (2014): 17–40. The term “eugenics” was coined in 1883 by Francis Galton, a British Social Darwinist scientist, mathematician, and anthropologist. See Chris Renwick, “From Political Economy to Sociology: Francis Galton and the Social-Scientific Origins of Eugenics,” *The British Journal for the History of Science* 44, no. 3 (Sept. 2011): 343-369; John C. Waller, “Gentlemanly Men of Science: Sir Francis Galton and the Professionalization of the British Life-Sciences,” *Journal of the History of Biology* 34, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 83-114.

<sup>95</sup> Anonymous but likely Juchacz, “Kommunale Sexualberatung,” *Die Genossin* 1 (Jan. 1925): 18.

“regulating births” was necessary to deliver only healthy children without “hereditary diseases and problems, and [who] have vitality for life.”<sup>96</sup>

In our last edition, our readers learned everything worth knowing about the question of infertility and sterilization. Today this question is crucial for the working woman because capitalist society doesn't give her the means, and therefore the right, to choose to have as many children as she wants and raise them into healthy and productive humans. This society simultaneously takes away her right to decide about her own body and forces her to bear children, even when she knows beforehand that she will not be able to feed and clothe them.<sup>97</sup>

Most Communist narratives on abortion prioritized melodramatic representations of women in desperation choosing abortion, thereby speaking to the emotions of readers and viewers.

The title page shows a pregnant proletarian woman. In her face, the fight between her primitive maternal instinct and her fear of the misery her child will suffer from is evident. With lips bit together in stern determination, she knocks at the doctor's door or that of a wise woman. The child shall not be born into this world.<sup>98</sup>

Other Communist language identified women using contraceptives, abortion, and sterilization as rational decision-makers and planners, hence modern New Women, which Social Democrats reserved for women who prevented pregnancies in the first place.<sup>99</sup> In 1931, at the height of the Communist-led broad movement to legalize abortion, Dr. Else Kienle, who had been imprisoned for providing illegal abortions and then freed after her hunger strike, argued in a *DWdF* article titled “Your Body Belongs to You!” (“*Dein Körper gehört Dir!*”), that:

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<sup>96</sup> Ernst B. Weithaas, “Elternschaftsverantwortung,” *Frauenwelt* 10 (May 1927): 143.

<sup>97</sup> H.R., “Unfruchtbarmachung...,” *DWdF* 8 (Aug. 1932): 6-7, here 6.

<sup>98</sup> Apfel, “Abtreibung...,” *DWdF* 1 (June 1931): 3 - 4, here 3.

<sup>99</sup> “Medizinischer Briefkasten,” *Frauenwelt* 1 (Jan. 1932): 14; and anon., “Wieviel Kinder...,” *Frauenwelt* 9 (3 May 1930): 201 and 206. H. R., “Unfruchtbarmachung...,” *DWdF* 8 (Aug. 1932): 6-7; E.T., “Gegen die Abtreibungsparagraphen,” *Die Kommunistin* 4 (25 Feb. 1921): 26-27; G.G.L., “Wir fordern den Schutz der Mutterschaft,” *Die Kommunistin* 5 (1 Mar. 1922): 36; and *Die Kommunistin* 6 Sonderausgabe (Mar. 1922): 6-7.



Many [of those receiving abortions] were women with several children; hardly any woman was there with her first pregnancy. I think that especially modern woman's sense of responsibility urges her to bring a child into this world only when there is a guarantee that the child will receive proper care.<sup>100</sup>

In Social Democratic language contraception, and Communist language also sterilization and abortion (performed by physicians in hospitals) were thus “social hygiene” methods for assuring living children received a healthy upbringing and thrived. The fewer children women had the better they would be able to care for them. Articles associated lower birthrates with decreasing infant mortality during Weimar, and some authors opined that allowing women's bodies to reproduce unchecked was cruel to the children and went against the national imperative against waste and inefficiency.<sup>101</sup>

The family with 12 children, only half of them surviving to adulthood, is an insurmountable obstacle to the proletariat striving to acquire culture. Paying birthing expenses and those of children doomed to an early death requires many sacrifices, all for nothing. Because of this, every year the national economy loses immeasurable amounts of women's productivity.<sup>102</sup>

Communists observed that as long as mothers could not guarantee their children would have access to improved living standards in capitalist Weimar Germany, they were entirely justified in making rational decisions to limit their fertility. In the Soviet Union, thanks to the legal availability of abortions and the socialization of reproductive work through supportive state provisions for all citizens, there were never any concerns about children's survival or healthy upbringing with sufficient food, appropriate housing, and proper child care and education. Therefore, Soviet women never had to put rational breaks on their desire to conceive, bear, and

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<sup>100</sup> M.G. “Dein Körper...,” *DWdF* 1 (June 1931): 2.

<sup>101</sup> Begun paraphrasing Dr. Dührssen, “Wann ist eine Frau unfruchtbar?” *DWdF* 7 (July 1932): 28; and Moses, “Die gesundheitlichen Verhältnisse der deutschen Familie,” *Frauenwelt* 4 (25 Feb. 1928): 77.

<sup>102</sup> Hedwig Schwarz, “Geburtenregelung,” *Frauenwelt* 22 (22 Oct. 1927): 335.

raise children.<sup>103</sup> In capitalist Weimar Germany however, which had privatized all reproductive functions in the hands of women, and was not helping its poorer populations with their living conditions, women had to be cautious.

One convinced Communist reader, possibly a local KPD woman functionary in Frankfurt, echoed this sentiment in her letter to *DWdF* describing the poverty and what she felt capitalist injustices one family had to bear with: a mother of 2 children gave birth in candlelight because the city had cut off the family's utilities; and were it not for dozens of Communist volunteers who prevented pawn shop employees and the police from entering the apartment, she would have done so without any furniture in her home.<sup>104</sup> The reader proclaimed to have learned the following lesson from that family's experience:

I no longer can have children (I am 48 years old and widowed), but I did not rest until my two married children started using protection. Having children will be a joy only once we have a Soviet Germany.<sup>105</sup>

### **Marriage**

The Social Democratic and Communist position that girls and women had a right to sexual satisfaction also influenced their proclaimed ideal heterosexual relationship. Unlike the traditional, institutionalized middle-class marriage; in which sexual intercourse was strongly linked to procreation, and in which the husband held the legally-defined dominant position; Leftists proposed a companionate marriage based on equal rights and freedoms and a separation of sex from reproduction.

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<sup>103</sup> Marianne Gundermann, "Für Brot Frieden und Freiheit," *DWdF* 3 (1 Mar. 1932): 3-6.

<sup>104</sup> Paula Rink, "Entbindung bei Stearinlicht," *DWdF* 8 (Aug. 1932): 13.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.* I assume that Paula Rink was involved in the local KPD organization because she used a slogan that was commonly used in *DWdF* and elsewhere by Communists: that in the Soviet Union women could not only afford – without financial worries – but that it would also be a "joy" for women to allow their maternal instincts to unfold and have children.

Even though the Weimar Constitution declared women's equality with men, the 1896 German Civil Code (*Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch*) continued to regulate Weimar marriages. §§ 1368-1409 identified husbands as "heads of household," giving them decision-making power over everything to do with the marriage, including where to reside. As the owner of the couple's property, including what the wife brought into the marriage, he had to support the family financially. Wives were tasked with housework, work in the husband's family business, and child care. They could also find employment outside the home if it did not interfere with their other obligations. The main function of marriage was procreation.

Social Democrats and Communists denigrated this institutionalized marriage as an economic safety marriage ("*Versorgungsehe*").<sup>106</sup> They claimed that sexual intercourse in such marriages was artificial, a contractual 'obligation' required for reproduction, and an economic exchange akin to prostitution where the wife traded her body and sex for economic security from the husband. Social Democrats insisted that under such circumstances the relationship could not possibly involve respect and love, and neither could sexual intercourse satisfy the wife because she merely 'submitted' her body to her husband without a passionate interest in the sex itself.

Alfred Kleinberg, a Czech-German pedagogue, school teacher, and literary scholar declared:

How little it [traditional marriage] serves as a regulator of the sex drive [... It] turns the marital bed from what should be ecstasy and bliss into a space of exchange of performance and payment offered without emotions. As strange as it sounds, the perpetually new miracle of the sexual act is 'terra incognita' for married couples. Still, the love act makes loud demands when reproduction ceases to be marriage's sole purpose and goal.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> G.G.L., "Liebe und Ehe," *Die Kommunistin* 7 (1 Apr. 1922): 56. Juchacz, "Frauenrecht – Frauenpflicht," *Die Genossin* 1 (Jan. 1928): 4; Wachenheim, "Lebensfremde Gesetze," *Die Genossin* 1 (Jan. 1928): 6-8.

<sup>107</sup> Alfred Kleinberg, "Liebe und Ehe im neuesten Roman," *Frauenwelt* 4 (22 Feb. 1930): 75 and 77.

Instead of seeing marriage as the only way to secure their economic well-being, Social Democrats and Communists demanded women should have careers. Economic independence gained through employment would provide women with the option to live out their sexual passions already outside of marriage, thereby also divorcing sexual intercourse from reproduction.<sup>108</sup> Serial monogamy – labeled as “temporary” or “trial marriages” to endow them with more respectability – would allow women a postponement of formal marriage until they found their ideal companion.<sup>109</sup> According to especially Communists, they should then nevertheless be able to choose an informal long-term cohabiting relationship, referred to as a “free” or a “wild marriage.” Alternatively, the partners could get formally married, in a “normal marriage” (*Normalehe*) preferably outside the church.<sup>110</sup>

Articles on modern, companionate relationships appeared widely in Social Democratic and Communist media. Their language advocated that for the first few years, companionate relationships should center on the couple; allowing them to get to know each other, their outlooks, and interests while enjoying mutually fulfilling sex without concerns about potential consequences, i.e., offspring.<sup>111</sup>

The companionate relationship was theoretically a voluntary association of equals grounded in gender-blind rights and freedoms instead of obligations.<sup>112</sup> It was fundamental that the state and society bestow the same legal, socio-cultural, and economic rights to women as

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<sup>108</sup> Trude Wiechert, “Wie stehst Du zur heutigen gesetzlichen Form der Ehe?” *Frauenwelt* 1 (11 Jan. 1930): 10.

<sup>109</sup> See Osborne, *The Politics of the Body*, 91; and Davis, “Not Marriage at All.”

<sup>110</sup> Elly Linden, “Die Revolution der modernen Jugend,” *Frauenwelt* 11 (2 June 1928): 250-251.

<sup>111</sup> Henny Schumacher, “Ehekrise: Die Kameradschaftsehe,” *Frauenwelt* 13 (27 June 1921): 300-301.

<sup>112</sup> Cläre Kleineibst, the second prize winner in the reader competition on marriage, “Wie stehst Du zur heutigen gesetzlichen Form der Ehe?” *Frauenwelt* 26 (28 Dec. 1929): 614.

men, regardless of their marital status. In such egalitarian relationships, instead of men's wishes being paramount, women would have a right to a life of their own in politics, culture, and professional engagement; a principle still not accepted by many males in relationships, according to Grünfeld.<sup>113</sup>

The woman of the new generation views herself as an equal to the man due to her educational, career, and athletic achievements. In her love life, she nevertheless finds herself all too often having to battle the man's traditional expectation of being the lord of the manor. Shocking allegations are brought forward in meetings that are starkly different from contemporary expectations, but the allegations are often deadly serious. "My fiancé doesn't allow me to have my own opinions that are divergent from his," exclaimed a young woman worker organized in the union, yearning for a companionate marriage and looking for advice. She ... has to decide whether to live without the man she loves or without her dignity.<sup>114</sup>

Grünberg claimed a "revolution[ary]" task of transforming their relationships into ideal companionate ones lay before women:<sup>115</sup>

"[T]he young generation's female proletarian wants to stand as an equal next to her male comrade, accepted by him as such. This goal-oriented pursuit, beginning with the female elite of the working class and then spreading into ever wider sectors, is the most profound revolution in the relationship between man and woman ever experienced in history. From a piece of property, a birthing machine, a housekeeper, and an object for sexual pleasure, the woman transforms herself into a *self-confident human being*. She allows her sex-specific qualities to unfold while seeking intellectual and spiritual companionship with the man.<sup>116</sup>

Women were not automatically or by principal equals to their partners in this and other leftist language. They only became men's equals and companions through better education,

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<sup>113</sup> Alfred Kleinberg, "Liebe..." *Frauenwelt* 4 (22 Feb. 1930): 75 and 77.

<sup>114</sup> Grünfeld, "Mütter..." *Frauenwelt* 11 (1 June 1929): 249 - 251, here 249.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., and Lilly Korpus, "Mein Mann will nicht daß ich..." *DWdF* 4 (1931): 3.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

professional careers, and knowledge in politics and other topics men were interested in; hence by sharing *men's* pursuits as the Chemnitz Communist activist Helene Schubert contended.<sup>117</sup>

The woman, *who has transformed herself into his best companion and comrade, if he has chosen the right woman*, will no longer just want to live alongside him but will enthusiastically share *his* ideals. As a result, there will be mutual respect and fewer disagreements, and the woman will no longer languish in day-to-day homemaking or use movie-going as a replacement for mental stimulation.<sup>118</sup>

The companionate relationship was not just something advocated for in a top-down didactic process. Prize-winning reader essays, readers' personal ads, and requests for relationship advice in *Frauenwelt's* "Wer weiß Rat...?" section reflected Social Democratic readers' desire to integrate a companionate relationship into their lives.<sup>119</sup> Terms like "life partner" ("*Lebenskamerad/in*"), "comrade" ("*Genosse*" "*Genossin*"), "kindred spirits" or "people with the same outlooks" ("*Gleichgesinnte*"), "people without a church affiliation" or "atheists" ("*Freidenker*"), made evident that readers were looking for egalitarian relationships based on friendship and shared identities, outlooks, hobbies, pastimes, and personalities, as the following personal ad illustrates.<sup>120</sup>

*Deepest wish.* A party member in Berlin, unaffiliated with any church, a sports enthusiast, and a friend of nature, 29 years old, wishes for the moment written communication with a [potentially] steady female life partner.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Schubert was one of the Women's Agitation Committee leaders of the Erzgebirge-Vogtland regional organization of the KPD in Chemnitz.

<sup>118</sup> Schubert, "Die Genossin," *Die Kommunistin* 18 (15 Sept. 1922): 142; anon., "Du mußt Mutter werden!" *Frauenwelt* 13 (27 June 1931): 293.

<sup>119</sup> Grünfeld, "Sexuelle Not oder Not der Liebe," *Frauenwelt* 18 (8 Sept. 1928): 423-424, here 423; Charl. A. "Das Standesamt als Hindernis," *Frauenwelt* (1927): 154; Hirschfeld, "Freie Ehe," *Frauenwelt* (1928): 538-539; and "Doppelte Moral," *DWdF* 4 (Apr. 1932): 13. This short report criticized the Berlin bureau of the German Textile workers' union (Berliner Verbandsbüro der Bekleidungsarbeiter) for not treating long-term partnerships the same as marriage.

<sup>120</sup> See "Ostsachsen," and "Wunsch," *Frauenwelt* 1 (Jan. 1933): 14; and "Lebensbund," *Frauenwelt* 5 (4 Mar. 1933): 111; reader Martha Starossen's, "Wie stehst Du zur heutigen gesetzlichen Form der Ehe," *Frauenwelt* 1 (11 Jan. 1930): 10; and Schröder, "Die alleinstehende Frau," *Die Genossin* 1 (Jan. 1928): 17-19, here 17.

<sup>121</sup> Anon., "Herzenswunsch," *Frauenwelt* 1 (Jan. 1933): 14.

And:

East Saxony. 24-year-old female comrade, intellectual, good character, respectable and steady, enjoys music and nature, wishes to meet a kindred spirit (up to 35 years of age).<sup>122</sup>

Nevertheless, economic considerations continued to play, albeit a slightly lesser, role in Social Democratic readers' choices for sexual and marital partners. During the economic crisis years of the early 1930s, with up to 6 million people officially unemployed, readers often chose to state that they were financially secure and in long-term employment, specifying their career sector, and occasionally pointing out that they owned an apartment and modern furniture.<sup>123</sup> Those seeking a new long-term relationship, such as this mother below, sometimes also specified that their partner had to have a regular income:

Which female comrade can introduce me to a loving and honest male comrade who is securely employed? I am 31 years old, employed, and have a 6-year-old daughter.<sup>124</sup>

The mention of economic status wasn't merely related to the traditional middle-class marriage pattern. Some women seeking a new relationship stated that they were not only employed but also economically self-sufficient, and hence were not looking for a male 'breadwinner,' such as 'M' from Dresden: "I am 36 years old and single; I would also like to note that I have been providing for my son's and my livelihood."<sup>125</sup> Even though M was ostensibly not looking for a sexual or marital relationship, and therefore her financial standing was theoretically irrelevant, she mentioned it because with it she claimed an identity as an

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<sup>122</sup> Anon., "Ostsachsen," *Frauenwelt* 1 (Jan. 1933): 14.

<sup>123</sup> 'Eine Freidenkerin', "Freundschaft," *Frauenwelt* 16 (Aug. 1932): 376; 'Ein Freidenker', "Freundschaft," *Frauenwelt* 18 (3 Sept. 1932): 423; 'Ein süddeutscher Abonnent', "Ehe," *Frauenwelt* 2 (Jan. 1932): 39; and "Ehe," *Frauenwelt* 24 (28 Nov. 1931): 566.

<sup>124</sup> 'Eine Freidenkerin', "Freundschaft," *Frauenwelt* 20 (3 Oct. 1931): 472.

<sup>125</sup> 'M in Dresden', "Freundschaft!" *Frauenwelt* 1 (Jan. 1932): 16.

independent, rational, modern, New Woman to illustrate her outlook on life and relationships. She and other women identifying themselves as economically independent established that a partnership with them had to be based on egalitarian companionship.

### Divorce

Divorce played a major role in Leftists' understanding of marriage. They argued that traditional notions about married couples belonging together for life, enshrined in restrictive divorce laws, were unnatural, and lived realities defied such expectations.<sup>126</sup> Claiming that couples discovered often only after years of living together that they were not companions or compatible, reform-minded activists demanded no-fault divorce to be legal. Divorce should be readily available when one or both partners' felt that they had irreparable differences; with women ideally receiving custody over children, as well as child support and alimony.<sup>127</sup>

However, only Communist discourses on the Soviet New Woman steadfastly insisted mothers of children did well after separating from their partners. Radical leftists held fast to strongly feminist visions of their independent New Woman supported by state childcare institutions. *DWdF* authors offered anecdotes and stories showing that life after separation from their partners – no mention was made of formal marriages or divorces – was not only possible but also enriching for women and mothers in the Soviet Union, due to the availability of a variety of child care facilities.<sup>128</sup> These stories described single/separated mothers in highly positive

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<sup>126</sup> Hans W. Fischer, "Ehescheidung und Ehereform," *Frauenwelt* 10 (18 May 1929): 219; and Otto Landsberg M.d.R., "Ehescheidung in Deutschland und anderen Ländern," *Frauenwelt* 21 (20 Oct. 1928): 485 and 492.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*; Fischer, "Ehescheidung...", *Frauenwelt* 10 (18 May 1929): 219; F.W. "Vor dem Scheidungsrichter," *DWdF* 1 (June 1931): 18; F. W. "Vor dem Scheidungsrichter: Misshandlungen – und keine Scheidung," and "Der Kuss," *DWdF* 2 (July 1931): 18; Schröder, "Die alleinstehende Frau," 17-19; Toni Pfülf, "Ehenot und Eherecht," *Die Genossin* 3 Sondernummer zum Parteitag (Mar. 1929): 90-91; anon., "Der Sinn des Sozialismus," *Die Genossin* 2 (Feb. 1925): 39; anon., "Die Reform der Ehescheidung," *Die Genossin* 5 (May 1925): 137; and anon., "Die Notwendigkeit der Ehescheidungsreform," *Die Genossin* 8 (Aug. 1925): 241.

<sup>128</sup> Anon., "Die Bolschewistin Anna. Eine Geschichte aus dem russischen Dorfleben," *Die Kommunistin* 1 (1 Jan. 1923): 7-8. Boak claimed that the "KPD wanted marriage to be regarded as a private contract between the two



terms even when they sent one or more of their children to full-time childcare institutions like orphanages. Authors noted that only state support allowed single mothers to continue their education, employment, and contributions toward building a Socialist society.<sup>129</sup>

Both Communists and Social Democrats commonly characterized Weimar homes for neglected children and criminal youth, or reformatories (“*Fürsorgeheime*”), managed by religious welfare organizations like the Catholic Caritas or the Protestant Innere Mission, as abusive of children and espousing retrograde or no pedagogical guidelines. In contrast, they insisted that their own childcare institutions were progressive pedagogical institutions, with Communists claiming that an upbringing there was equivalent to one in a family.<sup>130</sup>

Nevertheless, Social Democratic discourses never claimed their own institutions were a replacement for a loving and orderly home, but rather a measure to combat parental neglect and abuse of children. For them, an orderly middle-class home with two loving parents, a breadwinning father, and a full-time homemaking mother represented the ideal environment for a child’s healthy and happy upbringing. A homemaking divorced mother with custody over all her children and supported by the state and ex-husband represented the next best ideal. Therefore, Social Democratic activists and readers adapted their principled demand for easy access to divorce to Weimar’s legal and economic realities.

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persons concerned, a contract that could be terminated if both parties so agreed or one partner so desired.” 224. Whereas activists did not state this directly in the pages of *DWdF* and *Die Kommunistin*, their omission of formal marriage and divorce in discourses confirms this.

<sup>129</sup> Marla Cogan, “Die Betriebskorrespondenz Darja,” *Die Kommunistin* 7 (July 1926): 3.

<sup>130</sup> “Mitteilungen,” *AWO* 15 (1 Aug. 1927): 472; H. H., “Aus dem Preußische Beirat für Jugendpflege,” *AWO* 13 (1 July 1928): 400-401; Duncker, “...und drinnen waltet...,” *DWdF* 2 (Feb. 1932): 6-8; anon., “Das Worpstedter Kinderheim,” *Die Kommunistin* 20 (15 Oct. 1923): 160; Therese Blase, “Zurück aus dem Ludwig-Frank-Heim ins Elternhaus,” *AWO* 5 (Dec. 1926): 158; Juchacz, “1926-1927, Rückblick und Ausblick,” *AWO* (1 Jan. 1927): 1-8; and Toni Pfülf, “Die Disziplin der Fürsorgeerziehungsanstalt,” *AWO* 1 (1 Oct. 1926): 14-18, here 15-16.

Many Weimar women – even if they had a job – were not economically independent due to gendered jobs and wages. About a third of working women were married, but many left employment, or at least full-time employment, once their children were born.<sup>131</sup> Social Democratic discourses supported such a behavior, seeing mothers as ideal caretakers. Gendered jobs and wages as well as women’s time off from the workplace placed women in an economic bind if they divorced their husbands. Even if they managed to secure employment in their previous fields, their incomes were likely insufficient for providing for their own and their children’s material needs.

In addition, Weimar divorce laws were based on the idea that a marriage ended with the couple’s death, or if either party, i.e., the ‘guilty party’, failed to fulfill their marital obligations. As Helen Boak summarized, “[a]bsolute grounds for divorce included adultery, bigamy, wil[l]ful desertion, death threats, and unnatural sexual acts. Relative grounds, which permitted judges some discretion in their judgment, included immoral or dishonorable behavior which made it impossible for one party to stay in the marriage and mental illness.”<sup>132</sup> Weimar laws did not allow divorce when there was no guilty party. In addition, custody laws divided the children up by sex between the divorcing adults if the woman was the guilty party.

In dealing pragmatically with such realities Social Democratic authors, columnists, and reader contributors made adjustments to their positions on companionate marriage, divorce, and even on their ideals of modern femininity. They saw relatively few problems for a woman without children to demand a divorce from a non-companionate husband. However, when

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<sup>131</sup> On women’s employment statistics see Osborne, *The Politics of the Body*, 55; Frevert, *Women in German...*, 83-93; and Boak, *Women in the Weimar Republic*, 134-199.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.

women had children, Social Democrats often prioritized children's healthy and happy upbringing under the right environmental and material conditions over women's happiness. They argued that mothers should do whatever it took to remain caretakers for all of their children. This meant women should pursue divorce if the husband was the guilty party because in such a case the woman would receive custody over all of her children. In all other circumstances, women should willingly sacrifice their own needs for those of their children.

Even though Weimar divorce rates were low (0.33 percent in 1921), their numbers had gone up more than two-fold from prewar percentages, especially in large cities (Berlin's divorce rate: 0.79 percent).<sup>133</sup> *Frauenwelt's* "Wer weiß Rat...?" column illustrated that women were considering divorcing their husbands because the relationship was not or no longer based on mutual love, such as in the case of reader Elli:

I am 26 years old and have been married for five years but want to get a divorce. I married without understanding what marriage was and without love for him. I thought it was enough that I was the world to him. But now there is someone I love, and I want to ask you, how I should go about it. Is it enough that my husband says I cheated on him? Will I be declared guilty? What other divorce reasons are there? I am a worker but currently unemployed.<sup>134</sup>

Elisabeth advised her not to tell the court about her extra-marital relationship because the law prohibited a woman from marrying someone with whom she had a sexual affair while married to another. She should only admit to having engaged in "behavior constituting a matrimonial offense" ("*ehewidriges Verhalten*"), which refers to amorous behavior excluding sex.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Usborne, *The Politics of the Body*, 90-92. On marriage rates, which were up too, see Boak, *Women in the Weimar Republic*, 205-207.

<sup>134</sup> Elli, "Scheidung," *Frauenwelt* 3 (7 Feb. 1931): 62.

<sup>135</sup> E., "Scheidung," *Frauenwelt* 4 (21 Feb. 1931): 86.

Some formerly full-time homemakers were ready to enter the world of employment after divorce and needed advice on what kinds of jobs were available for them. Others, with only housekeeping and tailoring skills to boast, envisioned difficulties supporting themselves and their children while concurrently ensuring their children's supervision. Some were glad to receive child support and alimony from their ex-husbands. Others felt it tainted their pride or identities as New Women. Most suggested they were rational decision-makers both in establishing and ending relationships. They explained their reasons for wanting a divorce, whether due to ideological and pedagogical differences or due to a lack of emotional or sexual bonds.

For example, a homemaker wrote to *Frauenwelt* wondering if she should divorce her husband who was having an extra-marital affair, but on whom she would continue to depend financially after a divorce. She, and readers responding to her letter, felt that remaining married to a man who no longer loved her, merely to meet social expectations or to assure her and her children's economic safety, would be "dishonest," "unethical," and "immoral."<sup>136</sup> They, therefore, adhered to the principle of companionate marriage based on mutual love and exclusive sex.

Despite her economic dependence on her husband, the potential divorcee had identified as a Socialist New Woman before she learned about her husband's extra-marital affair. She did not see anything wrong with her economic dependence on him because she provided services in return ( "*Gegenleistung*"), with which she meant otherwise unpaid housekeeping, cooking, and childrearing.<sup>137</sup> She viewed this exchange as fair and even, valuing her homemaking as work.

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<sup>136</sup> B.W. "Unterhaltspflicht." *Frauenwelt* 3 (29 Jan. 1927): 42; and anon., "Unterhaltspflicht." *Frauenwelt* 5 (26 Feb. 1927): 76-7.

<sup>137</sup> B.W. "Unterhaltspflicht." *Frauenwelt* 3 (29 Jan. 1927): 42.

The existence of love between the couple had also assured that she had not seen her marriage as an economic safety marriage. After a divorce, however, she would no longer provide him with domestic labor while receiving alimony. This went against her sense of “pride” and “self-confidence” as a Socialist New Woman.<sup>138</sup> Consequently, she hesitated to divorce her husband.

In their responses, columnist Elisabeth and several readers insisted that the potential divorcee need not feel a loss in her pride. During her married years, she had already rendered her husband more services than a mere even exchange while “sacrificing” her best years and “depleting” her body in the process.<sup>139</sup> Readers and columnists recommended she follow the ideal of companionate marriage and divorce her husband. They were also pragmatic and willing to bend Socialist ideals on women being economically independent, to allow for a dependent divorcee to consider herself within Socialist gender norms for women.<sup>140</sup> Others made suggestions more closely aligned with Socialist principles. They recommended she accept child support payments but find employment sufficient to substitute for the alimony money. One reader recommended she initially receive her husband’s financial support while planning her path towards becoming the quintessential, professionally successful, New Woman: a designer and producer of women’s fashions.

In a separate case, a woman, who had left her husband, had been determined by a German court as the guilty party and was ordered to return to her husband or risk losing custody of her son.<sup>141</sup> She, and other women readers unsatisfied with their marriage, considered

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Anon., “Unterhaltspflicht,” *Frauenwelt* 6 (12 Mar. 1927): 91; and anon., “Unterhaltspflicht,” *Frauenwelt* 7 (26 Mar. 1927): 106-7.

<sup>140</sup> Anon., “Die Bolschewistin Anna. Eine Geschichte aus dem russischen Dorfleben,” *Die Kommunistin* 1 (1 Jan. 1923): 7-8.

<sup>141</sup> ‘Eine langjährige Abonnentin’, “Ehe,” *Frauenwelt* 5 (Mar. 1933): 111.

sacrificing their needs for companionate relationships or independence from their husbands to ensure they would keep their children. Some women had fallen in love with another man or had significant ideological differences with their partners. Others were subjected to emotional or physical abuse and controlling behaviors by their husband, or their husband was a gambler or alcoholic.<sup>142</sup> To get a divorce, these women would have had to claim they had an extra-marital affair, thereby identifying themselves as the guilty party. The courts would then likely grant custody over some or all of the children to the husbands. Consequently, the women chose and were recommended, to maintain relationships that were no longer companionate but to pretend (for the sake of the children) that they continued to be based at least on mutual respect.<sup>143</sup> In one such recommendation, columnist Elisabeth wrote to one reader:

You claim that you love your children “above everything else.” Therefore, consider how much your son will suffer if he loses you as a consequence of a divorce and the nervous parents of the father end up raising him. It is very uncertain if you could ensure the child does not live with the grandparents because you would have to prove that they would have harmful influences on him. Even if you could prove it, the child would end up in the care of other strangers. How would that help the child? Our divorce laws relegate so few rights to a woman, and she can only get a divorce from a shattered marriage in which there is neither physical abuse nor adultery on the part of the husband if he agrees to the divorce. He usually demands she assume a portion of the guilt too, and therefore she loses custody over her sons to the husband. A mother has to think first and foremost of her young children. [...] Above all, do not allow your children to witness your aversion to your husband, and be aware that you must get along with your husband for the following years for the children’s sake.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Erna, “Scheidung,” *Frauenwelt* 4 (18 Feb. 1933): 87; ‘Eine Unglückliche’, “Was soll ich tun?” *Frauenwelt* 25 (10 Dec. 1932): 592; and ‘Eine Leserin in der Mark’, “Eheschwierigkeit,” *Frauenwelt* 22 (29 Oct. 1932): 518.

<sup>143</sup> See ‘Eine langjährige Abonnentin’, “Ehe,” *Frauenwelt* 5 (Mar. 1933): 111; ‘Eine Sorgenvolle’, “Unglückliche Ehe” *Frauenwelt* 6 (21 Mar. 1931): 133; and the response by Elisabeth, “Unglückliche Ehe,” *Frauenwelt* 7 (4 Apr. 1931): 159.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

In the context of Weimar divorce laws which assessed fault to determine custody, readers writing to the publications and the columnist 'Elisabeth' argued that the interests of children, and their psychological health, had priority over other Socialist principles on relationships, marriage, and divorce.

In 1931, *Frauenwelt* published a serial novel by Grazia Deledda titled "Lia's Rückkehr" ("Lia's Return") which further illustrated the Social Democratic prioritization of children's needs over that of adults' love lives. It also depicted Socialist discomfort with women's right to sexual fulfillment and companionate marriages if they involved complicated relationships. In the serial novel, the female lead character Lia longed for a purpose in life since she had not been allowed to continue her education and acquire a profession. She felt a mother role would be that missing purpose in her life. Not heeding her aunt's warning that marrying a divorced middle-class man with a son but without generational wealth could mean her financial destitution in the case of his death, Lia chose to marry him. The marital relationship was not entirely companionate. Lia depended on her husband economically. Despite mutual emotional interest in each other, their sexual intercourse lacked passion, and Lia suspected her husband continued to love and desire his first wife. The marriage nevertheless produced a shared son before the husband's early demise.

A few years later, in financial straits, Lia was forced to rent out several of her apartment's rooms to a tenant, a single man. Subsequently, she rejected his marriage proposal, even though they were in love.<sup>145</sup> She remained steadfast in her decision even after inheriting her late uncle's wealth, which would have helped make their relationship a companionate one based on her economic independence. Lia sacrificed her sexual-emotional happiness as a woman to devote

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<sup>145</sup> Deledda, "Lia's Rückkehr," *Frauenwelt* 3 through 15 (Feb. through July 1931).

herself entirely to raising her two children well. With this story, Social Democrats on one hand argued that a wealthy female widow with children was entirely respectable socially. On the other hand, a family consisting of a stepfather to two children with different parentage and a mother of two sequentially married to two men seems to have violated too many taboos even for Social Democrats.

Not long after the publication of this serial novel, a reader argued that marriages between a woman and a male widower with children were doomed to fail because German traditional culture, including fairy tales and gossiping neighbors, poisoned relationships between stepmothers and their stepchildren. The reader solicited other readers' opinions if it were not better to prohibit such marriages and send children without mothers to orphanages, where, she asserted, they would receive enough love and grow up to be productive members of society.

Responding readers were usually of the exact opposite position. Often speaking from personal experience, they argued that orphanages were not suitable and loving places for children. None of the respondents believed laws prohibiting such marriages would be helpful. They further claimed that women, who were born with maternal qualities, would manage to win stepchildren over by treating them exactly like their biological children. All reader commentators insisted that the companionate husband had a role to play by supporting his second wife in all her decisions and actions related to the children. Therefore, while some Social Democrats were opposed to alternative forms of marital and parental relationships after a divorce or the death of a partner, others supported it. None of the respondents, however, discussed the issue with the roles reversed: where a single man might marry a female divorcee or widow with children, such as "Lia." Neither Social Democrats nor Communists seemed to imagine their ideal woman in her second marriage.



## Motherhood and Childrearing

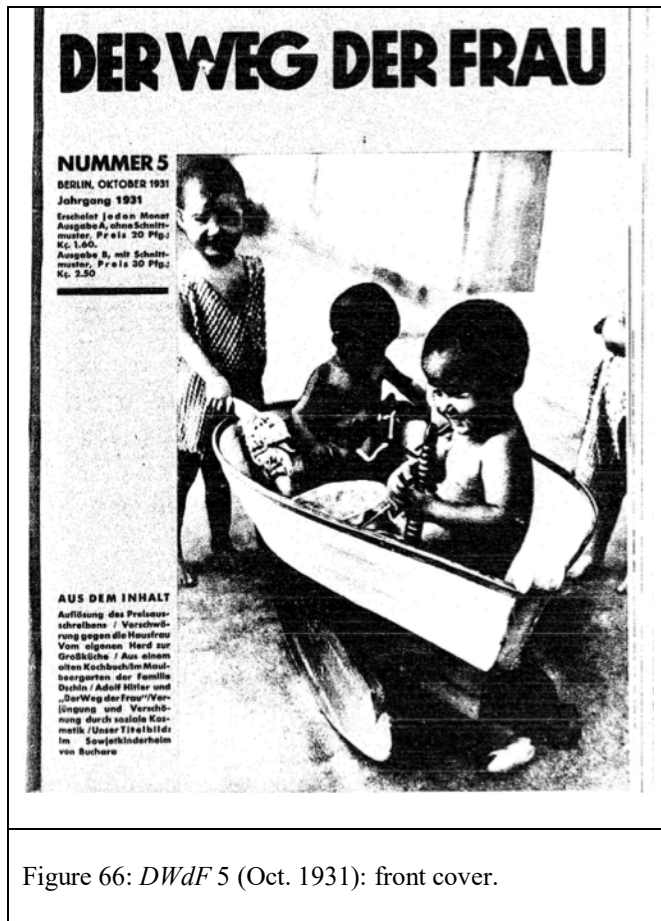


Figure 66: *DWdF* 5 (Oct. 1931): front cover.

It is evident from the above discourses on divorce, as well as those on contraception, abortion, and sterilization, that leftists did not suggest women should remain barren for their entire lives. Instead, they asserted women would naturally want to have children (see the numerous pictures of happy children such as in Figure 66 in *DWdF*). However, they should control their maternal instincts until the conditions were right before they had one or two children at most. Once women were pregnant, they should follow a specific protocol involving

hospital and homestays of differing lengths according to Communists and Social Democrats. These differences impacted their views on what kinds of identities mothers could simultaneously have, and on how to raise children. Social Democrats required a greater level of middle-class status for mothers and different care for children than Communists.

Communists listed motherhood as just one of women's life activity and identity aside from those related to employment and political activism. At no point did radical leftists' narratives suggest motherhood was a divine calling – or indeed the main form of personal fulfillment for women. In Chapter Three, I illustrated how, for Social Democrats and Communists, the attainment of a white-collar profession represented the epitome of employment for women,

described as a fulfilling life goal, which full-time homemaking was not. Contradicting those narratives on employment vs. homemaking somewhat, Social Democrats identified motherhood as a type of holy responsibility and women's "highest purpose in life" ("*höchste Lebensaufgabe*"). An act that made women – regardless of whether they had been leading "empty" and "unsatisfying" lives as homemakers or had professional careers – now feel "fulfilled."<sup>146</sup> Ideally, women became mothers *after* acquiring a career and being successful in it, such as the Chemist Hella, a character in Friedrich Karl Kellermann's novel *Um das Kind* (*All About The Child*) serialized in *Frauenwelt*.<sup>147</sup> Kellermann described Hella's professional success and her motherhood as the zenith of her existence.

At the same time that Hella brought a strong and beautiful boy into the world, her scientific work, to which she had made brilliant contributions, impacted the public and received the highest recognition. People congratulated her for her physical and intellectual child, and a halo of double motherhood crowned her head. [...] Her deepest and dearest wishes were fulfilled: she had a child. She felt complete in her humanity now; she had blossomed and bore fruit and had received the greatest and sweetest favor.<sup>148</sup>

Whereas Hella in the novel began to act particularly emotional – and hence feminine – with the birth of her child, Social Democrats generally claimed formerly professionally-employed mothers' knowledge of the broader world would help them become more than emotional mothers. They would serve as role models to their children and implement progressive pedagogies in their child-rearing. They noted that this required the same kind of rationality as acquiring and holding a profession.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Frankenthal, "Die biologische Tragödie," 12.

<sup>147</sup> Emphasis mine. Kellermann's serial novel, "Um das Kind," started with *Frauenwelt* 26 (Dec. 1926): 402-405. It was also published as a standalone novel with the same title in 1928 in Berlin by Dietz.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., *Frauenwelt* 7 (26 Mar. 1927): 98 - 99.

<sup>149</sup> Schubert, "Die Genossin," *Die Kommunistin* 18 (15 Sept. 1922): 142; and "Du mußt Mutter werden!" *Frauenwelt* 13 (27 June 1931): 293.

Even though Communist and Social Democratic activists insisted that married women should no longer feel the need to follow the traditional exodus of women from employment once they married; both advocated for women to stop working during their pregnancy. Because leftist physicians, social hygienists, eugenicists, and political, union, and welfare activists believed pregnancy and any type of physical exertion (such as present in manual employment) were incompatible, they wanted women to stop working by the time their pregnancy was visible.<sup>150</sup> Reform-minded activists assumed that the pregnant body was delicate and weak, and instead of recommending exercise regimes to ‘steel’ the body, they now insisted on rest and medical care associated with middle-class women’s status. They consistently prioritized expertly trained physicians’ regular gynecologic and prenatal care and birthing at state-of-the-art and hygienic maternity hospitals over home birth with the aid of a mere midwife.<sup>151</sup> Women were recommended to enter hospital care as much as six weeks before their delivery date as a type of medically-indicated seclusion and vacation from their normal housekeeping and family caretaking chores.<sup>152</sup> Communists labeled poor women’s maternity hospitals (“*Wöchnerinnenheime*”), such as those offered by the Salvation Army, as unsatisfactory because these required their working-class patients to clean, cook, and do laundry for the hospital staff and paying patients as a condition for their stay.<sup>153</sup> Pregnant working-class women should

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<sup>150</sup> Markuse, “Mutterschaftsnöte,” *Frauenwelt* 19 (22 Sept. 1928): 444 and 447; Fritz Kalbert, “Deutsches Institut für Frauenkunde,” *Frauenwelt* 18 (5 Sept. 1931): 413 and 417; “Schutz für die gewerblich tätigen Schwangeren: Eine Denkschrift des Deutschen Textilarbeiter-Verbandes,” *Die Genossin* 5 (May 1925): 141-145; and “Schutz der schwangeren Arbeiterin,” *Die Genossin* 8 (Aug. 1925): 240. For this topic see Osborne, *The Politics of the Body*, 46-50, and 55.

<sup>151</sup> R.K. “Hygiene der Schwangerschaft,” *Frauenwelt* 12 (15 June 1929): 277-278; *ibid.*, “Hygiene des Wochenbettes,” *Frauenwelt* 13 (28 June 1930): 291; and anon., “Frau Fönss,” *Frauenwelt* 16 (1924): 256-7.

<sup>152</sup> Despite this Leftist ideal, Osborne illustrates that only a relatively small group of women, 5.8 percent, transitioned from home birthing to hospital deliveries by 1924; even though hospital births were up from pre-WWI-era numbers. *The Politics of the Body*, 51.

<sup>153</sup> “Hygiene bei der Heilsarmee,” *DWdF* 7 (Dec. 1931): 6-7.

instead be treated like affluent middle-class patients in hospitals. They should be placed in a clean room with at most one or two other patients, offered healthy and sufficient food, and give birth entirely pain-free with the aid of medication.<sup>154</sup> They argued middle-class immobility, passivity, and comforts were essential for pregnant women.<sup>155</sup>

Communists accepted, however, that mothers of infants and young children would heed the economic need to return to work fairly soon after delivery. Therefore, Communists, as also Social Democrats, demanded an increase in government financial incentives for breastfeeding, hoping that these would help delay women's return to their jobs beyond the first six weeks after delivery (during which laws prohibited new mothers from working).<sup>156</sup> Unlike Social Democrats, Communists also called on the state to address problems caused by women's extended work hours, long distances between the home and the workplace, and the lack of factory infant care facilities at or near women's employment sites. Their solutions were the maintenance of the 8-hour workday, factory childcare services, and frequent breaks to enable working mothers to breastfeed their infants at the factory.

Less understanding than Communists, Social Democrats, such as one reader contributor, denied the accolade of appropriate motherhood to working-class mothers who returned to their employment while their children were young.

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<sup>154</sup> Hilde Fränkel, "Die Gesunde Frau: schmerzlose Geburt," *DWdF* 1 (Jan. 1932): 28; and Edith Busse-Rosenkranz, "Schmerzlose Geburten," *Frauenwelt* 20 (5 Sept. 1929): 465.

<sup>155</sup> Susi Bork, "Körperpflege und Schonung der Frau," *Frauenwelt* 20 (Oct. 1931): 471-472; "Ist das Mutterschutz?" *DWdF* 4 (Apr. 1932): 13; Begun. Achtung! Krankenhaus geschlossen!" *DWdF* 4 (Sept. 1931): 29; and M. Stahl, "Nur nicht ins Krankenhaus," *DWdF* 2 (July 1931): 4. Stahl illustrated here that working-class women with gynecological problems were treated – unlike private patients – like chattel at a renowned hospital, the Charité, Berlin University's research hospital.

<sup>156</sup> Schröder, "Erhöhung der Reichswochenhilfe und Familienwochenhilfe," *Die Genossin* 3 (1924): 73.

It isn't true that children are best cared for in a marriage. Especially not in a proletarian marriage, where most of the mothers have to work. You only have to look at the families.<sup>157</sup>

Social Democratic language associated families with two parents employed in manual labor with the *Lumpenproletariat*, familial dysfunction, and an inability to offer children a secure, loving, and middle-class upbringing.<sup>158</sup> Contributors to *AWO* often accused working-class mothers of ignorance about the health benefits of breastfeeding over other forms of milk for infants.<sup>159</sup> Manually laboring mothers supposedly failed in their supervisory roles and endangered their children's lives, by leaving them alone in the home with elder siblings too young to be left unsupervised, or in the care of neighbors.<sup>160</sup> Such mothers – but not professionally working mothers who could hire nannies – allegedly did not teach their children proper hygiene routines, leaving them in dirty and tattered clothes and barefoot, and allowing them to play on the street where they were not safe from diseases, traffic, and bad influences.<sup>161</sup> Moreover, exhausted from work, they neither had the patience nor pedagogical training to react rationally to their children's needs and emotional outbursts, often resorting to “primitive” parenting techniques, i.e., threats and physical punishment.<sup>162</sup> Criminality, promiscuity, alcoholism, incest, syphilis, and a variety of other maladies awaited such children, authors claimed; in addition to a lack of appreciation of self-discipline, order, and respect for authority. AWO welfare workers usually referred to such

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<sup>157</sup> Reader Trude Wiechert's submission to the prize competition question “What is your position on today's legal marriage?” “Wie stehst Du zur heutigen gesetzlichen Form der Ehe?” *Frauenwelt* 1 (11 Jan. 1930): 10.

<sup>158</sup> Walter Friedländer, “Anstaltspflege,” *AWO* 24 (15 Dec. 1927): 764-765; and Hanna Colm, “Die Berufsarbeit der Frau,” *AWO* 2 (15 Jan. 1928): 50-53.

<sup>159</sup> Anon., likely Juchacz, “Landkreis und Säuglingspflege,” *Die Genossin* 4 (Apr. 1925): 113-114.

<sup>160</sup> Marianne and Gottlob Binder, “Aus der Arbeit im Kinderhort,” *Arbeiterwohlfahrt* 1 (Jan. 1927): 22-27.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>162</sup> Kurgaß, “Ein Ausschnitt aus einer Sprechstunde,” *AWO* 2 (15 Jan. 1928): 55-59, here 55.

children and youth as “neglected” (“*verwahrlost*”) and, at times, initiated proceedings to withdraw them from their parents’ custody.<sup>163</sup> These children were then transferred to children’s reformatories (*Fürsorgeheime*) for “neglected” and “hard-to-raise children” (“*schwer erziehbare Kinder*”).

Consequently, Social Democratic messages on motherhood argued that mothers should necessarily depend on their partners financially and become full-time homemakers until their children reached school age. Only in this manner could they ensure their children enjoyed a hygienically, nutritionally, and pedagogically appropriate environment in the home. Among these requirements, *AWO* contributors insisted parents provide each child with a bed, dresser, and clothes of its own to develop its sense of self and independence, learn the proper organization of its belongings, and prevent infectious diseases with hygiene routines.<sup>164</sup>

Beyond these traditional middle-class positions on hygiene and order, Social Democratic narratives argued that the ideal mother learned and followed progressive pedagogical advice.<sup>165</sup> Both Social Democrats and Communists were adamant that mothers (and fathers) never use

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<sup>163</sup> Siegfried Bernfeld, “Psychische Typen von Anstaltszöglingen,” *AWO* 4 (Nov. 1926): 113-116; and Marianne and Gottlob Binder, “Aus der Arbeit im Kinderhort,” *AWO* (1 Jan. 1927): 22-27.

<sup>164</sup> Edith Rosenkranz, “Die englische Krankheit,” *Die Genossin* 6 (12 Mar. 1927): 87; Susi Bork, “Säuglings- und Kinderernährung,” *Frauenwelt* 4 (20 Feb. 1932): 81; and ‘Dr. S.’, “Mund- und Zahnpflege,” *Frauenwelt* 8 (19 Apr. 1930): 181.

<sup>165</sup> Schuhmacher, “Wie der kleine Peter rachsüchtig wird,” *Frauenwelt* 8 (9 Apr. 1927): 117; Ernst B. Weithaas, “Elternschaftsverantwortung,” *Frauenwelt* 10 (May 1927): 143; Fr. Liefmann, “Erziehung zum Egoismus,” *Frauenwelt* 21 (20 Oct. 1928), 491; Josef Scherl, “Suggestion in der Erziehung,” *Frauenwelt* 6 (22 Mar. 1930): 143; J. Fechenbach, “Das Kind als Persönlichkeit,” *Frauenwelt* 5 (4 Mar. 1933): 106-107; Hedwig Ringer, “Eifersucht zwischen Geschwistern,” *Frauenwelt* 1 (9 Jan. 1932): 11; Anne Haag, “Hat Erica gelogen,” *Frauenwelt* 26 (26 Dec. 1931): 611; Fr. Schneider, “Mutter und Tochter,” *Frauenwelt* 3 (7 Feb. 1931): 59; *Frauenwelt* and *Die Genossin* regularly published reviews of especially but not solely Socialist works on child development, see Adele Schreiber’s edited work *Das Reich des Kindes* (Berlin: Deutsche Buchgemeinschaft, 1930), see “Was ich lesen würde,” *Frauenwelt* 16 (9 Aug. 1930): 371; M. J.’s review of Henny Schuhmacher, *Die proletarische Frau und ihre Erziehungsaufgabe* in *Die Genossin* (1929): 72; and an ad for Heinrich Schulz, *Die Mutter als Erzieherin*, *Frauenwelt* 4 (12 Feb. 1927): unpaginated; Schulz was the editor of the SPD’s previous women’s publication *Die Gleichheit* after Zetkin’s dismissal in 1917.

physical punishment to discipline their children because violence was not an effective teaching tool and only led to children mistrusting their parents.<sup>166</sup> Instead, mothers should try to understand their children and become a friend or a “mother comrade” (“*Mutterkameradin*”) to them.<sup>167</sup> Many readers agreed in the *Wer weiß Rat...?* section. However, the editor admitted to publishing only “worthwhile” (“*bedeutungsvoll*”) submissions on this topic, meaning that some Social Democratic readers likely viewed physical punishment as an appropriate parenting tool.<sup>168</sup>

Apart from daily playtime outdoors, Social Democrats and Communists recommended frequent hiking and camping vacations for children, with their families and organizations like the *Kinderfreunde*, SAJ, AWO, RHD, IAH, the Communist Youth (*Kommunistische Jugend*, KJ), and Socialist sports and hiking clubs.<sup>169</sup> They could also arrange children’s exchanges with families living in rural areas, although some Social Democrats argued against this traditional practice claiming children were exploited to work by reactionary farming families.<sup>170</sup>

To encourage their children to be curious and develop their personalities and talents, and to further their enjoyment and knowledge, Social Democrats and Communists suggested mothers

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<sup>166</sup> “Immer noch Prügelstrafe!” *DWdF* 6 (Nov. 1931): 13; and “Prügel als Erziehungsmittel,” *DWdF* 6 (June 1932): 18.

<sup>167</sup> Bohm-Schuch, “Die Mutter-Kameradin” *Frauenwelt* (1928): 206; “Das kleine Kind muss Turnen,” *DWdF* 5 (May 1932): 29; and Markuse, “Über die Abhärtung,” *Frauenwelt* 19 (17 Sept. 1932): 442.

<sup>168</sup> See editorial note above Dr. Helmut von Bracken, “Seht, wir Wilden sind doch bess’re Menschen!” *Frauenwelt* 12 (June 1925): 173; Hertha Maria Funk, “Prügel,” *Frauenwelt* 9 (Apr. 1925): 126; Lisbeth Riedger, “Schule und Prügel,” *Frauenwelt* 9 (Apr. 1925): 127; and B.H.K. and Martha Schön, “Prügel: Zwei Fälle,” *Frauenwelt* 14 (July 1925): 208.

<sup>169</sup> Mara Löwenstein, “Reichskursus und Reichskonferenz der Kinderfreunde,” *AWO* 5 (Dec. 1926): 155-157; Kurt Löwenstein, “Unsere Zeltstadt in Frankreich: Boten Internationaler Solidarität,” *Frauenwelt* 21 (15 Oct. 1932): 490-491; and Trude Sand, “5 Wochen im Ferienlager,” *DWdF* 2 (July 1931): 15 and 28. On this topic see also Hagemann, *Frauenalltag*, 600-629.

<sup>170</sup> See the response by E., “Berufsfrage,” *Frauenwelt* 4 (21 Feb. 1931): 86. The *AWO* sent malnourished or sick children to medical retreats, “Aus der Arbeiterwohlfahrt,” *AWO* 3 (1 Nov. 1926): 88; and Dr. Rodewald, “Kindererholungsfürsorge,” *AWO* 2 (15 Jan. 1927): 38-42.



Figure 67: *DWdF* 9 (Sept. 1932): front cover.

provide their children with crafting opportunities and age-appropriate, but truthful reading materials. This honesty should cover sex education, traditional holidays, and fairy tales. Readers felt these issues very pertinent to their own families and repeatedly discussed how they explained Christmas and the easter bunny more truthfully to their children.<sup>171</sup> While Communists generally avoided discussing traditional celebrations, Social Democrats continued to celebrate Christmas and Easter without going into their religious

significance. They replaced other traditional festivities with newly invented ones that fit atheist and Socialist perspectives but celebrated these at the same times as the traditional and religious ones. Since many classic fairy tales were gruesome and involved social hierarchies by birth, Social Democratic readers noted that they created new children's stories or selected existing ones befitting a more Socialist, democratic, egalitarian, and less violent vision of society. The publications aided them with this task by offering new fairy tales, crafts, and scientific information explained to children's levels of understanding.<sup>172</sup>

<sup>171</sup> See A.V., "Christkind und Osterhase," *Frauenwelt* 2 (25 Jan.1930): 39; and J.B., "Christkind und Osterhase," *Frauenwelt* 3 (8 Feb. 1930): 65. On how mothers should enlighten their younger children age-appropriately when they had questions about sexuality, see "Bücher die uns angehen," *DWdF* 8 (Aug. 1932): 24.

<sup>172</sup> "Lustiges vom russischen Außenhandel," *DWdF* 8 (Aug. 1932): 26; "Arm und Reich," *Frauenwelt* 23 (12 Nov.1932): 543-544; Irma Epstein, "Mutter, was spielen wir?" *Frauenwelt* 1 (1924): 6; Karl Ewald, "Wasserrose und Libelle," *Frauenwelt* suppl. Kinderland 3 (June 1924): 9-10; "Wir bauen ein Guckkasten," *DWdF* 2 (Feb.



Even though Figure 67 depicts a mother with her child practicing math at the abacus, neither Communists nor Social Democrats called on mothers to eagerly prefigure or replace a school teacher at home. Developmental play was given a greater role than early school learning during preschool years. However, once children attended school, both Communists and Social Democrats advocated parents, especially mothers, become involved in parent-teacher associations at their children's schools; and thereby work toward the adoption of less reactionary teaching materials and methods.<sup>173</sup> Communists also insisted mothers give their daughters the same types of toys as their sons and not offer toy soldiers and guns to either.<sup>174</sup>

Communists expected mothers to indoctrinate a Communist worldview into their children. Contributor Schubert described the ideal mother as follows:

Her children's education is in the best hands. The female comrade will anchor her ideological beliefs into the souls of the young ones already at an early age; loyal mother hands will protect her children even if death calls prematurely on the husband and father. The tasks of the woman comrade are not always easy to do and often very difficult. Still, her pride and awareness of having contributed, hand in hand with her loved male partner, her part toward a better future with New Humans. Kudos and honors to the female comrade!<sup>175</sup>

Social Democratic narratives usually suggested parents stop indoctrination at democratic and altruistic principles; they felt political ideologies were too much of a burden on children during their developing years.<sup>176</sup>

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1932): 26; "Warum die Jungens keinen Sportplatz haben," and "Neue Rechenkunststücke," *DWdF* 3 (Mar. 1932): 26; Katja, "Wie tief kann man tauchen," *DWdF* 5 (May 1932): 26; and W.J. "Selbstgebautes Spielzeug," *DWdF* 6 (June 1932): 26.

<sup>173</sup> Spectator, "Eltern, nützt das Schulbesuchsrecht!" *Frauenwelt* 10 (14 May 1932): 224.

<sup>174</sup> Leni, "Wer will unter die Soldaten..." *DWdF* 1 (Jan. 1932): 28.

<sup>175</sup> Schubert, "Die Genossin," *Die Kommunistin* 18 (15 Sept. 1922), 142; and "Du mußt..." *Frauenwelt* 13 (27 June 1931): 293.

<sup>176</sup> See Rudolf Schlosser, "Ueber sozialistische Erziehung," *AWO* 6 (15 Dec. 1926): 162-169.

Activists called on parents to no longer insist that at fourteen their daughters enter factory work, under the assumption they would only work until marriage or childbearing. Mothers should instead assist their daughters with finding a trade school suited to their interests and talents. Despite discourses on the New Woman's entrance into masculine professions; housekeeping, cooking, tailoring, nursing, welfare, gardening, and florist jobs predominated among the trade schools sought by girls and their mothers in the "Wer weiß Rat...?" section of *Frauenwelt*.<sup>177</sup> To the background of unemployment in the millions in the early 1930s, numerous queries looked for housekeeping training ("Haustochter") as well as domestic worker positions for girls with little or no pay other than room and board.<sup>178</sup> No doubt many working-class people were happy to find any job that helped their daughters' survival. Only the occasional query asked for information on how to enter some formerly masculine-identified careers, such as those of a lab assistant, photographer, and fashion designer.<sup>179</sup>

One mother, 'Helene in Kiel' wrote that her 17-year-old daughter would like to become a police officer/detective ("Kriminalbeamtin") after finishing high school (*Gymnasium*).<sup>180</sup> H. Gnepper, whom the column editor likely contacted for information, gave her a discouraging

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<sup>177</sup> M.S., "Berufsfrage," *Frauenwelt* 3 (7 Feb. 1931): 62; Emmy, "Krankenschwester," and Mimmi, "Wohlfahrtspflege," *Frauenwelt* 1 (Jan. 1933): 14; Elsa im Zittau, "Frauenshule," *Frauenwelt* 6 (21 Mar. 1931): 133; F.D., "Ausbildungsmöglichkeiten," *Frauenwelt* 4 (21 Feb. 1931): 86; and "Wer will Gärtnerin werden," *Frauenwelt* (1933): 63. A lot of personal ads were by girls and their mothers looking for a position as a domestic worker, see Frieda Stehlow, "Hausangestellte," and anon., "Für eine 21-jährige Genossin," *Frauenwelt* 4 (18 Feb. 1933): 87.

<sup>178</sup> E. Sch., "Haustochter," *Frauenwelt* 5 (5 Mar. 1932): 108; "Stellung im Haushalt," *Frauenwelt* 2 (24 Jan. 1931): 36; Aenne K., "Hausangestellte," *Frauenwelt* 4 (21 Feb. 1931): 86; and E., "Nochmals Hausangestellte," *Frauenwelt* 4 (21 Feb. 1931): 86.

<sup>179</sup> 'Schwester Margarete', "Laborantin," *Frauenwelt* 5 (5 Mar. 1932): 108; G.G., "Journalistin," *Frauenwelt* 4 (20 Feb. 1932): 87; Hilde St., "Laborantin," *Frauenwelt* 11 (30 May 1931): 255; and Gerda H., "Modezeichnerin," *Frauenwelt* 3 (8 Feb. 1930): 65.

<sup>180</sup> 'Helene in Kiel', "Berufsfrage," *Frauenwelt* 17 (22 Aug. 1931): 398.

response: “I assume that the young female comrade is hardly aware of the ‘internal’ job of a woman police officer.”<sup>181</sup> He then described the qualifications needed, which included training as a welfare worker. What Gnepper likely meant was that as a female police officer, she would mainly be responsible for dealing with prostitutes.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter finds that both Communists and Social Democrats viewed women (as well as men) as sexual beings and therefore asserted that women’s sexual activity and their sexual satisfaction through mutually-satisfying intercourse was a physiological necessity for their maturation into physically, mentally, and emotionally healthy and complex human beings. With some exceptions, they generally approved of women having premarital heterosexual relations starting in their late teens. Serial premarital monogamy should lead to finding a companionate male partner, with whom they shared outlooks, interests, and practices in addition to an emotional bond and satisfying sex. Maintaining unofficial long-term relationships, so-called ‘wild marriage’, was acceptable to Communists and some Social Democrats, while formal marriage, officiated outside of the church, remained the ideal in most Social Democratic narratives.

In either case, Social Democrats and Communists insisted that women be economically self-sufficient even while married. They also stopped defining marriage as an institution primarily for procreation. Ideally, couples should “rationalize sexuality” by separating sexual intercourse from procreation and preventing pregnancies with the aid of contraception and, if necessary, abortion and/ sterilization (solely Communists). Women should only become pregnant when they were ready to enjoy motherhood and able to provide their children with the right

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<sup>181</sup> H. Gnepper, “Berufsfrage,” *Frauenwelt* 19 (Sept. 1931): 447.

supportive and material environment. Leftists prioritized the quality of the population over its quantity. Since the capitalist Weimar state and society privatized much of the reproductive work onto women's shoulders, women should limit pregnancies to at most two to assure these children a eugenically healthy upbringing. To this end, women should follow the best progressive hygienic-medical and pedagogical methods to ensure their children were happy and learn to think independently; with their talents and personalities flourishing under their mothers' care. To accomplish this, Social Democrats insisted mothers should take time off from work and become full-time homemakers and caregivers until their children reached at least school age.

While Communists, too, asked women to stop working temporarily when pregnant, they expected mothers to return to work a few months after the birth of their child. Mothers should make use of pedagogically progressive childcare institutions, such as the Soviet Union could boast of, to have time for their own education, employment, and political and community engagements. For Communists, motherhood was just one of women's identities above which they prioritized the identities of the worker and politically active woman engaged in body culture.

The Communist belief that the institutional upbringing of children was unproblematic so long as progressive pedagogies were applied, also meant they followed through on their principle that divorce should be readily available when one or both partners wanted to end the marriage. For Social Democrats institutional care and the care provided by fathers were deficient; only a mother's loving and middle-class care – for which she was essentially created – could guarantee her children grew up to be healthy, happy, and productive New Humans for a utopian Socialist society. Therefore, Social Democrats advocated for mothers' prioritization of their children's needs over their own needs for a companionate partner. Women should only seek divorce if they

could continue to have custody over their children. In the meantime, they should uphold a façade of a functional family to assure their children do not witness their parents' marital strife while growing up.

For leftists, all the maternal love in the world was insufficient if the material environment within and surrounding home environment was unsuited for the needs of children and families. They, therefore, also focused on the working-class home environment and women's homemaking practices as the next areas to make suggestions (and engage in internal colonization). Their desire to create New Humans with middle-class upbringing and lifestyles impacted how leftists assessed the existing living conditions of Weimar's working-class populations and what kinds of suggestions for changes they made, which is discussed in the next chapter.

## Chapter Six: Socialist *Wohnkultur*

As we have seen in Chapter Five, Social Democrats had very traditional middle-class expectations of mothers: mothers should be at home full-time to provide the best care and upbringing for their one to two children, even when such care involved modern pedagogics. This final chapter investigates the popular leftist women's press and uses relevant information from other party platforms to ask how Social Democrats and Communists envisioned the ideal proletarian home, its organization, content, and to whom they obliged the housework. It, therefore, shines a light on leftists' *Wohnkultur* (home culture) and further delineates the contours of their classed and gendered norms for women, men, and proletarian families overall.

This topic was important to leftists. *Die Kommunistin* and *AWO* published many commentaries on homelessness and the deficiencies of proletarian homes, and during the second half of Weimar, *Frauenwelt* and *DWdF* carried numerous exposes and articles on the New Building (*Neues Bauen*) and New Living (*Neues Wohnen*). These topics were also part of the agendas of many party women member gatherings. For example, at the 1927 SPD Women's Conference in Kiel, Dr. Hertha Kraus, a Jewish Social Democratic social scientist and Director of Cologne's Welfare Ministry, spoke on "The Housing Shortage and Housing Reform" (*"Wohnungsnot und Wohnungsreform"*).<sup>1</sup> During her speech she repeated estimates that as many as one and a half million new apartments were needed to cover the affordable housing needs of the homeless, subtenants, basement and attic dwellers, and young couples living with their parents.<sup>2</sup> Kraus saw not only homelessness but also crowded living conditions and the utilization

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<sup>1</sup> *SPD Parteitag 1927 Kiel*, 339-355.

<sup>2</sup> Other estimates ranged from 800,000 to a million. See B. R., "Die Gesundheitlichen Verhältnisse des Deutschen Volkes im Jahre 1926: Denkschrift des Reichsministeriums," *AWO* 7 (Apr. 1928): 201- 205; "Sauberkeit ist Luxus," *DWdF* 6 (June 1932): 28; Herta Gotthelf, "Das neue Wien," *Frauenwelt* 1 (1928): 6-7; and Georg Schumann, "Um 'Deine' vier Wände," *AWO* 5 (1931): 18.

of substandard housing by proletarian families as a problem. She suggested that being “cooped up like animals” (“*zusammengepfercht*”) in inadequate housing led children and adults to become degraded and immoral people:<sup>3</sup>

“What use is it that we remove thousands of children and youth from their families and place them under the protective surveillance of a legal guardian; find them childcare; and, with all manner of refinements, attempt to influence their mental development, if we send them back to their dark, ugly, unhealthy, and cheerless holes [...] These not only provide an unhealthy ambiance but have reduced their parents’ life purposes into something dark and unhealthy. *Bad housing creates bad people, sick people, people full of hate, and tortured people, who have no desire to change their lives toward progressive directions. Bad apartments chip away at the bone marrow of even the healthiest of people.*”<sup>4</sup>

Previous chapters have argued, the concerns of leftist reformers were directed toward creating healthy, well-adjusted, talented, and productive New Humans (*Neue Menschen*) or *Vollmenschen* out of proletarians. Since reformers believed along the lines of Kraus’ claims that the environment in which people lived had a deterministic impact not only on their lifestyles and family relations but also on their internal attributes (their emotional well-being, intellect, outlooks, and morality) leftists focused on deficiencies in and surrounding worker homes and how to remedy these. Politicians, physicians, architects, welfare advocates, and journalists complained that densely-built urban tenement housing and medieval inner-city apartments did not provide their tenants with easy access to nature and exposure to sunlight and wind, and therefore to healthier lifestyles with outdoor exercise. They were also troubled by working-class families’ habitation patterns of their living spaces, the lack of modern technological and hygienic conveniences, and a want of a modern aesthetic in worker homes, much of which they presented as hazardous to proletarian families’ bodies and minds. Reformers were especially preoccupied

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<sup>3</sup> *SPD Parteitag 1927 Kiel*, 343.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* My emphasis.

with proletarian women's homemaking practices, which they argued were inefficient, damaged their bodies, and prevented them from having time and strength to follow leftist and broader popular ideals of femininity to do with body culture, self-education, and progressive parenting. They suggested that thanks to bad housing, dismal inhabitation patterns and materials, and traditional patterns of housework, women could not transform themselves into Socialist New Women, husbands could not enjoy their homes as spaces for relaxing and self-education, and children could not grow up to be healthy, happy, and productive members of society.

Social Democrats and Communists felt it was vital for the Weimar State, individual *Länder* (the German states), and municipalities, in collaboration with building cooperatives, to correct the deficiencies in and around existing worker homes. With a very modernist-functional outlook, they ideally desired new worker homes such as those in the Frankfurt housing initiative. These were built in Hausmannized suburban environs following considerations for health, hygiene, aesthetics, and the most efficient use of interior space. Activists believed that giving workers sanitary and organized spaces would impose healthier and better habits on them, leading to an improvement in workers' overall lifestyles ("*Lebenskultur*").<sup>5</sup> Since one and a half million affordable homes following the Frankfurt building concepts could not be constructed overnight, Communists demanded the government use a variety of measures to prevent homelessness, make apartments more affordable, and redistribute available housing to the poor.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Juchacz, "Frau und Wohnung," *Die Genossin* 1 (Jan. 1927): 14-16.

<sup>6</sup> "Auf Abbruch zu verkaufen!" *DWdF* 5 (May 1932): 6-7; and "Kriegsschauplatz Mitteldeutschland: Teile und Herrsche!" *DWdF* 5 (May 1932): 15-17.



Given their insufficient government power to redress workers' material living conditions, both Social Democratic and Communist reformers burdened proletarian women with rationalizing and transforming their homes' interiors using the Frankfurt homes as a guide. They called on working-class women to purchase the newest technologies and modern furniture and renovate their homes following functionalist interior design principles. Most of all, they demanded women rethink their homemaking practices for greater efficiency, the least physical strain, and their best and feminine appearance while working.

With their narratives on rationalizing the home, leftists ultimately called for a gendering of proletarian home spaces, routines, and relations along traditional middle-class lines, with the kitchen becoming solely a woman's workspace while the combined living and dining room served the husband as a place to relax. Even as Social Democratic and Communist language endowed working-class women with masculine rationality to modernize their homes and work patterns, they "redomesticated" women by relegating all housework to them.<sup>7</sup> Simultaneously, they re-feminized and elevated proletarian women's bodies in class by requiring less strenuous physical exertion during homemaking and insisting women look dignified, youthful, and beautiful even while cleaning and cooking. Despite the language on greater efficiency and labor-saving, reformers' suggestions for rationalizing the home and homemaking at least initially increased working-class women's housework, and overall aimed for women to accomplish more during their days; they wanted working-class women to create time to engage in other middle-class practices, such as body culture, *Bildung* (self-education), companionate relations with husbands, and pedagogical parenting.

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<sup>7</sup> Henderson, *Building Culture*, 158.

Communists provided conflicting narratives on women. On the one hand, they worked to disassociate the employed Socialist New Women from housework in part by promising that a future Communist state would socialize *women's* housework and establish gender equality in the home. For the immediate Weimar context, however, their recommendations amounted to a slightly more hesitant endorsement of the same modernized but otherwise very traditionally gendered middle-class home spaces and gender roles Social Democrats called for. Such an endorsement was evident in Communists' complaints about working-class families' inability to purchase new appliances, furniture, gadgets, and nutrient-rich foods, and their advice for working-class women to at least maintain and repair essential household goods they already owned. In their discourses on the rationalization of proletarian homes and homemaking they too assigned housework exclusively to Weimar's women.

### **Proletarian Dwellings**

Leftist political and welfare activists, physicians, and architects were extremely dissatisfied with proletarians' homes as well as their practices within their homes. They consistently painted a dismal portrait of the living conditions in working-class homes, as that depicted in Figure 68. They described workers' apartments as small, with few or poorly placed windows in tightly stacked buildings with little sunlight and airflow, leading to dark and damp cave-like dwellings. Despite technological developments such as gas stoves, electric lighting, and central heating, proletarian kitchens frequently relied on wood or coal-burning stoves, which were often the only heat source for the entire apartment.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, older worker homes commonly lacked sanitary provisions such as a bathroom (with toilets usually located in the

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<sup>8</sup> "Kriegsschauplatz Mitteldeutschland," *DWdF* 5 (May 1932): 15-17; and E. Kirschmann-Röhl, "Körperpflege ist Gesundheit," *Frauenwelt* 8 (Apr. 1925): 110.

# Die Kommunistin

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

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## Die Steckrüben kommen!

Vater: „Preis! Wo denkst du hin, du Schlingel — sei froh, wenn du warme Steckrüben kriegst! Soll ja ebenso  
wahrhaftig sein wie die Hammelfeule — sagen die reichen Leute in ihren Zeltungen.“  
Kind: „Vater, dann laß doch die reichen Leute die Steckrüben essen und uns die Hammelfeule . . .“

Figure 68: “Die Steckrüben kommen!” *Die Kommunistin* 18 (15 Sept. 1922): title page.

stairwell and shared with other tenants). As a result, kitchens in worker homes served for cooking, eating, sleeping, laundry, bathing, and even employment in putting-out piece work. Reform-minded activists deplored this multi-purpose use and concentration of human bodies in one room as unhygienic and as facilitating the spread of diseases like tuberculosis and cholera.<sup>9</sup> Social Democrats also claimed that as children slept in the same room with siblings of the opposite sex, adult family members, and lodgers, they witnessed sexual acts and were exposed to sexual abuse and incest. They noted that such experiences not only resulted in psychological problems and the spread of syphilis but also steered children's lives toward prostitution.<sup>10</sup>

During the inflation years of the early 1920s and the Great Depression beginning in 1929, the garden colony movement became very popular, with some families even choosing to resettle rural areas to become farmers. In its regular section "Between a Pavilion and a Farmhouse" (*"Zwischen Laube und Siedlung"*) *Frauenwelt* referred to both movements as vital survival techniques and a eugenic path back to nature with daily exposure to sunlight, wind, physical exercise, and better diets rich in fruits and vegetables.<sup>11</sup>

An early *DWdF* article in 1931 agreed with Social Democratic views and referred to garden colony homes positively as "the common man's castle," accepting them as summer

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<sup>9</sup> Martin Knauthe [Architekt BDA], "Vom eigenen Herd zur Großküche," *DWdF* 5 (Oct. 1931): 4-6; and Ottfried, "Romantik und Wirklichkeit," *Frauenwelt* 14 (1924): 224-225. On this topic see also Osborne, *The Politics of the Body*, 61. On the Cholera epidemic in Hamburg see Richard J. Evans, *Death in Hamburg: Society and Politics in the Cholera Years, 1830 - 1910* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).

<sup>10</sup> Simmel, "Die Wohnung unserer Zeit," *Frauenwelt* 20 (3 Oct. 1931): 468-469. W.L. Guttsman argued that much fewer Weimar-era families had lodgers than during the Kaiserreich. *Workers' Culture in Weimar Germany: Between Tradition and Commitment* (New York: Berg, 1990), 123-124.

<sup>11</sup> P.D. [likely Paul Dobert, who contributed most articles to the column "Zwischen Laube und Siedlung"], "Neue Tendenzen in der landwirtschaftlichen Bestellung," *Frauenwelt* 13 (June 1925): 200; L, "Die Kunststoffplatte im Garten und Haushalt," *Frauenwelt* 20 (1 Oct. 1932):465; A.W. "Der Garten im Oktober," *Frauenwelt* 20 (1 Oct. 1932): 479.

residences for workers.<sup>12</sup> Thereafter, articles in the Communist periodical rejected garden colonies as a solution to the housing and economic crises and unemployment. Communists generally did not view garden work even in small allotment gardens as a healthy form of exercise for working-class women and suggested that such work was yet another burden.<sup>13</sup> Traute Hoelz (Slánská née Loebinger, 1901 - ?), the IAH's Women's Section leader, noted that children who live yearlong in garden colonies suffered from malnutrition and hypothermia leading to diseases and deaths.<sup>14</sup>

*DWdF* also included these garden colony homes in its litany of unacceptable and unhygienic worker housing. Articles noted that garden homes, lacking running water (other than from wells), bathrooms, sewage systems, central heating, and insulation, did not meet minimum standards for homes in "civilized" Western Europe.<sup>15</sup> Communist architect Martin Knauthe (1889-1942) labeled garden colonies as "New Cameroon" ("*NeuKameroon*"), a "Desert City" ("*Wüstenstadt*"), "Concentration Camps," "Niggervillages" ("*Negerdörfer*"), and "wild settlements" ("*wilde Siedlungen*") in just one of his articles.<sup>16</sup> In addition to discursively displacing garden colonies from German and European urban geographies, he associated their inhabitants with racialized colonial populations, primitivity, and the animal world.

Other Communists called on the German state to deal with the housing crisis by reestablishing wartime rent freezes and subsidizing worker homes at a much greater level.

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<sup>12</sup> H.F. "Das Rittergut des kleinen Mannes: Umzug von der Winter- in die Sommerwohnung," *DWdF* 1 (June 1931): 21.

<sup>13</sup> Leftists viewed female farm workers as among the most exploited employees (see Chapter Three).

<sup>14</sup> "Winter in der Laubenkolonie," *DWdF* 2 (Feb. 1933): 10.

<sup>15</sup> Knauthe, "Zurück zu Methusalem," *DWdF* 2 (Feb. 1932): 3-4, here 3.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

Further Communist suggestions included preventing landlords from ejecting tenants unable to pay rent, and renovating the existing second homes of the rich and commercial buildings into worker apartments.<sup>17</sup>

Ideally, however, Knauth and many other Communists and Social Democrats hoped for well-funded and professionally designed and built worker housing following modern standards for hygiene and technology that would improve workers' overall lifestyles and assure their continued membership in a civilized European/Western world. They proposed the construction of new apartments in Hausmannized suburban environs following the functionalist principles and



Figure 69: W., "Neue Bergarbeiterwohnungen in Oberschlesien," *Frauenwelt* 15 (25 July 1931): 347.

<sup>17</sup> "Der Reichsbetriebsrätekongreß und die Stinnesregierung," *Die Kommunistin* 23 (1 Dec. 1922): 178; Paula Rink, "Entbindung bei Stearinlicht," *DWdF* 8 (Aug. 1932), 13; 'Frau F.W., Berlin', "Brosamen, die vom Tische fallen," *DWdF* 7 (July 1932): 13; and "Friedensmiete und Wohnungsnot," *Die Kommunistin* 4 (Apr. 1926): 6.

modernist aesthetics of the 1920s (see Figure 69).<sup>18</sup> These involved a radical erasure of all remnants of the past by demolishing entire neighborhoods with older homes.<sup>19</sup> One supporter of Hausmannization, ‘Ottfried’, claimed that building styles are linked to economic eras and that twentieth-century populations should not be housed in medieval buildings or nineteenth-century worker tenement homes, which he respectively associated with an agrarian economy and the beginnings of industrialization.

Get out of the small, narrow buildings, out of the narrow alleyways, ... out of the apartments with staircases that are too narrow to fit furniture through them [...] In Hamburg, these revered old alleys ... were the source of a terrible and dreadful cholera epidemic, which killed hundreds of people every day [...] As romantic as images of old urban centers seem, the notion that twentieth-century human beings have to live in sixteenth-century living quarters destroys such romantic ideas. [...] They should stop being living spaces for human beings who need the “house surrounded by nature” for their lives within a new economic system.<sup>20</sup>

Social Democratic journalist, librarian, and historian Susanne Suhr (née Pawel, 1893-1989) added that buildings constructed in the era of the powdered wig and the corseted waist could not possibly meet the lifestyle needs of twentieth-century populations, insisting that form and function should always be intertwined in housing.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> H.L., “Die Moe” Sonderschau: Die billige Wohnung,” *DWdF* 5 (May 1932): 27; Knauthe, “Vom eigenen Herd zur Großküche,” *DWdF* 5 (Oct. 1931): 4-6; and Ottfried, “Romantik und Wirklichkeit,” *Frauenwelt* 14 (1924): 224-225. On modern urban design and Hausmannization see Nicholas Bullock, “Modern Design and Municipal Patronage: Frankfurt 1924-30,” *Oxford Art Journal* 2, no. 2 Art and Society (Apr. 1979): 21-24; David P. Jordan, “Baron Haussmann and modern Paris,” *The American Scholar* 61, no. 1 (Winter 1992): 99-106.

<sup>19</sup> W., “Neue Bergarbeiterwohnungen in Oberschlesien,” *Frauenwelt* 15 (25 July 1931): 347; Bruno Asch, “Neue Wege im Wohnungsbau,” *Frauenwelt* 2 (Jan. 1929): 34-35; and Susanne Suhr, “Neue Bauformen – Neue Lebensformen,” *Frauenwelt* 10 (18 May 1929): 229-230.

<sup>20</sup> Ottfried, “Romantik und Wirklichkeit,” *Frauenwelt* 14 (1924): 224-225, here 224.

<sup>21</sup> Suhr, “Neue Bauformen – Neue Lebensformen,” *Frauenwelt* 10 (18 May 1929): 229-230.

## Ideal Homes

Hausmannized spaces – with newly-built worker homes within wide-open green spaces, with wading pools, playgrounds, and nearby parks – were created by the Frankfurt housing initiative and reported on by Social Democrats and Communists in *Frauenwelt* and *DWdF*.<sup>22</sup> Their only two or three-story buildings (compared to worker tenement buildings usually consisting of five to six stories) were spaced further apart than tenement housing and offered families even private spaces outdoors, such as balconies, rooftops, and allotment gardens.<sup>23</sup> Leftists celebrated these homes for their exposure to sunlight and wind as befitting a contemporary enlightened understanding of human hygiene and health needs.<sup>24</sup>

Since the modern art and architecture movement equated function, simplicity, and uniformity with beauty; the new buildings of the Frankfurt housing estates looked starkly bare, simple, square, and uniform (see Figure 70).<sup>25</sup> Architects and leftist commentators explained to an audience used to feminine-understood ornamentation on the exteriors of nineteenth-century and older buildings that the new “clear building shapes – without false decorations, bourgeois romanticism, ostentatious façades, or superfluous ingredients” – were more honest,

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<sup>22</sup> On the new housing construction in Frankfurt see Susan R. Henderson, *Building Culture: Ernst May and the New Frankfurt am Main Initiative, 1926-1931* (Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, 2013).

<sup>23</sup> Alice Simmel, “Das wachsende Haus!” *Frauenwelt* 16 (6 Aug. 1932): 372-373; Grünbaum-Sachs, “Über die Stuttgarter Stadtrandsiedlung,” *Frauenwelt* 2 (Jan. 1933): 26 & 29; Fritz Kormis, “Siedlung – Wohnungsbau,” *Frauenwelt* 5 (10 Mar. 1928): 110; and Maria Rath, “Wohnung und Politik,” *Frauenwelt* 4 (Feb. 1930): 77.

<sup>24</sup> See Werkbund architect Bruno Taut’s Neu-Magdeburg Siedlung Reform, Bunte Straße in Ottfried’s, “Romantik und Wirklichkeit,” *Frauenwelt* 14 (1924): 224-225; Helene Simon, “Sozialismus und Wohlfahrtspflege,” *AWO* 1 (1 Oct. 1926): 3-9; and E. Kirschmann-Röhl, “Körperpflege ist Gesundheitspflege,” *Frauenwelt* 8 (Apr. 1924): 110.


<sup>25</sup> On the new Bauhaus building styles see Peter Galison, “Aufbau/Bauhaus: Logical Positivism and Architectural Modernism,” *Critical Inquiry* 16, no. 4 (Summer 1990): 709-752.




straightforward, and (masculine) rational-functional.<sup>26</sup> The new building styles were representative of a time and culture when women were asked to reign in their

## Neue Bauformen - Neue Lebensformen

Die Formen, in denen sich unser alltägliches Leben abspielt, die Formen aller Gegenstände, die uns umgeben, unsere Art zu wohnen, uns zu kleiden, Feste zu feiern und alle anderen Dinge unserer Welt und Umwelt hängen nicht ab vom Geschmack des einzelnen. Zwar liegt der ein oder der andere Blau, und über diese Geschmacksschiedenheiten, so sagt man, läßt sich nicht streiten. Aber das sind nur kleine Aeußerlichkeiten, die wir uns leisten, denn im Grunde stecken wir alle tief in den Notwendigkeiten und Anschauungen unserer Zeit. Der gepuderte Zopf, den vor 150 Jahren der junge Goethe mit selbstverständlicher Anmut trug, ist uns heute ebenso lächerlich und unverständlich wie die geschürzte Wespentaille und das künstlich erhöhte Hinterbein, wie sich zwischen 1860 und 1880 unsere Großmütter zu kleiden pflegten. Der gepuderte Zopf gehörte aber zu den geschürkelten und polierten Möbeln jener Zeit und zu der heiteren und galanten Musik eines Mozart, und die aufgebauerten Röcke unserer Großmütter gehörten zu jenen protzigen und unedlen Häuserfassaden mit den trostlosen Hinterhöfen, unter denen wir noch heute leiden. Daraus folgt nicht nur, daß sich die Formen, in denen sich unser Leben abspielt, mit der Zeit wandeln, oder umgekehrt, daß sich jede Zeit die Formen



Das Chalehan




Straße in der Großsiedlung Britz bei Berlin

aneres Alltags „Mode“. Die Mode ist die lautiſche Dienerin einer größeren Geſtalterin, ſie gibt gewiſſenmaßen die Ausführungsbeſtimmungen zu den großen Geſetzen der Zeit, ſie will Abwechſelung bringen, damit es nicht langweilig wird. Aber auch die Mode und ihre Anreißer folgen tieferliegenden Gründen. Als z. B. die Jugendbewegung im erſten Jahrzehnt unſeres Jahrhunderts mit ihrer Revolutionierung der Formen des Alltags begann, als ſie veraltete Geſelligkeit, verkrockete Erziehung über Bord warf, da ſchuf ſie ſich für dieſen anderen Geiſt auch andere, ebenſo weiſe, anſpruchsloſe Kleidung und Geräte, die in Ermangelung neuer Formen auf alte Volkskunſt zurückgriffen und ſich der „Rückkehr zur Natur“ gemäß mehr dem Rahmen der Wäſen und Wälder, als dem der Großſtadt anpaßte. Was die Jugendbewegung in romantiſcher Empörung begonnen hatte, ſetzte die Sportbewegung ſiegreich fort. Das gewaltige Geſchehen des Krieges und der Revolution veränderten die Welt. Die ungeheure Fortentwicklung der Technik und des Verkehrs, der geſteigerte Kampf um Brot und Arbeit zwang zu dem Grundsatz höchſter Leiſtung bei ſparſamſten Kräften. Den

ſchaft, die ſie braucht. (Mit einem Befröak im AutoBUS zu ſitzen, iſt ſchon deſhalb ein unmöglicher Geſchmack, weil dann nur noch der dritte Teil der Fabrigiſte Platz hätte!) Daraus folgt in viel weitgehenderem Sinne, daß unſere Lebensformen abhängig ſind von den wiſtſchaftlichen Erforderniſſen jeder Zeit und daß auch alle Kunſtformen der Ausdruck ſind für ſoziale und wiſtſchaftliche Notwendigkeiten.

Man hat, rückſchauend, den ſich wandelnden Formen jeder Zeitperiode Namen gegeben, man nennt ſie z. B. „gotiſcher Stil“ oder „Barockſtil“. Aber das ſind nur kunſthiſtoriſche und daher tote Begriffe, nur eine Art Etikette, die viel zu wenig ſagt über die tieferliegenden Zuſammenhänge. So könnten z. B. die gotiſchen Dome nur in einer Zeit gebaut werden, die wieder den Wert der Zeit (man baute Jahrhunderte an dieſen Wunderwerken!) nach den der Arbeitskraft des einzelnen, und den des Geldes, im heutigen Sinne kannte, also in der vor-kapitaliſtiſchen Zeit, in einer Zeit, die ihren Sinn an religiöſe Sehniſchte binden konnte, weil ſie für ihren wiſtſchaftlichen Unterhalt noch keine Bürohöfe, noch Warenhaushöfen, keine Hochöfen und Walzwerke brauchte!

Bezeichnen wir mit dem Wort Stil eine ganze Periode, ſo nennen wir die kleinen in ſtändigem Fluß ſich bewegendenden Formsänderungen



Siedlung Georgsgarten in Cöln

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Figure 70: Susanne Suhr, “Neue Bauformen – Neue Lebensform,” *Frauenwelt* 10 (18 May 1929): 229 – 230, here 229. Translation: “New Building Styles – New Lifestyles.”

<sup>26</sup> “Neue Bauformen – Neue Lebensformen,” *Frauenwelt* 10 (18 May 1929): 229-230, here 230; and W., “Neue Bergarbeiterwohnungen in Oberschlesien,” *Frauenwelt* 15 (25 July 1931): 347.

excessive ‘feminine’ emotionality by adopting ‘male’ rationality in their appearance and overall lives. Commentators suggested that people living in such simple buildings, designed with their use in mind, would have healthier lives and could focus on improving themselves.<sup>27</sup>

Social Democrats and Communists also thoroughly approved of the “professionalized” interior designs, including the arrangement of interior spaces, and the use of modern technologies and furnishings of the Frankfurt homes. They did so even though Frankfurt housing estates’ architects, some working as interior designers, used their middle-class perspectives and collaborated with middle-class homemaking ‘experts’ like Marie-Elisabeth Lüders (1878-1966) and Erna Meyer (Erna Konstanze Fanny Caroline Meyer, 1890-1975) to calculate and design the Frankfurt homes’ interiors.<sup>28</sup> Leftist activists hoped that the new interior organization, design, furnishing, and aesthetic would impose better (middle-class) *Wohnkultur* habits and qualities on working-class tenants, which underlay leftists’ visions of New Humans.<sup>29</sup>

In contrast to the spatial generosity surrounding the exterior of new apartment buildings, and despite leftist complaints about crowded spaces in older worker homes, the new apartments were often smaller than older worker homes (especially the new minimalist dwellings of 41 to 51 square meters).<sup>30</sup> Tightly calculating interior space allowed architects and builders to save on building costs in the effort to make new apartments more affordable for more than an upper crust

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<sup>27</sup> Hertha Gotthelf, “Das Neue Wien,” *Frauenwelt* 1 (14 Jan. 1928): 6-7.

<sup>28</sup> Both had written successful works on the rationalized home and homemaking. Henderson, *Building Culture*, 152.

<sup>29</sup> On this topic see also Henderson, “‘New Buildings Create New People’: The Pavilion Schools of Weimar Frankfurt as a Model of Pedagogical Reform,” *Design Issues* 13, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 27-38.

<sup>30</sup> Three square meters were taken as the minimum requirement per person according to Inge Maass, “People’s parks in Germany,” *Lotus* 30 (1981): 123-28, quoted in Henderson, *Building Culture*, 245. The windows in some new buildings were smaller than those in older buildings. Fürth defended the windows and reduced spaces as being for the sake of efficiency, cost saving, and affordability, “Wohnungsnot, Wohnungsnutzung und -pflege,” *Frauenwelt* 4 (25 Feb. 1928): 88; and *ibid.*, “Die neue Wohnung und der neue Wohnungsbau,” *Frauenwelt* 4 (25 Feb. 1928): 89.

of workers. Social Democrats appreciated that the smaller apartments also precluded the possibility of tenants subletting rooms and dedicating an entire room solely to entertaining guests (*die gute Stube*), both playing a great role in their criticism of proletarian *Wohnkultur* even though both practices were increasingly less common during Weimar.<sup>31</sup>

Social Democratic and Communist architects, other professionals, and cadres (who visited exhibitions on new interior design to report on them in women's publications) happily listed a variety of conveniences of new designs with the potential to lift working-class living standards to middle-class ones. The new apartments came with electricity, gas stoves, and centralized heating, which were cleaner and healthier than coal or wood-burning stoves, and reduced workloads: families no longer had to carry coal or wood and ashes in and out of their apartments on a daily basis. Knauthe insisted these amenities were essential for all working-class families and implied that the state had to subsidize new apartments with such amenities to make them affordable to all workers.

Every working woman's living conditions should fit the modern technologies available today. She should have a sufficiently large apartment with central heating, electric light, a Frankfurt kitchen, linoleum floors, and a bathroom with a water closet, *with the rent costing no more than 10 percent of the income*.<sup>32</sup>

As Knauthe also mentioned, new apartments were outfitted with bathrooms with toilets and often also bathtubs or showers, as well as running hot water. These made higher hygiene standards more accessible to some workers. Leftists like Juchacz hoped they also led to more

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<sup>31</sup> Social Democrats like Kirschmann-Röhl called their continued use by worker families as an imitation of outdated *Kaiserreich*-era middle-class culture based on the display of excess, which for her indicated "bad taste" (*"Unkultur"*), a lack of spirituality, intellect, and "soul" in their practitioners. She subsequently did a 180-degree turn, arguing that the room, being "smelly" and "cold," did not meet the German [middle-class] cultural ideal that the home be "cozy and comfortable" (*"gemütlich"*). E.K.-R., "Die 'gute Stube'," *Frauenwelt* 8 (1924): 114-115. On the reduction of subletting among workers see von Saldern, "Modernization as Challenge," 116.

<sup>32</sup> Knauthe, "Vom eigenen Herd zur Großküche," *DWdF* 5 (Oct. 1931): 4-6; here 5-6.

frequent and better hygiene routines in proletarian families: “Hygienic principles aim to train people to care for their bodies and command: bring every part of your body in daily contact with water and air.”<sup>33</sup>

Leftists saw further didactic functions in the arrangement of rooms and their contents in the new Frankfurt buildings. Simple and functional, often multi-functional, pre-installed furniture made rooms seem big enough for tenants’ essential needs: a sofa doubled as a bed, or the bed could be vertically stored in a closet to make room for daytime use of a desk in the same space.<sup>34</sup> The presence of a desk in all apartments also expressed interior designers’ expectation that a desk was as essential as a bed and that tenants would spend time engaged in intellectual activities. Moreover, everything had a thought-out place in the pre-furnished interiors. Tenants – as if they were mere guests in their own apartments – had to preserve the interior design’s intended functionality, bare aesthetics, and harmony, contributing author, mathematician, and teacher Dr. Helene Turnau (1879-1964) insisted:

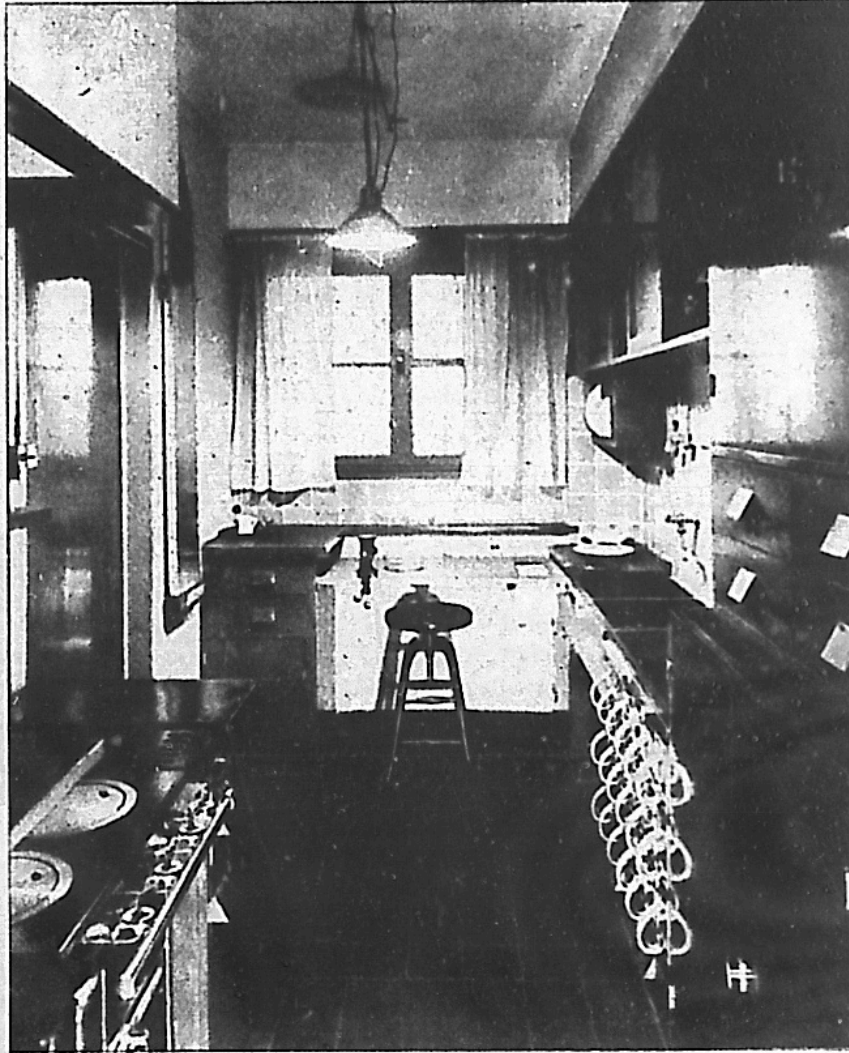
Beautiful colors light up the place; matching tones and suitable placements bring out the nobility of simple forms. Any item standing out through excessive shape or jumbled colors gets automatically marked as disturbing the harmonious fit here and surely gets banned by many a woman tenant. One does not need a lot of household goods here. [...] What is truly needed can be stored in the cabinet: shoes are placed on built-in shelves, cleaning supplies and tools are stored where they belong, similar to in a ship’s luggage, and every salt barrel has to be in its correct place within the built-in cupboard and pantry, or it disturbs the order of things!<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Juchacz, “Frau und Wohnung,” *Die Genossin* 1 (Jan. 1927): 14-16.

<sup>34</sup> Simmel, “Die Wohnung unserer Zeit,” *Frauenwelt* 20 (3 Oct. 1931): 468-469; Irene von Hartung, “Raum ist in der kleinsten Hütte,” *Frauenwelt* 5 (4 Mar. 1928): 108-109; Helene Turnau, “Alles haben und nichts besitzen: Aus der Siedlung der berufstätigen Frauen,” *Frauenwelt* 7 (4 Apr. 1931): 156-157; and Hilde Grünbaum-Sachs, “Von der Werkbundausststellung ‘Wohnbedarf,’” *Frauenwelt* 18 (3 Sept. 1932): 420-421.

<sup>35</sup> Turnau, “Alles haben und nichts besitzen: Aus der Siedlung der berufstätigen Frauen,” *Frauenwelt* 7 (4 Apr. 1931): 156-157, here 156.



Die sogenannte „Frankfurter Küche“, die keine unnütze Kraftverschwendung möglich macht. Unterm Fenster der Arbeitstisch mit Abfallschublade. Rechts davon die Abwäsche, darüber das Gestell zum Tellerabtropfen. Weiter rechts der Geschirr- und Vorratsschrank. Links der Kochherd, daneben die Kochkiste. Etwas weiter ist das Bügelbrett an der Wand befestigt  
 (Phot. Collischonn, Frankfurt a. M.)

Figure 71: Frankfurt Kitchen, *Frauenwelt* 1 (11 Jan. 1930): 5. Designed by Grete Lihotzky in 1927 while she was employed by the Frankfurt Hochbauamt under the direction of Ernst May. The caption reads: “The so-called Frankfurt Kitchen prevents all unnecessary wasting of effort. Under the window is the work table with the trash drawer; to its right is the sink for washing dishes; above it, the drying rack for plates, and further right the dish and pantry cabinets. On the left is the stove, and next to it the oven. A little further away the ironing board is attached to the wall.”

At the center of the new interior designs was the Frankfurt kitchen (see Figure 71). This kitchen was a small, separate room, equipped with modern appliances and furniture such that

only one person could perform all cooking and cleaning tasks in a Taylorized manner in it, meaning using a minimal number of steps and hand grips and therefore the least amount of energy and time possible. Whereas wider popular-scientific and leftist advice on exercise claimed movement helped women stay healthy, young, and beautiful; their language on housework assumed that every movement and physical exertion doing housework was a waste of women's energy and time, as well as potentially detrimental to their health. Consequently, they, as also wider discourses, suggested that "[e]very aspect of household productions, consumption, technology, and sociability [... needed to be] systematically rethought and reformed" to reduce women's time and labor while cleaning and cooking, as Nolan has noted.<sup>36</sup> The Frankfurt kitchen's small space and its outfitting with modern technological amenities and furnishing were the product of such thoroughly thought-out housekeeping processes.

The Frankfurt kitchen and the rationalized new apartment designs and furnishings gendered spaces and imposed more starkly divided traditional middle-class gender roles and responsibilities, yet Social Democrats and even Communists accepted them.<sup>37</sup> The *Frankfurt* kitchen forced a transformation of proletarian families' lifestyles and uses of space. Previously, large family kitchens ("*Wohnküchen*") made it possible for mothers to multi-task: supervise their children, and socialize with other family members even while they cooked and cleaned. In family kitchens family members could also help with cooking, cleaning, and childrearing.

In the new apartments, however, architects and interior designers viewed "[c]ooking, cleaning, and washing... reduced to 'labor processes'," as distinct activities from childrearing

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<sup>36</sup> Mary Nolan, "'Housework Made Easy': The Taylorized Housewife in Weimar," *Feminist Studies* 16, no. 3 (Autumn 1990): 549-577, here 554.

<sup>37</sup> Simmel, "Die neue Küche," *Frauenwelt* 1 (Jan. 1929): 16. On this topic see also Leif Jerram, "Kitchen Sink Dramas: Women, Modernity and Space in Weimar Germany," *Cultural Geographies* 13, no. 4 (Oct. 2006): 538-556.

and socializing.<sup>38</sup> This penchant for classifying functions and the focus on the most efficient use of time and energy by the housewife led to an understanding that family members, socializing, sleeping, and child care no longer belonged in the kitchen.<sup>39</sup> The Frankfurt kitchen, or “the workshop of the household” became a gendered space purely belonging to women and where women did quasi-professional work, somewhere between that of workers at the conveyor belt and carpenters at the workshop.<sup>40</sup>

In accepting the Frankfurt kitchen, leftists did not question architects’, interior designers’, and homemaking experts’ middle-class assumptions that the kitchen was a woman’s workspace. They thereby participated in “redomesticating” women in Henderson’s words.<sup>41</sup> By identifying women as the person solely responsible for cooking, and by separating the kitchen from the rest of the apartment, architects, interior designers, and supportive Social Democratic commentators established the combined living and dining room as the space where the male partner or husband spent his time resting and reading at the couch or desk. This brought the working-class husband’s status closer to that of a middle-class one. According to Henderson, this was not an accidental outcome of the *Frankfurt* kitchen: “[T]o ensure calm and a respite for the husband from the outside world, household labor was contained and out-of-sight, as it would have been in the households of any well-to-do family.”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Nolan, “Housework,” 559.

<sup>39</sup> On this see also Leif Jerram, “Kitchen Sink Dramas: Women, Modernity, and Space in Weimar Germany,” in *Cultural Geographies* 13, no. 4 (Oct. 2006): 538-556; and Nicholas Bullock, “First the Kitchen: Then the Façade,” *Journal of Design History* 1, no. ¾ Designing the Modern Experience 1885-1945 (1988): 177-192. According to Henderson, critics as well as some advocates of the Frankfurt kitchen “regretted that its small dimensions precluded two people working together,” *Building Culture*, 158.

<sup>40</sup> Behne, “Rationelle Haushaltsführung,” *Frauenwelt* 1 (Jan. 1931): 12 and 14.

<sup>41</sup> Henderson, *Building Culture*, 158.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

In principle, KPD programs, guidelines, and many articles and discussion contributors within *Die Kommunistin* and *DWdF* rejected the individual kitchen, which was for them “a backward province of the pre-capitalist social form [...] and petit-bourgeois values [because...] it was [i]ndividually rather than socially organized,” according to Weitz.<sup>43</sup> Individual kitchens in each apartment were a waste of space and resources, including women’s time and energies, they claimed and rejected women’s unpaid labor in the home after their day at work.

Those times when the housewife roasted coffee, kneaded dough, and baked bread at home ... are over. The working woman should no longer knit socks, heat ovens, launder clothes, scrub floors [...] The women working in the factories, our female salaried workers, our women chemists, nurses ..., trained for practical thinking and acting, should ask themselves: “Why should each little household have a pompous kitchen? Why leave the children at home to take care of themselves?”<sup>44</sup>

Communists preferred the rationalization and Taylorization of all work, including housework, and argued that socializing housework represented the greatest amount of its rationalization. They asserted that meals prepared at meal factories, central kitchens, and cafeterias (which supposedly existed in the Soviet Union) were much more cost and labor-efficient, and allowed the savings to be used for the purchase of higher-quality foods.<sup>45</sup> Therefore, families should ideally buy their breakfast and dinner ready to eat and preserved in cans and jars from consumer unions and eat their warm lunches at cafeterias at the workplace, school, and neighborhood.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Weitz, “The Heroic Man,” 329. See also “Richtlinien der Kommunistischen Frauenbewegung,” *Die Kommunistin* 22 (1920): 175.

<sup>44</sup> Knauth, “Vom eigenen Herd zur Großküche,” *DWdF* 5 (Oct. 1931): 4-6; here 5-6.

<sup>45</sup> Zetkin’s and the Comintern’s “Richtlinien für die kommunistische Frauenbewegung. Anhang Einleitung der russischen Ausgabe der Richtlinien,” (Leipzig: Franke, 1920): 15-16.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. F. Heckert, “Weshalb müssen die Frauen am Betriebsräte-Kongreß teilnehmen?” *Die Kommunistin* 19 (1922): 146; Erna Rickel, “Wie stellen wir uns zum Großhaushalt,” *Die Kommunistin* 13 (1 July 1922): 101; Helene Wellfrath, “Wie stellen wir uns zum Großhaushalt?” *Die Kommunistin* 17 (1 Sept. 1922): 133-134; E. Rinkel, “Ein Beitrag zur Frage über den Großhaushalt,” *Die Kommunistin* 19 (1 Oct. 1922): 148-149; “Rohrstock oder Kinderspeisung?” *DWdF* 3 (Aug. 1931): 14; and “Richtlinien für die kommunistische Frauenbewegung,”



Since the Weimar State didn't offer central kitchens (nor central laundries called for in Communist programs and guidelines) Communists approved of the Frankfurt kitchen as the next best thing and thereby participated in the "redomestication" of the working-class woman as a way to make do until the establishment of a Communist state in Germany.<sup>47</sup> H. L., writing in *DWdF*, declared:

For the working-class sectors reduced to poverty, for the million-strong army of the unemployed ["*Millionenheer der Erwerbslosen*"] even such a *Wohnkultur* is going to be beyond their means. As is well-known, a not-so-inconsiderable percentage of the German *Volk* lives between margarine crates in dreadful holes and caves.<sup>48</sup>

### **Rationalizing Proletarian Homes and Homemaking**

To a slightly lesser degree than Social Democrats, Communists argued that working-class women did not have to wait for a new home in Weimar Germany or a future Socialist society to obtain some measure of *Wohnkultur*. Working-class women should create a more hygienic, healthy, functional, and aesthetic home environment in their existing older homes by rationalizing their homes and homemaking practices in manners similar to those presented and prescribed by the new worker homes in Frankfurt.<sup>49</sup>

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*Kommunistische Internationale* 15 (1920/21): 530-555. Social Democrats like Fürth, a veteran feminist advocate and sociologist, argued the opposite: that it was more efficient and cheaper for women to cook in their homes than to have communal kitchens prepare food, in part because housewives were not paid for housework. Fürth, "Etwas von Teuerung, Zentralküche, hauswirtschaftlichen Erleichterungen und ähnlichen Dingen," *Frauenwelt* 1 (1928): 9. On this topic see also von Saldern, "Modernization as Challenge," 114-117.

<sup>47</sup> Knauth, "Vom eigenen Herd zur Großküche," *DWdF* 5 (Oct. 1931): here 5-6.

<sup>48</sup> H.L., "Die Moe' Sonderschau: Die billige Wohnung," *DWdF* 5 (May 1932): 27.

<sup>49</sup> 'A female comrade from Offenbach', "Ein *Frauenwelt*-Abend," *Die Genossin* 3 (Sept. 1924): 63-64. For studies on the rationalization of the home see Nolan, "Housework," 549-577; Hagemann, "Of 'Old' and 'New Housewives': Everyday Housework and the Limits of Household Rationalization in the Urban Working-Class Milieu of the Weimar Republic," *International Review of Social History* 41, no. 3 (1 Dec. 1996): 305-330; Nikos Pegioudis, "The 'Bare Wall': Interior Design, Painting, and Professional Politics in Late Weimar Germany," *Oxford Art Journal* 39, no. 1 (2016): 87-106. On definitions of Germanness based on patterns of homemaking see Nancy R. Reagin, *Sweeping the German Nation: Domesticity and National Identity in Germany, 1870-1945* (Cambridge UP, 2007).

Pedagogue Elfriede Behne (Schäfer, 1883-1960), who frequently wrote about interior design, art, and youth education, explained the guidelines proletarian women had to follow: "The most important principle is the creation of a hygienic, sunny, and airy apartment that is easy to

## Neue Wohnkultur mit alten Möbeln

Wohnungsgestaltung im neuzeitlichen Sinne ist leider eine Angelegenheit des Geldwechsels. Wie gern würden die meisten ihre altmodischen Vertikos und Fließspannüren dem Treidler überlassen und sich eine jezer schöne modernere Einrichtung aus kaukasischem Nubbaum oder in Schellack kaufen. Aber neue Wohnungsgestaltung ist nicht nur eine Geldfrage und auch für die, die notgedrungen mit ihren alten Klammern weiterleben müssen, gibt es allerlei Möglichkeiten, ihre Behausung nach modernen Ideen umzugestalten. Allerdings gehört dazu Entschlossenheit und ein bitlen guter Wille. Und nicht zuletzt auch einige Geschicklichkeit. Neues Wohnen ist nämlich auch eine Frage der inneren Haltung und der Geschmacksbildung. Die Wohnung unserer Zeit soll hell und freundlich, von einfacher, schlichter Formung und leicht sauber zu halten sein. Diesen Begriffen aber widersprechen die Einrichtungsgegenstände aus den neunziger Jahren mit ihren protzigen, unruhigen und staubansammelnden Verzierungen aufs schärfste. Im Gegensatz zu dem geistigen Mobiliar aus der Zeit unserer Urgroßmütter, deren schöne gewöhnliche Kommoden und Sekretäre ohne weiteres in jeden modernen Raum hineingepaßt, ist ihre sinnlose Überladetheit unseren auf Einfachheit und Schlichtheit gerichteten Empfinden besonders unangenehm. Und doch steckt auch in ihnen ein guter konstruktiver Kern und mancher Schrank erhält schon ein ganz anderes und viel zeitgemäßeres Gesicht.

Wenn man nur den aufgereimten Menschenaufsatz entfernt. Manche Leute, die sich von den Begriffen der Makartzeit und einem kleinbürgerlichen Repräsentationsbedürfnis nicht freimachen können, finden allerdings, daß er dann „noch nichts aussieht“. Nun, ich habe sogar eine Frau gekannt, die zum Zwecke des „Nachtwaschens“ japanische Fächer ins Badzimmer hängte...

Man wird sich wundern, was für glatte, saubere Möbel man herausbekommt, wenn man die überflüssigen aufgesetzten Teile entfernt. Und welche räumlich-befriedigende Wirkung man erzielt, besonders wenn man außerdem den Mut findet, Bilder mit verschärften Rahmen und die viel zu vielen Vasen in einer Kiste auf dem Boden zu verstauen. Es schadet hierzu wirklich Mut vonnöten, denn obgleich gegen Nippesachen schon seit Jahren geschrieben und gepredigt wird, haben sich immer noch viele Leute nicht von den

alten und doch wirklich nicht mal schönen Staubfänger getrennt. Man braucht gewiß nicht soweit wie Bruno Taut zu gehen, der alten Bildschmuck aus der Wohnung entfernt haben will. Aber man wird sich von dem in seinem Buch „Die neue Wohnung“ enthaltenen Beispielen der Umwandlung alter Zimmer gern überzeugen, welche überraschende, schöne und neuartige Wirkungen sich durch Entfernen des Überflüssigen, durch Korrektur der Möbelformen und durch ein geschmackvolles Zusammenstimmen der Farben erzielen lassen.

Bei einigen Geschick kann man bei einer solchen Umwandlung mit geringen Mitteln vieles selbst machen. Großere Arbeiten oder auch schwierigere, wie z. B. das Ersetzen der gedrehten durch gerade Beine muß man natürlich dem Tischler überlassen. Es ist ein hübsches Glücke, daß man einen verständnisvollen und nicht zu kostspieligen findet.

Ein junges Ehepaar hatte ein unmodernes bürgerliches Speisezimmer mit einem fürchterlichen Menestrum von Büfett gerast, dessen Umgestaltung sich in jeder Beziehung gelohnt hat. Durch Entfernen der gedrehten Säulen usw. und geschicktes Benutzen der glatten formierten Teile ist es noch ein hübsches modernes Zimmer geworden. Die ziemlich umfangreichen Tischlerarbeiten haben für das ganze Aufbauschzimmer 150 M. gekostet.

Manches Möbelstück wirkt hübsch durch seinen großen Beizton und seine billigen Messingblechbeschläge. Dem kann man selbst leicht abhelfen. Nachdem man die aufdringlichen Beschläge entfernt hat, langt man das Möbelstück mit einer Lauge aus kausischem Soda ab, die die alte Farbe herunterwäscht. Dann befreit man sich aus etwas Sagenmilch, brühen Wasser und Tuschleim einen Holzkitt, mit dem man alle Löcher und Risse verstreicht. Nach dem Trocknen müssen alle Unebenheiten mit feinem zerhacktem Gipspapier abgeschliffen werden. Nun wird die Beize, die man in jeden Farbton fertig kaufen kann, gleichmäßig aufgetragen. Das Wachsen des trockenen Gegenstandes kann mit Fußbodenwachs geschehen. Die Messingbeschläge ersetzt man durch einfache kleine Schlüssel-schilder in Schwarz oder Bronze. Bei Kommoden bringt man auf beiden Seiten des Schließloches ein paar handliche Knöpfe an.

Möbel brauchen aber nicht unbedingt braun zu sein. Ein brauner Anstrich, der Holzmasse vorzuziehen soll, ist sogar meistens ungesund. Dagegen kann ein tau-

Abb. A1

Abb. A2

Abb. B1

Abb. B2

Abb. C1

Abb. C2

Die Abbildungen A1, B1 und C1 zeigen die Möbelstücke vor der Modernisierung. — Abbildungen A2, B2 und C2 nach der Bearbeitung. (Siehe auch das Photo auf Seite 317)

Nach jedem Anstrich muß die Oberfläche mit Glaspapier oder Bismutrinne geputzt und nach dem Abblättern mit kaltem Wasser abgewaschen und getrocknet werden.

Wenn man anzeitlich wohnen will und es irgendwie erschwigen kann, dann verzage man auch nicht, den dunkelgrünem oder Molettgrün des Sofas durch einen indanthrenfarbigen Rips oder Cellon zu ersetzen. Und dann: lichte Fensterwände und nach Möglichkeit lichte Tapeten! All das kostet etwas Mühe, aber man wird freudig überrascht sein, welche neuen Glanz die alte Wohnung verbreiten kann und wird sich selbst darin wie neugeboren fühlen.

M. Hartig.

### WER WEISS RAT?

**Antworten**

**Frage:**  
Liebe Elisabeth!  
Stadteinstelle. Ich habe eine Schwägerin, welche Textilarbeiterin ist und einen unehelichen Sohn hat. Derselbe ist legal und studiert zur Zeit auf der Wiener Universität Naturwissenschaften. Um aber im Besonderen später eine Stelle als Lehrer zu bekommen, sollte er jetzt auf einer deutschen Hochschule weiterstudieren. Dann würde meiner Schwägerin aber das Geld nicht, zumal das Geschäft auch sehr langsam ist. Gibt es in Deutschland eine Hochschule, in der solches Studenten gegen mäßigen Entgelt aufgenommen werden? Oder gibt es andere Mittel und Wege zur Erlangung des Studiums?  
Marie S.

**Antwort:** Können man gegen einen Mietler, der sich einer Körperverletzung gegen die Frau des Vermieters schuldig gemacht hat, Hausungabe antwortet? Der Vermieter ist im Grundbuchverfahren mit, wenn der Mieter die Kosten trägt und die Wohnung stumm, wenn ihn der Mieter die Kosten trägt und die Wohnung stumm, wenn ihn der Mieter zugewiesen wird.  
Lina.

**Frage:** Hansa. Ich bin 30 Jahre alt, hatte früher leicheres Haar, das allerdings schon bei mir füllte ziemlich rasch ist. Auf Veranlassung einer Freundin entschied ich mich zu einer „Anna-Caring-Kur“. Diese Kur kostete 16,- M. und dauerte normalerweise 1/2 Jahr. Obwohl in dem Schreiben des Laboratoriums ausdrücklich berichtet wird, daß die Haare eine natürliche Farbe wieder erhalten, bemerke ich nach Ablauf der Kur doch eine sogenannte Besorgung der Vorderseite nicht des grünen Lösses. Es war mir lieb, zu erfahren, ob eine Leserin der „Frauenwelt“ schon einmal eine solche Kur durchgemacht hat und wie sie mit dem Erfolg zufrieden war. — Ist vielleicht eine Groomin in der Lage, mir einen Rat zu empfehlen, das grüne Haar, das Ergüsse der Haare, wenn schon nicht gleich zu beseitigen, so doch wenigstens für eine Zeit lang so zu verhindern?  
M. S. K.

Figure 72: M. Hartig, "Neue Wohnkultur mit alten Möbeln," *Frauenwelt* 14 (12 July 1930): 322-323. The title reads new home décor and living culture using old furniture. Before and after removal of decorations and sections no longer considered functional by the author.



clean.”<sup>50</sup> The housewife had to rationalize material aspects of her home interior, her and her family’s use of the home, and her work patterns guided by the goals of increasing the cleanliness of her home, making it fit a modern aesthetic, and saving steps and time during domestic labor (see Figure 73).<sup>51</sup> Social Democratic and Communist authors promised that these transformations

<sup>50</sup> Elfriede Behne, “Rationelle Haushaltsführung,” *Frauenwelt* 1 (Jan. 1931): 12 and 14.

<sup>51</sup> Margarete Hartig, “Wege zu neuzeitlicher Wohnungskultur: Wie renoviere ich meine Wohnung schön und zweckvoll,” *Frauenwelt* 9 (2 May 1931): 205-206; and A.P., “Der neue Raum,” *Frauenwelt* 6 (Mar. 1932): 131-132. On worker homes see Christiane Koch, “Schreibmaschine, Bügeleisen und Muttertagsträuße: der bescheidene Frauenalltag in den zwanziger Jahren,” in von Soden and Schmidt eds., *Neue Frauen: die zwanziger*, 89-102.

would create more pleasant and healthier home environments for working-class families, and simultaneously generate free time the housewife could use for other activities.

These narratives on rationalizing the home were in part bottom-up. In *Frauenwelt's* “*Wer weiß Rat...?*” and “*Die Axt im Haus*” segments readers asked for and offered homemaking advice. With such contributions, readers indicated they were interested in or knew about the best, most efficient, or cost-saving – and hence most rational – ways to accomplish specific homemaking chores. Repairing, maintaining, and reusing existing items while accommodating modern needs or aesthetics made up a good part of these contributions. Such contributions were encouraged by many didactic *Frauenwelt* articles on *Wohnkultur*, especially from 1928 through early 1933, with images illustrating what the new *Wohnkultur* should look like and explaining why readers should adopt it. These articles prescribed a heightened new furniture consumption but also illustrated ways to transform existing furniture into a modern-functionalist aesthetic.

In the process, architects, designers, political activists, and journalists presented a single, modern, middle-class aesthetic and hygienic ideal for the working-class home. Even though the Werkbund architects, designers, carpenters, artists, and businesses funding the new furniture belonged securely to the middle classes, Social Democratic authors claimed the new furniture types (see Figures 74 and 75) were “expressions of a proletarian culture” because they were mass-produced by (in part) unskilled laborers using less and cheaper industrial materials.<sup>52</sup> Despite this their prices remained unaffordable for most working-class families. Nevertheless, Social Democrats called on women to purchase individual items on special occasions and increase their collection over time. They insisted that the home of a woman had to demonstrate –

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<sup>52</sup> Grünbaum-Sachs, “Von der Werkbundaussstellung ‘Wohnbedarf,’” *Frauenwelt* 18 (3 Sept. 1932): 420-421. On interwar mass-produced furniture styles see W. Owen Harrod, “Unfamiliar Precedents: Plywood Furniture in Weimar Germany,” *Studies in the Decorative Arts* 15, no. 2 (Spring-Summer 2008): 2-35.

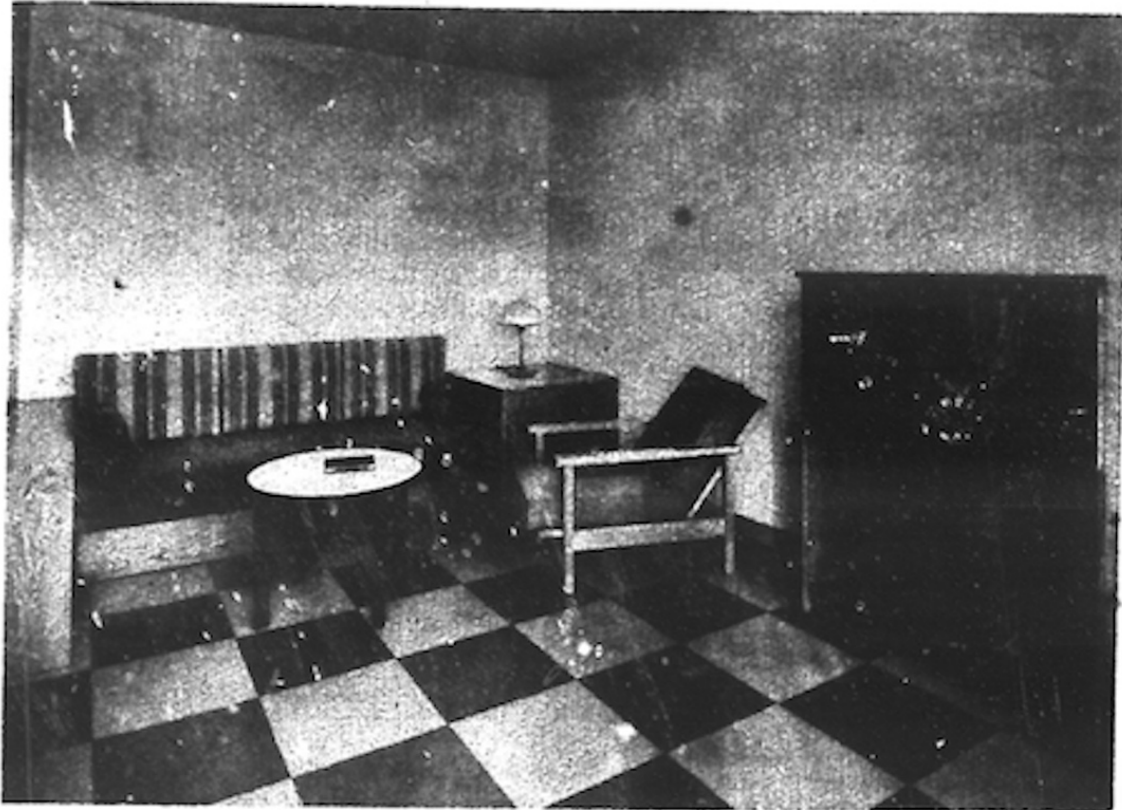


Figure 74: Franz Schuster, *Ein eingerichtetes Siedlungshaus*, (Frankfurt am Main: Englert und Schlosser, 1928) photo reprinted in Fritz Kormis, “Die neue Wohnung,” *Frauenwelt* 8 (21 Apr. 1928): 182-183, here 182.

with a modern aesthetic – that she was an emancipated Socialist New Woman, and claimed that older furniture in a home evidenced that the homemaker was unemancipated and clung to past traditions and culture. Kirschmann-Röhl noted, using the masculine personal pronoun to actually refer to women:

These dependencies prove bondage to established habits and a certain lack of independence. The very conviction and desire to transform the world, to work toward gathering a majority of people into an army that will construct a new social order, has to be visible already in the individual’s arrangement of his environment, which he needs for collecting and developing his strength.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>53</sup> E.K.-R., “Die ‘gute Stube’,” *Frauenwelt* 8 (1924): 114-115, here 115.

# DER NEUE RAUM

Die Not der Zeit im allgemeinen und die Wohnungsnot bzw. die Mißverhältnisse auf dem Wohnungsmarkt im besonderen zwingen uns an sich schon zu völliger Umstellung. Unsere Wohnsitten müssen sich nun den Forderungen der Gegenwart anpassen. Die mahndendste Forderung ist die nach Oekonomie. Es ist das ökonomisch, was seinen Zweck in vollkommener Weise erfüllt und was aus seiner Funktion heraus geformt ist. Die Erziehung zur Oekonomie, angewandt auf die Wohnung, wird uns lehren, bewußt alles Ueberflüssige auszuschalten und sich auf das Gebrauchswichtige zu beschränken. Ein weiterer Grund für die Umstellung ist, daß sich unsere Ansprüche an den uns umgebenden Raum gewandelt haben. Unser Hunger nach Licht, Luft und Sonne, nach Körperpflege und Bad in der eigenen Wohnung ist wesentlich gestiegen. Die einschläfernde Gemüthlichkeit unseres früheren trauten Heimes mit dem vielen Drum und Dran paßt nicht mehr in das heutige bewegte Leben, wo Wachsen und Kämpfen die Parole ist und ein ständiges Ringen und Sichbehaupten das Leben so unsicher machen. Im ausgleichenden Gegensatz zu der Hast und der Hetze unserer Arbeitstage stehen die klaren, ruhigen Formen der neuen Sachlichkeit. Ein Raum, in dem Fenster, Türen, Möbel, notwendige Beleuchtungskörper und sonstige Gerätschaften in ihren Beziehungen zueinander gesehen und geordnet sind, ist nicht nüchtern und nicht schmucklos, ein solcher Raum ist nicht nur zweckmäßig, sondern er ist gestaltet, und auf dieses Gestalten kommt es an. Daß hierin eine besonders große Aufgabe für die Frau liegt, bedarf kaum der besonderen Erwähnung. Wichtig ist zunächst, daß der Mensch im Raum wieder zur Geltung gebracht wird. Die menschliche Erscheinung muß im Raum vorherrschen, denn wir, wir sind die Hauptsache, nicht der Hausrat wie bisher. Das „Aufgehen der Frau im Haushalt“ wie in früheren Zeiten (von den National-



Bild 2



Bild 3

sozialisten wird es allerdings wieder verlangt) ist heute ein Luxus, den sich die moderne Frau, hauptsächlich die proletarische Frau, nicht mehr leisten kann. Ihre Zeit ist zu kostbar und der Nutzen, den sie der Familie oder der Gesamtheit durch andere Arbeit bringt, ist größer als die Annehmlichkeiten, die sie durch rastlose Tätigkeit im Haushalt erringt. Wir Frauen müssen daher lernen, uns nicht mit so viel Ueberfracht im Hauswesen zu packen, damit unsere Leistungsfähigkeit nicht gehemmt wird. Viel Ueberlegen und viel Nachdenken gehört dazu. Die Möbelindustrie — bis auf wenige Ausnahmen — stellt heute noch Möbel her, die wenig im Einklang zu der Wirklichkeit, Raumbeschränktheit und Geldknappheit, stehen. Was da in den Schaufenstern an Möbeln zu sehen ist, ist meist zu kolossal gebaut und zu elegant für die heutige verarmte Zeit. Vitrinen z. B. sind unnötig, nur gerechtfertigt für Antiquitätensammlungen. Vor allen Dingen sollen die Möbel so angeordnet sein, daß sie unserer

Beweglichkeit im Heim weiten Spielraum lassen.

Die beigegebenen Bilder, die eine Raumgestaltung nach den Entwürfen des Architekten Hans Brehmer, Hamburg, zeigen, geben nun einige Anregungen. Die Schränke und Borte sind von einem Tischler leicht anzufertigen, je nach den vorhandenen Geldmitteln kann man das Holz wählen. Bild 1 stellt eine Wohncke dar. Wir finden hier die einfachsten Möbelformen bei voller Zweckerfüllung zu einem harmonischen Ganzen geordnet. Als Wandbekleidung ist silbergrauer und roter Rips verwendet. Aus gleichem Material sind Ruhesofa, -decke und Kissen. Der kleine Schrank (Kiefernholz schwarz gebeizt), Platte Linoleumbelag, hat offene Borte für schnell aus der Hand zu legenden Bücher und kleine Gebrauchsgegenstände. Die Röhrenbeleuchtung ist gedeckt mit einem einfachen Holzkasten. Bild 2 zeigt weiter eine vortrefflich angeordnete Zimmerecke. Der mit einer Leiste abgegrenzte Wandbehang ist aus

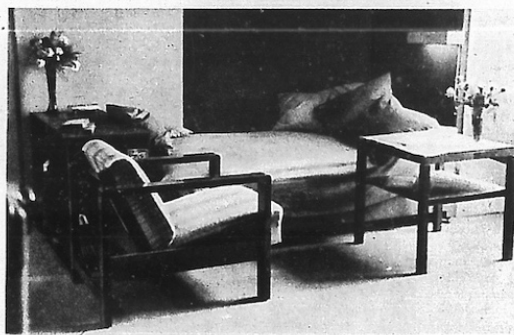


Bild 1

Two-time contributor Maria Rath suggested that the interior furnishing of a woman's home shed light on whether she was a rational Socialist New Woman homemaker concerned with hygiene, function, and efficiency.

With this furniture, easy to transport during a move, one has achieved the best way to use interior space [...] in such rooms, the housewife would have the time to devote herself to other things besides how to keep her home clean. When comparing such interior furnishings with so-called 'good old middle-class' interior designs – the former makes the impression that the housewife has an open and free character. There is nothing masked or hidden. One can tell what these practical furniture pieces ("*Gebrauchsmöbel*") are intended for and what they contain. They look beautiful in their simplicity. Their beauty does not need to be elevated with crocheted doilies and blankets. On the contrary, such furniture does not tolerate things of alien styles close by; decorative knickknacks and keepsakes from grandmother's times don't belong with interior furnishings expressing rational objectivity.<sup>54</sup>

Like the new building styles, the modern Werkbund-type furniture leftists prized was starkly bare, square, simple, functional, and "gender-neutral."<sup>55</sup> As with narratives intended to make the new buildings more appealing, contributors attempted to instill a new understanding in readers of beauty based on simplicity, function, and the use of "scientific rationality" for design, creation, and choices for materials.<sup>56</sup> The Frankfurt sculptor Fritz Kormis (1897-1986) claimed that once readers gave such "alien" seeming but "truthful" furniture, "with bare, smooth, and "calm surfaces" "a try, they would experience them as a relief for their eyes."<sup>57</sup>

Interwar hygiene standards required every inch of the home be dust-free and as clean as possible, and, like the Hausmannization, prescribed tabula rasa on everything from the past. The new simple and bare *Gebrauchsmöbel* without decorations made better cleaning possible.

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<sup>54</sup> Rath, "Wohnung und Politik," *Frauenwelt* 4 (Feb. 1930): 77.

<sup>55</sup> See Henderson, *Building Culture*, 184.

<sup>56</sup> Kormis, "Die neue Wohnung," *Frauenwelt* 8 (21 Apr. 1928): 182-183, here 183.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*



# RICHTIGE HALTUNG FÖRDERT DIE GESUNDHEIT

Die Frauennarbeit in den rationalisierten Betrieben hat erfahrungsgemäß zu einer Häufung der Frauenkrankheiten geführt.

Zweifellos bedeutet die Arbeit an der Nähmaschine, am Automaten, wo schon ein Mann die Anspannung seiner ganzen

Körperkraft braucht, unter den heutigen schlechten Arbeitsbedingungen schwere Gesundheitsschädigungen für die viel zarter und komplizierter gebaute Frau. Um diese Schädigungen wenigstens etwas auszugleichen oder zu vermeiden, daß sie in den Wechseljahren und dem späteren Alter in solcher Schwere auftreten, sollte die werktätige Frau bei ihren häuslichen Verrichtungen mehr auf eine richtige Körperhaltung achten.

Eine straffe Aufrechthaltung, in Sport und Spiel erworben, kann ausschlaggebend dabei sein, ob die Wechseljahre ohne Beschwerden verlaufen, ob die schädigenden Einflüsse von Entbindungen und Fehlgeburten sich in mehr oder weniger starkem Maße bemerkbar machen. Es gehört ja lediglich etwas Aufmerksamkeit und Willenskraft dazu, die bei der Verrichtung einer jeden Arbeit zweckmäßige, dem Körper und seinen Organen

am wenigsten schädigende Haltung der Hals- und Brustwirbelsäule nach vorn führt und in einer bleibenden Rückgratverkrümmung endet. Abgesehen davon, daß eine solche vorübergehende Haltung schlecht aussieht und auch jungen Mädchen den Anschein älterer Frauen gibt, bedeutet der ständige Druck der Brustorgane und des ganzen Brustkorbes auf die Bauch- und Beckenorgane eine erhebliche Gesundheitsschädigung, Gebärmutterkrümmung, Entzündungen mit heftigen Kreuz- und Leibschmerzen verbunden, Regelblutung, die oft lediglich durch derartige Haltung bedingt sind.

Dr. med. Wilhelm Swienty

## Ein Geschenk: Vier neue Leserinnen

Die Buchprämie „Hotel Amerika“ haben wir erlitten. Wir haben uns sehr gefreut darüber und senden an Euch ein kleines Geschenk: 4 neue Leserinnen für den „Weg der Frau“. Es war an der Zeit, den hürgeklachten Moden- und Frauenzeitschriften mit ihrem altherren, verlogenen Gewäsch eine proletarische Frauenzeitschrift gegenüberzustellen.

L. E. Aurnberg



Das Schubband schnürt man am besten im Stehen, wobei man den Fuß auf einen Stuhl oder Hocker stützt. Auch hier ist die Knickung des Körpers und der Druck auf die Unterleibsorgane, auch wenn es nur vorübergehend geschieht, zweifelslos schädlich.



Diese Art von Entspannung des Körpers beim Lesen führt zu einem Druck des Brustkorbes auf die Unterleibsorgane, wobei gleichzeitig der Blutabfluß aus den Beinen und aus dem Körper verschlechtert wird. Krampfadern, Gebärmutterneidungen, Darmträgheit und Stuhlverstopfung können die Folge sein. Auch in der Ruhe soll der Körper beim Sitzen geradegerichtet werden.



einemachen. Dauernde Kontrolle durch andere und durch sich selbst wird verhindern, daß durch ungewöhnliche Haltung, gebücktes Gehen, gebücktes Arbeiten, Lesen oder Sitzen eine Erschlaffung der Rückenmuskulatur eintritt, die schließlich zu einem Zusammenfallen der



Um etwas vom Boden aufzuheben, muß man knien, da die Knickung des gesamten Oberkörpers gegen die Beine zu einer Blutüberfüllung des Gehirns und einer Überanstrengung der gesamten Muskulatur führt.

Die gebückte Haltung beim Tragen eines Eimers führt zu einer Überlastung der Muskulatur der einen Seite, Krümmung der ganzen Wirbelsäule und kann, beispielsweise bei Aufwartefrauen, Wasserträgerinnen usw., zu einer dauernden Rückgratkrümmung führen. Beim aufgerichteten Körper trägt sich der Eimer auch leichter.

Figure 76: Swienty, "Richtige Haltung fördert die Gesundheit," DWdF 7 (July 1932): 29.

However, if readers could not afford new furniture, Social Democratic and Communist authors called on women to declutter walls from knickknacks and transform their existing furniture into



the same looks and reap the same benefits that the new furniture had.<sup>58</sup> They should detach and get rid of wooden decorations, sand surfaces flat, paint over dark and varnished wood with light and glossy colors, and use linoleum for countertops and floors (see Figures 72 and 74). Light surfaces showed dirt more readily and smooth surfaces allowed for easier cleaning. Women should also flip their kitchen furniture upside down or break off leg pieces to eliminate spaces under furniture and the necessity for them to clean these “while crawling on their abdomen.”<sup>59</sup> Alternatively, readers should get rid of their old furniture and construct basic furniture with inexpensive pieces of wood such as food crates and broomsticks.<sup>60</sup>

By Weimar, some postures and poses, such as being bent over or on one’s knees, were associated with primitive servile beings and the working classes.<sup>61</sup> Leftists’ narratives suggested that the Socialist New Woman used her brain/rationality to avoid looking like she belonged to the above undesirable groups and instead present herself with middle-class and civilized attributes (see Figure 76). Regular contributor Hedwig Schwarz expressed this in rhyme:

The floor has to be waxed to a shine –  
 But why a kneed reverence because of that?  
 Slavery is abolished,

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<sup>58</sup> “Ein *Frauenwelt*-Abend,” *Die Genossin* 3 (Sept. 1924): 63-64; Kormis, “Tapete und Bodenbelag,” *Frauenwelt* 10 (17 May 1930): 230-231; Dipl.-Ing. A. Lion, “Was muss die Frau von der ‘Richtigen’ Beleuchtung ihrer Wohnung wissen,” *Frauenwelt* 17 (22 Aug. 1931): 394-395; and ‘Architect E. Bielefeld’, “Möbliertes Zimmer zu vermieten,” *Frauenwelt* 17 (20 Aug. 1932): 399; “Zwischen Schlafstelle und Heim,” *Frauenwelt* 15 (1924): 239; P.E. Kuhlmann, “Mit einfachsten Mitteln ein schönes Heim,” *Frauenwelt* 11 (May 1932): 248-249; H.L., “Die neue Küche aus alten Möbeln,” *DWdF* 5 (1 May 1932), 27; Grete Wels, “Kitsch dem Volke,” *Frauenwelt* 15 (28 July 1928): 350-351; and Elli Radtke-Warmuth, “Kampf dem Überflüssigem!” *Frauenwelt* 9 (1924): 149. On this topic see also Pegioudis, “The ‘Bare Wall’,” 87-106. Readers asked each other for photos of new furniture styles to copy them. See “Antwort,” *Zwischen Schlafstelle und Heim*, *Frauenwelt* 3 (29 Jan. 1927): 38.

<sup>59</sup> Rath, “Wohnung und Politik,” *Frauenwelt* 4 (Feb. 1930): 77.

<sup>60</sup> An example of simple furniture was Austrian-Hungarian architect and furniture designer Frank Schuster’s (1892-1972) settlement furniture (*Siedlungsmöbel*), shown at the 1932 Stuttgart *Wohnbedarf* exhibit. It consisted of modular cubes, some with shelves and doors, was mass-produced, and had to be assembled after purchase. Each cube sold for 15 Marks, which some proletarian women earned in a week’s worth of work. See Henderson, *Building Culture*, 184-189.

<sup>61</sup> Luise Winkelmann, “Frauen der Wüste,” *Frauenwelt* 2 (24 Jan. 1931): 37-38.

One preserves dignity and saves strength.  
 The waxing cloth at the broomstick's end  
 fits the housewife's transformations. [...]
 You save yourself the agony of bending  
 And remain human and vertical.<sup>62</sup>



Figure 77: “Am laufenden Band,” *DWdF* 1 (June 1931): 11.

Dr. Swienty claimed that upright and seated postures also prevented physical deformations:

It only requires a little attention and willpower to select the type of posture during the execution of every chore, which will lead to the least forward-bending of the neck and backbone. [Excessive forward-bending] ultimately results in permanent backbone malformation.<sup>63</sup>

Others noted that better postures impacted women's youthful appearance and beauty.

Readers were therefore reminded to assure – using masculine rationality – that their every posture, move, and physical appearance was securely middle-class and feminine even while cleaning and cooking in the privacy of

their homes.

Commercial popular media narratives suggested that mass-produced electric domestic appliances such as washing machines and vacuums reduced the physical labor and time needed to do household chores. *DWdF* and *Frauenwelt* adopted such messages. Images of vacuuming

<sup>62</sup> Hedwig Schwarz, “Die Denkende Hausfrau,” *Frauenwelt* 16 (9 Aug. 1930): 370-371, here 370.

<sup>63</sup> Swienty, “Richtige Haltung fördert die Gesundheit,” *DWdF* 7 (July 1932): 29.

women in upright postures and sporting nice clothing or a white apron (such as in Figure 77) implied vacuuming enabled women to clean without sweating or getting dirty, and hence practice middle-class ideals of femininity even as they accomplished housework. Most leftist articles thereby advised readers to incorporate modern appliances into their homes and associated the use of modern appliances and tools with the rationalized performance of homemaking with New Womanhood. Their authors portrayed women who continued to use old-fashioned household goods and practices as “irrational,” even though these appliances were too expensive for most Weimar consumers and many working-class homes lacked electricity.<sup>64</sup> For example, in Berlin, the largest and most modern metropolitan city in Germany, only 43 percent of households had electricity in 1927.<sup>65</sup> As a result, Communists claimed that proletarian women, too poor to afford vacuum cleaners, were denied the experience – with the aid of such appliances – of New Womanhood in their homes. They proposed a workaround for those with electricity in their homes: they should share buying and using a vacuum cleaner with other building tenants. Other Communist narratives associated frugal consumerism with rational homemaking: they warned proletarian women to not waste their limited resources on unnecessary gadgets.

Social Democrats and to a lesser degree Communists offered readers many other ways to rationalize their homemaking patterns. They, therefore continued to associate women with masculinity even as their suggestions persistently and securely stayed within traditional middle-

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<sup>64</sup> According to Henderson, a vacuum cost 90 marks, nearly as much as a month’s wages for women workers. *Building Culture*, 330. A reader asked other readers to inform her about what kind of vacuum cleaner would suit the specific needs she described, thereby showing that she rationally evaluated the purchase of the right kind of machine for her. ‘Eine langjährige eifrige Leserin in Magdeburg’, “Staubsauger und Teppichreinigung,” *Frauenwelt* 25 (12 Dec. 1931): 588; Susanne Schiffel-Kratz, “Der Tyrann der Frau,” *Frauenwelt* 8 (1924): 120; “Am laufendem Band,” *DWdF* 1 (June 1931): 11; Fürth, “Etwas von Teuerung,” *Frauenwelt* 1 (1928): 9; and Juchacz, “Frau und Wohnung,” *Die Genossin* 1 (Jan. 1927): 14-15. On this topic, see Nolan, *Visions of Modernity: American Business and the Modernization of Germany* (New York: Oxford UP, 1994), 206-226; and *ibid.*, “‘Housework made Easy,’” 549-577.

<sup>65</sup> Quoted in Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin*, 57.

class gendered expectations for women. They called on women to scientifically and efficiently plan their cleaning tasks to assure they could complete them without unnecessary trips to the store and other rooms. They prescribed specific and complicated regimes of cleanliness and maintenance involving the regular use of a variety of chemicals for cleaning, polishing, etc. Scientific experts explained why and which type of chemicals, tools, and methods should be used to clean, maintain, and repair which items, including some mechanical and electrical ones.<sup>66</sup> Cleaning products' ads in *Frauenwelt* suggested that their use made cleaning easy and even enjoyable (see Figure 78).

The publications also recommended when and how best to do which chores to save time. *Frauenwelt* offered biweekly meal plans and argued that with their aid readers would reduce their time spent on planning and shopping for meals.<sup>67</sup> Both Social Democrats and Communists recommended readers only shop at the consumer cooperative ("*Konsumgenossenschaft*"), a one-stop cheaper grocery store for members.<sup>68</sup> There they should prioritize the purchase of canned and processed foods, claiming these were healthy, decreased women's prep and cooking work, and signified progress. Social Democrats also advised readers when to use which cooking tool

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<sup>66</sup> "Diese Zeitschrift," *Frauenwelt* 1 (1924): 1; "Wenn die Sicherung durchbrennt," *DWdF* 6 (1932): 27; and Ernst Edgar Reimerdes, "Die Behandlung der Wäsche im Haushalt," *Frauenwelt* 13 (1924): 210-211. This author essentially treated laundry as a science worthy of a male scientist's attention, giving readers detailed instructions on how to deal with different materials and water hardness. He called on women to turn doing laundry into a prolonged and serious chore involving all kinds of attentions and time.

<sup>67</sup> "Einfacher Küchzettel," Schmalhans mit Geschmack, *Frauenwelt* 2 (15 Jan. 1927): 24; "Schmalhans" signifies less rich and meaty foods and smaller rations. However, nearly every dish listed in the biweekly meal plans contained some type of meat, poultry, or fish, something Communist narratives claimed many working-class families could not afford.

<sup>68</sup> Simon Katzenstein, "Was der Zusammenschluß vermag," *Frauenwelt* 9 (Apr. 1927): 132.

(for example: pressure cooker vs. cooking box), and how short or long to cook meats vs. vegetables.<sup>69</sup>

Many of these suggestions (at least initially) likely increased rather than decreased women's time spent reading about and doing domestic labor, but leftists insisted that rationalization of homes and homemaking saved women time. Social Democrats and Communists did not advocate rationalization for its own sake, nor did they do so to afford women free time to do as they wished; they actually aimed to increase women's burdens. Leftists wanted women to have time to educate themselves broadly including about Socialist or Communist politics and become involved in the labor movement. Through rationalization of the home and homemaking women should also make time to practice body culture, and to devote more time to interacting and communicating with their families.<sup>70</sup> Rath made this clear:

Especially the working-class woman should find time to read newspapers and pay attention to economic issues, which are simultaneously political ones. In the evenings, she should have several hours of time to rest in her comfortable apartment and talk with her husband and children about things unrelated to the dinner pot. She can achieve this in part on her own. Therefore, get rid of all of the superfluous junk from the apartments! Let us simplify homemaking, become aware of our own strengths, and become active female co-fighters for a better world order.<sup>71</sup>

Behne expressed it in the following way:

Even the homemaking woman today, who sees homemaking as her profession, rejects having to sacrifice the entire day for her housework. She wants to save time and strength to devote herself to her children, share her husband's interests, exercise, read a good book, and attend a political speech.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Dr. Cocina, "Dampftopf und Kochkiste," *Frauenwelt* 1 (11 Jan. 1930): 5. *Frauenwelt* advertised for an umbrella organization for Consumer Cooperatives called Gesellschaft Deutscher Konsumvereine/Genossenschaften (GEG), with many of these ads featuring canned vegetables as well as other consumer goods, such as cleaners, fats, and flour. See "Beim Einkauf," *Frauenwelt* 2 (15 Jan. 1927): 11.

<sup>70</sup> Anon. but likely Juchacz, "Die Befreiung der Frau: Der neue Haushalt," *Die Genossin* 9 (Sept. 1926): 275.

<sup>71</sup> Rath, "Wohnung und Politik," *Frauenwelt* 4 (Feb. 1930): 77.

<sup>72</sup> Behne, "Rationelle Haushaltsführung," *Frauenwelt* 1 (Jan. 1931): 12 and 14, here 12.

A *Frauenwelt* debate on how women could add a hike to their Sunday roast tradition illustrates that Social Democrats expected women to accomplish more in their days. Most comments and tips ranged from women preparing and cooking the roast a day ahead to transforming the warm lunch meal to a cold breakfast, brunch, or picnic.<sup>73</sup> Only one contributor suggested males in the household help by setting and clearing the dining table so that families could leave for the hike after women were finished washing dishes.<sup>74</sup> Even though men were contributors of articles on scientific homemaking and childrearing, and therefore, demonstrated their interest in what the magazines' narratives overall still considered women's issues, no reader recommended that husbands help with cooking the Sunday roast, preparing its replacement meal, or washing dishes.<sup>75</sup> Therefore, while contributors claimed to offer ways for women to reduce their workload, they mostly expected women to squeeze a family hike into their existing Sunday traditions, mostly without asking others to share the burdens (see also Figures 78 and 79).

Social Democratic narratives on rationalized homes and homemaking therefore not only advocated that proletarians adopt modernized but still very traditional middle-class gendered spaces and practices, but they also oversold the advantages of rationalization, and expected

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<sup>73</sup> Linda Körnig, "Hausfrauen-Sonntag," *Frauenwelt* 21 (17 Oct. 1931): 485.

<sup>74</sup> Hanna Lange, "Hausfrauen-Sonntag," *Frauenwelt* 12 (13 June 1931): 277. A single *Frauenwelt* article discussed men from all social sectors attending a cooking class. The author implied these were single men, who during a time of high unemployment saved money by cooking in their apartments as opposed to eating in restaurants. She made evident that many might see men learning to cook as a surprising and unusual happening. See Annemarie Hering, "Männer lernen kochen," *Frauenwelt* 14 (9. July 1932): 322.

<sup>75</sup> In a book review of Erna Meyer's widely popular *Der neue Haushalt* (Stuttgart: Francksche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1928) likely Juchacz made a rare suggestion that the rest of the family – without mentioning men specifically – should pick up responsibilities in the household. This should enable women to travel and be politically active, "Die Befreiung der Frau: Der neue Haushalt," *Die Genossin* 9 (Sept. 1926): 275.



Figure 78: GEG ad, *Frauenwelt* 20 (4 Oct. 1930): rear cover. Another rare depiction of a marital couple in the women's publications, here with very traditionally-gendered responsibilities and relationship.

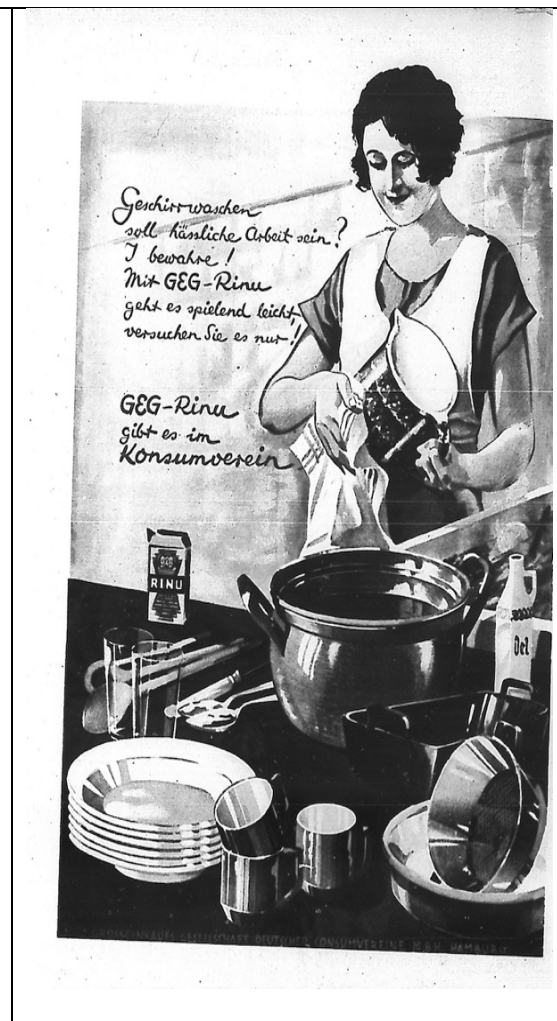


Figure 79: GEG ad, *Frauenwelt* 18 (6 Sept. 1930): rear cover. The captions read: Washing dishes is supposed to be odious work? I insist! With GEG-Rinu it becomes joyfully easy, just give it a try! GEG-Rinu is available at the consumer cooperative.

much more from proletarian women. Women now were solely responsible for rationalized housekeeping and cooking as well as for pedagogic child-rearing. All the while, they still had to make time to socialize with their family, follow a healthier lifestyle involving body culture, and educate themselves.

Communist *DWdF* participated in some of the same *Wohnkultur* discourses as the Social Democratic *Frauenwelt* but to a lesser extent and its narratives contained conflicting messages.<sup>76</sup> Without a doubt, in capitalist Weimar Germany, Communists saw wives and mothers as the main persons responsible for housework and childrearing. While a few rare voices called on husbands to relieve their wives temporarily of ‘their’ supervisory responsibilities over children, so that even mothers could read political newspapers, Communists did not advocate for husbands to share domestic chores equally with their wives.<sup>77</sup> During the early 1930s, one commentary in *DWdF* even defended unemployed working-class husbands and fathers for not helping in and around the household while their wives worked outside the home and did housework afterward. These men had been denigrated in non-Socialist magazines as being “lazy,” but Johanna Schau explained in *DWdF* that unemployed working-class men and fathers were too weak and without energy since they were suffering from hunger.<sup>78</sup> Only a rare Communist voice criticized why boys didn’t have household chores commensurate with girls.

*DWdF* also advocated for women’s rationalized modern forms of homemaking over traditional housekeeping patterns. However, the focus of many articles was not on celebrating the rational homemaking New Woman but rather on bemoaning working-class families’ inability to afford better, technologically advanced, and more convenient homes, appliances, and tools. Authors argued that such a lack of consumer power heightened the necessity for proletarian

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<sup>76</sup> See “Am laufendem Band,” *DWdF* 1 (June 1931): 11.

<sup>77</sup> Photo and captions under Duncker’s, “... und drinnen waltet die züchtige Hausfrau,” *DWdF* 2 (Feb. 1932): 6-8, here 8.

<sup>78</sup> Johanna Schau, “Film und Rundfunk: Jungmädchenstunde,” *DWdF* 4 (Apr. 1932): 30.



women to clean and maintain essential items which even the poorest readers presumably had, such as the non-modern coal stove, a flat iron, and a cooking box.<sup>79</sup>

An even greater number of *DWdF* articles dealt with working-class households' inability – due to low wages, unemployment, and high food prices – to afford what Socialists deemed essential nutrients for human health, such as butter, meat, whole-fat milk, cheese, coffee, potatoes, and white bread.<sup>80</sup> Whereas Social Democrats offered recipes for supposedly inexpensive but nutritious meals with fruits, vegetables, and flour (many of the meals nevertheless contained some form of meat, poultry, or fish), some Communists mistrusted middle-class nutrition scientists for their class biases. With notable exceptions, they did not adopt the conclusions of food science as a great aid in bolstering the nutritional needs of the working classes under economic hardships in the early 1930s.<sup>81</sup> These Communists identified lower-priced foods like, low-fat milk, fruit, vegetables, and rye bread as 'substitute foods' ("Ersatzprodukte," reminiscent of the war-time food scarcities) low in nutritional value, and criticized vegetarianism and the raw food movement as 'fanaticism'.<sup>82</sup> They complained that capitalist profitmaking had led to nutrient-poor food staples on store shelves from which the best

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<sup>79</sup> H.W., "Die alleinseligmachende Kochkiste," *DWdF* 4 (Sept. 1931): 27; "Wie entferne ich Flecke," *DWdF* 2 (July 1931): 23; "Pflege und Reinigung der Nähmaschine," *DWdF* 6 (Nov. 1931): 23; H.W., "Sachgemäße Behandlung der Öfen," *DWdF* 7 (Dec. 1931): 27; H. W. "Gardinenwäsche," *DWdF* 2 (Feb. 1932): 27; "Kleine Winke fürs große Reinemachen," *DWdF* 4 (Apr. 1932): 27; and H. W., "Neue Geräte" and "Die Hefe als Trieb- und Nahrungsmittel," *DWdF* 1 (Jan. 1932): 24-25. Once this section illustrated how to clean a mechanical sewing machine, an expensive item. H.W., "Pflege und Reinigung der Nähmaschine," *DWdF* 6 (Nov. 1931): 23.

<sup>80</sup> Hedwig Heß, "Die Klappstulle," *DWdF* 1 (Jan. 1933): 27 and 31; Schuhmacher in "Rationalisierung des Arbeiterhaushalts," *Frauenwelt* 21 (18 Oct. 1930): 489; "Der Karpfen der Armen Leute," *DWdF* 13 (Dec. 1932): 24-25; H.G.K., "Rundfunkrezepte für Arbeiterfrauen," *DWdF* 12 (1 Dec. 1932): 30; Begun, "Gesundheit und Hygiene: Eine Generation verkümmert," *DWdF* 8 (Aug. 1932): 28. Begun blamed working-class mothers for not making the right nutritional and other consumerist choices for their children, which she claimed lead to illnesses, poor physical and mental development and even to "crippling malformation" ("krüppelhafte Einstellung").

<sup>81</sup> For an article doubting the value of the pharmaceutical industries and their vaccines see "Ein toter Säugling = 300 Mark," *DWdF* 1 (June 1931): 10; and A. Grotjahn, "Nährmittel," *Frauenwelt* 19 (1924): 131.

<sup>82</sup> Dr. F. Pinkus-Flatau, "Die Wissenschaft in der Küche," *DWdF* 1 (June 1931): 14.

# Die alleinseligmachende Kochkiste

Um die Jahrhundertwende wurde sie erfunden. Zunächst zum Nutzen einiger geschäftstüchtiger Fabrikanten und Firmen, die schön daran verdienten, zur Freude von Leuten, die sich den teuren Apparat leisten und nun stolz der Mitwelt zeigen konnten, wie fortschrittlich und sparsam sie wirtschafteten.

Dann kam der Weltkrieg und mit ihm die Flut von volksbeglückenden Entdeckungen. Da fand man auch bald heraus, daß das stundenlange Nachkochen der beste Weg war, um schwer kochende, minderwertige Nahrungsmittel schließlich doch genießbar zu machen. Nun wurde die gute Kochkiste auf einmal der Retter aus aller Wirtschaftsmisere, sie wurde massenhaft und zu erschwinglichen Preisen, natürlich aus Kriegsmaterial, hergestellt, wiederum ein gutes Geschäft für Lieferanten und Warenhäuser. Auch im Zeichen der Brennstoffknappheit bewährte sich die Kochkiste als treuer Helfer; mit ihrem Beistand konnten diejenigen, die auf dem Papier den arbeits- und hungerermühten Hausfrauen das „Durchhalten“ so glänzend vorzurechnen verstanden, denjenigen, die es glaubten, beweisen, daß das in der Kochkiste bereitete Mahl allen Feuerungsstätten ein Schnippen schlug.

Jetzt veröffentlichten die verschiedenen Hausfrauen-Organisationen und -Zeitungen Aufweisungen, wie jeder sich eine Kochkiste selbst herstellen konnte. Daß durch das gepresene Verfahren die Speisen „totgekocht“ wurden und auch an Geschmack einbüßten, mit solchen Kleinigkeiten brauchte man sich im Hinblick auf die „Größe der Zeit“ nicht aufzuhalten.

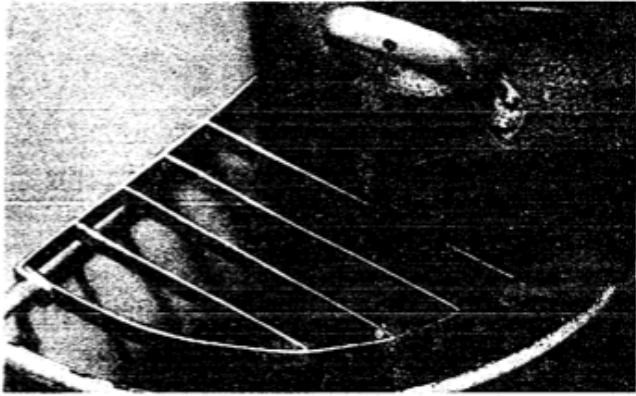
Heute ist durch Experimente zweifelsfrei festgestellt, daß jedes überflüssige Kochen den Nähr- und Sättigungsgehalt der Speisen verringert, und man ist bei der Bereitung von Hülsenfrüchten, den einzigen Speisen, die ein langes Nachkochen beanspruchen, zu dem einfachen und bewährten Verfahren der guten alten Zeit zurückgekehrt: Man schlägt den Topf mit dem auf starkem Feuer vorgekochten Gericht schnell in eine dicke Lage von Zeitungspapier und umwickelt das Ganze mit einer Decke oder stellt es zwischen Kissen.

Die brave Kochkiste aber führt nur noch in manchen Haushaltungen im stillen Winkel ein beschaufliches Rentnerdasein. — Gönnen wir ihr die wohlverdiente Ruhe, hat sie sich doch in herrlichen Kriegszeit zum Zweck der Ausnutzung von Unwissenheit und Leichtgläubigkeit glänzend bewährt. H. W.



Außerordentlich praktisch ist dieses Trichterzich. Es ermöglicht das Füllen der Kaffeesaube ohne das leidige Dazubegießen des Getränks.

## DIE DRITTE HAND



Die Abstellvorrichtung am Ausguss ist eine ebenso praktische wie billige Einrichtung zur Arbeiterleichterung im Haushalt.



Ein Metallhaken wird über den Leitungshahn gesteckt, an dem ein Topfbrakel aufgehängt werden kann. Das Wasser läßt sich bequem einfließen.

## DAS SYSTEM WEHRT SICH!

In der „Deutschen Schokoladen-Zeitung“, die — ihr gutes Recht — ihrer Industrie dient, wendet sich Dr. Heinrich Fincke, Köln, gegen unseren Aufsatz in Nr. 1 „Die Wissenschaft in der Küche“. Er regt sich besonders über den Satz auf: „Daß wir viele Nahrungsmittel in der dargebotenen Form genießen müssen, nicht weil sie gesund sind, sondern weil es der Großindustrie gefällt.“ Als Beispiel werden die Ausführungen über Zucker, Reis und Salz angeführt. Aber unseren Standpunkt in dieser Frage teilen ganz bekannte Ernährungswissenschaftler.

Herr Dr. Fincke schreibt dagegen in der „Schokoladen-Zeitung“: „Das System wird sich zu wehren wissen.“ Sicher wird es das versuchen, aber es wird nicht hindern, daß ein neues besseres, nicht auf Profit des einzelnen eingestelltes System der Wirtschaft den Bedürfnissen der Menschen gerecht werden wird. Im

übrigen soll dem Verteidiger der Großindustrie gern bescheinigt werden, daß Schokolade, sachgemäß produziert, ein gesundes und gutes Nahrungsmittel sein kann. Vielleicht verwendet sich Herr Fincke bei seinen Auftraggebern dafür, daß auch die billigen Sorten mehr Kakao und weniger Mehl enthalten.

## GAS ODER ELEKTRISCH?

Heute muß die Hausfrau mit jedem Pfennig rechnen. Deshalb lohnt es sich, in jedem Haushalt festzustellen, ob das Plätten mit Gas oder Elektrizität billiger ist.

In jedem Ort sind die Gas- und die Elektrizitätspreise verschieden, deshalb kann hier keine allgemeingültige Rechnung aufgestellt werden. Wir geben aber eine Anweisung, mit deren Hilfe jede Hausfrau ganz einfach ihre Plättkosten berechnen kann.

Dem Vergleich zugrunde gelegt ist ein Gasplättchen von etwa 3 Kilo Gewicht mit dem normalen Brenner und ein elektrisches Plättchen von etwa 3 Kilo Gewicht mit einem Verbrauch von etwa 450 Watt. (Der Verbrauch ist auf jedem Eisen vermerkt.)

Es verbraucht nun in einer Stunde das Gasplättchen etwa 0,3 Kubikmeter (cbm) Gas und das elektrische Plättchen etwa 0,45 Kilowattstunden (KWh) Strom.

Wie errechnen wir jetzt den Preis? Nehmen wir z. B. Berliner Verhältnisse an. Es kostet in Berlin 1 cbm Gas 16 Pfennig und 1 KWh Strom 20 Pfennig. Wir bezahlen nun für eine Stunde beim Plätten mit Gas 0,3 (cbm) × 16 (Pfennig) = 4,8 Pfennig, beim Plätten mit Elektrizität 0,45 (KWh) × 20 (Pfennig) = 9 Pfennig.

Hieraus sehen wir die Schlußfolgerung, daß in Berlin das Gasplättchen fast um die Hälfte billiger ist als das Plättchen mit dem elektrischen Gerät. Wir können nun für jeden beliebigen Gas- und Elektrizitätspreis die Plättkosten pro Stunde ausrechnen, indem wir den jeweiligen Gaspreis mit 0,3 cbm und den Elektrizitätspreis mit 0,45 KWh multiplizieren, natürlich immer die oben erwähnten Plättchen vorausgesetzt.

Figure 80: DWdF 4 (Sept. 1931): 27.



Figure 81: “Kleine Winke fürs große Reinemachen,” *DWdF* 4 (Apr. 1932): 27.

nutrients were withdrawn for sale as animal fodder and that consumers had to make do with unhealthy products like bleached flour.<sup>83</sup> Other Communists accepted some scientific findings and used a language of objectivity and expertise, similar to Social Democratic narratives, to advise women on how to ensure they served their families inexpensive foods that were nutritious.<sup>84</sup>

Despite identifying women as responsible for housework, Communists seemed to want to limit associating their Socialist New Woman with the home and homemaking. While the majority of *DWdF*'s content focused on women's participation

in the world of employment, their political activism, body culture outside the home, and their fashion wear, *DWdF* devoted only one of its 32 pages per edition to homemaking.<sup>85</sup> On those pages, when *DWdF* showcased small, inexpensive gadgets, the images usually didn't include women using the gadgets (see Figure 80). When they did, either the faces of these women were

<sup>83</sup> “Verschwörung gegen die Hausfrau,” *DWdF* 5 (Oct. 1931): 3-4; Grünbaum-Sachs, “Ein billiges und hochwertiges Nahrungsmittel,” *Frauenwelt* 4 (25 Feb. 1928): 89; Dr. F. Pinkus-Flatau, “Die Wissenschaft in der Küche,” *DWdF* 1 (June 1931): 14.

<sup>84</sup> Anon., “Das Abkochen von Gemüse und Kartoffeln,” *DWdF* 1 (June 1931): 21; anon., “Reis. Ein wichtiges Nahrungsmittel,” *DWdF* 5 (Oct. 1931): 27; Swienty, “Obst essen und Wasser trinken,” *DWdF* 8 (Aug. 1932): 28-29; and Pinkus-Flatau, “Kohlrüben sind nahrhaft,” *DWDF* 3 (Aug. 1931): 15-16.

<sup>85</sup> In comparison, the fashion/sewing/handcrafting sections usually took up four pages, and the health and sports sections covered two pages per edition.

strangely blurred or entirely erased, or only women's arms and hands were shown (see Figure 81). The only exception was the vacuuming woman (see Figure 77).

### **Conclusion**

Language in both *Frauenwelt* and *DWdF* suggested that healthy, happy, enlightened, progressive, talented, and productive New Humans could best develop in newly-built homes and pre-furnished apartments, such as in the Frankfurt housing initiative. These new homes provided their tenants with the newest technologies and amenities for hygienic and healthy lifestyles but also thoroughly calculated and predetermined how tenants would use the spaces and materials in the home. Not surprisingly, middle-class architects' and homemaking experts' recommendations for interior design and furnishing organized and gendered proletarian spaces and people along traditional middle-class norms with women assigned to work in the rationalized and professionalized Frankfurt kitchen fully separate from the living and dining rooms reserved as quiet spaces for husbands they could use to relax and for intellectual purposes.

Despite their demands for women's emancipation and rights, leftist activists, architects, reformers, journalists, and readers accepted the gendering of spaces and roles in the Frankfurt homes along traditional gender norms. Both *Frauenwelt* and *DWdF* insisted that, given workers' lack of consumer power to afford new homes, proletarian women should emulate Frankfurt's new interior design styles and rationalize their existing homes and housework. Even though Communists envisioned the socialization of domestic chores in a utopian Socialist society, and despite an evident Communist desire to disassociate their Socialist New Woman from housework, during Weimar Germany, both Communists and Social Democrats relegated all housework to women.

Since leftists expected proletarian women to be more than house cleaners, laundresses, and cooks, they called on women to also rethink their homemaking patterns to save time and preserve their strengths. Only in rationalized environments and with thoroughly thought-out domestic work patterns could proletarian women generate leisure time in their days to devote to their own bodies (body culture), minds (education and politics), and their families (companionate partnership and pedagogical parenting), and thereby assure that they and their families became Socialist New Humans. Despite the language on masculine rationality and modern transformations, ultimately leftists described the ideal proletarian home and working-class women's housekeeping practices and family relations in alignment with traditionally gendered middle-class norms, and in the process burdened women with greater amounts of work. Now women had to accomplish all housework on their own while ensuring that they looked middle-classed and feminine at all times. While cleaning and cooking, they had to use their male rationality to pay attention to their poses to never appear to be working hard like proletarians or people outside of civilized societies, but rather always look youthful, dignified, and beautiful.

In his widely read and influential work *Woman under Socialism (Die Frau und der Sozialismus)* August Bebel, one of the founding figures and longtime leader of the SPD, expressed what leftists meant when they aimed to improve the lives of working-class people and develop a class-less utopian society:

We are not working to establish a Socialist society to advocate for a proletarian way of life but rather to eliminate the proletarian lifestyles of the great majority of humans. Socialist society will try to provide every human being with a high level of comfort in life, so the question is: how high can society set its expectations?<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Bebel, *Die Frau und der Sozialismus* (Zürich-Hottingen: Volksbuchhandlung, 1879, reprint Berlin: Dietz, 1974), 414.

Until the advent of a Socialist society, it was women's task to ensure – without the help of domestic servants – that they and their families enjoyed middle-classed lifestyles.

## Conclusion

This dissertation has argued that in all of their women's magazines, Social Democrats and Communists presented very middle-class gendered norms as ideals for women in Weimar Germany. Despite calling on women to adopt some attributes and practices understood as masculine and therefore as emancipatory during Weimar, leftists also insisted that women remain feminine in their looks, practices, and essence and thereby limited women's choices and freedoms.

Leftists' gendered and middle-classed ideals can be described as embodied by two distinct Socialist New Women, who shared characteristics with each other as well as with the New Woman in non-Socialist popular culture. The first set of Socialist ideals of femininity was in alignment with the nineteenth-century emancipated New Woman and came to light in the written contributions of leading women functionaries and professionals within the pages of the traditional multi-tasking (*Die Kommunistin*), functionaries' (*Die Genossin* and *AWO*), and popular magazines (*Frauenwelt* and *DWdF*). Leftist contributors established white-collar professional work and political and welfare activism as ideal occupations for women, and with these demanded proletarian women's economic independence through middle-class levels of access to education and professional careers. They also called on more women to engage in leftist political activism. In their contributions, activists and professionals portrayed themselves and each other as representative of this first ideal Socialist New Woman. Having overcome either working-class existences consisting of menial labor or middle-class expectations for limited lives as wives and homemakers, they instead supported themselves with their own careers or, even if unpaid, were engaged in fulfilling mental work toward improving human society through Socialism.

Narratives in leftist women's publications suggested that these women had acquired masculine (and middle-class) rationality, objectivity, and self-discipline, and had learned to develop their minds, talents, and personalities. Only such attributes enabled them to transform themselves from excessively feminine beings (which most women supposedly were, due to their biology and as a result of social construction) into notable complete individuals, or *Vollmenschen*, with appropriate levels of both masculine and feminine attributes. As women cadres, physicians, and pedagogues informed readers about their social policy proposals or exercise, health, hygiene, companionate marriage, and progressive parenting, they displayed they had superior knowledge in these fields. Female functionaries also described how they successfully organized and mobilized women within the party despite persistent discrimination against them by male SPD and KPD members and functionaries. They illustrated that, as women parliamentarians and bureaucrats, they worked in a world of mostly men to create better laws and policies and implement these in cooperation with other politicians and civil servants in municipal, state, and welfare institutions. Communist women activists more frequently attacked unjust laws and insufficient social policies, while proposing policies and laws they believed were ideal. They thereby portrayed themselves as lone heroines with masculine bravery going against antiquated expectations and entrenched forces.

Leftists presented middle-class professionals and activists as ideal women by negatively describing mere homemaking proletarian women (mainly in the multi-tasking traditional and functionaries' women's magazines), and surprisingly also those engaged in manual labor as well as lower-level white-collar work. In alignment with Zetkin's theories on women's emancipation through employment, they argued that full-time homemaking stunted women's individual development and led to economically and socially dependent lives akin to those of minors, and



narrowed life experiences and outlooks limited to the home and family. Even though manually laboring women should be identified positively as following Zetkin's teachings, functionaries consistently portrayed menial labor and women's low wages as impediments to women's economic and social emancipation. They asserted that physically demanding, dangerous, and unhygienic working conditions in manual labor were unsuited to women and their reproductive functions, therefore suggesting that women's workplaces should only provide middle-class settings and treatments such as those associated with the New Woman in broader popular culture.

Political and welfare activists described female manual laborers, including factory laborers, as excessively and anachronistically feminine masses similar to biological organisms instead of rational (masculine), self-aware (middle-class) individuals belonging to a progressive society. They declared that women workers, ignorant of both Socialism and their working-class identities, did not advocate for themselves by joining leftist unions and parties as they ought, despite being exploited by employers. Additionally, Communists painted lower-level white-collar workers, such as store clerks and office workers, with excessive and non-emancipated femininity for being both sexually victimized by employers and commercially exploited by the fashion and commercial leisure industries.

Contributors to the popular leftist publications proposed a second set of very middle-class and relatively traditionally gendered ideals for women. I have described these Socialist ideals of femininity as being embodied by a second Socialist New Woman, who was virtually indistinguishable from the New Woman in non-Socialist popular culture. She was defined through her modernized middle-class appearance, social relations, and her leisure and body-

cultural, homemaking, and child-rearing practices, as well as by her attitudes toward consumerism and her living environment.

As discernible above, leftist descriptions of the professional or activist Socialist New Woman involved a shifting and complex interplay of attributes and behaviors seen at the time as variously masculine or feminine. The second Socialist New Woman also combined masculine and feminine characteristics. However, when describing the second Socialist New Woman, leftist language illustrated greater concern with maintaining her feminine essence, keeping her within traditionally feminine middle-class gender boundaries, or re-feminizing her through her looks, practices, relations, and suitable environments. In this aspect too, she was very much like popular narratives on the New Woman in commercial media.

This impression of Socialists' greater concerns with this second New Woman's secure femininity is also the result of silences by activists and professionals in the women's publications about their own activities and outlooks which might have been seen as too masculine and gender-transgressive by audiences. Activists' omissions of their bohemian lifestyles, same-sex partnerships, and sexual relations with married colleagues suggest they too were concerned with presenting themselves as possessing attributes that were on the safe side of newly drawn but still relatively traditional gender boundaries.

The second set of Socialist ideals of femininity came into being as leftist women's publications called on proletarian women to consume to nearly the same degree as the New Woman in popular culture: at middle-class levels. In images, women appeared almost exclusively in short bobbed hair and clothing in Weimar fashion styles. According to narratives, these were much more functional and allowed women the ease and mobility to participate in public life including work, sports, and travel. Therefore, leftist discourses transformed a

traditional forte of middle-class women, participation in fashion, as facilitating their emancipation through the adoption of practices previously limited to middle-class men.

Creating bridges to the rational and emancipated professional and activist Socialist New Woman, leftist narratives insisted that proletarian women use (masculine) rationality in their consumerist practices and not imitate bourgeois women's excessive and frivolous consumption. They should sew their and their family's clothing with higher-quality fabrics including those that they reutilize from existing clothing or curtains, instead of buying cheaply-made but expensive ready-to-wear clothes. This second Socialist New Woman should therefore look like the New Woman in commercial culture but in actuality be clothed in even higher quality clothing made to last, and thereby more truly represent middle-class culture. Communists also insisted that women remain feminine despite the masculinized fashion-wear by avoiding specific clothing items from men's wardrobes, such as pants and pajamas. Radical leftists declared that wearing these represented unacceptable levels of gender transgression.

In further alignment with non-Socialist ideals of femininity, Social Democrats and Communists asserted that working-class women had a right to middle-class leisure time and body-cultural activities. They called on proletarian women to engage in sports, travel, and perform extensive gendered rituals of hygiene. Working-class readers should adopt masculine discipline to manipulate and steel their bodies against modern stressors with outdoor sports, previously the exclusive pursuit of middle-class and aristocratic men. However, women should preserve their femininity and reproductive functions by selecting only those types of sports and moderate levels of exercise experts advised as appropriate for women's more fragile bodies. The activities' health benefits, the potential for enjoyment, and their incorporation of gracefully and elegantly feminine movements were prioritized by experts in their advice for women.

Leftist experts' concerns were not just with maintaining women's bodies' femininity but also that of their internal, emotional-mental, characteristics. They argued that the right balance of self-centered attention to the female body, self-confidence-building exercises ideally in groups, and the development of altruistic outlooks were necessary in women's athletic activities. At the same time, women should prevent the development of a monstrously gender-transgressive male ego by avoiding aggressive, competitive, and motorsports, and those sports that draw the attention of sports fans to the individual athlete. Such leftist narratives were very similar to popular discourses in commercial mass culture.

In a further overlap with commercial culture, leftist language promoted women's adoption of gendered and middle-class rituals of personal hygiene. Heightened Weimar hygiene standards for women required middle-class levels of conveniences in the home, such as bathrooms with showers or bathtubs and running hot water, to which many proletarian women still lacked access. These, therefore, imposed yet another burden on women. With their narratives on sports and hygiene, leftist popular magazines taught readers, as did commercial popular culture, that a female body should look lean, healthy, youthful, and erotically beautiful (and hence feminine), with immaculately clean and tanned skin implying middle-class levels of access to conveniences, leisure time, and care. Along with this went the notion that the female body was an object to be viewed and assessed for its appearance and beauty. Women should always be conscious of what their bodies looked like and manipulate their bodies' various parts with specific regimes of hygiene and exercise to achieve optimal appearance.

However, in distinction from commercial culture, Social Democrats and Communists did not advocate for as much consumerism of hygiene and beauty products, even warning of the negative effects of commercial products like make-up and lipstick. In a further attempt to

differentiate their Socialist ideals of femininity from those represented by the New Woman in commercial culture, leftists argued working-class women should not utilize their erotically-feminine bodies for the non-emancipatory purpose the middle-class New Woman did: to attract wealthy males as suitors for marriage.

As part of the very middle-class body cultural regimes, leftists recommended proletarian women incorporate the middle-class New Woman's travel culture into their lives by engaging in short regular day hikes and long-distance trips. Here were overlaps or commonalities between the two sets of Socialist ideals of femininity. Nationally active political women had always needed to travel for their work, but now they adopted exercise and travel into their training courses. Local women functionaries also incorporated hikes and travel (with and without their children) to seaside, mountainous, or wooded geographies, and historic sites. Leftists argued travel endowed women with further opportunities for outdoor exposure and exercise and the greater freedom and mobility previously limited to the middle classes and men.

Leftists advocated for another set of bodily regimes that were once again middle-classed individualistic and overlapped with ideals in commercial popular culture. Just as the New Woman in wider popular culture was sexually liberated, leftists insisted proletarian women had the right to live out their 'natural-biological' sexual needs essential for their development into healthy and complex human beings, i.e. middle-class Socialist New Women. Therefore, the remaining social norms limiting women's sexuality to within marriage and denying women any desire for satisfying sexual intercourse should be jettisoned. Leftists went further than wider popular culture in their demands for legal changes. Social Democrats insisted that women had the right to prevent pregnancies through legal and easily accessible contraception and some demanded decriminalization of abortions during early pregnancy under the care of trained

physicians. Communists added to this demand that legal, safe, and free abortions be allowed at any stage of pregnancy, as well as voluntary sterilization.

Leftists argued such civilized control over reproduction provided numerous other benefits besides sexual freedom for women. Frequent pregnancies damaged women's bodies' health, beauty, and youthfulness – essential for the identity of the second Socialist New Woman – and crushed her spirit. Postponing pregnancy would also enable women to devote more time to their own body culture as well as to acquiring an education and a profession; thereby facilitating their ability to follow both sets of Socialist ideals of femininity. Fewer pregnancies would also lead to an improvement in the genetic quality of offspring, resulting in healthier future generations of humans.

Having children only when ready for motherhood further allowed Socialist New Women time to develop relationships with the opposite sex that did not amount to an exchange of economic security for sex. Social Democrats and Communists wanted heterosexual partnerships to be instead based on companionate relationships with shared outlooks and practices. Social Democrats discussed miscellaneous 'wild,' 'trial,' and 'temporary' marriages; concepts that also circulated in popular culture. These would permit especially young couples to get to know each other before marriage and discover if they were companionate. These also would make separation easy if the relationship was unsatisfactory for any reason.

Communists went even further by eliminating formal marriage from their narratives altogether and describing female singledom, including single motherhood, as neither an aberration nor a particularly difficult economic or social situation, as exemplified by its success in the Soviet Union. Social Democrats also called for a normalization of single womanhood in society by celebrating single Socialist New Women, noting the existence of a 'surplus of

women' (*Frauenüberschuß*) in Weimar Germany, and suggesting a subset of women was born without maternal instincts. Nevertheless, Social Democrats simultaneously negatively connoted single middle-aged or older women, claiming they were deprived of the opportunity to experience sexual intercourse and fulfill their instinct for motherhood.

In leftists' plans to create a eugenically healthy and progressive socialist society of New Humans: healthy, happy, and well-adjusted children, and economically productive adults whose talents were promoted during their upbringing, were vital. Communists believed this could be achieved with the aid of child-care care institutions, and envisioned mothers returning to work some months after the birth of their children. They, therefore, posited motherhood as just one of women's many simultaneous identities. Modernized but nevertheless, very traditionally gendered middle-class forms of motherhood loomed large in Social Democratic norms of womanhood delineated in their publications. When women were ready to have children, Social Democrats required both manual laborers and professional women to take time off from their employment until their children reached school age. During this time, full-time mothers should provide their children with progressive parenting involving healthy nutrition, hygiene, order in children's material environments, families, and routines, exposure to outdoor play and exercise, and pedagogically appropriate treatment. Narratives in traditional and functionaries' publications claimed that especially professional women and political activists would make for perfect mothers in addition to companionate wives thanks to their experiences of fulfilled lives.

An orderly home environment along traditional middle-class norms was prescribed by both Social Democrats and Communists. Leftists had long intruded into working-class homes' interiors as they sought to reorganize people and practices within them and improve the health of working-class children, families, and future generations. Modernized but traditional middle-class

conveniences, norms, aesthetics, practices, and relations served as ideals for leftists. These included easy access from homes to natural environs for healthy leisure practices; the occupation of each home by only a single nuclear family; access to modern consumer technologies and aesthetics in mass consumer goods, a rationalized arrangement of materials within the home, inhabitants' gendered uses of space, and as a result, their gendered relations to each other.

Adopting contemporary prescriptions for modern and functional interior design and rationalized homemaking, Social Democrats suggested it was proletarian women's task to modernize their homes' interior spaces, furnishings, and their homemaking practices following the functionalist and rational principles found in the Frankfurt housing initiatives' interiors. Women should outfit their homes with modern technologies and furniture and eliminate clutter and decorations to create smooth and bare surfaces that were easy to clean. They claimed these steps would improve hygiene in the home and reduce the time spent on cleaning and the physical burdens of housework. Despite the language on modernization and masculine rationalization, Social Democrats therefore gendered spaces and roles within the working-class home analogous to the traditional bourgeois home and family. Communists, who envisioned the socialization of homemaking tasks in a future Communist state, advocated slightly more hesitatingly for the incorporation of the very same gendered and middle-class norms and practices into the proletarian home and family.

Gender played a complex role in leftists' advice on how women should modify their traditional housekeeping patterns. As they relegated housework to women only, their language on efficiency and rationalization of housework associated women's housework with masculine attributes – similar to non-Socialist popular culture – without, however, calling on men to share housework. At the same time, contributors insisted that these rationalized patterns of



homemaking enabled women to observe classed and gendered requirements that had become vital attributes of the New Woman in interwar popular culture: women should expend as little time and physical energy as possible, and not bend forward or be on their knees (such as proletarians at work might be expected to be) while doing housework. They should instead maintain dignified (middle-class) upright postures that did not signify physical strain or labor. Even while working, women should look youthful, beautiful, and feminine.

At the heart of Social Democratic and Communist recommendations for rationalizing the proletarian home and homemaking, was women's generation of leisure time to use for body culture, self-education, companionate engagements with partners, and pedagogical parenting of their children. Leftists thereby increased women's workloads. Women now had to accomplish traditionally gendered women's tasks in modern rationalized (masculine) and middle-class (less strenuous) patterns without any help from family members while also finding the time to transform their bodies and minds into those of New Women, create companionate relationships with male partners, and improve their parenting to assure their child or children had an upbringing befitting New Humans.

To serve as a foundation for analyzing leftists' ideals of femininity within their women's publications, this dissertation has also studied the leftist parties for their attitudes toward women. It has argued that historic circumstances led to sex-segregated structures in the SPD and the marginalization of women and topics of interest to them. Women began joining the working men's SPD during the pre-1908 Imperial era when women were prohibited by law from participating in political events and organizations. Sex-segregated organizational structures and practices were a necessity to preserve the SPD's legality while still allowing women to meet in clandestine SPD women's organizations.

However, the marginalization of women, their perspectives, interests, and goals continued into and throughout the Weimar era, including in the other major leftist parties of Weimar (USPD and KPD), when women had the right to vote and be elected into office. This was because male members and cadres had conflicted and, in many ways, middle-class gendered, positions toward women. They wanted women as members of the party but prioritized their own traditional party topics including class, national, and international politics while viewing topics of interest to women to do with the personal and familial as apolitical issues and displacing them off major party platforms and general events. They limited nominations to paid functionary positions and municipal and parliamentary election lists to mostly male cadres, viewing women as unqualified for paid posts but expected them to work for free for the party.

Therefore, throughout the interwar era, women cadres constituted a small minority within leading bodies and parliamentary factions and could only influence party decision-making if enough male functionaries and/or members agreed with them. In many ways, this division of access to paid decision-making over ‘public matters’ for men and unpaid work in subordinate positions for women dealing with ‘private matters’ reproduced the middle-class ideology of the separate spheres in the structures and practices of the leftist parties. Only in the SPD’s welfare organization AWO were women in posts where they had decision-making power over the organization’s agenda and structures.

Men’s conflicted position toward women led party leaderships to relegate through neglect or formally assign women’s propaganda and organizational activities to women cadres. Women in the organizations’ national women’s bureaus were immediately or eventually tasked with coordinating women’s propaganda, training, and mobilization from the local through the national organization.

Male and female leaders also dismantled these and other special women's structures they created during Weimar or inherited from the Kaiserreich (such as the women's conferences of the SPD), and in the case of the KPD, rebuilt special women's structures. In 1925, only a year after it had rejected female gender as a role within the Party and dissolved its National Women's Bureau, the KPD re-established newly gender-segregated organizations by agreeing to the expulsion of women from the paramilitary organization of the KPD, the RFB. It then approved the creation of a women-only RFMB, with activities the Party saw as more appropriate for women, and organized a Women Workers' Delegates' and Conference 'movement'. These 'front' or 'mass' organizations, such as also the mixed-sex aid organizations IAH and RHD, were varyingly successful in their goals but since they mainly attracted housewives with grievances related to the 'private sphere', the KPD ended the Workers' Delegates and Conference movement.

Male members' and cadres' neglect of women's perspectives or their refusal to adjust their practices and meeting agendas to those desired by women, and women's own preferences led some women to form separate women's groups. There they discussed problems with a more direct impact on women and families, such as sexuality, contraception, abortion, marriage, women's legal discrimination within marriage, improving the rights of unmarried mothers and of children born out of wedlock, how to resolve women's child care needs and the added burdens of housework, protectionist measures for women workers, and discrimination against women workers such as with lower wages. In a very middle-class culture, women's groups in both the SPD and KPD also wanted to do practical and charitable work; and some SPD groups established local AWO organizations.

Another area in which the SPD and KPD implemented a type of middle-class separate spheres ideology was party communications and propaganda. Gender segregation here meant the organizations displaced topics of interest to women from the general party press onto usually just one women's magazine per party. Many women cadres rejected this displacement but found it nevertheless very appropriate that female functionaries created propaganda for women and dealt with social policy topics in a separate women's mouthpiece. Due to the limited allocation of funds for women's propaganda, party women's magazines traditionally had to serve the needs of party cadres and members and simultaneously attract non-members to the publication. Consequently, they contained organizational information, demanded women's rights and specific social policies, and sometimes also offered political commentary and Socialist theory (KPD: *Die Kommunistin*; SPD: *Die Gleichheit*; and USPD: *Die Kämpferin*). The articles and commentaries meant for non-members targeted their emotions with descriptions of harsh working-class lives in the hope of prompting readers to join the party while condemning existing social norms, laws, policies, and capitalism.

All parts of these multi-tasking traditional party women's organs expected middle-class levels of literacy and extended attention spans from their readers since they consisted of written text only (*Die Kommunistin* only from 1919 through 1921). By the first half of Weimar, the multi-tasking traditional party women's paper, even with some popularization attempts, had proven difficult to sell to working-class masses who were consumers of easy-to-read and entertaining mass media incorporating many images of the New Woman.

Therefore, in 1924, besides printing *Die Genossin* for SPD and AWO cadres alone, the SPD's Executive published the illustrated *Frauenwelt*, which was a radical break from the traditional party women's organ while continuing the labor movement's tradition of posting men

to paid party positions. With Richard Lohmann as its editor, who concealed his sex from readers behind his first initial, *Frauenwelt* targeted ordinary members and non-members with easier-to-read, mainstream, and entertaining content similar to commercial fashion and housewives' magazines of the interwar era. It signified a lowering or democratization of the party women's paper. In a further democratization following Weimar's popular media practices, *Frauenwelt* was conceptualized as a collaborative product, giving readers ample opportunities to submit a variety of contributions, from prize competitions to requests and recommendations for advice, as well as commentary on a wide range of topics. The magazine did not carry obvious Party initials; though its Social Democratic ideological persuasion could easily be discovered but its specific political messages within the entertainment segments often relied on readers' interpretation.

This stood in contrast to the overtly political content of Münzenberg's *DWdF*. This popular women's paper of the early 1930s carried many more unmistakably Communist and overt political statements in titles, articles, and commentaries. *DWdF* made its class, social policy, and women's rights topics visually interesting by including innovative photo collages and photo narratives, often using these as primary narration tools.

Both *DWdF* and *Frauenwelt* were successful, quickly reaching subscriptions in the six digits, but *Frauenwelt* was not without its detractors. Even though women members of the SPD constituted about half of its subscribers, women functionaries criticized *Frauenwelt*'s conceptualization and content. The cadres, who wanted to raise the educational levels of working-class populations and in particular women's awareness of history, art, and politics – all attributes of the elevated middle-class culture of the *Bildungsbürgertum* – claimed *Frauenwelt* pandered to women's lowly consumerist desires and baited and distracted them with lesser culture: mindless entertainment and frivolous consumerism of fashion. Moreover, for decades,

leftist women politicians had been trying to dislodge women's attentions and practices away from full-time homemaking in favor of the emancipatory and eye-opening public worlds of work and politics. Instead of helping in this endeavor, *Frauenwelt's* homemaking pages returned women's focus to the traditional middle-class private sphere and gendered norms therein: the home and women's domesticity. Women functionaries thereby refuted the leadership's claim that *Frauenwelt* shielded bourgeois messages from proletarian women, and, as this dissertation has demonstrated, they were right. However, female functionaries' own messages in articles they published in the traditional multi-tasking and functionaries' women's magazines, as also the popular ones, also contained very bourgeois and traditionally-gendered messages and ideals even if they also incorporated some formerly masculine characteristics and practices as this dissertation has argued.

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