

Resolution of the Second Party Congress of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany on the Women's Question (September 24, 1947)

Abstract

In East Germany, too, reconstruction and economic recovery depended on the deployment of women. In 1947, the SED propagated the unqualified equality of men and women in public life and the workplace. At the same time, the party decided that this equality obliged women to participate in building up a Socialist society.

Source

The Fascist war of conquest has brought unspeakable misery especially for the women and children of our nation. After inflicting its horrors, it robbed many of their possessions, their homes, their homeland. It destroyed tens of thousands of families, consigning the children to misery and the women to the most profound suffering. Millions of women and girls must fight for their basic existence on their own. This harsh struggle for survival strengthened the self-confidence of women and led them to play an increasingly independent role in public life.

Women and girls have the right and the duty to participate decisively in shaping Germany's future. In so doing, they must overcome all prejudices resulting from centuries of discrimination and become the most determined fighters for their own equality.

The Socialist Unity Party of Germany, like all socialist parties before it, is fighting without reservation for the economic and political equality of women in all areas of life.

The party's particular concern is the protection of the working woman. Equal pay for equal work, better work protections, a paid housework day, social services in the workplace, additional food and work clothing for those gainfully employed. Its fundamental demand is the opening up of all occupations and all educational and training opportunities that are suitable for women. The party thanks the women and girls who are currently performing taxing men's work with self-abnegation and a willingness to sacrifice. They have stepped into the gaps to help farm the land, to secure our food, and to rebuild the economy. In the rebuilding of a democratic administration, they have proven themselves superbly in all areas, from the simple secretary to the minister.

In the Soviet occupation zone and in Berlin, the party has brought about an improvement in the provisioning of food to housewives. It promotes the creation of all institutions with the potential to ease working women's concerns about the household and the family. The Socialist Unity Party of Germany devotes special attention to the care of mother and child. It fights for the expansion of all institutions that serve to protect mother and child and the family. It has reinstated support for widows and orphans and has substantially improved the communal welfare. With special energy, the party is leading the fight for the legal equality of women in marriage, family, and inheritance law, and it is fighting against the discrimination against unwed mothers and children born out of wedlock and for an improvement in the social situation of expectant mothers.

The party calls upon women and girls to fight for these demands themselves, to participate actively in all areas of public life, especially in the supervision of the economy and the administration, and to

participate in the party's struggle against misery, hunger, and cold.

Countless women, mothers, and children are still waiting for the return of their husbands, sons, and fathers. That is why women, in particular, are justified in asking the Allies to return the prisoners of war more quickly and in larger numbers than in the last few months, so that all prisoners of war will be back home by the end of 1948. The women will embrace the returnees, so that they can regain their bearings at home and take part in the democratic rebuilding of Germany.

Through their active participation in public life, women and girls will be increasingly drawn into the political struggle of our people. By virtue of this, their political consciousness will also mature. They will recognize that securing peace and fighting for the unity of Germany is the fundamental precondition for overcoming their miseries. However, their eye for the deeper social implications will also become keener, and they will recognize that they will only be able to liberate their children and secure a happy future for them if they help eliminate the capitalist social order, with its crises and wars, and create a socialist social order.

Thus women will become fellow fighters for Socialism.

Source: *Dokumente der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands. Beschlüsse und Erklärungen des Zentralsekretariats und des Parteivorstandes*, vol. 1, 2nd edition. East Berlin, 1951, p. 231 f; reprinted in Udo Wengst, *Geschichte der Sozialpolitik in Deutschland*, Bd. 2/2: 1945–1949: Die Zeit der Besatzungszonen. Sozialpolitik zwischen Kriegsende und der Gründung zweier deutscher Staaten. Dokumente. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2001, pp. 380–81.

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