

Women's Suffrage! (March 2, 1913)

Abstract

Clara Zetkin (1857-1933) was a leading representative of Social Democracy and one of the most famous women's rights activists in the German Reich. She was the founding editor of the Social Democratic women's magazine *Die Gleichheit* [Equality], which first appeared in 1892. In 1910, she proposed the institution of a special international holiday for women – her idea took hold and the first International Women's Day was celebrated the following year. In 1916, together with Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, she founded the Spartacus League [*Spartakusbund*].

Zetkin published her pamphlet “Frauenwahlrecht!” [“Women's Suffrage!”], the first page of which is reproduced here, on the occasion of the Third Social Democratic Women's Day on March 2, 1913. It was Zetkin's firm belief that the “women's question” could only be resolved in conjunction with the “workers' question.” In her mind, capitalism was the common enemy of both men and women. Zetkin appealed to the ideals of the French Revolution and fought for a time when gender would no longer function as a barrier to liberty, equality and fraternity.

Source



The poem reads:

That Day

On that day under heavenly skies

Flowers will sprout merrily on the earth,

And hawthorn blossoms will sweeten the air.

And every threshold will be crowned with

Olive branches to protect the handsome house,

Where love will bless the dance of life.
And every mother may suckle her child
In peace and happiness, giving to it the
Strength of her red mother's blood;
In a pure, unspoiled manner she will weave
This hardy youth, who owes her his life,
An impenetrable coat of armor,
With words, which one day quivering lips
Will repeat, when death comes and when
Our mother's eyes and face appear before us.
And no woman will have to force herself
By dint of exhausting women's work
To leave the house and her child's cradle.
Chosen to be goddess of the purest temple,
She leads the hero, born of her flesh and spirit,
Freely upwards towards the light.
And all are then brothers at heart
Through this religion of the mother's womb,
Which created them in pain for sun and storm;
Brothers, in a dream, at work and at the harvest,
In the name of those, who throughout the world,
In every language, now and again and again,
With the same tender, loving tone,
And righteous gaze, the heart heavy with tears,
Whisper lovingly and forgiving: Oh, my son! . . . – Ada Neart

Translation: Richard Petit

Source: © Deutsches Historisches Museum

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