

manifesto

The Woman Worker

N K Krupskaya



The Woman Worker

Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya

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© Translation Mick Costello

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N K Krupskaya and *The Woman Worker*

Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya (1869–1939) has been overshadowed as a revolutionary and essayist in the popular perception by the figure of Lenin and unfortunately became known by many simply as ‘Lenin’s wife’.

Despite her outstanding record as an educationalist, Krupskaya’s writing remains neglected in English. She served from the first days of the revolution, firstly from November 1917 as deputy to Anatoli Lunacharsky, People’s Commissar of Education and Enlightenment, where she took responsibility for Adult Education and developed the Soviet library classification system.¹ The Main Department of Political and Educational Work (*Glavpolitprosvet*) decreed on 3 November 1920, that all libraries would form a joint library network and on 21 January 1921 made the Decimal Classification of the International Bibliographic Institute obligatory.

From 1920 she became chair of the education committee and was Deputy Minister of Education of the USSR from 1929 until her death in 1939. She also played a leading role in founding the Communist Youth movements *Komsomol* and the *Pioneers*.

The Woman Worker, Krupskaya’s first pamphlet, was written in Siberian exile where she had joined Lenin, following their arrest in 1896 and sentencing to three years internal exile in Shushenskoye. Krupskaya and Lenin married in July 1898.

Krupskaya wrote *The Woman Worker* in 1899 under the pseudonym ‘Sablina’, one of several she used before the Bolshevik revolution. Other pseudonyms she employed included; Lenina, Artamonova, Onegina, Ryba, Rybkina, Katya, Frey and Gallilei.

Following his release from Siberia, Lenin left

for Munich where Krupskaya joined him in 1901. They arrived in London in April 1902.

Krupskaya recalled in *Reminiscences of Lenin* (1933)²: “The immensity of London staggered us. Although the weather was filthy the day we arrived, Vladimir Ilyich brightened up at once and began to look round at this citadel of capitalism with curiosity, Plekhanov and the editorial conflicts for the moment forgotten.”

The *Iskra* group gathered around Lenin and Krupskaya found an editorial office with the Social Democratic Federation’s Twentieth Century Press at 37 Clerkenwell Green.

Today, visitors to Marx House can still see the office where Lenin edited *Iskra*, the newspaper of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party.

Krupskaya recalled: “We were in the habit of going for rambles in the suburbs too. More often than not we went to Primrose Hill. It was the cheapest trip – the fare only costing sixpence. The hill commanded a view of almost the whole of London – a vast smoke-wreathed wilderness of houses. From here we took long walks into the parks and country lanes.

Another reason we liked going to Primrose Hill was because it was near the cemetery where Karl Marx was buried. We used to go there.”

The Woman Worker was originally published and circulated in 1901 before being banned following suppression of the 1905 revolution. It was republished in 1925 with a new preface by the author (included in this translation).

Its significance stems from being the first Marxist work on the situation of women in Russia. The author analyses in some depth the causes of women’s lack of rights under tsarism. She calls on women to join the ranks of fighters for a better life, as equals and alongside men workers. “The woman worker is a member of the working class” she writes “and all her interests are closely tied to the interests of that class.”

Krupskaya vividly describes the plight of

peasant women in the family, their powerlessness and wholesale dependence on the husband. "The woman is "brought into the house"" she writes. "That is why the person of the woman is rated so low, and why according to peasant custom the woman is seen as property, which is valued in the main only for her capacity for work."

The Woman Worker continued to be published in Soviet times, in the first volume of Krupskaya's complete works published in 1957 by the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of the The Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (available to download at <https://tinyurl.com/ycgylbzx>) and republished in 1964.

The work has recently been included in *Krupskaya Nadezhda Konstantinovna, Autobiographical articles, Prerevolutionary works 1899-1917*, Moscow (Direct-Media) 2014, pp 62-89.

In other words, *The Woman Worker* though never lost, was neglected and has not been published separately since 1925, but solely as part of anthologies of Krupskaya's writing. While short extracts have been translated in English in the context of debates (on prostitution, for example), the whole pamphlet has never before been translated into English (in common with many other works by Russian revolutionaries).

A 1901 first edition of *The Woman Worker* signed by the author with her pseudonym 'N. Sablina' went for sale recently at auction for 6000 roubles (£80).

Dmitriy Kolesnik **Alex Gordon**

August 2017

Notes

- 1 Eduard Sukiasyan, Library-Bibliographical Classification (LBC) – the National classification system of the Russian Federation, Scientific-research center of the Library-Bibliographical Classification (LBC) development, RUSSIAN STATE LIBRARY, (Moscow) 2015
<http://tinyurl.com/ybdj7rq8>
- 2 NK Krupskaya, Krupskaya's Reminiscences of Lenin, *Life in London 1902-1903*, Written 1933, International Publishers, 1970.
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/krupskaya/works/rol/rol04.htm>

Dmitriy Kolesnik is a Ukrainian journalist and former editor of online journal *Liva* and Ukrainian communist newspaper, *New Wave* (now suppressed) whose editor was recently arrested by Ukraine's security service and accused of treason. Dmitriy Kolesnik contributes to German newspaper, *Junge Welt* and *Melodie und Rhythmus* magazine and co-ordinates antifascist and communist activists in his homeland.

Alex Gordon is a train driver and former president of the Rail, Marine and Transport Union and is chair of the Marx Memorial Library & Workers' School.

Dr Mick Costello is a social anthropologist and author of *Workers' Participation in the Soviet Union*, 1977 He was formerly industrial organiser of the Communist Party and later industrial correspondent of the *Morning Star* and is a Council member of the Society for Cooperation in Russian and Soviet Studies.



above NK Krupskaya

above left Krupskaya with her mother pre-exile in 1899

left *The Woman Worker* cover of the edition signed with the pseudonym, N.Sablina

above right Krupskaya with Lenin

Translator's note

This booklet, published for the first time in English, has a splendid brief introduction by the author, which requires no explanation. Discussion of this piece of Krupskaya's theoretical contributions can be left to reviewers and be examined by students of the political economy of Marxism, and by activists in today struggles for women's emancipation. Indeed, the author addresses her work to the latter, above all others.

Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya's life (1869-1939) was spent in the Russian revolutionary movement and she was among the higher ranks of the Bolshevik party, before and after the October socialist revolution of 1917, an activist, theoretician and educator.

She was Vladimir Ilyich Lenin's life-long partner, and she continued as an educator and champion of women's emancipation after his death. She saw the emancipation of women workers and peasants as organically tied in with that of men workers and peasants, in the struggles for better conditions and social transformation. Women, just like men, had to be freed from the domination of capitalist exploitation and, in addition, from the domination of men by becoming economically independent, on a par with men, freed from patronage and from being confined to the household and its family chores. The road to emancipation for women lay through winning economic independence. Workers, both women and men could only be emancipated with the winning of a socialist system to replace capitalism. She was a Bolshevik up to her death, a member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks).

This booklet sets out her analysis of details of the road to emancipation. It displays her Marxist approach, based on a presentation of the facts of life for the woman worker of her time, thus giving it an actuality that makes it not

only of value for its analysis of Russia at the end of the 19th century, for historians, but remains in large part relevant to how to tackle the conditions of today's world. The relevance is demonstrated by this booklet being republished without amendment 26 years after its being written.

It presented some considerable challenges to the translator. These derive from Krupskaya's rich style of writing to accommodate different audiences and has three main characteristics: a) writing with a command of the wealth and beauty of Russian literary prose, b) weaving into this her profound knowledge of the vernacular and, c) displaying her competence as an educator, drawing on statistical data and on the ethnography of workers in struggle. The last point makes it readily accessible to a wide audience, in study groups, in combat, written also as a handbook for oral presentation, and as an aid to struggle.

I have left place names and details of cottage industries with slight expansions in the text to help an English reader or listener who might not be familiar with some terms and places. As does Krupskaya, I have kept to the term Woman Worker since Krupskaya makes clear throughout that this is her subject and so as not to allow it to be confused with the many meanings attributed today in political writings to the term "Female". The end notes are Krupskaya's own.

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Introduction

This booklet was written a long time ago, in 1889, in the Siberian village of Shushenskoye, Minusinsk region, Yenisei province, where I was exiled together with Vladimr Ilyich [Lenin]. As it was my first booklet I felt very nervous about whether I could manage it. Vladimir Ilyich encouraged me. At that time the booklet could not be published openly as one would be arrested for it. It could only be published in secret, illegally. In 1900, together with Plekhanov, Akselrod, Zasluchich, Martov and Potresov, Vladimir Ilyich went abroad to edit *Iskra* as a national newspaper for illegal distribution inside Russia. I remained exiled in the town of Ufa. Vladimir Ilyich showed the manuscript of *The Woman Worker* to Vera Ivanovna Zasluchich, an old revolutionary whom I liked very much and whose judgment I respected. Vera Ivanovna's comment was: "The booklet contains some inaccuracies but she takes the bull by the horns" and she recommended publication. *Iskra* printed the brochure and it was reprinted in an underground press inside Russia. It was only in 1905 that it could be openly printed and distributed. It was signed "Sablina", a pseudonym which was sometimes used for me. It was then banned again.

Twenty five years have passed since 1900 and there have been many upheavals in the meantime. They were the February and October revolutions. The working class has come to power. The conditions of the working class have changed and in many ways so have the conditions for the woman worker and woman peasant. Laws have changed. Soviet law protects the rights of the woman worker and peasant woman. Vladimir Lenin has written with passion and wonderfully well on the conditions of the labouring woman, on her rights and on the need to draw her into the running of the state. A lot that is good has also been spoken of by other comrades. The Woman's Sections of the Communist Party have greatly extended their activity and with each passing day women workers and peasant women are becoming more politically conscious, self-confident and partaking ever more in the building of a new life.

The lines of *The Woman Worker* have paled with age. And gone into the past.

Nonetheless, rereading the brochure I thought that I should agree to the proposal from comrades to a reprint of this old booklet. When one compares the description of the then conditions of the worker woman with today, one sees how far we have moved forward. But one also sees the other side; that much remains not yet done, and how doggedly one must work further to achieve the full emancipation of the woman worker.

Take a look back over your own life, at the life of the women workers you know and you will say in the words of Nekrasov "Oh but a woman's lot is hard, scarcely can one find a tougher lot than the woman's." Whether in the village or in the town the working class woman remains "an eternal, perpetual worker." To her falls not less, if not more

work, than to the man. She shares the same poverty, undernourishment and loss of sleep but finds more grief and humiliation.

Nekrasov has a poem *To whom in Russia is it given to live well*. In it a peasant woman when telling of her bitter life said a woman once told her that a pilgrim disclosed “the keys to happiness for a woman, for the joyful happiness of freedom were forgotten and lost by god himself ... Lost! Just think of it, a fish swallowed them ... As to what fish it was that swallowed those precious keys and in what seas it wanders – god has forgotten!” The peasant serf woman could only complain and live in hope that perhaps god will remember where those keys are hidden. The factory woman worker gave up hope for that and now begins, as yet only by groping almost subconsciously, to search for those keys herself. As to where the woman should look for those keys, “the keys to happiness, for the joyful happiness of freedom – that is exactly what this booklet is about. We will examine the conditions of the woman worker, the peasant woman engaged in home-working cottage industry or in factory or workshop. We shall see that the conditions of a woman worker are particularly difficult because she is a member of the working class, that her conditions are closely tied in with the conditions of the whole working class and that only the victory of the working class, of the proletariat can liberate women. Furthermore, we shall examine the state of dependency in which the woman worker is subjected within the family, the subjugation of women to men. We shall point to the reasons for that dependence and show that she can only gain a position of total independence simultaneously with the victory of the proletariat.

Finally, we will demonstrate that as a mother the woman worker has an interest in that victory. Only when struggling arm in arm for the workers’ cause can women find the keys to “the joyful happiness of freedom”.

I Woman as a Member of the Working Class.

Let us examine the conditions of the woman worker, starting with the peasant woman. She has to tackle all kinds of heavy field work, with no let up day and night at harvest time as, in many places, women plough and harvest alongside men. In addition to that they shoulder the burden of looking after the poultry and cattle, household chores, making clothes and looking after the children; in fact it is impossible to list all the jobs that fall to the peasant woman.

Life is particularly tough for the woman in a poor family. In addition to heavy labour there is unrelenting misery, worries, humiliation and grief. Meanwhile, the ruination of villages has advanced over recent years. Few households are relatively better off and the majority are impoverished in one way or another. Even those that were middling are becoming poor. People are growing shorter, weaker, ageing earlier year by year and the number of households that are without a single horse or with only one is on the increase.

Today in Russia there are around three million horseless households and the same number of one-horse ones, out of a total of ten million households. What kind of a household is one without a horse or even with one only! How can one work the land properly without a horse? Badly worked and badly fertilized land provides a very poor return. An over-ploughed and exhausted plot cannot feed a peasant and his family. The peasant has to get bread to feed the family and money to pay taxes while necessity pursues him, so the peasant becomes an insolvent debtor to the *kulak* [rich peasant]. He is forced to sign forward contracts for his labour, which commit him to working off his debt. Tied hand and foot he becomes a sort of hired labourer for the person who loaned him grain or money. In reality he remains a proprietor in name only as he becomes a hired labourer for others in order to feed himself and his family on his own. And he lives no better than a hired labourer, eating only bread and half-starved at that. Constant undernourishment drains his strength and nearly always leads to the breakup of the family as its members scatter looking for paid work. In some provinces almost annually part of the families of the poor peasants disperse for work. Often the family sits in semi-darkness in unheated cottages ... There are no reserves put by for a rainy day and people exist only from day to day so that every little crop failure brings hunger and disaster.

Over the past 100 years the Russian people have suffered 51 famines, *i.e.* a failed harvest occurs not less than every two years. Hunger becomes a normal feature of life. The hunger of recent decades are illustrated by the horrors of complete ruination, scurvy, sicknesses from hunger and consequential deaths that they bring to the poor peasant.

Millions of people starve and the life of the peasant woman in such poverty stricken families defies description. She, just as her husband does, battles with dust, mud and

cold over a tiny piece of tilled land, commits herself to work for a nearby landlord or to his fellow, a well to do peasant; struggles to win an additional penny to pay taxes and arrears, goes hungry, falls ill from hunger, has to attend to her children and works indefatigably, as does her husband. The woman welcomes almost any earnings on the side, as a day labourer and goes on foot to other provinces in search of work.

Leaving those provinces where land parcels are small and from those with poor soil, each spring tens of thousands of workers, including almost a half who are single young women and juveniles move southwards to the regions of the Don Army, Tavia and Yekaterinoslav [regions of southern Russia and Ukraine and Crimea] and the Caucasus. They go on foot, subsist virtually on what they can beg, wandering from town to town until they find work. Those who hire them do not willingly give anything away and take full advantage of the helplessness of those seeking employment, among whom it is toughest for the young women. There are rare newspaper notices of court hearings, which illustrate the full horrors of the situations in which these young women find themselves when looking for work.

In most provinces the villages engage not only in arable farming but also in what is called cottage industry. They do manual work at home and the produce is for the greater part sold to a buyer middle-man. The cottage industries are various: weaving, hat-making, knitting, tanning, pottery, making lamps, nails, cutlery, samovars, cartwheels, spoons and icons, locks and much besides. It is usual for the whole family of a craftsman to be involved in a given industry, including the women and children. The children start work from the age of five or eight. There are also specifically female industries such as lace making and cloth fringe sewing. Women often carry out very heavy operations such as treading clay, beating wool, nail making and in the smithies sometimes as hammerers, and so on. Cottage industry earnings are paltry. Thus, Kimry cobblers earn four or five rubles a month and provide their own food; weavers in the Medyn region of the Kaluga province and Moscow province lace makers 10 kopeks a day and so on. Work lasts 16 to 19 hours per day. To gain something of a picture of cottage industry let us take as an example the production of mats and of most peasant footwear from bark fibre - bast - which is widespread in the Kaluga, Viatki, Kostroma, Nizhnegorod and other provinces. Work lasts up to 18 hours a day and involves the whole family.

Children begin picking bast aged five, and from eight years of age work the same as adults. The winter season lasts six months, during which a fit group of four earns 20 to 25 rubles. By springtime the bast workers are so weak that they stagger around like drunks. The sad and degraded condition of the home-working locksmith from Pavlov village rushing about from buyer to money lender and back again best characterises the Pavlov village custom of "pawning wives." Even working flat out, a whole family cannot earn enough to last one Monday market day to the next and has to spend all week finding additional income. Thus, each week they have to pawn what they have made.

On market day the cottage worker takes a sample of his goods to a buyer and when a price is agreed, then commits himself to deliver the goods by a certain hour. But the goods have meanwhile been in pawn to the moneylender and the peasant does not have the wherewithal to settle with him, so the cottage worker brings his wife to the shop, takes the goods that he has promised to deliver to the buyer's store and leaves his wife as surety till he can collect her after he receives payment for the goods. In that kind of way are the worker and his wife forced to manoeuvre backwards and forwards.

With each passing year ever increasing poverty drives the peasant cottage worker to the town. Work in his own business at home alternates with work in a factory. The same want also drives the peasant woman to town. Women's labour is used very widely in many mills, especially for cotton spinning and wool and silk processing. In cotton mills there are even more women than men. On the other hand, in some industries such as, for example, steel foundries there is no woman's labour at all other than occasionally.

The total number of women employed in mills and factories in 1890 in European Russia was about a quarter of a million and since then the number has increased considerably. Where women's labour has become common as, for example in cotton and cotton fabric mills, women's wages, although lower than men's, are not significantly so. One researcher has calculated that it makes up around 4/5 of men's wages in those industries. Where women are on piecework alongside men they produce no less than them. One must note, however, that in those industries men are paid a relatively low wage and it is hardly enough to live on.

Where women are found only occasionally the women's pay is so low that one cannot survive on it, so the women's wage only serves as a supplement to the family income and if the woman happens to live alone then poverty forces her to sell not only her labour power but also herself. Prostitution provides the necessary additional income. When she works in a factory the woman has the same hours as a man (according to a law of June 2 it is 11 ½ hours). The law does not specify a limit on the length of the working day for women. According to our factory legislation there is only one decree concerning women's labour and that prohibits night work in the textile¹ industry. But if the woman works on the same premises as the head of the family, *i.e.* father or husband, then she is permitted to work nights. They often labour in stuffy, dusty, overheated or damp buildings at exhausting and monotonous work. The extremely unhealthy work harms the women's health, to no less a degree than her poor food and housing. Coarse and tough food, which can be more easily endured when one is engaged in physical work in the open, is harmful to the weakened organism of the factory worker. At the same time women generally eat even worse than the men. They set up either their own women's food preparation co-operative, where the food is worse than the men have, and if they enter men's co-operative groups they spend less but give up meat.

A woman's wage is lower than a man's and she is forced to cut down on food. Living

accommodation in factory districts is bad, dirty and exceedingly dear. So many people are stuffed in at night that the owners of quarters often do not know how many people are living in them. The stench is choking. For instance, in St. Petersburg living quarters in factory areas are dearer than on Nevsky Avenue. The overnight rent for two in a bed runs from 1 ruble 25 kopeks to four rubles a month. It is no better in the factory dormitories. It will come as no surprise that living in such conditions the woman factory worker suffers from all kinds of diseases. Women suffer more than men from the harmful factory conditions and factory doctors note that women workers are sick both more often and more seriously than men.

In addition to work at the mill women workers take on working in town, as seamstresses, milliners, florists and corset makers. But to secure earnings from such handicrafts one has to have been apprenticed for some years and that has to be paid for and is, therefore, beyond the reach of many. Moreover, even with an apprenticeship brings in little. The best thing is to find work in big workshops that supply the shops. But the wages there are extraordinarily low. The hours of work are no shorter than in the mill. There is a law of 1785 which lays down that apprentices start at six in the morning and work on to six at night, with 1½ hours for dinner and half an hour for breakfast, making up a total of 10 hours work, but that law is only on paper and is observed nowhere. There is no supervision of apprenticeship training schools and the majority of apprentices have never heard of such a law. Only in the western part of the country, where apprentices are more united and act together have there been some cases where the owners have been forced by strikes to keep to the law on the ten-hour day. Usually, however, work in the apprenticeship schools during “the peak season” runs virtually through the night. The skilled craftswomen work not for the 11½ hours that is the rule in the mills but as long as their strength holds out, catching sleep on the benches or bare floor. The “peak seasons” are followed by lay offs, which the skilled women workers, like it or not have to “enjoy” without a penny in their pockets.

So, the position of the woman worker everywhere across the country is extremely harsh, as she suffers the same as the working man. Like him, she works without respite, suffers poverty and, just as he does, she belongs to the class in society that is most deprived of and oppressed. The woman worker is a member of the working class and all her interests are closely tied to the interests of that class.

When the working class wins a better lot then the position of the worker woman will change. If it remains in beggarly ignorance and without rights, then the worker woman will continue to drag out the same miserable existence she has today. Therefore, the woman worker cannot be indifferent to whether the working class wins a better fate. The workers’ cause is her own dear and vital cause. It is as close to her as it is to the man worker. So what does this “workers’ cause” consist of?

Workers are dissatisfied with their conditions as they see that all wealth is created

by their hands, their labour and, yet, for this labour they receive just enough to feed themselves and to keep up their capacity for working. They work not for themselves but for the owners of the mills, land, mines, shops and the rest or, as is customary to call those classes of the population, the bourgeoisie.

All laws are drawn up to serve the property classes and the whole country is run in the interests of the bourgeoisie. Workers have no part in drawing up laws, nor in the management of the country. Their job is to work, to work for others indefatigably, to pay taxes and duties, be silent and submissively bear cold and hunger and suffer denigration of their personal dignity.

The workers want to change this order of things. They want no more classes, no rich and poor, for the land, mills and factories, workshops and mines to belong not to private individuals but to the whole of society, and all managed by it. At present the owners think only about how to enrich themselves. They do not think about the health, comfort and prosperity of the workers who work for them. They count as naught the life of the working human being - profit is their main aim.

When the control of production passes out of the hands of private owners into the hands of society then things will change. Society will concern itself with making it possible for everyone to live well, with seeing to it that every person has what is necessary, with sufficient free time to enjoy a full life, to enjoy every happiness and pleasure that there is. Workers know that there need be no fear that there would not be enough goods to go round.

Since the introduction of machines, which have so increased the productivity of human labour and new ways of cultivating the soil that have increased its fertility, there is no reason to be afraid of that. There will be enough for everyone. Under existing conditions people live in poverty, not in any way because there is not enough grain, clothing, etc. Grain lies loaded on the railways and rots waiting for buyers while, alongside it the labouring masses swell up with hunger and die. The factory owner's warehouses burst with unsold goods while, by their gates crowds in rags search for work.

When production is managed by society everyone will have to work but labour will not be as arduous as it is today as everything will be done to lighten the unpleasant aspects of working and it will not be in stuffy, stinking and infected factories but in well lit, spacious, dry and well ventilated buildings. Labour will not be as lengthy as it is nowadays because all will work and, unlike today, one will not see some workers, including children and pregnant women, straining over their workload while others are forced to be idle, jobless and looking hopelessly for work... Everyone will have to work but it will not be the forced, exhausting and degrading work to which the working class is currently condemned.

Society will take on itself the care for the weak, the sick and the old. The future will hold no fears, the fear of dying somewhere in a back yard, or living as a beggar dependent on others. People will not be afraid if they fall ill that the family will be left destitute, as society as a whole will be responsible for bringing up the children, caring for them and making them strong healthy and intelligent, useful and knowledgeable people, turned out as good citizens.

Those who want such a state of affairs and who fight to achieve it are called socialists.

It is especially among workers that there are many socialists. In Germany, Belgium, France and some other countries there are millions of socialists and they are organised in workers parties, which act in unison and defend their common interests together, and they have made great advances. With every passing day the number of socialists is on the increase.

Workers can expect no improvement in their conditions from anyone else: neither the tsar nor god will help them. The tsar looks upon everything through the eyes of the capitalists and the nobility, showering favours on them and granting them all sorts of rights. He hands over the administration of the country to them and counts workers who stand up for their rights as rioters, while he ceremoniously expresses gratitude to the troops for shooting down unarmed workers on strike. Thus it was in 1895 on the occasion of unrest at the Korzinkin textile mill in Yaroslavl. It is true that he states that he holds equally close to his heart the wellbeing of both factory owners and workers but one would be blind not to see that those are just empty words.

God does not go to the help of the poor. His servants only preach to the oppressed of the virtues of patience and humility, to love their oppressors, and of the sin of cupidity to those who can hardly feed themselves; of the sin of idleness to people who labour 16 to 18 hours a day and they speak of the kingdom of heaven while doing their best to distract all thoughts that workers might have of bringing about a better life on earth. It is a sin to think about this earth and complain, and sins are punished by the merciful god.

No, workers cannot expect anything from god or the tsar. It is also a waste of time to expect the capitalists to change their minds and stop exploiting them, just as it would be to wait for wolves to stop eating sheep or for birds to give up catching insects. Capitalists live by exploiting labour power and will never give up exploiting.

The workers of all lands know that they can rely on none but themselves, that they themselves must win a better fate on earth; that each on his own is completely powerless and defenseless but once united all together in a huge army they are a power which no state can withstand, a power that will come into its own. The more the workers act in concert, the more forcefully they fight for their rights, the clearer they come to

appreciate the line of march and recognise their objective, the greater the power they will represent. It is not by chance that the words “Proletarians² of all lands, unite!” and “One for all and all for one!” are repeated at workers gatherings. The workers have to carry out a long and determined struggle. Every step forward has to be fought for.

At first workers fight for demands that are closest to them, for pay rises, a shorter working day, the removal of all manner of abuses that forbid them to strike, hold gatherings to discuss their affairs and to form unions. They are not allowed to write to newspapers about their needs and demands. In all confrontations between bosses and workers the government takes the side of the bosses. Workers realise that for them to have proper organisation to struggle with the factory owners they need the freedom to strike, to hold meetings and to form unions, to have freedom of speech and of the press. Yet they also see that top civil servants always take the side of the exalted and the rich and will always frame laws against the workers, to keep workers in the dark and in ignorance. They impose ever fresh taxes and deductions. All this will continue until the workers, through their elected representatives have their say in drafting the laws and in running society. The workers, therefore, demand that the country be ruled according to laws that are passed by a parliament (an assembly of people’s representatives), that the officialdom that manages the country has to account to parliament for their actions, so that no taxes or other deductions can be levied on the people without the approval of parliament, and that parliament decides on the use of the monies collected from the people.

Workers demand universal and equal suffrage, which would allow them to send their own representatives to parliament. In a word, workers demand political freedom. Without political freedom and without participation in the running of the country the workers will never be able to attain their cherished goal of a socialist order of society. Therefore, workers of all countries strive for political freedom and there are already parliaments in all European countries where workers have a certain say in the running of those countries. Albeit, in many countries that participation is still very weak but only in Russia is there no participation; only in Russia are workers and all other ordinary inhabitants completely removed from taking part in the formulation of laws and in the administration of the country, as everything is decided by the tsarist officials who are answerable only to themselves. In those countries where there is political freedom workers are organised in parties and have already been able to achieve much, and workers’ conditions are much better than in Russia. In Russia the struggle for the workers’ cause is only just beginning and a workers’ movement is embryonic but, in all corners of Russia today the fires of struggle have been lit, and with each year that passes the workers’ movement will grow and strengthen.

So, how should the woman worker relate to the struggle to win the workers’ cause? Should she take part in it?

It is often the case today that the woman adopts a very negative attitude to her husband's involvement in the workers' cause. She completely misunderstands what he is getting involved in and only sees danger in it. Frequently she knows nothing whatsoever about the workers' cause or the workers' movement and, thus, does not understand her husband, nor sympathise with him. She tries in every way to interfere with his studies and is hostile to his friends. Young politically conscious workers often report that it is difficult to find a wife who is sympathetic to them in their activities, and that they do not want to marry someone who would drag them down.

One also finds among politically conscious men workers some who think that women should not get mixed up in the struggle for the workers' cause, that it is none of their business and that it would be much better if only the men carried on the struggle. That is a mistaken approach. It would be difficult for men to win through on their own. If women do not join the workers' movement, if they are hostile towards it they will always be standing in its way. Let us say the men workers organise a strike and the employer is ready to concede but women offer to take on the men's jobs, the strike is then lost. Who knows the extent of harm that women who are not organised, who do not participate in the workers' movement can cause! Stopping women joining the struggle is the same as leaving half of the workers' army unorganised.

Most politically conscious men workers understand that it is essential that in the struggle for the workers cause women go hand in hand with the men to increase the numbers in the ranks of the militant worker's army and to tighten the ranks of the workers to attain victory. And the women will not be left out. It is to the extent to which they begin to play a part in productive labour that they see more and more clearly that their interests are the same as those of the working man, to understand that her own liberation is closely linked to the liberation of the working class. They see that they have no choice but to struggle for the workers' cause.

In the western part of the Russian Empire the most politically conscious women workers are already affiliated to the movement. They help the men workers in their struggle and attentively follow what is said and written about the workers' movement. They take part in mass meetings, celebrate May Day and become organised and found their own **woman's** newspapers. The women's movement is growing year by year.

In some parts of Russia women are also beginning to take part in the struggle. As an example we can mention the women's strike at the Laferme tobacco factory in St. Petersburg in 1895, the Brest-Litovsk and Belostok wrappers and cigarette factories in 1897, and more recently the Katz cigarette wrappers factory in Kiev, the hosiery workers in Vilna, and strikes in Riga and Serpukhov at the Konshin works and others. Besides those, women and men usually walk out simultaneously at cotton weaving and spinning mills.

2 The Conditions of Women Workers in the Family

Of course, women workers suffer not only because they go out to work but also from being women, from being dependent on men.

From the earliest age the peasant girl works in her parents' family as a labourer. She is regarded simply as the property of her parents who can make her work from morning to night, can send her out to work and take away all her earnings. To see just how widely the view of the peasant girl as the property of her father can be shown by the following, for example. There have been a number of cases where a village community has forbidden a girl to marry until her father has paid off the arrears on his debts. In such a case the person of the girl counts as nothing as she is simply seen as property that can be held for debts. A girl is often married off to a person that she doesn't even know. The ritual of lamentation that survives everywhere and is acted out at the party for girls on the eve of the wedding points to how little happiness awaits her. When a bride is chosen the main qualities sought are that she be healthy, works well and is strong, agile and hardy. The girl leaves her father's family for that of her husband. There, as before, she works without respite and, as previously, she remains a dependent. It does happen, of course, that the man and woman get on well and come to love one another, but even then the woman is not protected against what is known as "the husband's teaching". The peasant woman who has not experienced a beating from her husband is a rarity and the woman, therefore, gets used to looking on beatings as a matter of course unless the husband is particularly brutal. But even then the woman is not allowed to leave her husband. He has the power not to allow her a passport of her own and wherever she goes he can have her brought back under guard.

How can such a dependent state of women be explained? The man as master gives all the orders about work and the woman is only there to carry them out. The man decides everything: when to start ploughing or sowing, whether to take on such and such work or not, and it is the man who gets the money to pay taxes, and selling grain and cattle is also his responsibility. Seeing to all the finer points about work is up to him. As it is the man who runs the household it is he who takes part in discussion of all community affairs that are decided at gatherings about the land and taxation share allocations and so on. The woman is excluded from all social affairs, tied to matters of the house and children. The husband is the head of the family because the whole household rests on him. The husband is the head of the family also because all the property, land, cottage, cattle and the rest belongs to him.

The woman is "brought into the house". That is why the person of the woman is rated so low, and why according to peasant custom the woman is seen as property, which is valued in the main only for her capacity for work.

In those cottage industries where the business is only a supplement to farming the

woman's position is little changed and although she assists her husband, that does not make her more independent. But where farming retreats to the background and earnings from the cottage handicrafts become the main source of income, when the woman can earn enough to manage a life outside the family, then things change. The woman's voice takes on more importance in the family and divorce becomes easier. Where a woman, thanks to her playing a part in manufacture, attains independence she can sometimes obtain a parcel of land, thus gaining the right to possess land fully on the same terms as a man. We see that in those branches of industry where women's labour has become customary the woman working in the factory is paid only a little less than the man and is able to feed herself. The husband ceases to be her "bread winner", she provides for herself and sometimes, when her husband is out of work, also keeps him. She works in the factory completely separately and independent of her husband instead of under his command in the way seen in peasant life. All this, that is, a woman's independent work with an independent income, cannot but affect the relations between husband and wife.

The wife ceases to be the husband's slave and becomes an equal member of the family. Total dependence on her husband is replaced by equality. It becomes not so easy for the parents to "give away" in marriage a factory girl who since her youth can earn her keep. She can choose a bridegroom who suits her. Marriages in a factory environment are made more according to mutual agreement than for material calculations. In cases where a husband and wife do not get on it is easier for them to separate than it was in peasant conditions as, should they separate they do not destroy a household business because each of them can live on their own earnings.

Divorces are much more often among factory workers than among peasants. Furthermore, among them free relations between men and women are the general rule. Men and women doing night work together and the conditions of factory accommodation contribute to making liaisons outside marriage easy, even too easy. How could it be otherwise? In factory dormitories separation of the sexes in different rooms is not the rule and in the overwhelming majority of factories complete mixing of the sexes and ages prevails. Children and grownups, men and women, single people and the married share the same bedrooms and bunks. How is one to work out accurately who is "legally" married or not? Among workers relations between a man and a woman out of wedlock are accorded the same common rights as according to those in a "legal" marriage. In such relations the woman is freer than were she to be "the husband's wife" as she is not a dependent on the man with whom she lives. He has no "legal" rights over her and cannot, for instance, refuse to allow her to have a passport or force her to live with him... In a word, an independent income frees woman from the power of men.

But if the woman earns too little to survive on, as woman's pay is very low in all those branches of industry where their labour has not yet become customary, as also in some trades, she has to live with her parents or husband. And if she has neither the one nor

the other she is forced to seek additional income from prostitution. As recently as May 1899 in Riga there were huge workers disturbances over this. They started with the fact that women at a jute mill had demanded an increase in rates of pay and they set off as a group to the governor's office to complain about the factory administration. On the way, the women were halted and locked into the Alexandrov Park. As they were leaving work, men workers from the Phoenix factory and some others began freeing the women by force. The governor called out the army and from the 5th to 15th of May Riga was turned into a battlefield as the soldiers fired on the workers and the workers responded by throwing stones at the military, smashed windows and set fire to buildings. But the greatest fury of the workers was directed against the brothels and eleven of them were destroyed in one night. Why did the workers set upon the brothels? What had that got to do with the strike and the workers' disturbances? What had brothels got to do with those? It turns out that when the workers announced it was impossible for their wives to live on the earnings they received the authorities cynically told them that they could find additional income from the brothels. In that way prostitution was openly stated to be the only way in which a woman living only on her own earnings could supplement her miserable pay! Who then can blame a poverty stricken woman for selling herself, for preferring the only readily available extra earnings to beggarly existence, hunger and sometimes a hungry death? Bear in mind that there is nothing enjoyable about being a prostitute. One has only to listen to how the well fed bourgeois and his wife talk with contempt of the depraved factory women and girls, and with what hypocritical disgust these ladies who have never known poverty pronounce the word "prostitute". Bourgeois professors shamelessly go into print to assert that prostitutes are not slaves but are people who have chosen to take that road! It is the same hypocrisy that insists that no one prevents a worker from leaving a given factory where it is impossible to breath, what with the dust, poisonous vapours, heat, and so on. They "voluntarily" remain working there for 16 to 18 hours a day.

But if a woman receives miserable pennies for her work and yet is not always forced to sell herself, and still remains supported by a husband or her parents she does not have the independence of a woman who needs no one else's support. She still has to subordinate herself to those who keep her as she is unable to do without their help.ⁱⁱⁱ

Thus we see that independent earnings free a woman worker, as a woman, and make her equal to a man. Only when she is engaged in large-scale industry can she be free. One must, however, note that first of all, there are still comparatively few women earning wages in factory and mill. As we saw, in 1890 there were only around a quarter of a million. Today that figure is certainly much greater but, nonetheless, is probably not more than half a million. Secondly, in many branches of industry women's labour is paid so badly that the woman worker cannot survive alone on that money. Also, even where the woman for the moment does receive a comparatively good wage, she must be prepared for the eventuality of the introduction of machinery or a hold up in production putting her on the street without a crust. What then? Either she again has to be a

burden for her husband or relatives, again becoming a dependent, or get by through prostitution.

Only the complete victory of the workers striving to replace the current order by a socialist one can make women completely free. We have already said that under socialism, in a socialist system, all adult and healthy people will work and it follows that that includes women, excluding, of course, those pregnant or nursing. But in return all will share the benefits produced; all will be guaranteed the means of subsistence and it follows that that will apply to women. Women's dependence on men today stems from men keeping women, whether wife, lover or daughter. When that ceases women will be free from men. Thus, we see that a woman has a double interest in the success of the workers' cause – as a worker and as a woman. The words "Proletarians of the World, Unite!" cannot but meet with a response in a woman's heart. She cannot but join the ranks of the fighters for a socialist system, for a better future..

3 Women and the Upbringing of Children

For the woman worker family life means being tied into endlessly looking after children. There is no chance of her educating the child but only of being able to feed it.

With the birth of a child the peasant woman faces added chores. After all, one cannot both go out to work and care for children. Work waits for no one and the peasant woman goes out to work leaving the children to be looked after by some old feeble woman or the older children. Anyone who has lived in a village knows what looking after them means. Before being weaned a baby has a sour feeding horn stuffed into its mouth and is fed all sorts of greens together with chewed black bread, then rolled up in a sheepskin, rocked in a cot till it is unconscious, kept in a stuffy cottage and at night is taken outside almost naked. The mother feeds it now and then. One keeps hearing that a six to eight-year old "nurse" dropped or bumped a baby, or burnt it or did something else to it - whatever comes to mind in a six year old... But even if the mother herself is looking after the child things are little better. She has no idea whatsoever how a human organism is constructed, how a child develops, what it requires in order to grow strong, sturdy and healthy. The peasant woman is mostly guided by custom and superstition. But even if she knew how to bring up a child then, with the best will in the world she could not do what is needed. A child needs cleanliness, warmth and fresh air but there are ten people living in a cottage, which is not heated and sheepskins, calves and the rest all around. Willy-nilly she gives it up as a bad job. When the child is sick the mother has no idea what to do and there often is nowhere to go for treatment. Worst of all is where the sickness is infectious, as with smallpox, scarlet fever, etc. When the child needs to be isolated how can it be done where the whole family lives in the

cottage? So the children infect one another and die through lack of help. It is no wonder that in the villages half the children die before they are five. Only the sturdiest survive.

Let us now take a look at how matters stand with schooling for peasant children. Very often there is no school in the village and learning to read and write is a matter of chance. But even when there is a village school the peasants often cannot afford to place their children in it. The children are wanted at home to look after younger brothers and sisters, to tend the shop and help with all manner of household chores. At times there are no clothes to wear for school, especially if it is somewhere in a neighbouring village. Those children who do go to school more or less learn only to read, write and count, and badly at that. Our schools in Russia are very bad and teachers are forbidden to teach anything other than the basics. The government benefits from holding people in ignorance and therefore, it is forbidden in schools to describe or to give children books to read on how other peoples have won their freedom and what their laws and systems are like. It is forbidden to explain why some people have such and such rules while others have other ones, why some people are poor and others are rich. In a word schools are forbidden to tell the truth and teachers must only teach the children to honour god and the tsar. The people in charge take great care to see to it that a teacher does not let slip some truths and they select teachers from among those who have no understanding of anything. So the child leaves school knowing as little as it went in with. The mother herself is usually unable to teach it anything as she knows nothing herself.^{iv} Here is how Leo Tolstoy speaks of the ignorance of the Russian peasant in the words of a soldier in his *The Power of Darkness*: “And so what do you women folk know? You're just like blind puppies sticking your noses in manure. A man at least does a stretch in the army, rides a train and goes to town, but what have you ever seen? Apart from your foul women's tricks you know nothing.” The best she can hope for is to teach her son to observe fasts and church rituals, to fear god and its elders, respect the rich and to teach it humility and patience... It is unlikely her children thereby become happier and freer or better to understand the meaning of the words: “All for one and one for all”, and doubtful if they will be better at winning justice and take a stand for justice.

What we have said about the peasant woman as an educator applies much the same to the woman as mother who works at a cottage industry. She knows as little as the peasant woman who is overwhelmed by work and just as powerless to educate her children. These are drawn into cottage handicrafts between the ages of five or eight, when they are given some simple operations to carry out but work just as adults and often the same long hours. Such work is destructive of the child's organism, undermines health and blunts the child's mental capabilities. Without any moving about, without clean air in a stuffy cottage, the child grows sickly. Monotonous work from morning to night starves its intellect, does not develop it and it becomes sluggish and stupid. There can be no schooling of any sort. Cottage workers can only feed themselves more or less when the whole family, the old and children work without

respite. What schooling can there be in these circumstances?

The mill woman is distinguished by her poor health. A woman's organism suffers more from the harmful conditions of factory work. And a weak or sick woman produces weak children. One piece of research has found: "When a woman in the match works marries, and women and children make up the greater part of the workforce in them, she becomes a hotbed for a sickly and half-alive generation similar to her own, made all the worse by a number of diseases which lead on to an early grave." In our factory legislation there are no laws that limit or make lighter the work for pregnant women. There is only in the rules governing the custody of and dispensation of monies collected in fines on factory workers a stipulation that this money "might be used", amongst other things, to pay allowances to women workers in the last stage of pregnancy and who give up work a fortnight before giving birth. So, there is no obligatory payment of benefit but only wording that such a payment "may be" made; *i.e.* such contingency is left fully to the yea or nay of the factory owner. In fact such payments are made almost nowhere. Without support and frightened to lose her job the woman worker carries on almost up to the eve of giving birth, and she returns to work before fully recovering. That is why factory women so often miscarry, have premature births and all kinds of women's ailments. Life with children is very difficult for the woman worker. Coming home tired from the factory she has to get down to do the washing, sewing, cleaning, feeding and washing the child. Sometimes the mother is overjoyed if she has a neighbour who gives her the idea of feeding the child a drink made with poppy seed; the child sleeps calmly and the mother is happy. She has no idea that with that drink she is poisoning her child, as there is a lot of opium in poppies and opium is a frightening poison, and can later turn the child into a complete idiot. When she leaves for work during the day the woman factory worker leaves the children in the care of an old woman neighbour and when they have grown a little, they are left without anyone to supervise them. The children virtually grow up outdoors. They don't eat properly, get cold, go about in rags and dirty from early childhood and see their fill of drunks, debauchery, fights and much else. That is how the pre-school children grow up. There are schools in the town but town and suburban schools are usually overcrowded so that it is difficult to get into them and factories and mills do not always have their own schools. The law "allows" factory owners to set up schools for workers' children but does not oblige them to. So not all workers' children go to school. When children reach the age at which they are taken on at factories (according to our factory legislation children start at 12) they begin to provide for themselves and soon become completely independent. In general, the factory woman worker has a lot of grief with her children, lots of worries but rarely seeing them and the children grow up as half-strangers to her.

If we take into account how difficult it is for a factory woman worker with children, especially if the child is illegitimate and its upkeep falls entirely on its mother then we will understand why the woman is often forced to hand her children over to a

foundling hospital or to a woman who specialises in looking after children. Newspapers sometimes carry stories that in this or that big industrial town an “angels works” has been discovered. These are where a woman earns a living by being paid for bringing up babes in arms and then, through starvation, by feeding them opium and in other ways sends them as soon as possible to the next world, turning them, as it were, into “angels”. After a court hearing the maker of “angels” is sentenced to hard labour but then, somewhere else, the same conditions give rise to another “angels works”; a woman factory worker finds it impossible to feed a child.

The same fate also awaits the child of a live-in maid-servant. A servant is not supposed to have a family. All over the place, a condition of employment for servant women is that they are not to have men visitors and a married woman is taken on reluctantly if her husband visits her. A servant woman with children is never employed. So, by taking up her post the servant has concluded a forward contract on her entire future. In this her situation is worse than that of the woman factory worker as the latter works a set number of hours and after these she is her own mistress. A live-in servant can never dispose of herself as all her time belongs to her masters. These usually do not allow her to have any time to spend with children and, therefore, like it or not, she has to surrender her child to a foundling hospital.

Thus, we see that in most cases the woman worker finds herself in a situation where it is totally impossible for her to bring up her own children properly. She is completely unprepared for the role of bringing up her children as she does not know what is harmful or good for a child and does not know how to educate it. “Without learning, you can't even mend a shoe,” as the German socialist Zetkin wrote in her well-known brochure on the women's movement in Germany. Is one really to believe that in order to bring up a human being one does not need to be properly prepared?! But even if the woman worker were trained in the role of educator in her present conditions it would be almost a waste of time. She would not have enough time, nor the wherewithal by which to educate her children. The only things she can think about is to see to it that her children are fed, clothed and dressed. But often she is not in a position even to guarantee that her childrens' stomachs are filled and she is forced to leave them to the mercy of fate. Such is the state of affairs under the present social system.

What will the bringing up and education of children look under a socialist system? We have already said that socialists stand for the social upbringing of children. The indignant bourgeois exclaims: “Those terrible socialists are out to destroy the family and take children way from their parents!” That is, of course, absurd rubbish as such a thing is out of the question. No one and nowhere had it in mind to take children away from their parents. When one speaks of a social upbringing for children one means, first of all, that the worries of supporting them will be removed from the parents and that society will provide for the child not only the means of existence but will concern itself with seeing to it that it has everything

necessary for it to develop fully and in every way. The most difficult time for bringing up children is before they are old enough to go to school. In Western European countries there are already what are called “kindergartens”. When a mother sets off to work she takes her small children with her and leaves them in the kindergarten until she is finished. She can be relaxed at work because she knows that no misfortune will befall her toddlers as they are in the hands of numerous teachers and their loving care. Laughter and the sound of children’s voices announce the presence of the kindergarten house and garden. At first glance it can seem that there is no order there but that is only how it appears. There are set programmes for their activities. They are broken up into groups and each group gets on with its business.. They dig the earth, water and weed rows of plants, clean vegetables in the kitchen, wash the dishes, plane wood, glue things together, sew, draw, sing, read and play. Every game and other pursuit teaches something and the main thing is that the child is trained to be tidy, to labour, learns not to fall out with its friends and to give ground to others without caprices and tears. The teachers know how to keep three and four year old toddlers occupied, to eat and be put to bed on time. They spread wide mattresses on the floor and the children lie next to each other covered by a common blanket. How different is that way of passing one’s time in the kindergarten from the aimless wandering from corner to corner to which children are doomed who have no one with the time to occupy them! “Don't interrupt! Don't get in the way! Clear off!” is what the kids at home are told all the time. However, it must be said that there are as yet still very few good kindergartens even in Western Europe. We have given the description of a kindergarten only to show that educating children can start from an early age and that in a social kindergarten children can pass their time with great advantage to themselves and much more happily than at home. If there are good kindergartens even today then they will be much better in a socialist society. As children coming from all members of society will be looked after in such kindergartens it will be in the interests of all to see to it that they be organised as best as possible. Children then pass from kindergarten to school. In a socialist society schools, of course, will not be like they are today. In the schools of the future pupils will acquire much more knowledge and will also get used to productive labour. The principal feature is that schools will not only teach but will develop their potential, spiritual and physical, so that they are brought up as useful and energetic citizens.

The bourgeois, who is not burdened with having to worry how to feed and bring up children, who can put several well lit rooms at the disposal of his own children, can provide all manner of comforts, hire all kinds of wet nurses, maids, governesses, servants and teachers can look with indignation at the social provision of education. Women workers cannot fail to recognise all the benefits of social education. Maternal feelings make her wish for the social education of children, a socialist system and victory for the workers’ cause!

4 Conclusion

We have observed that no matter how heavy factory work is for a woman worker it has its bright side: an independent wage frees woman from the dominance of a man as she becomes much more independent of him. Work in the factory has another bright side as it awakens woman's class consciousness.

Let us explain what this means. When a woman enters a factory she sees that there is pressure on her to do as much work as possible for the smallest possible reward through cutting her rates of pay, fines and being cheated. The overseer, manager and other superiors shout at her all the time. Daily conflicts give rise to an awareness in the woman worker that her interests and those of the factory owner are completely opposed. He is interested in making her work as much as possible for the lowest possible pay. In addition to that, it is in the factory that the woman worker comes face to face with the employers' class and involuntarily compares her conditions with those of the boss. He holds in his grasp the whole works while she has nothing.

The employer lives in luxury and she half starves. He gives orders to all the workers, abuses them and sacks them. Their fate is in his hands while she lives with the expectation that at any minute she can be dumped on the street. She is aware of her complete helplessness, that she is defenceless against the owner. Every tiny conflict with the overseer or clerk brings up the bitterness of being an oppressed human being and that makes her indignant. And she is not alone in feeling thus. By her side are hundreds of other women and men workers in the same position as she is. Everything that affects her affects them, also; what angers her angers them, also. And, what is more, she cannot remain indifferent to any offence or injustice meted out to any of her fellow workers.

All of this deeply worries her and is clear to her. Little by little she begins to realise that the women and men workers alongside her are not only fellow workers but fellows in spirit and that she shares common interests and common feelings with them. They are her comrades because they are workers. The meaning of the words "All for one and one for all" become ever clearer to the woman worker. When there are confrontations with management she sees that her comrades are always ready to back her up and she is to support them. The same conflicts show her that while she is weak when alone she ceases to be weak when she acts together with her comrades. She comes more and more to appreciate that "Unity is strength".

Collisions with the police and all kinds of authority, exiling and persecution of workers, the ban on discussing their affairs, the formation of unions make it clear that the government is on the side of the exalted and the rich. They teach her the necessity of political struggle and the necessity of winning for workers the right to take part in

drawing up laws and in the way the country is run.

Little by little the woman comes to understand that political freedom is required for the working class to win a better fate and that without the organisation of the working class a socialist system is impossible. So, gradually, class consciousness is born in the woman worker. Of course this does not all happen in a trice as years are sometimes needed for this and not all women working in a factory are able to appreciate their conditions with the same degree of consciousness, but, none the less, working in a factory prepares women for the struggle for the workers' cause just as it prepares men for the struggle

Austrian pastors, Belgian and Swiss Catholic priests and many kind gentlemen busy themselves with trying to have laws that would ban women from working in factories. They blame factory work for taking women away from the family and argue that it is harmful to women's health. All this is so but they forget one thing - that women are driven into factories by poverty and women who are thrown out of factories would have to seek other sources of income. They would turn to taking work home and getting caught up in cottage industries and be forced to strain themselves even more at such work. Another possibility is that they would have little option but to sell their very selves. Those kind gentlemen are sorry for the woman worker but they fail to appreciate the position she is in. Neither do they understand the liberating effect of factory work on women. They believe that fighting for the workers cause is evil and that it would be much better for a woman to stay at home and take no part in it. Women workers themselves see matters somewhat differently. They speak out against banning women from factory work.

Women are usually paid less than men. Therefore, factory owners are very happy to have women's labour in their factories and sometimes to replace men by women. That is why many men workers would like laws to keep women out of the factories. They see women as dangerous competitors who cut the price of labour as they offer their labour below subsistence rates. But what would happen if workers won such a ban? Would they be able to take the place of the displaced women? No.

The factory owners would never agree to replace cheap women's labour with dearer men. We know from the history of factory legislation that when a law was introduced that limited the use of child labour the employers did not place child labour with the dearer labour of grown ups. They introduced new up to date machinery with the help of which they could dispense with child labour. It would be the same if any law forbade women's labour. The employers would introduce new machines and the men would have won very little. No, in order to prevent women cutting wage rates men must demand not laws to keep women out but to insist on equal pay for men and women. Then the factory owner would have no basis for preferring women's to men's labour.

These days the employer prefers women's labour to men's not only because women's labour is cheaper but also because women are more compliant and compromising than men and the employers can exploit them to their heart's content. Therefore, men must help the women workers to organise themselves, to awaken class consciousness in them, as conscious and organised women will be less receptive to the employers' demands and will not allow themselves to be twisted around the boss' little finger.

But if the woman worker cannot agree to women's labour being forbidden then she cannot but want factory laws that protect her life, health and interests.

Representatives of workers' unions from all countries held a meeting at an international congress in 1897 in Zurich, Switzerland. They discussed measures for the protection of health and safety in all countries and, regarding the protection of women's labour, they resolved to campaign everywhere for:

1 All round and effective legal health and safety protection for all women factory and office workers in large scale and small industries, in handicrafts, trading establishments, the Post Offices, telegraph and telephone agencies, on the railways, in shipping and elsewhere, and to cover cottage industries as well. Effective protection is defined as not existing only on paper but in actually being enforced. For that to be the case there must be severe punishment for factory owners who fail to comply with the law, and the appointment of a well-staffed and independent factory inspectorate to ensure implementation of the law.

2 Congress resolved that, above all else, the working day for all women factory and other women workers should not exceed eight hours, and 44 hours a week. Work must end at midday on Saturdays so that women are guaranteed time off work until Monday, a break of at least 42 hours.

3 Entrepreneurs to be strictly forbidden to set women workers in factories and elsewhere extra work to take home after completing their shifts.

4 Around the time of giving birth mothers may not be engaged in manufacture for a total of eight weeks before and after giving birth; in all cases six weeks minimum to be taken off after the birth. The law must list those branches of industry in which pregnant women are not to be engaged. During the pregnancy leave women must receive compensation for loss of wages that is never to be less than her usual wage, to be paid out by the state or the commune.

5 There must be special health and protection laws to cover village women workers and maid servants which provide protection levels that are no worse than for other categories of employed women.

6 Congress demands that there be equal pay for women and men doing the same work.

So how are the workers to secure implementation of the congress demands? They will be publicly discussed, in print and at meetings. The demands will be put into petitions to parliament, petitions signed by many people, sometimes in their thousands. Workers' representatives will make demands in parliament for the corresponding laws to be published and in that way secure implementation of the congress demands.

Here in Russia one cannot openly discuss workers' conditions or present petitions and we have no parliament. It is laughable to expect the government to implement the congress demands. Every law that favours workers has to be won in struggle, just as they were won in the struggles of 1885 and 1887, but even when won their implementation is constantly being bypassed and not implemented. In order to win genuine labour protection the workers must win political freedom, as their brothers, the European workers, have done. Political struggle is the one way for workers to achieve improvements in their conditions. In the struggle for better conditions at work, for political freedom and a better future, the woman worker will go arm in arm with the man worker.

Notes

- 1 The textile industry is one which covers the processing of various fibrous materials: flax, wool, cotton, foams.
- 2 By proletarian we mean a person who has no possessions and lives only by what he or she receives from working hired by other persons or, as the books put it, lives by selling labour power. A worker is a proletarian as he or she lives only by selling one's labour power.
- 3 The same can be said of a woman's labour in what is known as "home industry". Many factories are happy to allocate work to be done at home. For instance, factory owners give, for outworking, the gluing of cigarette tubes and sweets wrappers, and so on. To secure such work those who take it cut what they charge to a minimum. They are piece workers and work for such low rates of pay that even working from morning till night without a break only get pennies. They take that work as there is no alternative and even the most miserable earnings serve as a support for the family. But, clearly, that home working does not give the woman independence but only undermines her strength.
- 4 The woman is a slave in the house and it is her being a dependent that marks her out.
- 5 Zetkin is one of the outstanding and talented leaders of the women workers' movement in Germany.



The *Woman Worker* was N K Krupskaya's first pamphlet, written in exile in Siberia where she had joined Lenin, following their arrest in 1896 and sentencing to three years.

Krupskaya wrote *The Woman Worker* in 1899 under the pseudonym 'Sablina'. It was the first written work on the situation of women in Russia

Originally published in 1901 the pamphlet was banned following the suppression of the abortive 1905 revolution. Lenin and Krupskaya came to London in April 1902 where, in what is now the Marx Memorial Library, Lenin edited the Bolshevik illegal newspaper *Iskra*.

The illustration above is taken from the records of the Tsarist police



manifesto



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