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# Clara Zetkin's defense of the united front in the Communist International

Thursday 13 June 2019, by [RIDDELL John](#) (Date first published: 21 April 2019).

**An internationally respected revolutionary leader since the 1880s and a close collaborator of Rosa Luxemburg, Clara Zetkin (1857-1933) became part of the newly formed Communist International (Comintern) in 1919 [1]. In 1921, she joined with Vladimir Ilyich Lenin and Leon Trotsky in helping to win the Comintern to an effort to unify working people and their organizations in joint struggle against the evils of capitalism. This policy was termed the "united front." [2]**

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## PART 1: Honored but silenced, 1924-28



### *Clara Zetkin in the 1920s*

An internationally respected revolutionary leader since the 1880s and a close collaborator of Rosa Luxemburg, Clara Zetkin (1857-1933) became part of the newly formed Communist International (Comintern) in 1919. In 1921, she joined with Vladimir Ilyich Lenin and Leon Trotsky in helping to win the Comintern to an effort to unify working people and their organizations in joint struggle against the evils of capitalism. This policy was termed the “united front.”

Two years later, the German Communist leader applied this policy to the challenge of unity against fascism in a report adopted by the Comintern. (See Zetkin, “The Struggle Against Fascism” [3] and “Fighting Fascism: How to Struggle and Win” [4].)

Yet in 1924 the visionary policy championed by Zetkin was overturned. Zetkin spent the last decade of her life as an honoured but effectively silenced dissident as the Comintern decayed into Stalinist degeneration.

### **Zetkin’s defeat at the Fifth World Congress**

Twelve months after the Comintern’s adoption of Clara Zetkin’s report and resolution on fascism, this position was overturned by its Fifth World Congress, held in June-July 1924.

During the next few years, as the International came increasingly under the domination of a bureaucratic apparatus headed by Joseph Stalin, its view on fascism and the united front shifted several times, without ever returning fully to its 1923 position. Then in 1928 the Comintern embraced a sectarian stance, opposed in principle to antifascist unity of any kind with Social Democratic and other non-Communist currents in the workers’ movement, whom it labeled “social fascists.” This refusal, combined with a corresponding rejection of united action by leaders of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), opened the door to Hitler’s assumption of power in Germany in January 1933.

Although increasingly burdened by illness and loss of vision, Zetkin remained an active member of the Comintern during these years. The International’s officials blocked her from openly expressing her views on fascism and the united front. Nonetheless, she found ways to indicate her disagreement on these questions. In August 1932 she managed to express the essence of her 1923 report on fascism in a speech to the German Reichstag (parliament). When Zetkin died a year later at the age of 75, she was one of the few leading figures within the Communist International who was still attempting to stand on the ground of the Comintern under Lenin.

## About-face on workers' unity



### *Grigorii Zinoviev*

In his opening report to the Fifth Comintern Congress in 1924, its president, Gregory Zinoviev, abandoned Zetkin's analysis of the nature and dynamics of fascism by claiming that Social Democracy was itself closely linked to this antiworker movement. "The Social Democratic Party has become a wing of fascism," he declared. "The fascists are the right hand and the Social Democrats the left hand of the bourgeoisie." [5] This ultraleft position excluded the possibility of united action involving both Communist and Social Democratic workers—the very error that had crippled resistance to Italian fascism during its rise to power in 1921–22 [6].

Zinoviev also criticized attempts to promote the cause of workers' unity in action by challenging and, when appropriate, discussing with Social Democrats on a leadership level—an approach endorsed by the Fourth Comintern Congress in 1922 as a necessary component of united-front policy. He also redefined the Comintern's call for a workers' and peasants' government in such a way as to rule out any possibility of a governmental coalition with Social Democrats.

Despite opposition by Zetkin and Karl Radek, another central Comintern leader, Zinoviev's views were adopted by the 1924 congress.

## Rise of Stalinism

The underlying cause of the turnabout in Comintern policy was the rise of a privileged and self-serving bureaucratic layer within the Russian Communist Party and a resulting factional division in its leadership. In 1923, a Left Opposition led by Leon Trotsky and supported by Radek renewed the antibureaucratic struggle launched by Lenin in 1922. [7] Lenin's political activity had been cut short by a stroke in March 1923; he died in January 1924. While Lenin was incapacitated, Zinoviev was part of a bloc with Lev Kamenev and Joseph Stalin to take over the Communist Party's leadership and to oppose Trotsky. By the end of 1923, Trotsky and Radek had been thrust aside from their central leadership role in the Comintern. [8]



### *Karl Radek*

Zinoviev, who had initially held doubts about the united-front policy, [9] threw his authority in 1924 behind an ultraleft shift, particularly with regard to Germany. With Lenin gone and Trotsky and Radek sidelined, Zetkin was left as the only leading proponent of united-front policy in the broader Comintern leadership.

The debate at the Communist International's Fifth Congress focused on drawing a balance sheet of the KPD's participation in the massive workers' upsurge in Germany in 1923, which the Comintern central leadership believed could have led to a successful proletarian revolution. After months of intense struggle in Germany, capitalist rule was restabilized by year-end, with the Communist Party in inglorious retreat.

Debate over the causes of this defeat spread to the Russian party. Trotsky and the Left Opposition accused the Comintern Executive (ECCI) of failing to see the revolutionary potential of the situation until it was too late. Zinoviev sought to pin responsibility on the German party's main leaders, Heinrich Brandler and August Thalheimer, who like Zetkin were strong advocates of broad united action against fascism.

In 1924 the ECCI under Zinoviev threw its support behind the ultraleft current in Germany led by Ruth Fischer and endorsed its retreat from united-front initiatives. Meanwhile, the Comintern Executive forced all its parties into alignment with the Zinoviev-Kamenev-Stalin "troika" in the Russian party. Zetkin kept silent on the Russian dispute, refusing to endorse the "troika," but she did speak up on the united-front debate in Germany.

## **Zetkin at the Fifth Congress**

Both Zetkin and Radek took the floor at the Fifth Congress to strongly oppose Zinoviev's proposals to reverse Comintern positions on the united front and other questions. Most of Zetkin's two-hour speech was devoted to the defeat in Germany. While making forceful criticisms of the German party's leadership, she also pointed to the ECCI's responsibility and argued that the German working class had not been ready in the autumn of 1923 for a showdown struggle for power.

The last half-hour of Zetkin's speech dealt with the united front, the underlying issue behind the disagreement on fascism. The basic precondition for united-front efforts, she explained, was the Communist Party's unity, independence, and close ties to the masses. In that framework, negotiations with Social Democratic leaders were sometimes appropriate—provided that we meet

with them “not to do them honor” but to “increase the pressure on them toward action” and win “an even broader range of their supporters to our banner.”

Delegates should not reject such leadership meetings on principle, she said. They should hold firm to the decisions of the Fourth Congress (1922) on this point and not be misled by latter-day reinterpretations of them. [10] Despite Zetkin’s appeal, the Fifth Congress endorsed Zinoviev’s proposals.

Although sharply criticized at the congress, Zetkin was still publicly honored by the Comintern in the years that followed as a symbol of revolutionary intransigence. She often penned greetings or appeals of a ceremonial nature, but was not allowed to speak or write publicly on controversial topics. The Communist Women’s Movement and its journal *Die Kommunistische Fraueninternationale* (The Communist Women’s International), in which she was the driving force, were shut down in 1925 and 1926 respectively.

Zetkin was severely afflicted by illness during the last decade of her life. Her lengthy periods of treatment outside Moscow sometimes served, according to her biographer Tânia Puschnerat, as a form of quarantine to keep her away from important political occasions. [11]

### **Defending unity in struggle**

Zinoviev broke with Stalin in 1925 and went into opposition, joining the next year with Trotsky, Kamenev, and Radek in the United Opposition, which challenged the tightening grip of Stalin’s bureaucratic control in the Soviet Union and his rejection of an internationalist perspective under the guise of building “socialism in one country.”

The Ruth Fischer leadership in the German party (KPD), aligned with Zinoviev, was overturned at the end of 1926. During the interval that followed, Zetkin regained limited freedom of action within the Comintern leadership. In 1927 she became once more a member of the KPD Central Committee; she was removed two years later.

In October 1927, Zetkin sent the KPD Central Committee a powerful defense of the united-front policies she had helped develop in 1921–23. She called on the party to propose conditional support to a Social Democratic government in the German federal state of Hamburg, where the KPD and SPD together held a parliamentary majority, on the basis of an agreed program of measures in workers’ interests.

Zetkin’s letter also defended the KPD’s entry in 1923 into a short-lived SPD-KPD government in the German state of Saxony, which had been sharply attacked within the KPD and the International.

“We can be sure that the broad masses have a quite incorrect view of what such a government could achieve,” she wrote, “but this is all the more reason to call for it.” Otherwise, she believed, the SPD leaders will find it all the easier to reject governing with KPD support and to form a coalition instead with the openly bourgeois parties—its standard procedure during the years of Germany’s 1919–33 Weimar Republic. [12]

At this time, Zetkin was aligned with Nikolai Bukharin, then the Comintern’s president. Zetkin supported Bukharin and Stalin’s harsh reprisals against the United Opposition, going so far as to endorse Trotsky’s expulsion from the Communist Party in November 1927. She did not protest the mass arrests of oppositionists and their banishment to Siberia. She thereby gave encouragement to bureaucratic forces that were soon to turn against Bukharin and solidify Stalin’s absolute rule. [13]

## Ultraleft turn

Only one month after Zetkin's appeal on the united front, a convention of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union initiated a major ultraleft turn in policy. Known as the "Third Period" line, it was based on a schema according to which the first period was the revolutionary upsurge that followed World War I; the second period was the subsequent stabilization of capitalism that followed; the third period supposedly was to be marked by capitalist collapse and revolution.

It served to solidify Stalin's control by undercutting support for Bukharin as well as to win over and silence individuals sympathetic to Trotsky and the Left Opposition. The new line began the march toward forced collectivization of agriculture, breakneck industrialization, and ever-tightening control by the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union.

In Germany, this line meant reviving and intensifying the disastrous policies of the Ruth Fischer period, including rejection of united-front initiatives with the Social Democrats. Stalin made a rare appearance at an ECCI meeting in February 1928 to castigate the "right wing" of the KPD—that is, the forces led by Brandler and associated with Zetkin—as the main danger to the party.

The meeting marked the effective end of united-front policy in the Comintern, blocking the road to a fighting antifascist alliance. A subsequent meeting of delegates from Germany and the Soviet Union to the ECCI, from which Zetkin was excluded, spelled out the transfer of power in the KPD to forces adhering to Stalin's new line.

Zetkin expressed her anguish in a letter to her son Costia in March 1928: "I ask myself, what to do.... This situation afflicts and torments me." She wrote German party leader Wilhelm Pieck of her opposition to having such vital questions of party policy "settled by agreements among different parties," alluding to the Soviet party's interference in the KPD's internal life. [14]

When the resolution on Germany came up in the ECCI for ratification the next month, Zetkin alone voted to reject it. She wrote a confidential letter to the KPD leadership explaining her views, which was inexplicably leaked and published the following year in a German non-Communist newspaper. [15]

In the months that followed, a behind-the-scenes factional struggle opened up in the leadership of the Russian party, known since 1925 as the "All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks)." Stalin's faction, committed to an ultraleft line both internationally and in the Soviet Union, confronted "right oppositionist" forces led by Bukharin.

On July 3, 1929, the Moscow daily Pravda published an article by Zetkin that presented some central themes of her 1923 report on fascism. She submitted the article as a criticism of the draft program prepared for the Comintern congress the following month, whose main author was Bukharin.

Criticizing the draft's schematic presentation of a "class against class" perspective, Zetkin stressed that the Comintern must unite "all working people and all oppressed classes and peoples." She regretted the draft program's inadequate attention to middle layers between the proletariat and bourgeoisie, especially the more educated layers ("intellectuals").

Also neglected, Zetkin indicated, was the impact of capitalist "rationalization" -increasing mechanization and the displacement of small-scale producers and traders - which was throwing all subordinate social layers into crisis. Demands benefiting women were absent, she pointed out, while the significance of women for the class struggle was acknowledged only for those who were workers or peasants. A German text of Zetkin's article circulated to Comintern activists internationally. [16]

The Comintern's Sixth Congress, held in July-August 1928, was the first one attended by Zetkin where she did not speak. In its corridors, Stalin's supporters campaigned against Bukharin and his international supporters, including Zetkin.

The conflict in the KPD culminated in a historic session of the ECCI on December 19, 1928, where Zetkin confronted Stalin directly. Stalin's forces demanded expulsion of the KPD "right wing"; Zetkin called for postponement of any disciplinary action until the KPD held a democratic discussion and congress. During this session, Béla Kun, an architect of the ultraleft "March Action" disaster in Germany in 1921, charged Zetkin with "rightism" for opposing his course at that time. In response, Zetkin pointed out that she had joined with Lenin in rallying the world congress against Kun's ultraleft views. To no avail: the plenum decisions were in step with Kun's position. Expulsion of the KPD "right" was decided, against the votes of Zetkin, Jules Humbert-Droz, and Angelo Tasca; 6,000 dissidents were forced out of the German party. [17]

## PART 2



### *Clara Zetlin in the 1930s*

Following Stalin's expulsion of Zetkin's co-thinkers in the German Communist Party (KPD) in 1928, the internal dispute in the Russian Communist leadership escalated toward Joseph Stalin's open break with Nikolai Bukharin several months later. Bukharin's faction was crushed; Bukharin and other leading "right oppositionists" capitulated, admitting their supposed errors. Expelled supporters of Bukharin in Germany organized a new movement, which took the name Communist Party of Germany (Opposition), or KPD(O).

Privately, Zetkin wrote bitterly of the Comintern's transformation into a mechanism that "sucks in Russian-language directives on one side and shoots them out, translated into various languages, on the other." [18] Yet she still believed that Communists must work to reform the International, as did her friends in the KPD(O) and also the now-exiled Leon Trotsky and his comrades in the International Left Opposition.

For Zetkin, loyalty to this perspective and to the Soviet Union demanded that she remain in the International, even at the cost of keeping silent on crucial issues. Stalin, for his part, although threatened by Zetkin's continued defiance, evidently considered the risks flowing from her membership less than those that might follow if she were expelled.



*Nikolai Bukharin, 1920*

Between October 1929 and March 1930, Zetkin composed a comprehensive memorandum on the crisis in the KPD addressed to the ECCI. [19] Assessing the German party's erroneous political line, she diagnosed it as a symptom of a more general crisis of the Comintern as a whole. As in the December 1928 ECCI plenum, she compared the party's ultraleft stance with the notorious "theory of the offensive" that some central ECCI leaders had briefly and disastrously embraced in 1921. [20] Breaking the grip of that error had been the great achievement of the Comintern's Third Congress (1921). Won through the efforts of Lenin, Trotsky, and Zetkin herself, this victory opened the door to the united-front policy adopted by the Comintern later that year.

Zetkin's memorandum condemned the destructive role of the Soviet party, which no longer "leads" but merely "dictates" to the International. And for the first and only time, she challenged the Stalin leadership's policies within the Soviet Union by demanding "extensive documentary material" on developments in the Soviet party and state. Comintern member parties, she said, had the "duty and right to consult on the problems of the Soviet Union in fraternal solidarity with the Russian party."

### **Expressions of dissent**

Zetkin complained to her son Maxim of the severe censorship and frequent suppression suffered by her writings. Even her name could no longer be mentioned, she said. And yet, by one means or another, her ideas managed to reach a wider audience.

In 1929, after many delays, her *Reminiscences of Lenin* was published in German. This pamphlet contained a detailed account of her collaboration with Lenin in the Third Congress over issues fundamental to united-front policy. [21]





### *Paul Frölich*

Zetkin received visits from leaders of the KPD(O) such as Paul Frölich, with whom she agreed on the united front, trade-union unity, the need for internal party democracy, and the need to reform the Comintern. The KPD(O) published four of Zetkin's private oppositional statements, without eliciting any protest from her. [22] She corresponded with old friends now hostile to the KPD, such as Georg Ledebour. She wrote an obituary of Margarete Wengels, a comrade from wartime revolutionary struggles who later returned to the SPD, which was published in a non-KPD workers' paper. [23]

While praising the Soviet Union's achievements, Zetkin did not join in the customary adulation of the Soviet dictator. [24] She expressed her contempt for the Soviet ruler in a private note intended for Bukharin in Moscow, advising him not to let himself be pushed around by Stalin, whom she referred to, using the gendered language of that era, as a "mentally deranged woman who wears men's pants." [25]

In 1929, the Russian émigré and SPD press published rumors regarding Zetkin's supposed persecution by Communist authorities in Moscow. The KPD's central newspaper, *Die Rote Fahne*, twice broke its silence regarding Zetkin by publishing her denials of these reports. Her second statement ended in a fashion surely disconcerting to her editors: "As is generally known, my outlook on both tactics and fundamentals stands opposed to the opinion of the ECCI's majority." [26]

Although aware of the Comintern's degeneration, Zetkin maneuvered cautiously and skillfully to maintain her status as a tolerated dissident. In her 1929-30 memorandum, she pledged, "I will break party discipline three times, four times, if it serves the interests of revolution." But when, in 1931, Stalin assailed the memory of Rosa Luxemburg, for example, Zetkin's protests of this insult to her longtime friend and comrade circulated only in private letters. [27]

"My greatest affliction," she told a friend at the time, "is to answer the question: Where does the truth lie? What are my responsibilities to the proletarian revolution? Should I speak out or remain silent?" She paid the price of maintaining her Communist Party membership, which was to speak only a fraction of what she believed. [28]

## **Seizing an opportunity**

Zetkin continued to present aspects of her 1923 analysis of fascism publicly when possible—in a criticism of KPD policy sent to party leader Wilhelm Pieck in March 1932, for example, and in published greetings to an antifascist conference in June. [29] In greeting the KPD's 1931 campaign for freedom of choice on abortion, she made a public appeal for unity with women in the SPD. [30]

In August 1932, Zetkin seized a chance to speak publicly to a national audience on the need for united action against fascism. To do so she had leave some things unsaid, such as spelling out the need to approach the SPD on the need for a united struggle against fascism. Passages from her text stressing the magnitude of the task the party faced in rousing the masses were deleted from her final text. Nonetheless, confident that she could express the essence of her thinking, she eagerly grasped the opportunity.

The circumstances of the speech were dramatic.

The global depression that broke out in 1929 had hit Germany hard. With its workers' parties consumed by fratricidal struggle, Hitler's National Socialists—in eclipse since 1923—quickly grew to be Germany's largest party. The Nazi vote rose from 2.6% (1928) to 18.3% (1930) and 37.4% (1932). In the July 1932 vote, Zetkin was re-elected to the Reichstag, having been a member since 1920. Seventy-four years old, she was the oldest member of Germany's parliament and as such had the right to formally open its first session.

The Nazi press bristled with vile threats against her as a "Communist Jew," a "slut" (Goebbels), and a "traitor." The KPD received a Nazi threat to assault her on the floor of the Reichstag. But when her party's Central Committee asked whether she could open the Reichstag session, she responded with characteristic defiance, "I'll get there, dead or alive." Driven incognito into Berlin, she slipped into a safe house. Her biographer Gilbert Badia describes the ensuing drama at the Reichstag as follows:

*"Clara Zetkin was very weak, subject to fainting fits, and almost blind. On August 30, before a Reichstag crammed with Nazi deputies in SA and SS uniforms, two Communist deputies helped the old woman to mount the speakers' platform. She spoke at first with a barely audible voice, but little by little her voice strengthened and grew passionate." [31]*

The final part of her talk reasserted the essence of her long-suppressed opinion on the urgency to forge unity against fascism.

**John Riddell**, April 21, 2019

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### **Zetkin's August 30, 1932, speech in the German Reichstag (excerpt)**

*Zetkin's courageous call for antifascist action, made in Germany's parliament less than a year before her death, stands as a fitting tribute to her lifetime of revolutionary struggle and to her legacy as a beacon for future generations.—JR*

Our most urgent task today is to form a united front of all working people in order to turn back fascism. All the differences that divide and shackle us—whether founded on political, trade-union, religious, or ideological outlooks—must give way before this imperious historical necessity.

All those who are menaced, all those who suffer, all those who desire freedom must join the united front against fascism and its representatives in government. Working people must assert themselves against fascism. That is the urgent and indispensable precondition for a united front against economic crisis, imperialist war and its causes, and the capitalist mode of production. The revolt of millions of laboring men and women in Germany against hunger, deprivation, fascist murder, and

imperialist war expresses the imperishable destiny of producers the world over.

This destiny, shared among us around the world, must find expression through forging an iron-like community of struggle of all working people in every sphere ruled by capitalism. It must also unite them with their vanguard, the liberated brothers and sisters in the Soviet Union. Strikes and uprisings in various countries abroad are blazing fires showing those in struggle in Germany that they are not alone.

Everywhere the disinherited and the defeated are beginning to advance toward taking power. Millions of women in Germany are still subjected to the chains of sexual slavery and thereby also to the most oppressive form of class slavery. They must not be absent from the united front of working people now taking shape in Germany.

The youth who want to blossom and mature must fight in the very front ranks. Today they face only the prospect of corpse-like military obedience and exploitation in the ranks of obligatory labor service. All those who produce through intellectual labor, whose skill and will augment social well-being and culture but can find no expression in the existing bourgeois order—they too belong in the united front.

The united front must embrace all those who are dependent on wages or salaries or otherwise must pay tribute to capitalism, for it is they who both sustain capitalism and are its victims.

I am opening this session of the Reichstag in fulfillment of my duty as honorary chair and in the hope that despite my present infirmities I may yet have the good fortune to open, as honorary chair, the first congress of workers' councils of a Soviet Germany. [32]]

**Clara Zetkin**

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**P.S.**

• <https://johnriddell.wordpress.com/2019/04/21/clara-zetkins-defense-of-the-united-front/>

<https://johnriddell.wordpress.com/2019/04/26/clara-zetkin-years-of-stubborn-resistance-1928-33/>

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**Footnotes**

[1] The text that follows first appeared in Clara Zetkin, *Fighting Fascism: How to Struggle and How to Win*, ed. Mike Taber and John Riddell, Haymarket Books, 2017. Copyright (c) 2017 Mike Taber and John Riddell. The text in *Fighting Fascism* has been slightly modified to adapt it to blog format

[2] See “Clara Zetkin’s Struggle for the United Front”, available on ESSF (article ), [art: http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article22639](http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article22639)

[3] See on ESSF (article 49243), [The Struggle Against Fascism](#).

[4] See on ESSF (article 49244), [Clara Zetkin and the struggle against fascism](#).

[5] Protokoll Fünfter Kongress der Kommunistischen Internationale (Hamburg: Carl Hoym Nachf., 1924), pp. 66-67.

[6] <https://johnriddell.wordpress.com/2014/06/01/fumble-and-late-recovery-the-comintern-responses-to-italian-fascism/>

[7] From late 1922 on, Lenin had initiated a broad fight within the Soviet leadership around a number of issues, including the national question, defense of the monopoly of foreign trade, and the alliance with the peasantry. At the root of many of these questions was the growing bureaucratization of the Communist Party, whose general secretary was Stalin. To wage this fight, Lenin had formed a bloc with Trotsky, urging him to champion their common positions on these questions within the party leadership, and he had called for Stalin to be removed as general secretary.

[8] For Trotsky's view of these controversies, see Leon Trotsky, *The Third International after Lenin* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1996), part 2, section 4, pp. 107-15.

[9] In his report to the June 1923 ECCI meeting, Zinoviev admitted, "At the time, to be sure, I did have reservations" about the united-front policy. In Mike Taber, ed., *The Communist International at a Crossroads: Plenums of the Communist International Executive Committee, 1922-1923* (Historical Materialism Book Series, 2017).

[10] Protokoll Fünfter Kongress der Kommunistischen Internationale, pp. 335-39. For the record of the Fourth Congress, see *Toward the United Front, Proceedings of the Fourth Congress of the Communist International*.

[11] Tânia Puschnerat, *Clara Zetkin: Bürgerlichkeit und Marxismus* (Essen: Klartext, 2003), p. 296.

[12] For the text of Zetkin's letter, see <https://www.marxists.org/deutsch/archiv/zetkin/1927/10/zkkpd.html>

[13] Puschnerat, pp. 305-6.

[14] Gilbert Badia, *Clara Zetkin, féministe sans frontières* (Paris: Les Éditions ouvrières, 1993), pp. 276-78.

[15] Badia. p. 278. For the text of Zetkin's letter, see *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung*, 6 (1991), pp. 787-88.

[16] Zetkin's 3,500-word text was published in *Internationale Presse-Korrespondenz*, vol. 8, no. 64, pp. 1172-73 and no. 65, pp. 1189-90. For a quite different criticism of the draft program, see Leon Trotsky, *The Third International after Lenin*.

[17] Puschnerat, pp. 364-66. The entire proceedings of this ECCI meeting are found in Tânia Ünlüdag, "Die Tragödie einer Kämpferin für die Arbeiterbewegung," *IWK* 33 (1997), pp. 337-47. For the controversy involving Kun and Zetkin in 1921, see *To the Masses: Proceedings of the Third Congress of the Communist International*.

[18] Tânia Puschnerat, *Clara Zetkin: Bürgerlichkeit und Marxismus* (Essen: Klartext, 2003), p. 370.

[19] Puschnerat, pp. 370-72, 377, 380.

[20] The “theory of the offensive” was advanced by majority leaders in the KPD following the adventurist “March Action” of 1921 to justify their policies in launching that action and to propose that such policies continue. The theory called on Communists to radicalize their slogans and initiate minority actions that could sweep the hesitant workers into action.

[21] Zetkin’s record of her discussions with Lenin on the Third Congress is included in *To the Masses*, pp. 1137-48. The entire text of Zetkin’s *Reminiscences of Lenin* can be found on Marxists Internet Archive.

[22] Puschnerat, p. 381.

[23] Puschnerat, p. 378.

[24] One exception has been noted. In 1932 Zetkin assented to her editor’s insertion into a message of greetings she had written of a reference to Stalin as an “outstanding and brilliant leader.” See Puschnerat, p. 384.

[25] Gilbert Badia, *Clara Zetkin, féministe sans frontières* (Paris: Les Éditions ouvrières, 1993), p. 288-89, Puschnerat p. 374.

[26] Puschnerat, p. 376.

[27] Zetkin had defended Luxemburg at the March 1926 ECCI plenum against similar attacks made in the German party. Her speech was published in the record of the plenum.

[28] Puschnerat, p. 377; Badia, pp. 282, 290.

[29] Badia, pp. 300-301.

[30] Badia, p. 264.

[31] Badia, pp. 302-3.

[32] Translated from <https://www.marxists.org/deutsch/archiv/zetkin/1932/08/alterspraes.html>. For the entire text of Zetkin’s Reichstag speech, see Mike Jones and Ben Lewis, ed., *Clara Zetkin: Letters and Writings* (London: Merlin Press, 2015), pp. 169-73, or Philip S. Foner, ed., *Clara Zetkin: Selected Writings* (New York: International Publishers, 1984), pp. 170-75.