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## 'Aux Ouvrières!': socialist feminism in the Paris Commune

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### ABSTRACT

Feminist and socialist movements both aim at emancipation yet have often been at odds. The socialist feminists of the Paris Commune provide one of the few examples in late nineteenth-century Europe of a political movement combining the two. This article offers a new interpretation of the Commune feminists, focusing on the working-class women's organisation the *Union des femmes*. We highlight how the Commune feminists articulated the specific form of oppression experienced by working-class women as both women *and* workers, which consequently required a joint, yet differentiated, struggle to overcome. We explore three aspects of this framework. First, the Commune feminists offered a vision of the transformation of the social through reforms to girls' education, the family and women's work. Second, they practised a *politics of coalition building* by connecting their struggle with those of other oppressed groups, such as male workers, peasants and workers of other nations. Third, these ideas were instantiated in the *Union des femmes'* novel proposal for *women's worker co-operatives* as part of a socialist re-organisation of the economy.

### KEYWORDS

Socialism; feminism; Paris Commune; France; Commune feminism; socialist feminism

On 11 April 1871, a group of Parisian women founded the *Union des femmes pour la défense de Paris et les soins aux blessés* (The Women's Union for the Defence of Paris and Aid to the Wounded, hereafter the *Union des femmes*). The *Union des femmes* was primarily comprised of working-class women and was formed to organise women in support of the revolutionary Paris Commune. The women in the *Union des femmes* called for "men and women workers [to unite] in complete solidarity" and to struggle "for the replacement of the rule of Capital by the rule of Labour [...] in short, for the emancipation of the working class by the working class".<sup>1</sup> They viewed discrimination against women as part of a broader strategy of the ruling class to divide workers and called for "an end to all competition between male and female workers".<sup>2</sup> Unlike liberal and bourgeois republican feminists,<sup>3</sup> the women of the *Union des femmes* did not primarily define their programme in terms of a campaign for universal suffrage.<sup>4</sup> Instead, they focused on social improvements to women's lives such as greater access to education and new economic institutions that would enable women to retain the

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fruits of their labour. In particular, their experience of marginalisation within the workers' movement convinced them of the need to form women's producer co-operatives to ensure women's economic independence as part of broader plans for the socialist re-organisation of the economy. This political programme made the *Union des femmes* the first large political group of women to theorise the distinctive oppression of working-class women and to struggle for their collective liberation.<sup>5</sup>

This article aims to reconstruct the political thought of the women who participated in the Paris Commune with a particular focus on the *Union des femmes* as the central organisational structure. This includes women such as Elisabeth Dmitrieff (1850–1910), Nathalie Lemel (1827–1921), Paule Mink (1839–1901) and André Léo (1824–1900), who represented one of the highpoints of socialist feminism in the nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> While the role played by these Commune feminists was long neglected, pioneering work by Edith Thomas and a series of subsequent investigations, such as those by Eugene Schulkind, Gay Gullickson and Carolyn J. Eichner, have given them the historical prominence they deserve.<sup>7</sup> They have highlighted the distinctive place of the Commune feminists in the history of socialist feminism, when other studies have tended to submerge them in longer histories of either feminism or socialism.<sup>8</sup> Our article is indebted to the work of these scholars and builds on their studies by providing a new theoretical interpretation of the political thought and actions of the Commune feminists.<sup>9</sup>

The unique contribution of this article consists in its systematic reconstruction of the Commune feminists' articulation of the distinct oppression experienced by working-class women. Where previous work, such as Schulkind's 1985 article on socialist women in the Paris Commune,<sup>10</sup> provides a general account of the context, organisation and composition of the *Union des femmes*, our article examines the specific practices envisioned and implemented by the Commune feminists to resist women's oppression as women *and* workers. Furthermore, while Eichner has rightly highlighted the plural nature of the socialist feminisms in the Commune, including Léo's collectivist socialism, Dmitrieff's Marxist socialism and Mink's more decentralised and grassroots socialism, our focus is more on the commonalities of the political thought and actions of the Commune feminists.

The articulation of the distinct oppression of working-class women and the demand for a joint, yet differentiated struggle, to overcome it distinguished the Commune feminists from both the anti-feminist socialisms and the class-reductionist socialist feminisms of their contemporaries. We demonstrate this by bringing to the fore three aspects of their thought and practice. First, the Commune feminists offered a vision of the transformation of the social through specific reforms to improve the lives of working-class women in the spheres of girls' education, the family and women's work. These reforms aimed to address their particular oppression and enable them to become full and equal participants of society. Second, the Commune feminists practised a politics of coalition building by connecting their struggle with those of other oppressed groups, such as male workers, peasants and workers of other nations. This reflected their insight that working-class women's liberation could only be achieved as part of broader social struggle. Third, their novel attempt to establish women's cooperative workshops aimed to secure working-class women's economic independence from men and capitalists. This practically instantiated their commitment to overcoming working-class

women's specific oppression, within a wider social struggle and socialist transformation of the economy.

This project is of historical significance because it draws attention to one of the first socialist feminist articulations of working-class women's emancipation that connected patriarchy and capitalism as interlocking systems of oppression. This occurred a century prior to when socialist feminism is sometimes considered to have emerged in large political organisations.<sup>11</sup> Bringing the historical example of the Commune feminists to wider attention also offers us something of theoretical importance. Though the particular constellation of political and social forces in Paris in 1871 obviously differs from those of today, the challenge of combining the struggles against patriarchy, capitalism and other forms of oppression remains. Similar to how Kristin Ross has recently characterised the continuing value of studying the Commune, we argue that, although the experience of the Commune feminists cannot be expected to provide directly applicable contemporary lessons, their political thought and activities constitute a resource, or "useable archive", from which we can draw for achieving that emancipatory task.<sup>12</sup>

While the membership of the *Union des femmes* was "distinctly proletarian",<sup>13</sup> much of the writing this article draws on was written by women who were not themselves from working-class backgrounds. Dmitrieff was, for instance, the émigré daughter of a Russian aristocrat and Léo a novelist and journalist from a comfortable middle-class family of state officials.<sup>14</sup> There is a question then as to whether their ideas were representative of working-class women's experience and their political and social ambitions. Of course, lacking a working-class background does not necessarily preclude this possibility. Marx and Engels, themselves of impeccably bourgeois origins, noted that an expected aspect of class struggle is that "a portion of the bourgeoisie goes over to the proletariat, and in particular, a portion of the bourgeois ideologists".<sup>15</sup> A suspicion may still remain, however, as to *why* we should think non-working-class women would produce writings in line with the interests of the working-class women they wrote about. Such an alignment is indeed unlikely to come about coincidentally. The concern, however, may at least be somewhat alleviated by the women in question's enmeshment in working-class women's struggle and organisation. Dmitrieff, for instance, served on the *Union des femmes*' Executive Commission (alongside the more working-class Lemel) and Léo was elected to the 17th *arrondissement* Committee of the *Union des femmes*.<sup>16</sup> The *Union des femmes*' success in attracting an overwhelmingly working-class membership suggests that the concerns raised in the writings of figures like Dmitrieff and Léo did match the aspirations of working-class women. We also try to pay particular attention in this article not just to the writings of individuals but to the collective organisational statements and declarations of the *Union des femmes* as a whole.<sup>17</sup>

The article is structured as follows. First, we introduce the key features of the *Union des femmes*, its organisational structure, leaders and role in the Paris Commune, as well as situating its experience in the wider context of French socialism and feminism in the nineteenth century. Second, we discuss the specific reforms the Commune feminists introduced to transform the social. Third, we examine the Commune feminists' practise of coalition building. Finally, we focus on the establishment of women's cooperative workshops.

## Women in the Paris Commune and the *Union des femmes*

Working women in Paris in the nineteenth century were deprived of basic civic and political rights and marginalised socially due to a lack of schooling, employment opportunities and adequate housing.<sup>18</sup> The Catholic Church still exercised a strong conservative influence over French society and supported a strong role differentiation based on gender due to the perception that women lacked strength, authority, power and wisdom.<sup>19</sup> Even within the radical and workers' movement, French republicanism and socialism from Rousseau to Proudhon had a long history of justifying women's intellectual and physical inferiority to men.<sup>20</sup>

In the 1830s, most feminists were utopian socialists who understood women's full participation to be a necessary component of social transformation towards a new society.<sup>21</sup> They were shaped by a romantic sensibility and strove for peaceful social transformation through education and reform. In France, the 1848 Revolution and the extension of voting rights to all men pushed the question of female suffrage to the forefront and witnessed the first stirrings of the liberal and bourgeois republican forms of feminism<sup>22</sup> that would come to dominate French feminism in the late nineteenth century.<sup>23</sup> Parts of the French socialist movement, on the other hand, under the misogynistic influence of Proudhon, distanced itself from the feminist goals of early socialism.<sup>24</sup> As Antje Schrupp summarises, "Feminist movements became antisocialist, socialist movements became anti-feminist".<sup>25</sup>

The Commune feminists represent a stark contrast to both of these trends. Rather than striving primarily for female suffrage and representation in political institutions, the women of the Commune enacted a different vision of women's liberation that centred on women's independence and empowerment in the social and economic domains, as well as incorporating a greater focus on class struggle into their political strategy.<sup>26</sup> The Commune feminists focused on issues of material concern to working-class women such as their lack of access to education and their exploitation in the workplace and the family. Women activists struggled against the limitations of a male-centred workers' movement and forms of feminism that were silent or complicit in forms of class oppression against working-class women. Writing in *La Sociale*, the paper she edited, on 8 May 1871, André Léo (Victoire Léodile Béra's pseudonym created by combing her two sons' names), expressed the following:

If a history of France since 1789 were to be written dealing only with the inconsistencies of revolutionary movements, the question of women would be the largest chapter, and it would show how these movements have always found the way to drive half of their troops over to the enemy; troops who had asked for nothing more than to fight at their side.<sup>27</sup>

Feminist activism had increased dramatically in the late 1860s after years of repression under the Second Empire. Societies and popular clubs were established, at which female and male members argued for the need to improve the condition of women. The first feminist organisation that appeared at the end of the Second Empire was the "League in Favor of the Rights of Women", created in 1868. This group of *citoyennes* published a manifesto in *L'Opinion nationale* announcing a "league for a new declaration of rights, not only those of man, but those of humanity and for their social realization".<sup>28</sup> Their manifesto, published over a number of issues in *L'Opinion nationale*, centred upon

freedom in religious matters and equality before the law, in marriage and at work. The organisation, which was open to women and men, initially had limited goals: they aimed to create a non-religious primary school for girls.<sup>29</sup>

A second manifesto published on 18 April 1869 in the journal *Le Droit des Femmes*, signed by 38 women, put forward bolder claims of universal secondary education, equal pay and a right to work for women.<sup>30</sup> In 1870, several of these same members founded the *Association pour le droit des Femmes* (Association for Women's Rights), which included Léon Richer, Maria Deraismes, Anna Féresse-Deraismes (Maria's sister), Louise Michel, Paule Minck and André Léo and became a training ground for those who would later go on to work in the *Union des femmes*.<sup>31</sup>

The Paris Commune was an insurrectionary movement that erupted on 18 March 1871. It arose following the resistance that broke out in Paris when the national government in Versailles attempted to take control of the cannons of the city's militia. Municipal elections which soon followed gave a decisive victory to the revolutionaries who formed the Commune government on 26 March 1871. The Commune governed Paris for two months and instituted a variety of progressive, anti-religious and social democratic reforms. Socialist, feminist and anarchist elements all played an important role in the Commune, which has remained an important focal point in the imaginary of workers' movement since its collapse. It was eventually suppressed by the French Army beginning on 21 May 1871 in the "bloody week" leading to the fall of the Commune.

Women had been traditionally excluded from participation in French politics, but this situation was fundamentally transformed during the Paris Commune. Although women were not allowed to vote or stand in the Commune elections (in line with existing electoral practice in France), the avenues of political participation open to women were fundamentally transformed and extended. The Commune was the first French governmental regime to appoint women to positions of responsibility within the administration, such as in welfare and education institutions, and as delegates to provincial cities.<sup>32</sup> The Commune also passed decrees in favour of free, compulsory and non-religious education for women, equal pay for male and female teachers and nurses and pensions for widows of fallen national guardsmen.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps most strikingly, women served on the battlefields as nurses, cooks and combatants, fighting the French national army on the barricades in the final days of the Commune.<sup>34</sup> While working-class men held a range of attitudes towards women's political activity, the increasing use of "*citoyens et citoyennes*" as a common form of public address, along with concrete measures implemented by male communards towards greater gender equality, is evidence of the changed landscape of 1871.<sup>35</sup>

Three weeks into the Commune, the *Union des femmes* was founded, on 11 April 1871, by Elisabeth Dmitrieff, with a "remarkable degree of programmatic and organisational cohesiveness".<sup>36</sup> Dmitrieff was one of the founders of the Russian émigré section of the International Working Men's Association (I.W.M.A.) in Geneva and, at just 20 years old, had been sent to Paris from London by Karl Marx and the General Council of the I.W.M.A. to report on the Commune.<sup>37</sup> Nathalie Lemel, a socialist activist and bookbinder who moved to Paris in search of work, was also involved from the beginning and had previously helped establish a co-operative canteen called La Marmite. The *Union des femmes*, which was the women's section of the French International, was described in

the press as “a responsible organisation of Paris *citoyennes* who are resolved to support and defend the cause of the people, the Revolution, and the Commune”.<sup>38</sup> In addition to the Central Committee of the *Union des femmes*, 20 *arrondissement* committees were established that recruited women, held two daily plenary sessions, collected membership fees of 10 centimes and sent a daily report to the Central Committee on their activities.<sup>39</sup> The demands placed on activists were high, with statutes of the *Union des femmes*, published in *La Sociale* on 20 April 1871, indicating that women could be called upon “at any time of the day or night according to the urgency of the circumstances”.<sup>40</sup> The *Union des femmes* was composed overwhelmingly of working-class women and was an organisation established for the advancement of their specific interests. Edith Thomas notes:

Out of 128 members, we know the professions of 60. All women’s trades are represented there [ ... ] The Central Committee, which in principle was made up of twenty members representing the twenty *arrondissements* of Paris, accurately reflected this social composition.<sup>41</sup>

In his subsequent study, Schulkind was able to identify 311 women associated with the *Union des femmes* and, for those whose profession is known, this was “overwhelmingly in manual trades”.<sup>42</sup> He further estimates that a total of around 1000–2000 women participated in the activities of the *Union des femmes*.

In its first public appeal “to the *citoyennes* of Paris”, the *Union des femmes* called for democratic and socialist-minded women to attend a meeting “to make definitive resolutions for the formation of committees in all the *arrondissements* to organise the women’s movement for the defence of Paris”.<sup>43</sup> The Commune was responsive to calls from the *Union des femmes* and printed its address and a summary of its decisions in its official journal. The *Union des femmes* maintained a degree of autonomy from the Commune and set itself up as an intermediary body between working women and the Executive Commission of the Commune. The *Union des femmes* was officially supportive of the Commune, although it attempted to pressure the leadership to be more progressive on feminist issues:

That the Commune, representing the principle of the extinction of all privileges and of all inequality, should therefore consider all legitimate grievances of any section of the population without discrimination of sex, such discrimination having been made and enforced as a means of maintaining the privileges of the ruling classes.<sup>44</sup>

The central committee of the *Union des femmes* all signed their name with “*ouvrière*” (female worker), highlighting the creation of a political subjectivity for working-class women. The address also articulates an interconnection between gender-based oppression and class differences, positing that the artificial divide between working women and men was a means through which the privileged classes sought to rule them. The women of the *Union des femmes* established themselves as the leading voices of working women and began organising women in each district of Paris. They also established connections with the Commission of Labour and Exchange and worked alongside administrators in town halls.

Members of the *arrondissement* committees worked in welfare institutions such as orphanages and aged care facilities, in medical stations, at town hall centres and in efforts to organise women’s education and work.<sup>45</sup> Schulkind estimates that 1000–2000

members participated across the 20 *arrondissements*. The fragmentary evidence testifies to “a remarkable degree of activity in many *arrondissements*”, leading Schulkind to note that “it is astonishing that so much was actually accomplished in so little time”.<sup>46</sup>

The political and social goals of the *Union des femmes* were clarified by the Central Committee in a poster on 8 May 1871, which stated the *Union des femmes* were:

for total social revolution, for the abolition of all existing social and legal structures, for the elimination of all privileges and forms of exploitation, for the replacement of the rule of Capital by the rule of Labour [...] in short, for the emancipation of the working class by the working class. [...] Once victorious, men and women workers in complete solidarity will be able to defend their common interests and, with one final effort, they will extinguish all trace of exploitation and exploiters.<sup>47</sup>

The women who rose up during the days of the Paris Commune were later targeted by the conservative press as a particularly dangerous and threatening phenomenon. “If the French nation were composed only of French women, what a terrible nation it would be”, wrote the *Times* correspondent on 19 May 1871.<sup>48</sup> Women who challenged traditional gender roles and participated in public protests were portrayed as hysterical “incendiaries” (*pétroleuses*).<sup>49</sup> The name was due to rumours circulating that, in the final days of the Commune, women were pouring burning petroleum into unsuspecting people’s cellars. Fears were so widespread that, following the defeat of the Commune, hundreds of working-class women suspected of such crimes were summarily shot in the street, with another 1051 women brought before the Councils of War for trial.<sup>50</sup>

The activities of women in the *Union des femmes* represent a high point in socialist feminism, which was to be suddenly interrupted by the destruction of the Commune during *la Semaine sanglante* (the bloody week).<sup>51</sup> The end of the *Union des femmes* marked a significant decline in socialist feminism and the ascendance of liberal and bourgeois republican feminism in France.<sup>52</sup> From this point onwards, until well into the twentieth century, French socialism was dominated by male workers and their struggle.<sup>53</sup> As Claire Moses points out, with many of the Commune feminists in exile, “the ties between socialism and feminism had been cut”.<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, the political action of these women inspired the political and literary imagination of generations of writers and activists such as Robert W. Chambers with his 1895 novel *The Red Republic*.<sup>55</sup> Returning to the practices and the nascent political theories of the first large women-led socialist feminist organisation helps shed light on this important experiment in political history.

## Transformation of the social

The position of socialist feminists during the Commune can be differentiated from liberal and bourgeois republican feminisms and the male-centred socialism of their time. Contrary to the feminists of the 1880s, who narrowed the scope of feminist demands to that which a socially conservative legislature might be expected to pass into law, the Commune feminists called for widespread changes to advance the social and economic empowerment of women and combat women’s economic dependence on men.<sup>56</sup> They believed that women could only achieve liberation by addressing the economic and cultural sources of their oppression and pursuing a radical transformation of society. On the other hand, they also rejected socialists’ claims that the division between men and women



was based primarily on property rights and that the overcoming of capitalism would in itself free women from their subordination to men.

One important aspect of socialist feminist theorising at the time emphasised the distinctiveness of working-class women's social position and attempted to redress specific aspects of their situation. Working-class women living in Paris during this time suffered appalling social conditions, with cramped and unsafe housing, a lack of rights to higher education, miniscule wages (where work could be found) and social marginalisation even within the workers' movement.<sup>57</sup> André Léo questioned: "who suffers the most from the current crisis, the high cost of food, the cessation of work? – Women, and above all, isolated women who are looked after no more by the new regime than by the old one".<sup>58</sup> Socialist feminists recognised that, "in the society of the past, [women's labour] was the most exploited form of all", due to women's oppression both in the family and the workplace.<sup>59</sup> Not only were women from lower social classes expected to undertake unpaid reproductive labour within the family unit, they were also often forced into extra paid work to supplement a family's wages.

The positive project of the Commune feminists involved a "social renovation [*la rénovation sociale*]" which would transform social relations.<sup>60</sup> To understand this project, it is important to pay close attention to socialist feminists' practical activities during the Commune, which primarily concerned the spheres of education, the family and women's employment. Their goal was both women's economic independence and the democratisation of everyday life. Rather than simply seeking women's entrance into the male public sphere, the concept of a transformation of the social points to their attempt to recreate both private and public space through an ideal of a more egalitarian social order. This consisted of claiming new rights in the family, rejecting traditional gender roles and asserting their right to publicly participate in politics. We highlight three main aspects of their transformation of social relations, in girls' education, the family and women's work.

The first example relates to an overturning of public education. They considered girls' secular education to be a first priority because this would provide the spiritual and mental preconditions for women to live a free life and to escape the ideological control of the Church. This was of particular importance to André Léo, who argued for the creation of a new "democratic school to come" in the "conquest of equality", which would be "better obtained by the reform of the education of girls". It is about "basing education on freedom, science, justice and equality [...] to train free citizens of a free country".<sup>61</sup> An important component of this ideology was the advocacy of secular schools outside the control of the Church and the belief that science and reason should replace the dogma and superstition of religious teachings. For Léo, religious instruction was aimed at forming docile subjects, while secular education would be designed for human emancipation. There were a number of new initiatives during the Paris Commune, such as Marie-Léonie Manière's plans submitted to the Commune for the creation of vocational schools for girls and the establishment of such a school in the 18th *arrondissement* by Paule Mink.<sup>62</sup> Additionally, on 13 May 1871, a new women's school for industrial arts was opened, with Madame Parpalet appointed as its director.<sup>63</sup>

A further priority was for radical changes to women's work in the home and workplace. Jones and Vergès contend that the Commune feminists supported a series of ideas that would have radically transformed the nature of family life:

they supported mutual consent divorce, the legal recognition of 'union libre', as well as decrees by the Commune itself that provided for support by the Commune for all women, and their children, whose companions (not just husbands!) had died defending Paris; pensions for women, married or not, and their children; and alimony for women who asked for a separation.<sup>64</sup>

Commune feminists sought to challenge the Napoleonic code, which gave fathers rights over women and children. They argued for women to retain their legal status in marriage rather than disappearing as a legal entity. This would also assist with promoting greater rights to prosecute abusive partners and request a divorce if so desired. Women in the *Union des femmes* also supported the temporary adoption of publicly-funded childcare facilities and supported women choosing whether or not to work from home.<sup>65</sup> In contrast to the 1848 feminists, Commune feminists tended to place less emphasis on women's unique role as mother as a justification for her participation in the public sphere.<sup>66</sup> Socialist feminists in the *Union des femmes* argued that women's defence of their society should come before their obligation to their families. As a result, they were critical of women who resisted calls for political mobilisation on grounds of the priority of caring for their families.<sup>67</sup>

Finally, to support their empowerment within the family, women required new rights at work. Discrimination over wages at work was considered one important issue. Women typically received less than half of a man's wage for the same work. Clare Moses has found that "[w]omen in factories in Amiens were paid between 1.25 and 2 francs a day while men doing the same work in the same factories received 2.50 to 3.50 francs".<sup>68</sup>

The *Union des femmes'* Executive Commission declared that "the reorganisation of women's labour is an extremely urgent matter" and called for equal pay for men and women.<sup>69</sup> Schulkind notes that this appeared to be "the first occasion on which a large organisation of French working women put forth a demand for equal pay".<sup>70</sup> There were also many women who could not obtain work and were discouraged from working in industries deemed to be men's work. Their opponents argued that it was in women's interests to stay at home and that women's health, morality and well-being were depleted by their entry into the workforce. While their opponents sought to pressure women back into the domestic sphere, the reality for many working-class women was that they had to work due to economic necessity. They therefore demanded that such work be compensated the same as their male peers.

## A politics of coalition building

A distinctive aspect of the political strategy of the Commune feminists consisted of formulating claims of solidarity between different oppressed groups. A cornerstone of their strategy was to draw parallels between working women's oppression and that of three other groups: male workers, peasants and the peoples of other oppressed nations. They considered this relevant on two different levels. First, working-class women shared similar forms of oppression to these groups and were oppressed by the same

agent: the ruling class of rich property-owners. Second, in terms of practical strategies for social transformation, change could only come about through a coalition between different oppressed groups rather than each group fighting against the ruling class on its own.

We address Commune feminists' relationship to each oppressed group in turn. First, they suggested closer collaboration between working men and women. A barrier to this was the discrimination practised by male workers against women. Women in the *Union des femmes* identified how working men's discrimination against women actually benefited the ruling class of both sexes, as it kept workers divided and prevented working women from taking a more active role in revolutionary movements. André Léo argued that women's liberation would be necessary for a successful workers' revolution: "all women with all men [*Toutes avec tous*] [ ... ] It is with women especially that, until now, democracy has been defeated, and it will only triumph with them".<sup>71</sup> She claimed that the social revolution, as it was articulated at the time, would not be possible without the full participation of women. Léo stressed that the current dominance of men was not due to women's lack of desire but on account of their social exclusion. She also appealed not only to working men's sense of fairness and justice but to their practical instincts for how a successful workers' movement could be organised. For Léo, it was the "force of arms that wins battles" and, by conceiving of the workers' struggle as principally involving male workers, they were denying themselves half of their willing troops.<sup>72</sup>

Just as the social revolution would not be possible without women, so too did a project of women's liberation not make sense outside of a broader strategy for liberation from capitalism. Working women would not become free simply through female suffrage, as they would still face oppression as workers, which is why they joined other socialists in calling for "the emancipation of the working class by the working class".<sup>73</sup> It was recognised that this struggle required unified action between female and male workers. The cause of their liberation would be enhanced by an end to suspicion and hostility between the sexes and a recognition of their shared exploitation by the ruling class. In a proposal from its Executive Committee, the *Union des femmes* called for the "abolition of all competition between men and women workers, their interests being absolutely identical and their solidarity essential for the success of the definitive universal strike of Labour against Capital".<sup>74</sup> Continuing to invoke the common interests and aspirations of workers of both sexes, the *Union des femmes* called for "men and women workers [to unite] in complete solidarity".<sup>75</sup> Despite identifying distinctive problems faced by female workers, the *Union des femmes* nonetheless called for a politics of solidarity between workers from both sexes in their shared struggle against the ruling class.

Second, the Commune feminist strategy of coalition building extended to a call for solidarity with peasants working outside of the capital. Their acts of solidarity with peasants in the countryside and the theorisation of their shared oppression stands in contrast to the scepticism that industrial workers' movements often showed to the political attitudes and revolutionary potential of the peasantry. This prejudice stretched from Marx's famous description of peasants as a "sack of potatoes [ ... ] incapable of asserting their class interests in their own name" to Karl Kautsky's dismissal of peasants' political agency and his speculation that, "by its nature agriculture is not a social activity, and is not therefore amenable to social organisation".<sup>76</sup> As a result, within early Marxism,

peasants were mainly viewed as an obstacle and barrier to social transformation. In contrast, Dmitrieff highlighted the importance of the peasantry in social struggle, a point which she attempted to convince Marx of in her correspondence.<sup>77</sup> This project of coalition building with peasants was shared by elements of the French anti-capitalist Left, particularly its Proudhonist strand, who grounded the communal revolution in the artisan and peasant economy.

Although French feminism had also been nearly entirely based in the cities, many of the Commune feminists had a strong conception of solidarity between town and country. This was particularly the case with André Léo, who undertook a tour of the provinces in an attempt to build bonds of solidarity between urban workers and peasants. She attempted to launch a journal, *L'Agriculteur* (The Farmer), and also wrote a revolutionary pamphlet, *Au Travailleur des Campagnes* (To the Worker of the Countryside), about the unity of revolutionary struggle between peasants and urban workers, which was widely distributed in the provinces.<sup>78</sup> In this pamphlet, Léo compared the civil and social inequality of women with the oppression suffered by peasants under the Empire. She also underlined the necessity of solidarity between the struggles of urban workers and peasants: “Our interests are the same. That which I demand is what you want as well; the emancipation that I claim is yours”. Léo continued:

Should it matter if those who produce all the wealth of this world yet who lack bread, clothing, shelter and support are in the countryside or the city? Should it matter whether the oppressor is a large landowner or an industrialist? With you as with us, the day is long and harsh, and does not even provide the body what it needs. With you as with me, freedom, leisure and the life of the mind and heart are absent. We are still and always, you and I, the vassals of misery.<sup>79</sup>

Léo noted that a common argument of the monarchists against the Commune was that Paris was attempting to enforce its will on the countryside, who were predominantly royalists. She argued that the facts showed that there was a stronger sentiment for republicanism in the countryside than her opponents admitted and that this would be even higher if Paris’ lines of political communication with the countryside were not suppressed by the national government.<sup>80</sup>

In her memoirs, Louise Michel described the recruitment of women by the *Union des femmes* to act as emissaries to carry news to the provinces. She recalled Paule Mink undertaking one such mission, and Marie-Léonie Manière appears also to have been sent, although she was arrested en route. In one approach, Michel reports that the *Union des femmes* “even tried launching balloons filled with letters to the provinces”.<sup>81</sup> Although they faced existential threats inside the capital, these women devoted considerable energy to building bonds of solidarity between city and countryside in an attempt to unite marginalised groups in a shared struggle.

Third, the Commune feminists’ conception of political struggle was not limited to a bounded national republic but was international in its scope. Kristin Ross has illuminated the network of political actors across national borders that took part in the Commune and the internationalist spirit that pervaded it. She writes that, “[u]nder the Commune [,] Paris wanted to be not the capital of France but an autonomous collective in a universal federation of peoples”.<sup>82</sup> She demonstrates that they held an internationalist conception of citizenship that extended to foreigners and was opposed to the discourse of

sovereignty and the nation state. This revolutionary cosmopolitanism is evidenced not only by the number of foreigners who participated but also by the invocation of the terms *citoyenne* and *citoyen* to address them, regardless of their legal status.<sup>83</sup>

In their first public appeal on 11 April 1871, the *Union des femmes* framed their struggle not in terms of national self-defence but through international solidarity with the working classes of the world. The struggle was based on “the eternal antagonism of right and force, of labour and exploitation, of the people and their executioners”, and the enemy of the people was “the privileged ones of the current social order, all those who have always lived from our sweat, who have always been fattened from our misery”.<sup>84</sup> In what was proclaimed as the “final act” in this confrontation, the internationalism of the *Union des femmes* was made clear:

Paris is being blockaded. Paris is being bombarded. *Citoyennes* [...] Do you hear the roaring cannon, the tocsin ringing out the sacred call? To arms! The homeland is in danger! Were those foreigners who were coming to attack Paris threatening those triumphs called ‘liberty, equality, and fraternity’? No, these enemies, these murderers of the people and of liberty, are Frenchmen.<sup>85</sup>

The struggle in Paris was framed as being at the centre of a global liberation movement in which “all civilised peoples have their eyes on Paris, waiting for our triumph so, on their turn, they can free themselves”.<sup>86</sup> What is striking about this appeal is how much space was devoted – in what was effectively an intervention into a French civil war – to discussing the connection between revolutionary movements in Germany, Russia, Ireland, Poland, Spain, England and Austria and “the international struggle of peoples”. The appeal directly criticised those who limited their struggle to only local or regional ties and recognised that the political fight must be an international struggle against the ruling classes of all nations. For Léo, “it is no longer a question of national defence. Instead of such a narrowing, the field of struggle has grown larger. It’s about humanitarian defence, the rights of freedom”.<sup>87</sup>

There was, however, a distinct ambiguity of the universalist and internationalist discourse of the *communards* in relation to the French Empire and France’s colonial possessions abroad. The Commune feminists were notably silent on forms of solidarity with those struggling in France’s colonies and had little to say about the anti-colonial revolt in Algeria of 1870, for example.<sup>88</sup> Their universalist discourse combined with notions of “civilisational” differences tended to occlude rather than enable solidarity with colonised peoples.<sup>89</sup> The emancipatory universalism of the Paris Commune, then, has to be viewed in the context of the racialised boundaries of the French Empire and the history of how universalist language often aided the “civilising missions” of European colonial powers in relation to the Global South.<sup>90</sup>

## Workshops for women

Recognising the distinctive oppression suffered by working-class women also led women in the *Union des femmes* to employ a novel strategy of organising autonomous women’s workshops. The *Union des femmes*’ proposal imagined women in control of receiving raw materials, allocating them to groups, storing and producing the goods and then selling these to consumers. The idea was for every *arrondissement* to have a committee of

women and a credit account to put this into effect. Rather than relying on the wage of her husband, a woman working in such a producer co-operative could use the credit of the co-operative to buy raw materials and retain the full profit from her labour after selling the finished product. This would not only provide women with a steady source of income but also would empower them in personal affairs relating to marriage, divorce, childcare and living arrangements. As one aspect of their broader programme of workers' emancipation, their proposal for women-controlled workshops thus reveals how they imagined negotiating competing tensions in one institutional dimension of their political project.

"*Appel aux ouvrières*" (Call to female workers), read one poster printed by the Commune on behalf of the *Union des femmes* on 17 May 1871, "the Central Committee of the Women's Union [ ... ] invites all female workers to unite [ ... ] in order to name delegates from each corporation to form trade unions" and "free producer co-operatives, federated with each other".<sup>91</sup> Flora Tristan's idea of workers' unions and producer co-operatives re-emerged in the Paris Commune. It had been tried once before in the summer of 1849, during which French feminists attempted to create a federation of workers' associations, outlined by Jeanne Deroin in her sketch for the journal *l'Opinion des femmes*, before being arrested and charged by the police.<sup>92</sup> But this time, in 1871, women planned to form a coalition of independent women's workshops to guarantee their economic independence and security.

Based on the amount of time the Central Committee of the *Union des femmes* devoted to this task, it is clear they considered it an important initiative and it remains one of their most innovative contributions to the history of socialist feminism. The *Union des femmes* submitted plans to the Commission of Labour and Exchange for the formation of women's co-operative production and argued for the Commune:

to establish firmly the foundations for the new political organisation [ ... ] not by limiting itself to the urgent needs of military defence, but by embarking unequivocally on the path of social reform [ ... ]. This goal would be achieved by the creation for women of special workshops and of centres for the sale and distribution of the products they will have manufactured.<sup>93</sup>

Women in the *Union des femmes* shared with their male comrades in the broader Commune socialist principles about the need to reorganise the economy and to introduce new forms of co-operative production to society as a whole. They shared with the 1830s generation of utopian socialists an emphasis on the importance of "rights to work", "the re-organisation of work" and a belief that women's emancipation was essential to human emancipation.<sup>94</sup> Similar examples to the women's co-operative workshops in the Commune can be found in the Owenite co-operative movement in England in the early 1830s.<sup>95</sup> What differentiated the Commune feminists' co-operative production was a stronger inclination to conceive of this as part of a revolution involving armed struggle rather than one occurring through an evolutionary process of moral persuasion and enlightenment. Their vision of a system of interlocking workers' co-operatives also differed from the more centralised and nationalised models of the later socialist movements. Dmitrieff wrote:

Any re-organisation of labour tending to assure the producer of the proceeds can be effected only by means of free productive associations making advantageous use of the

various industries to their collective profit. In taking work away from the bondage of capitalist exploitation, the formation of these organisations would eventually allow the workers to run their own business.<sup>96</sup>

This programme of liberating workers from their dependency on the capitalist class was framed by the Commune feminists as a universal project involving female and male workers united against capitalist exploitation. The Commune had issued a decree on 16 April 1871 authorising abandoned workshops to be converted into worker-owned co-operatives and the Commission of Labour and Exchange had called for assistance with planning the implementation of more wide-sweeping changes to the economy.<sup>97</sup> Much of the language of the public declarations of the *Union des femmes* emphasised co-operation between the sexes and a unified front of workers against the capitalist class. The Central Committee of the *Union des femmes* coordinated with the Commission for Labour and Exchange and addressed the appeal to both sexes, although there was an explicit call to “women citizens, whose devotion to the Social Revolution is so invaluable, not to disregard the all-important question of the organisation of production”.<sup>98</sup>

Yet the practical experience of marginalisation within workers’ movements instilled in women in the *Union des femmes* the desire to organise independently of male organisations. Although many socialist men were not explicitly hostile to women, prejudices against women’s participation in politics were so ingrained that many women still felt side-lined within male-led workers’ organisations. The women of the *Union des femmes* insisted to the Commune that they be put in charge of women emancipating themselves through organising independent women workers’ co-operatives.

Workshops for women were designed to satisfy an immediate need of finding work for the thousands of unemployed and impoverished women in Paris. While many of the men were fighting for the Commune, the women argued that the Commune had a duty to provide for women and children. In addition to meeting pressing social needs, however, workshops for women were a key element in the political programme of transforming labour practices.

The plan would enable women to retain all of the profit from their labour and provide greater autonomy to women workers over their lives. If groups were provided with more control, they could distribute tasks fairly and avoid overly monotonous labour and ensure variety, for “the continual report of the same manual movement has a deadly influence upon the organism and the brain”.<sup>99</sup> This would also allow them to shorten the working day and provide more time for rest and social activities, as “the exhaustion of physical strength inevitably brings about the extinction of moral strength”.<sup>100</sup> Dmitrieff also called for the elimination of any distinction in pay between men and women and for all work to be paid equally.<sup>101</sup>

The *Union des femmes* was conscious of the multiple demands placed on working women and wanted to avoid increasing these by placing women’s workplaces a long distance from their family. The proposal indicated that the workshops would not be organised along the lines of the National Workshops of 1848, which forced women to travel long distances to workplaces. Instead, they would have the option of having work given to them in their *arrondissements* and be able to work from home if they desired: “These would be workshops that would hand out work: the women would be given work to do at home. For, while we are obtaining work, we think that it is important,

at the same time, to bring about reforms in work for women”.<sup>102</sup> They also wanted the work to be organised federally so that local groups would have more autonomy over their production schedule and workers would not have to have everything administered from one central location.

The goal of these workshops was to achieve the concrete institutionalisation of working-class women’s power that would outlast the momentary wave of women’s radicalism. The worry of the organisers was that women would soon be pulled back to more reactionary modes of political thought: “it is to be feared that the feminine element of the Parisian population, revolutionary for the moment, would return because of continual privation to the passive and more or less reactionary state to which it belonged in the past”.<sup>103</sup> The reason the Central Committee was so preoccupied with the creation of workshops for women was that, once established, these new economic institutions would provide a secure basis for well-paid work and autonomy for women. Meeting the immediate economic needs of working-class women would thus be a first step towards greater militancy and further political struggle.

Women’s workshops offer an intriguing concrete example of their attempt to negotiate the tensions of working-class women organising as part of a broader emancipatory project. Demands for women’s work in the workshops led to more far-reaching plans for the transformation of work itself. Women did not simply demand equal wages or entrance into the existing *ateliers*. Their goal of social transformation led to new organisational forms of producer co-operatives and for special workshops that would specifically empower women in other aspects of their social lives. The creation of these workshops, however, should not be understood as a deviation away from the goals of the Commune itself. Instead, it was an integral part of the social transformation and a means of radically pushing this vision into the everyday lives of women and men. Workshops for women could have made a profound impact on the history of working-class women in French society.

In spite of the efforts of the *Union des femmes* and the Commission for Labour and Exchange, however, there were not enough producer co-operatives to make a significant impact on the transformation of the economy; thus rates of pay continued to drop. Although plans were drawn up and began to be implemented in May 1871, the invasion of the French army interrupted this radical experiment before it had the chance to fully materialise. Women in the *Union des femmes* held one final meeting on 21 May 1871, during which orders arrived from the Commune to defend the barricades. One hundred and twenty women left the meeting, leading with a raised red flag to hold the barricade at Place Blanche. The socialist feminists who made up the *Union des femmes* either died on the barricades, were deported to New Caledonia or fled following the defeat of the Commune.

## Conclusion

It has now been 150 years since the Commune feminists rose up against capitalism and patriarchy and, despite many important gains, those structures of oppression continue to shape working-class women’s lives. The challenges they faced in their political struggle are, as a result, not so distant from the ones facing socialist feminist theory and practice today. Both the Commune feminists and socialist feminists from the 1960s/1970s



onwards took as a starting point the assumption that women's liberation required a change in material relations; that is, a change in the way in which production and reproduction were organised. Understanding women's oppression in this way raises a number of questions that remain central to socialist/Marxist feminism today: if the source of women's oppression is both capitalism and patriarchy, how do the two relate and what is their respective explanatory power? Are they different systems or should they be theorised as one integrated system? What do answers to these questions imply for the struggle for women's liberation? Should this struggle be part of the working-class struggle or should women organise independently?

By taking a closer look at the specific political practices of the Commune feminists, we saw how they tried to resolve these questions in practice, which we can particularly observe in the women's cooperative workshops. One of their central aims was to help women overcome their economic dependence on men. Commune feminists thought that this economic dependence could be addressed neither by merely demanding equal integration into the workforce nor by simply joining the working-class struggle. This suggests two interpretive points. First, we can understand their practices as implying an understanding of capitalism and patriarchy as an integrated system in which class relations are systematically structured by gender (and cannot be understood in isolation).<sup>104</sup> Second, while understanding capitalism and patriarchy as an integrated system, they still emphasised that women experience distinct forms of oppression within this system that need to be addressed. The workshops are thus an innovative example of how it is possible to connect a particular struggle with a broader one, without dissolving the former into the latter.

The women who participated in the Commune in their thousands were driven by their immediate social needs and a long-term vision of women's liberation. Women of the *Union des femmes* theorised the distinctive nature of their oppression and put forward concrete plans for their emancipation. They argued that female and male workers had to unite in a socialist revolution to democratise the conditions of work, education and the family. As Léo argued, if the socialist revolution did not aim at women's liberation, then "women [might] no longer have to obey priests; but nor can they rise themselves. They must remain neutered and passive under the guidance of man, she will have only changed confessor".<sup>105</sup> Women's emancipation was thus an essential component of a thoroughgoing social revolution; one which would transform the condition of all oppressed peoples under the current social order.

Commune feminists broke new ground in articulating an emancipatory politics that addressed the particular struggles of working women within a wider anti-capitalist struggle. Through their organising, they offered a glimpse of what full social equality and emancipation could look like.

## Notes

1. "Manifeste du Comité Central de l'Union des Femmes pour la Défense de Paris et les Soins aux Blessés", *Journal officiel*, 8 May 1871.
2. Cited in Schulkind, "Socialist Women during the 1871 Paris Commune", 150.
3. Though the term "feminism" is anachronistic for the period under discussion (as it only began to be used in the modern sense in the 1890s), we follow standard historical practice

- in using it to describe nineteenth-century movements and figures that aimed at women's liberation. See Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem*, x; Eichner, *Surmounting the Barricades*, 4.
4. Eichner, *Surmounting the Barricades*, 26.
  5. Schulkind, "Socialist Women during the 1871 Paris Commune", 139.
  6. The *Union* did not have a monopoly on channelling women's activism, but no other organisation or group exercised the same influence over women activists, the *communards* and town hall administrators.
  7. Thomas, *The Women Incendiaries*; Schulkind, "Socialist Women during the 1871 Paris Commune"; Jones and Vergès, "Aux Citoyennes! Women, Politics and the Paris Commune of 1871", 711–32; Gullickson, *Unruly Women of Paris*; Johnson, *The Paradise of Association*; Fauré, "La Révolution avec ou sans la femme?"; Eichner, *Surmounting the Barricades*.
  8. See, for instance, Boxer, "Socialism Faces Feminism"; Moses, *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century*; Cliff, *Class Struggle and Women's Liberation*.
  9. Several of the *Union's* public statements were well documented and thus allow for a reconstruction of their political aims and organisation. See Schulkind, "Socialist Women during the 1871 Paris Commune", 126. The limited availability of more specific statements on the distinct oppression of working-class women led us to reconstruct the *Union's* thought on this issue from their action.
  10. Schulkind, "Socialist Women during the 1871 Paris Commune".
  11. Such as Martin, *Socialist Feminism: The First Decade, 1966-76*; although see Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem*, for a corrective.
  12. Ross, *Communal Luxury*; Ross, "The Meaning of the Paris Commune".
  13. Thomas, *The Women Incendiaries*, 75. Although "proletarian" should not be understood as industrial factory workers, as the modest level of industrialisation in Paris at the time meant that only a few of the women in the *Union des femmes* held such industrial jobs. See Schulkind, "Socialist Women during the 1871 Paris Commune", 156.
  14. Eichner, *Surmounting the Barricades*, 27, 30.
  15. Marx and Engels, *The Manifesto of the Communist Manifesto*, 494.
  16. Lemel had been born to petty bourgeoisie café-owning parents, but slipped down the class ranks after her divorce and became a bookbinder. Eichner, *Surmounting the Barricades*, 83–4.
  17. Although, some of these documents were also likely written under Dmitrieff's influence. *Ibid.*, 73–4.
  18. Moses, *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century*, 133–4.
  19. Gibson, *A Social History of French Catholicism Catholic Church*, 186.
  20. Moses, *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century*, 4–6.
  21. *Ibid.*, xii; Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem*, ch. 2; Duong, "No Social Revolution without Sexual Revolution", 809–35.
  22. Moses, *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century*, 139, 172.
  23. McMillan, *France and Women 1789–1914*, 135–7.
  24. Moses, *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century*, 152–8.
  25. Schrupp, "Bringing Together Feminism and Socialism", 351.
  26. Jones and Vergès, "Aux Citoyennes! Women, Politics and the Paris Commune of 1871", 716.
  27. Léo, "La Révolution sans la Femme".
  28. "Manifeste de Ligue en faveur des droits des Femmes", *L'Opinion nationale*, 20 July 1868.
  29. Fauré, "La Révolution avec ou sans la femme? La Commune de 1871".
  30. *Ibid.*
  31. Moses, *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century*, 173.
  32. Schulkind, "Socialist Women during the 1871 Paris Commune", 136.
  33. Moses, *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century*, 192.
  34. Eichner, *Surmounting the Barricades*, 23.
  35. Schulkind, "Socialist Women during the 1871 Paris Commune", 135–8.
  36. *Ibid.*, 133.

37. Eichner, *Surmounting the Barricades*, 64–5; Sylvie Braibant, *Elisabeth Dmitrieff: aristocrate et pétroleuse*, 102.
38. “Les statuts de l’Union des femmes”, *La Sociale*, 20 April 1871.
39. Thomas, *The Women Incendiaries*, 76.
40. “Les statuts de l’Union des femmes”.
41. Thomas, *The Women Incendiaries*, 74–5.
42. Schulkind, “Socialist Women during the 1871 Paris Commune”, 155–6.
43. “Appel aux Citoyennes de Paris”, *Journal officiel de la Commune de Paris du 20 mars au 24 mai 1871* [hereafter *Journal officiel*], 11 April 1871.
44. “Adresse des Citoyennes à la Commission Exécutive de La Commune de Paris”, *Journal officiel*, 14 April 1871.
45. Schulkind, “Socialist Women during the 1871 Paris Commune”, 148–9.
46. *Ibid.*
47. “Manifeste du Comité Central de l’Union des Femmes pour la Défense de Paris et les Soins aux Blessés”, *Journal officiel*, 8 May 1871.
48. Lissagaray, *History of the Paris Commune of 1871*, 419.
49. *L’Avant-Garde*, 27 May 1871, quoted in Thomas, *The Women Incendiaries*, 175; Gullickson, *Unruly Women of Paris*.
50. Thomas, *The Women Incendiaries*, 150–64, 189–216; John Merriman, *Massacre: the Life and Death of the Paris Commune*.
51. Although, Mink, Léo and Michel continued to advance their socialist feminist positions in the post-Commune decades.
52. Moses, *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century*, 193.
53. Kennedy and Tilly, “Socialism, Feminism and the Stillbirth of Socialist Feminism in Europe, 1890-1920”, 6–42.
54. Moses, *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century*, 174.
55. Chambers, *The Red Republic*; Ross, *Communal Luxury*.
56. Jones and Vergès, “Aux Citoyennes! Women, Politics and the Paris Commune of 1871”, 716.
57. Moses, *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century*, 24–32.
58. Léo, “La Révolution sans la Femme”, *La Sociale*, 8 May 1871.
59. Schulkind, “Socialist Women during the 1871 Paris Commune”, 150.
60. “Adresse des Citoyennes à la Commission Exécutive de La Commune de Paris”.
61. Cited in Fauré, “La Révolution avec ou sans la femme? La Commune de 1871”, 104.
62. Schulkind, “Socialist Women during the 1871 Paris Commune”, 136.
63. Jones and Vergès, “Aux Citoyennes! Women, Politics and the Paris Commune of 1871”, 716.
64. *Ibid.*, 723.
65. *Ibid.*, 6.
66. Moses, *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century*, 133.
67. “Appel aux Citoyennes de Paris”.
68. Moses, *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century*, 24.
69. Cited in Schulkind, “Socialist Women during the 1871 Paris Commune”, 150.
70. *Ibid.*
71. Léo, “Toutes avec Tous”, *La Sociale*, 12, 13, 14 May 1871.
72. *Ibid.*
73. “Manifeste du Comité Central de l’Union des Femmes pour la Défense de Paris et les Soins aux Blessés”, *Journal officiel*, 8 May 1871.
74. Cited in Schulkind, “Socialist Women during the 1871 Paris Commune”, 150.
75. *Ibid.*
76. Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*, 187; Kautsky, *The Agrarian Question*, 126.
77. Eichner, *Surmounting the Barricades*, 65.
78. Fauré, “La Révolution avec ou sans la femme? La Commune de 1871”, 4.
79. Léo, “Au Travailleur des Campagnes”, *La Sociale*, 3 May 1871.
80. Léo, “L’opinion de la Province”, *La Sociale*, 6 May 1871.

81. Michel, *The Red Virgin*, 65.
82. Ross, *Communal Luxury*, 31.
83. Breaugh, *The Plebeian Experience*, 173–99.
84. “Appel aux Citoyennes de Paris”.
85. Ibid.
86. Ibid.
87. Léo, “Toutes avec Tous”.
88. Mailhe, *Déportation en Nouvelle- Calédonie des Communards et des Révoltés de la Grande Kabylie (1872- 1876)*, 94–115.
89. Plaetzer, “Decolonizing the ‘Universal Republic’”, 585–603. See also Nicholls, “Empire and internationalism in French revolutionary socialist thought”, 1051–74.
90. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize*, 1–38.
91. Chevalier, *Les Murailles politiques francaises*, 522.
92. Moses, *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century*, 147.
93. Schulkind, “Socialist Women during the 1871 Paris Commune”, 150.
94. Moses, *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century*, 40–2.
95. Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem*, 88.
96. Cited in Thomas, *The Women Incendiaries*, 83.
97. “Décret de convocation des chambres syndicales ouvrières”, *Journal officiel*, 17 April 1871.
98. “Commission d’enquête et d’organisation du travail”, *Journal officiel*, 10 May 1871.
99. Cited in Thomas, *The Women Incendiaries*, 70.
100. Ibid.
101. Ibid.
102. Cited in Ibid., 80.
103. Cited in Ibid., 83.
104. This approach comes close to what is, in contemporary socialist feminist theory, labelled unitary system theory. Unitary system feminists argue for an integrated account of both patriarchal oppression and capitalist exploitation. See, for instance, Vogel, *Marxism and the Oppression of Women*; Young, *Throwing like a girl*.
105. Léo, “La Révolution sans la Femme”, *La Sociale*, 8 May 1871.

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