

Summer Project Report

This summer I undertook a research project on the writings of Clara Zetkin, supported by the Merton College non-residential summer project grant. I intend to write my thesis in the coming year on the work of Clara Zetkin, and her role as a German socialist and women's rights activist. In particular, I am concentrating on her articles written for *Die Gleichheit*, the official publication of the women's section of the SPD. Unfortunately, the vast majority of issues of *Die Gleichheit* have not been translated to English, and remain in her original German. I am by no means fluent in German, eliminating the possibility of translating as I go, but I have learnt some German and completed the German for Historians course in my first year at Oxford. Therefore, I decided to begin a project of translating her work over the summer for future use. It was at this point that I applied for the grant from Merton, which was invaluable because it enabled me to spend three weeks on the project at home, without worrying about working over the summer, allowing me to concentrate fully. I am very grateful to Matthew Grimley who agreed to be my supervisor for the project.

I concentrated on three articles, with the theme of Socialist meetings, and the reactions to them by the law. The first, titled *Von Rechts Wegen*, was from February 1895 and detailed the methods used by the German state to effectively outlaw workers' meetings and unions, as well as how this extended to disproportionately affect women workers. The second, 1907's 'Der Internationale Sozialistische Kongreß zu Stuttgart,' naturally outlined the activities and achievements of the Stuttgart Socialist Congress; I then compared this with 'Die erste Internationale Konferenz sozialistischer Frauen.' This provided an interesting insight into the workings of the Second International, as well as Zetkin's own approach to these kinds of gatherings; for example, her scepticism about the value of these conferences, whilst simultaneously playing an active role in planning the first socialist women's conference. I ran into an unexpected difficulty in translating, in that the typeface used for the journal, *Fraktur*, was virtually illegible. I therefore had to transliterate the articles into a more recognisable font, before then translating into English.

The Summer Project grant was extremely useful- at one point, I thought it would be necessary to take a short trip to the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam, in order to access copies of the journal; in the end, this wasn't necessary, but it was very reassuring that the grant allowed me the free time and movement in order to do this. It also gave me the opportunity to develop vital skills. Whilst it was somewhat daunting, planning and structuring my time independently with no external deadlines, I ended up really enjoying it. It was good practice for this year, when I will be writing my thesis, and will use many of the same skills I've used this summer. It also allowed me to practice my German, especially in an academic context. Overall, I am very grateful to have been allowed this opportunity, and would encourage anyone considering it to apply.