

**GLOBAL FEMINISMS
COMPARATIVE CASE STUDIES OF
WOMEN'S ACTIVISM AND SCHOLARSHIP**

SITE: Germany

**Transcript of Gudrun Koch
Interviewer: Sławomira Walczewska**

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Gudrun Koch was born in Kolberg in East Pomerania in 1945. She studied education in Dortmund and Berlin 1964-1970, and became a secondary school teacher of German and history, after passing the state exams. She taught from 1967-73, and in 1974 began postgraduate studies in social sciences and adult education, taught adult education, and during that same period was co-founder of the Women's Action Dortmund (FAD). She engaged in practical theater training in the late 1970s in Berlin, and in the 1980s pursued both theater studies and experimental theater work in Paris. Beginning in 1990 (and continuing through 2006) she worked on the establishment of a European women's cultural association, which was the external link of European Women's Action (EFA) eV Berlin. She planned and implemented events in Europe and North Africa, and also worked on documentaries.

Sławomira Walczewska, born 1960, feminist activist and philosopher (PhD). In 1999, Walczewska published *Ladies, Knights and Feminists: Feminist Discourse in Poland*, the first Polish book about the history of women's emancipation in Poland from a cultural perspective. That book was nominated, as one of 20 books, for the most prestigious book award in Poland at that time, NIKE, in 2000. She is author of ca. 50 articles about feminism and history of the women's movement. She was teaching history of philosophy at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow (1985-1990), history of feminist ideas at the Warsaw University (1997), at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow (2000) and the feminist critics of history at the Viadrina University in Frankfurt a/O (2019).

In 1991 she co-founded the eFKa- Women's Foundation, one of the first feminist organizations in post-socialist Poland. She edited the feminist magazine "Pełnym Głosem" (*In Full Voice*, 1993-1997) and was member of the editorial board of *Zadra*, the feminist quarterly (1999 - 2018). She is director of the Feminist Institute for Research and Education (www.efka.org.pl/fibe).

Transcriber's note:

[?] denotes incomprehensible passages. When I was not completely sure of having understood, I put the words in brackets and added a question mark [like this?] At times, but not consistently, I have included accompanying gestures by including the affect in brackets after the word [stressed].

Sławomira Walczewska: Today is the 2nd of December 2017.

Gudrun Koch: Yes.

SW: I, Sławomira Walczewska, am doing an interview with Gudrun Koch.

GK: Yes.

SW: And my main question, and probably the only question for a long time, is how did feminism make a way into your life? How did you come to think that feminism is something that is important to you personally?

[00:00:38.21] GK: First of all I would like to say, I try to be brief, so it doesn't get out of hand, because I do that from time to time. It's like this, I can- I've already hinted at it, I come from a typical German family of my time. I was born in 1945 in the last days of the war. Uh... I was born in ... Kołobrzeg, Kolberg,¹ uh, I was born at the Baltic Sea. Uh, I have two older brothers that were born one year apart from each other. That is, my mother had three small children of two and a half, one, two years, one year, and six weeks. And, of course, like everyone else, we had to flee. The escape from the Soviet army. You know that, that was a planned revenge campaign by the Soviet Union against the German population. I would like to insert as a parenthesis that this is something that has made its way into my life's history and it was a nightmare from an early age, but my generation, the post-war generation, didn't know a thing about what the German army previously did to the countries that it conquered, we didn't know about the destruction our army brought, especially in regards to Russia. That was the other side's answer. Who is going to pay for that? Let me just say one sentence about this. The National Socialists party² tried a lot to prevent people from fleeing from East Prussia back then. But then in six weeks twelve million people moved to leave their country. Two or three million tried to move across the Baltic Sea, and the others just, uh, yes, with horses and carts, from their- it was an agricultural region in large parts. They left the country in which they have lived for centuries for the majority of their life. Of course, they had a hegemony towards the other population groups, for example towards the Poles, no? Very important. I belong to those who were born at this moment in history, and I can say that we only survived by accident. Because millions died back then. And we know this from the ship

¹ Kołobrzeg, also called Kolberg in German, is a German city on the coastline of the Baltic sea.

"Kołobrzeg." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ko%C5%82obrzeg> (Accessed on February 26, 2020).

² The Nazi Party of Germany was also referred to as the National Socialist German Workers' Party.

"Nazi Party." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazi_Party (Accessed on February 26, 2020).

accidents of the Gustloff³ and so on. An unbelievable amount of people died during this conquering expedition and during their flight. So I came into the world in a moment- uh, yes, it was extremely difficult, and yet, the end of the war came and the most important thing was to put an end to National Socialist Germany. That was necessary. To bring this kind of Germany to its knees. We caused this Second World War and brought it to large parts of the world. It was a very difficult situation. I have two older brothers, I already said that. And I always wondered how my mother managed to ensure the survival of three children. Basically it is a story that has affected many hundreds of thousands or even millions of people. Yes. We survived, thank God, thanks to chance, because when we left Kolberg, it was completely wiped out the next day by the Polish and Soviet army.

Because the Soviet army had called the Poles to join the war and conquer these cities, these very ports on the Baltic Sea. So. My father is a Mecklenburger from Rostock.⁴ He was in the war. That's another question. Sławka, when those twelve million people left their earth and their homeland, please tell me who that was, in 1945? They were women and children, and old people. They weren't men because, 90, 95% of the men were involved with the war, if they lived at all. Yes, that is simply the dimension that such wars bring with them from a human point of view. My father was a Russian prisoner of war. He fortunately survived alongside very few other people. He never wanted to leave his homeland. Several generations of his family were born and lived here. But my father was a teacher of Greek and Latin, which simply meant that he couldn't find work in the GDR.⁵ And couldn't work there, because the GDR had no need for this overall civic education. That's when we decided to move to the home of my mother, the Ruhr area.⁶ I grew up there. At the beginning of these post-war years there was nothing to eat, but slowly the situation got better for us over the years, right? My father found a job very quickly. And I grew up there with my brothers. I already told you this, so I will try to keep it short. I think my feminism or the battle I fought for feminism- I would like to call it that. It all began because of my mother and my mother's family. My mother didn't just have to make ends meet like millions of women at that time, but she had to do this for three small children. But, uh, I have been incredibly lucky that my mother- I believe from the very beginning, my mother had a strong female personality. She rejected a lot of the things that others might have considered normal in regards to the education of little girls. Yes? I had two brothers, we were a little gang in our street, there

³ Motor Vessel Wilhelm Gustloff was a German ocean liner that was sunk by a Soviet submarine on January 30, 1945, killing an estimated 9000 passengers who were evacuating under Operation Hannibal as the Soviet Red Army advanced on East Prussia.

"Wilhelm Gustloff." Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/MV-Wilhelm-Gustloff> (Accessed on February 26, 2020).

⁴ Rostock is a city in the German state Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, along the Baltic Sea coastline.

"Rostock." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rostock> (Accessed on February 26, 2020).

⁵ The GDR stands for German Democratic Republic, often called East Germany.

"History of East Germany." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_East_Germany (Accessed on February 26, 2020).

⁶ The Ruhr is an area in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany.

"Ruhr." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ruhr> (Accessed on February 26, 2020).

were no differences between girls and boys in regards to the education and their rights. Except for the fact that I always had to look pretty on Sunday. But when we got out of school, we would put on old things and play, right? My mother was really the most important person for me and I looked up to her. In a way she taught us a thing or two about equality. This didn't go unnoticed in school and some were confused about the way I as a girl behaved. I had a completely strange, let's say, old-fashioned teacher who wrote shame poems about me. She thought it was that I was climbing trees and stuff like that, yes? You know, I can still remember, I was seven or eight years old, I looked at her and thought, what is wrong with you? That didn't affect me. Not at all. Her plan did not succeed. Because the pillar of values was my mother. And, uh, my father [indicates distance with her arms] later as well you know. But, uh, first and foremost my mother. I was incredibly lucky not to have been educated in the same way my schoolmates and my friends were educated. They weren't allowed to do a lot of things, they had to be at home at a certain time, they weren't allowed to do, uh, a lot of things that were normal for me. I think it gave me a good starting point yes, it gave me a good starting point.

Let me say something about my female ancestors. About my grandmother. I was named after my two grandmothers, which makes me very happy. My grandmother, my great-grandmother, and I even met my great-great-grandmother. Yes? She died when I was eight years old. She was over 93. And in this family, well that was no family, that was still like a real clan, you know? That was always beautiful. They were such nice and cordial people, this was my big home. And my great-great-grandmother, my great-grandmother, and my grandmother, yes, my grandmother, that was always- there was always something like that, women, who stood out as particularly strong characters. When I look at my great-great-grandmother's picture today, you think that- she was already over eighty at the time. You think- well, she looked pretty grumpy. Yes? But that was just her very strong character. And my great-great-grandmother had seven daughters. And then there were always these very nice allusions and jokes. Men? We only need them to have children. But do we really need them aside from that? [laughs] Yes, but how much? That was always an unspoken message. And my great-grandmother, whom I also liked very much, thought the same way. And my grandmother, and then, when my female ancestors died- unfortunately, my grandmother didn't get old compared to her grandmother, her mother, who got a lot older, so they survived their own grandchild. There was always something like that among my aunts and great aunts and great-granddaughters, there was always a female head of the family. Some female in our family always played an important role. We always waited for what the great-great-grandmother had to say. Yes? And a lot of things were aligned according to that. It was actually the one whose advice you listened to in the first place. And let me tell you something Sławka. Don't think that I understood all of that immediately. I discovered it myself and it was difficult and took a while. I was probably forty or something. Yes? That's when I really started thinking about it. The interesting thing was that the entire clan, men and women. There were also very interesting men in the family. So men and women, the entire clan, were informed when that important person died, and then the next person was chosen, so to speak. Yes? But, a lot of things, they didn't necessarily work via language either, but then they

said: Mathilde, now it's your turn. Yes? Now it's your turn. And the interesting thing is that when my grandmother Mathilde died, the "crown" was passed on to my mother without a remark. She had been the oldest, yes? It was passed on to my mother, because of being the person she was. And once in a while, her siblings, aunts, great aunts, and everything that was, well- this structure was so fine, you know, at first it wasn't very visible to the outside world, because it was so present, it worked like this, it was an incredibly exciting thing for me, and I experienced it that way from my childhood onwards, and of course I only realized that much, much later. You can imagine that right? And then I went to school and then I was in school, I never in my life have ever been so bored as in school. You have to imagine 90 or 95% of the teachers were male. You have to imagine there were no female role models at all. We had Annette von Droste-Hülshoff⁷ in poetry. The only thing we 14-15 year olds saw in her was an unmarried virgin. Although Droste, such an eloquence, she is unbelievable. Yes, in German. But there were no female role models. We had two more female teachers, some old hags. One of them wrote these shameful poems about me. Yes, two really old hags, you know? I am a good example of someone that had only male role models. And I think I had this problem very early on, yes, I listened to it all, but I had the problem very early on that for many things I didn't get an answer. You see, that was a lesson for me. Also in regards to my orientation.

And I say that again because it's very important to me, from my own point of view. It's in no way a question of minimizing or belittling the work of those we call great men. Not at all. But the other side of the coin was missing. That was certainly the second reason that led me to join the movement of feminism. I also have to say that my mother's interests and her life played a big role. My mother wanted to work again in 1956 I think, when I was eleven years old. My father said that you are welcome to do that and sign a contract, but then I will go there tomorrow and make sure to annul it. Because he thought that his wife working would be beneath him as a senior teacher. And my mother wanted to work so much. Right? You saw it that way. I think it was like that, and I would like to say this again, I can't say that my brothers were feminists, but seeing what women they married afterwards it seems like they were supportive of it? Was feminism a commitment to women's rights at all? I don't want to call it feminism, but an honest commitment to women's rights, that was as important to my brothers as it was to me. That's what I'm saying. Uh, they are, unfortunately, both my brothers are no longer alive. That- I- uh- well, I still mourn their deaths. I also mourn my parents' deaths. Above all, my mother's death. But that's life. Sometimes we have to say goodbye. But as I said, I was at that point then. I never again got as bored as I did at school. You know, and that just leads to children like me. They just start doing a lot of stupid things. It was clear to me [laughs]. Yes? And then I started studying. I also have to say that for my parents the most important thing were the children during the post-war period. The most

⁷ Annette von Droste-Hülshoff was an important 19th-century German author, poet and composer. "Annette von Droste-Hülshoff." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Annette_von_Droste-H%C3%BClshoff (Accessed February 26, 2020).

important thing was that the children studied. My, uh, my father earned good money because he was a civil servant. But my parents were not interested in wasting their money though. While the whole Federal Republic⁸ went on holiday to Italy and bought cars and TV sets they did neither. They sacrificed a lot so that their children could study. And that was the other way round for me, because I knew that, uh, I had to take up a profession first, to prove that I would make use of the chance they had given us. And then I became a teacher of German and history. For the middle school, yes from 10 to 15, later 16, during that time. And then I worked as a teacher for six years. During my 20s so to speak. And the only real problems I had during that time was- you have to imagine, that was in '68. During that time I had some incredibly lazy colleagues who did nothing for the children. I couldn't stand that. I can say that in one sentence. I already said that before. The year 68 was a pedagogical front. Yes? It was about, um, yeah, having a different concept of being a teacher that first and foremost felt responsible for the children, and I can tell you I had one and the same class for six years. Yes? It was about making the children strong, it was about making the children talk, it was about supporting small personalities, to really help some small plants grow. And I think I was hated tremendously at the school where I worked for that reason. I was hated by these colleagues, especially the male colleagues. Yes?

They used to open the book and say, "What am I doing today? In the conference hall. And I was one of those teachers that worked together with parents, one who took care of the children, who made sure that they, uh, got their school degrees. That they got an apprenticeship. And at the same time I made sure they grew up to be people who dared to open their mouths. Yes? I have to say, Sławka, I quickly reached the limits of my officialdom, because I actually wanted to get rid of grades. You know, back then, that was very important for us. And I found out that in this kind of work environment, where you really educate people to accept democracy, I experienced so many positive surprises due to the children and teenagers. I learned what they were able to assess, and how they were able to follow, and how something like that can really become a small collective and not just children who sit there and say: Oh, I did not finish my homework again, you know? But to really create something together with them. And then I- I think I did a lot of work. Those were my twenties. I worked a lot, Sławka, and, uh, I worked for up to 60, 70 hours a week. The teaching profession is simply like that. You can either be lazy and try to just work through your hours. Or you take it seriously and then it almost never stops. And I didn't have time to educate myself back then, you know, I always thought I had to learn more now. Do you know what I mean? I somehow thought I have to study a lot more, I have to know a lot more. And then the year 68 came and I had my third experience with my male colleagues, with my male superiors. This time it was a good experience. Usually I only had terrible experiences. Some male colleagues denounced me, or tried it. We were politically left, but I was in no party, like

⁸ This is referring to the Federal Republic of Germany, also called West Germany during this time period. This republic was first formed after World War II and then reunified with East Germany in 1990.

"Federal Republic of Germany." The Free Dictionary.

<https://www.thefreedictionary.com/Federal+Republic+of+Germany> (Accessed on February 26, 2020).

the DKP⁹ for example, you know what I mean? Those people were banned as teachers and couldn't join our school. But that wasn't because I was there, uh, because I was somehow afraid, but it was for a simple reason, because these parties didn't, uh, give me what I was looking for in their content in all left-wing groups, and had also structured themselves in this way, and I believe that they were all male structures, that is, male systems. Perhaps you remember this famous throw of the tomato, yes? That is, no one listened to the women or the women were just hired to make bread rolls. At that time I also joined a trade union, I also set up a labor union¹⁰ group in our college. Yes? My superiors were not happy as you might imagine. But that didn't matter to me. Uh, I didn't go there, I shared many ideas, but I found myself in these, uh, left-wing, also left-wing radical groups, I didn't find what I was actually looking for. Because one thing was clear: what we wanted was to change society. And not just say: 'We want better conditions'. Rather, we wanted to renew society from the ground up, and the problem women faced was surfacing more and more at that time. Yes? Well, I can say that for now. And here's a nice anecdote. We always used to make this joke that working as official is like receiving a life sentence. Yes? And then I said, I'm quitting my job now and I'm going to study again. Then [laughs] - I'll never forget, I had lunch with a colleague, and then he said: 'I heard you quit.' 'Yes', I said, 'I quit'. I already quit. And then he said: 'but you are employed for life!' I said: 'Yes. But you know, I still have a lot more to learn and study.' And then I did that, I found a job in Dortmund¹¹ at the adult education centre through, uh, other colleagues, I worked there in the evening. And I was there, that was great. Everything we had set in motion came back. In the pedagogy- you know, there were a lot of people who did not even have a primary school leaving certificate. After they had finished an apprenticeship they started going to school again in the evening. To get their intermediate school-leaving certificate, school-leaving certificate, intermediate school-leaving certificate, Abitur¹².

And then there was the Volkshochschule¹³ in Dortmund, where the system was very well set up. And that's where I used to work in the evenings and I started studying again during the day. And at the same time, well, a little later, there are always breaks in the- that is, not breaks, phases that are over. I did that for a while, yes. And that was the case, I had lived

⁹ The DKP stands for the *Deutsche Kommunistische Partei*, or German Communist Party in English. It is a far-left minor communist party in Germany.

"German Communist Party." Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Communist_Party (Accessed on March 3, 2020).

¹⁰ Labor unions and trade unions are often used interchangeably, and are collective bargaining units of workers.

"Trade union." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trade_union (Accessed on March 3, 2020).

¹¹ Dortmund is a city in the Ruhr area of Germany.

"Dortmund." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dortmund> (Accessed on March 3, 2020).

¹² Abitur is an examination that students in Germany must take before they can attend university.

"Abitur." Merriam-Webster <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Abitur> (Accessed on March 3, 2020).

¹³ A *Volkshochschule* is a community college or adult education center in many German cities.

"Learning German at the Volkshochschule." Zurika <https://www.zurika.com/2008/07/learning-german-at-volkshochschule.html> (Accessed on March 3, 2020).

together with a man for a while, yes? And when I left the school, I split up and moved five houses away. Before that I lived much further away. Yes, we finally broke up. I didn't quit my job for the time being, but gave up this path. Yes? And then I, uh, from there I then, uh, went back to university. Then I studied sociology with an emphasis on adult education. I did that in the evening, at different universities in Bochum and Münster¹⁴. That is, during the day I studied and in the evening I went to work. And that happened exactly at the time when I had finished this phase in my life, I then, uh, addressed a friend, we were different couples, as was the case at the time, in Dortmund, where all those who thought they were left lived there in a quarter. Do you know what I mean? And one day we started talking about our situation, about our partners. Yes? Or husbands, depending on who it was. I was not married, yes. And imagine, then we suddenly started talking about us. Then a friend of mine, Ursula, says to me, one day she says, you, we have thought about it, we should actually meet. Yes? And that's when we founded the first women's group in Dortmund. We were ten women, ten and a half I'd say, because some of them visited a lot less. But the core consisted of ten women. You can't imagine that. The leap in consciousness appeared suddenly. Many women said, yes, we also want to change this society, we also want to orient ourselves towards Marxism and we want to read Karl Marx¹⁵. Yes, but no one is hearing us? No one is listening to us women. That's it. And that led us to say that we first have to meet alone. Oh the horror. Imagine that! I will never forget that, because we were searching for the right things to read. To find a starting point, to know what women thought before us and so on. We knew nothing and nobody. And then we started, Engels, "origin of the family",¹⁶ because thank God the good man expressed himself about women. Later August Bebel, "Woman and Socialism".¹⁷ Once again they were books written by men. And there's one thing I will never forget. It was the first book from the trade union movement, uh, by a woman named Jutta Menschik. I hope that's what it was called. Yes? And she had written a book titled "Equality and Emancipation". Of course most of us read that and a lot of us were women from the leftist, rebellious movement of that time. Without being anywhere else, some were also engaged elsewhere. That was not the case for me. And there we had this group, we sat down for a year and

¹⁴ Bochum and Münster are cities in the Ruhr area of Germany.

"Bochum." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bochum> (Accessed on March 3, 2020).

"Münster." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M%C3%BCnster> (Accessed on March 3, 2020).

¹⁵ Marxism is a method of social, political and economic analysis developed by Karl Marx in the 19th century. It analyses society's classism using a materialist interpretation.

"Marxism." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marxism> (Accessed on March 6, 2020)

¹⁶ Friedrich Engels wrote a book called 'The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State: in the Light of the Researches of Lewis H. Morgan' which uses historical materialism to analyse Karl Marx's notes to Lewis H. Morgan's book 'Ancient Society.' Some of Engel and Morgan's ideas spoke of a 'matrilineal clan' preceding the patriarchy, giving women power.

"The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State." Wikipedia.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Origin_of_the_Family,_Private_Property_and_the_State (Accessed on March 6, 2020).

¹⁷ August Bebel's book 'Woman and Socialism' was written in the 19th century in Germany and discussed how economics, politics and social movements affect women.

"August Bebel (1840-1913) and his book Woman and Socialism (1879)." Towards Emancipation? <http://hist259.web.unc.edu/augustbebel/> (Accessed on March 6, 2020)

thought that we have to think for ourselves now. Yes? At the same time the fight for the abolition of §218¹⁸ began. Yes? Then one day we said we have to draft this policy paper. That was in the year 73 or 74. And then we said we have to deliver this message to other women.

Of course we aimed at recruiting the bourgeois left-wing or non-intellectuals of the city of Dortmund, yes, we were of the opinion that we had to listen to the beating heart of the working class above all. Yes? [laughs] I can tell you something. Anyway we created a big event at the Volkshochschule Dortmund back then. And we simply invited women, handed out slips of paper, did that on matrices, and so on. Yes. And we handed out notes, and we were exhausted. There were 200 women there. Yes? And we invited, uh, Alice Schwarzer,¹⁹ too. We wanted to see her talk, and she was already very well-known. And then we met every Wednesday here and there. We didn't have a women's centre yet, nothing, yes. And there we were in a social college, that's what it was called. I think we were there. Then they always provided us with a room. And then they all arrived. All of a sudden we were 200 women. Then we said, what do we do now? And now it becomes interesting. Now it's getting interesting. Because one thing was clear. We did not want a bourgeois framework.²⁰ No creation of an association. We did not want to fall under the bourgeois male law. Yes? We wanted, uh, no power structure. Of course we had this illusion. Yes? We didn't want the same power structures we knew from political groups or parties or politics. We didn't want that. Yes? But what did we want? Now we were suddenly 200 women strong, and often at the, um, at the- our Wednesday meetings were attended by 100, 150, sometimes even more women. Then we said, we have to create a women's centre. While we were trying to establish that a lot of campaigns were done towards achieving the 218. Yes? There were campaigns ongoing in the whole of Germany, yes, from Munich to Cologne, in the Ruhr area, there were an unbelievable amount of cities, where women started to organize themselves at the same time as we did. The Women's campaign Dortmund, the FAD,²¹ as we called it, uh, was one of the important, large women's centres in the Federal Republic at that time. And what many people no longer remember today is that during the small beginnings we did the following: Regional meetings, the women's groups from, uh, North Rhine-Westphalia almost always met in Cologne, sometimes also in Bochum, but mostly in Cologne. Cologne already had its first women's centre at that time. And we all met there and also organized the things for 218.

¹⁸ Section 218 of the Constitution of Germany outlawed abortion.

"Abortion in Germany." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abortion_in_Germany (Accessed on March 6, 2020)

¹⁹ Alice Schwarzer is a German journalist and contemporary feminist who campaigned for the abolition of Section 218 of the German Penal Code.

"Alice Schwarzer." Towards Emancipation? <http://hist259.web.unc.edu/alice-schwarzer-1942/> (Accessed on March 6, 2020)

²⁰ According to Marxism, the bourgeoisie were the politically progressive social class, usually part of the middle class.

"Bourgeoisie." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bourgeoisie> (Accessed on March 6, 2020)

²¹ The FAD stands for Frauen Aktion Dortmund in Germany, which translates to Women's Action Dortmund. Age Foto Stock. <https://www.agefotostock.com/age/en/Stock-Images/Rights-Managed/PAH-112060440> (Accessed on March 9, 2020)

Not only in Dortmund, not only in Cologne, not only in Munich, Frankfurt, Hamburg or such, but we also did national demos. That was immediately after- you surely already know about it and you have heard about it. This so-called signature event that many women were a part of. It was published in the Stern. 'I am X, I had an abortion.'²² So on the one hand we had our own political struggle in this society, to abolish this paragraph. On the other hand, we were faced with this question. We who are creating a new world, what are we doing now? It was very important, I remember like it was today, yes? I see another woman who was physically very small, yes? She suddenly stood up in the Chamber and said, 'I have never spoken to more than three women before'. Yes? In other words, it was a school for an incredible number of women, Sławka. They simply said that they could talk here. Which actually led to another anecdote. When we created the women's centre the following year, we had a garage in front of us with a very large steel roller blind. Yes? And that was always lowered when we were meeting. Yes?

When everyone was there, and so on, when someone came later, it was raised, and so on. And after the end of our session there were the husbands and such, their friends, yes and they always said, 'Why can't we go in there?' We said, 'We have to talk to each other alone'. And what are you doing in there without us? That was the best thing. What are you doing in there without us? Yes? Those were such wonderful moments. And even today it's difficult to pass this on, even historically, so if you ask me, I wouldn't want to have lived the life I had during any other time period. Because that was such a wonderful time. With everything that we achieved, Sławka. Everything was incredibly difficult, yes? But this, this verve. And this, yes, also kind of naive, you know, this energy that we had, to say, 'We do everything differently'. That was so infinitely precious. Let me just say that I still like to remember it today, of course. **[00:33:35.07]** So this is the time between 1973 and, '74 and '78, in which I- because while I also studied, many other women worked. And because of my studies I always had a bit more time to take care of the center, despite all that, also because of my work in the evening, but despite all that. And I think I did a lot of political work back then. Yes? Because that was simply important. And you think, if I heard you correctly earlier, dear Sławka, yes, just like you, that we never asked the question, what does it cost? Or something like that. Or how much do I get for doing this now? That didn't exist at all. The entire results of the women's movement were, of course, unpaid. To a very, very, very large extent, you would- you can probably confirm that for yourself just as well, I would say, yes? And today everything is already working, it hasn't worked for a long time, we know that. But these beginnings, where it wasn't about, uh, how much is going on, but where it was about saying we are doing this, we are creating a reality, and we are creating it with our own strength. When we were in this room in the Junggesellenstraße, it was very nice, the street was called Junggesellenstraße, where we had our women's center, yes? There, uh, we had really found

²² Feminist Alice Schwarzer started an event in West Germany in 1971 where high-profile women publicly confessed to having undergone abortions in an attempt to oppose Section 218. This event was later published in West German magazine 'Stern.'

"We've had abortions!" Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/We%27ve_had_abortions! (Accessed on March 9, 2020)

very nice, big rooms, which we renovated ourselves, covered with mattresses, painted everything and so on. That was no problem. But it wasn't just that we made this beautiful meeting place out of it, it was incredible, it was the first room in Dortmund, far and wide, which was only for us women, for us women. Yes? That was real, so I think it was an incredibly important thing. And then of course that happens, dear Sławka, now I will talk about two things. Then here's what happens when 100, 200 or even 1000 women get involved somewhere and say we're creating a new world. Mon dieu, that's perfectly clear, dear Sławka, that this has not only one, but probably 40 directions. Do you understand? That is, we all thought about new ways. On a certain basis of the criticism we had made. But that clearly means that of course there are different ways out of it. Yes? And that was so crucial, I will never forget it. At some point, I guess it was around '77 or something, a women's bookstore was founded in Dortmund called Zimtzicke. Zimtzicke was a swear word for women like us.²³ Do you understand? Maybe you can't imagine that, but I lived in a time where I wasn't allowed to enter a pub by myself, let alone order a drink. We think about Islam and the Muslims today. We think about the rites of the Muslims, where 90% of the public space is occupied by men, yes? There was no such thing, and we gradually conquered it all.

Hence the women's bookstores. I will never forget the moment, it is really tragic. I stepped into the bookstore, saw two books laying there in the whole bookstore. At first they were on the table. Anja Meulenbelt's "Die Scham ist vorbei".²⁴ I personally thought it was horrible. And the second one was Verena Stefan's "Häutungen".²⁵ I forced myself, I forced myself to read these books, otherwise I wouldn't have been able to talk about them to the other women. It was for me a way of feminism, which I accept. I accepted it with difficulty, because it was far too little analysis, far too little thinking about our society. And yet today I can say that the personal development, the individual development, which women began then for their own lives, was of course incredibly important. Let me say that again. And I'm telling you this because, of course, in our women's centre, it was split at the beginning. Then it was all about that, a wonderful example. I know, I remember it so clearly because I led the discussion that evening. Yes? That was: Are we still making a demo of the abolition of the 218? Or let's withdraw now and finally think again. That was discussed that way. That went on for two hours, two and a half hours, the discussion went on with an unbelievable number of contributions. They were also very committed. And then we said: 'well, let's vote.' Then we voted. I remember exactly because we were a hundred women that day. 55 women

²³ The German word *Zimtzicke* translates in English to "stupid cow."

"Zimtzicke." Collins Dictionary. <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/german-english/zimtzicke> (Accessed on March 9, 2020)

²⁴ Anja Meulenbelt's book *Die Scham ist vorbei* translates in English to "The Shame is over," which was an important piece of second-wave feminist writing.

"Anja Meulenbelt." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anja_Meulenbelt (Accessed on March 9, 2020)

²⁵ Verena Stefan's book *Häutungen* translates to "Shedding" and was based on her experiences living in Berlin. "Verena Stefan." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Verena_Stefan (Accessed on March 9, 2020)

agreed to doing a demo²⁶ and 45 women were against a demo. We have to meet to think, yes, to think further and about us, about ourselves, and so, no, these two ways. And then, well, they won. The women, it was half past ten, yes, they got up, took their things, and wanted to go home. Suddenly, out of the crowd, out of the standing crowd, a voice: 'Women, have you ever thought about the fact that 45 is almost half?' Yes? You know, that was incredibly crazy. The women all sat down again and we discussed until half past one. And that's a very good example of how it went. At half past one we then voted again. And we made the following suggestions: 'We'll do one last demo now, and then we won't do any more, because then we'll see how the political situation continues to change, and then we'll meet to think about it.' And that was approved by over 90%. All in all, uh, you know, that's incredibly interesting, because I worked on a project about the Berber²⁷ women in North Africa years later. And I noticed that for a long time, a long time, a long time, for thousands of years the Berbers had had this form of, uh, democracy, where it wasn't just a matter of a simple majority, but also of what wisdom a person had, even women despite it being a male society - less so, but also old women, yes, who were asked - so that the decision-making processes- I didn't, I thought that reminds me of something. It was the same way for us, and we kept on discussing until we finally found a solution that was acceptable to almost everyone. Do you understand? And these are other forms of democracy. And if I look at it today, we are currently in an unbelievable, socially enormous situation of revolution that goes through the third world, the virtual world, the Internet, as always, the digital world and the rapid development of this world, unbelievable, with incredible speed. And on the other hand the questions of democracy and what kind of democracies come up. We have just had the good example of the failed Jamaica coalition,²⁸ and you can see where this is actually taking us.

When you think about the form of democracy. It was quite interesting, but what was important for us at that time was to break new ground. Looking for new ways. And there is something real about that, not to forget, I don't want it to be misunderstood. The decision to become involved in this society as a feminist, yes, that was a decision you made, from then on you belonged to a rebellious minority. And if you somehow returned to the "normal public sphere" you had to fear the consequences of not only being attacked, but insulted,

²⁶ By using the word 'demo', Koch is referring to conducting a 'demonstration,' which is defined as "a public display of group feelings toward a person or cause."

"Demonstration." Merriam-Webster. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/demonstration> (Accessed on March 9, 2020)

²⁷ The Berbers were a group of nomads from North Africa with Arab ancestors who inhabited the Sahara desert around 5000 BCE.

"Meet The Berbers Of North Africa: The Nomads Who Survived Where No One Else Could." All That's Interesting. <https://allthatsinteresting.com/berbers> (Accessed on March 9, 2020)

²⁸ The parties of Germany are called the 'Jamaican alliance' because of the colors they represent - black, green and yellow - which resemble the Jamaican flag. In 2017, Angela Merkel tried to encourage a coalition between these parties, which later failed when one of them (the pro-business Free Democratic Party) walked out of negotiations.

"German coalition talks collapse after deadlock on migration and energy." The Guardian.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/19/german-coalition-talks-close-to-collapse-angela-merkel> (Accessed on March 9, 2020)

denigrated, that was normal. That wasn't just Alice Schwarzer, yes, that was for women who thought like we did then and like me, that was common practice. That was unbelievable. Society avoided this question. That lasted for years, of course. I would like to mention two more things at this point, two decisive discussion points, which were discussed by the entire women's movement, not only in the Federal Republic, not only in France, not only in those countries where the feminists, the women, stood up. These were two infinite topics. Of course, a large part of the women's movement was politically left-wing, often indefinable. But we wanted a fundamental change in society. Then came the so-called endless discussions, what is actually more decisive in the structure of our society? The fight against capitalism or the fight against patriarchy? Yes? These two topics were discussed alternatively for decades. Without end. I stand by that notion. Do you understand? What has priority? That was always the, uh, you know, argument of the left groups, including the DKP, the KBW, KPDML²⁹, as they were all called. That they said, yes, women! We agree with you, but first we have to abolish capitalism. And we didn't think so at all. Yes? And that was the same, we also knew this, we discussed this again and again, but we didn't get any further regarding that problem. Until that day, not to be forgotten, we stood up again. It was quite wonderful. The moments where women just stood up and said what they felt, yes? One woman stood up and said: 'I would like it if we discussed these topics without end, I would like the women who sit here and who are still organised in other left-wing groups to point that out, stand up and say where they are organised.' And you will not believe it, it happened! They stood up, the women stood up, and said: 'I am at the DKP.' They stood up. Another woman said: 'I am at the KBW.' And our dear Ingrid, for example, she was a creepy bigmouth, so to speak, she was always so wonderfully cheeky, yes?

She said: 'And I'm with the KPDML' And I thought shit. I thought, Oh God, that's terrible, yeah? Of course, and on the other hand, we had strong emotional relationships with each other. We knew each other, we liked each other, we also had our common goal of change. But we also had our differences. And then there were reports, Sławka. That the women said I always make a report when I come here. The men's groups asked the women in our FAD to report what we had discussed. Because they were standing outside and were not allowed in. And they also gave a report, yes? And that is why we then discussed whether we actually found it compatible, whether we actually found that these women could actually continue to belong

²⁹ DKP stands for for the *Deutsche Kommunistische Partei*, or German Communist Party; KBW stands for *Kommunistischer Bund Westdeutschland*, or Communist League of West Germany; KPDML stands for *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands/Marxisten-Leninisten*, or Communist Party of Germany/Marxist-Leninist. "List of political parties in Germany." Wikipedia.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_political_parties_in_Germany (Accessed on March 9, 2020)

"German Communist Party." Wikipedia.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Communist_Party (Accessed on May 9, 2020)

"Communist League of West Germany." Wikipedia.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communist_League_of_West_Germany (Accessed on March 9, 2020)

"Communist Party of Germany/Marxist-Leninist." Wikipedia.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communist_Party_of_Germany/Marxists%E2%80%93Leninists (Accessed on March 9, 2020)

to it or not. Because we thought that solidarity between women was the first thing that applied. That was the first ongoing subject. The second ongoing topic: How do we get our ideas into this society? Very important. That was also the time of the RAF,³⁰ you must not forget that. That was true not only for the women's group that I knew, but also for the other women's groups, so not only for Dortmund, yes? So I met them later in Berlin and everywhere else. That is very important. The women's movement did not want violent clashes. No violence. Not only here, uh, the RAF, was not supported, although there were also feminists in the RAF, some of them. The majority of the women's groups, women's centres in the Federal Republic of Germany was such that they came into conflict, they somehow did not have them- uh, necessarily the state, we were also against the state, we were an extra-parliamentary opposition. We must not forget that, right? That we said, well, it is better not to meet them, because extradition is also difficult, yes? Do you understand? But the decisive question went to our mutual friend Sigrid, yes?³¹ You can scratch that later. [the following part is missing] In order to get our ideas through, i.e. the equal rights of women, not just emancipation, the same payment. We were in the Ruhr area. Of course, we also showed complete solidarity with the women who went on strike in some businesses around Dortmund. We went there immediately. With buses and so on, and supported the women there. 48:13 Erwitte³², for example, was such a case. The second question was, how do we now get our ideas pushed through and into our society. Should we go to the institutions or not. Second topic. Unanswered until today even after endless debates. Above all perhaps the debating has let us learn. But just to tell you, it is unbelievable. The women who said that we were going into the institutions, and one of them, for example, was Sigrid, who said that we were trying to change the institutions from within, we knew exactly that they would be in the minority for a long time to come, and that it will be very difficult, but they applied to us as women, that is to say also to the other position, to those who adapted. Do you understand? They were the ones who adapted. And we had no doubts about that, as you can see from the results, the many women's research centers that were established in the universities and so on.

We had no doubt that they would pursue this honestly. But we found that they were first and foremost following a path, what we did not do at the time, which accepted the so-called prevailing social conditions. And they were not accepted by us. That, on the other hand, the wings of those who said it- it was incredibly important that we remain autonomous, without links to parties, without structures like parties, without superiors or something like that - we had always formed a council, which always changed every few weeks. We have to do many things differently from this society, and we have to remain a strong extra-parliamentary

³⁰ The RAF is the Red Army Faction, a far-left militant organization in West Germany. It was active between 1970 and 1998.

"Red Army Faction." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_Army_Faction (Accessed on March 20, 2020)

³¹ The Global Feminisms Project has an interview with Sigrid Metz-Goeckel on the Germany Interview site.

³² Erwitte is a town in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany. Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erwitte> (Accessed on May 10, 2020)

political force so that we can change this society. The consequence of this, dear Sławka, is that infinity- that is to say really- I do not want to say infinity at this point, but many women whom I know and whom I have known and whom I still know today have of course paid with their lives. Materially completely free. It was about the debate. You can't imagine that today. Are we even taking money from this state? Not really. Do you know how we feel about the rent, because the landlady didn't want to rent it to us, and we didn't want to go to a club. Five women guaranteed it and we paid the proud monthly contribution of six marks. So that we had a bit of leeway for posters and stuff like that. Do you know what I mean? And by that I mean the revolutionary one, which is very interesting by the way, I was able to follow it later, the French Revolution,³³ the commune of which I recently told you that the women at that time did exactly the same thing and pursued the same cause. The question is, do I adapt to this system and try to change it from within, or do I think a change from within isn't working and you can only keep your radical, even revolutionary ideas if you stay outside? That, dear Sławka, was the consequence. Naturally our media success was very limited. That the women- there was no such thing as that, that they were also heard. Do you know what I mean? That it was much harder being in this position. From there it was much harder to make oneself heard, even after the first regulations for the 218 came through. While the others of course also had their difficulty to make their voices heard. This gap between these fronts- let me say that again- half of them- yes, with commitment and also with renunciation of personal success. Many could have easily become successful but instead they ended up without security, that is without a safety net, while the others said, I cannot do that, and perhaps sometimes also said, I have family, I have children, yes, I take this path. That is something, these two big issues, capitalism versus patriarchy, oppression, which is more important, and these two, the institutional way, the way through the institutions or the way outside have never been discussed to the end in the women's movement and I tell you today that was a mistake, not a mistake I personally can also say this happened to myself, I not understand that, it was wrong from the point of view of thinking to discuss this against each other at all. Do you understand? It must be thought of differently. It has to be formulated differently. It must be approached differently, from the point of view of thinking. Much later we talked about feminist thinking, and a woman's own thinking, and do women think differently than men, and of course we also thought a lot about that. But I see it today in such a way that we at that time in this either-or situation, that this either-or situation was already the wrong starting point from the point of thinking. So much for my phase at the FAD in Dortmund. [laughs]

[00:54:32.13] SW: Yes, the FAD phase lasted until the...

[00:54:38.17] GK: Until, I came back, but I went to Berlin in '78, yeah? So you can say that from '73 to '78 I not only accompanied the work, but also very intensively helped to shape it,

³³ The people of France started the French Revolution in the 18th century in an attempt to overthrow the monarchy.

"French Revolution." History.com <https://www.history.com/topics/france/french-revolution> (Accessed on March 20, 2020)

yes, in the women's centre in Dortmund as well. By the way, this is the reason why my girlfriends, my friends, absolutely wanted it to be recognized, if I may say so again. That is also something that distinguishes Sigrid, yes. I'm assuming that Sławka, without [the following conversation section being missing]

[00:55:10.11] SW: ...driven to [Ber?]lin What made you do it? What was the occasion? What did you do back then?

[00:55:21.13] GK: In the time of my work in the women's center, construction and so on, I have lived together with a very nice man. Yes? Of course he immediately took part in, uh, preparations for demos and so on, he immediately fully cooperated, yes? So, on the side. He also had no problem at all with the fact that he wasn't allowed to go to the women's centre or anything. Not at all. Really nice person, we are still friends today. Yes? But our relationship ended. That was again such an interface. But it is not like I would have left because we ended our relationship. But I discovered a new great passion in this context, certainly concerning my own path, and that was the theatre. The political theatre.³⁴ The theatres, these- you know, with their big stages and their huge budgets and stuff, that never interested me very much. I was always interested in good theatre. I've often been in the BE back then, the Berliner Ensemble.³⁵ Remember, that was in the East, too, right? Naturally socialistically contaminated, we know that, right? A lot of people engaged with Brecht.³⁶ And I had gotten to know a completely crazy theatre group, troupe, called Theater Manufaktur.³⁷ Those were all, uh, Austrians. They came from Vienna. But they had settled in Berlin. And they did a play, a play about the revolution in Vienna in 1848, which was also the title of the play. You know, Sławka, it was a bit like our women's movement. That was the invention of theatre. They took some towels and some wood and old clothes that they had laying around and made them into costumes, and left one- a historical moment, they really gave birth, that really was wonderful. And that was how the people of Vienna got up, how the Viennese judged their situation, how they fought, comparable to the struggle of the commune. Again a piece of what you just said, of history, of what you told, as I did for us, when we discovered that we already had so many committed women and a women's movements around 1900 and in the 19th century. The book by Ute Gerhard, professor of history, well known in our time as feminists. The one who made this wonderful paperback, "Unerhört" (unheard of), is a very nice play on

³⁴ Political theatre is theatre that comments on political and social issues.

"Political Theatre." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_theatre (Accessed on March 27, 2020)

³⁵ The Berliner Ensemble was a theatre company in East Berlin established by playwright and poet Bertolt Brecht in 1949. It was an independent state theatre and was committed to political theatre.

"Berliner Ensemble." Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Berliner-Ensemble> (Accessed on March 27, 2020)

³⁶ Bertolt Brecht was the man who established the Berliner Ensemble.

"Berliner Ensemble." Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Berliner-Ensemble> (Accessed on March 27, 2020)

³⁷ The *Theatermanufaktur Berlin* was a free theater group from Berlin active between 1970 and 2007. They travelled around Germany for performances.

"Theatermanufaktur Berlin." Wikipedia. https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theatermanufaktur_Berlin (Accessed on March 27, 2020)

words, yes? The story of the "first German women's movement" in the 19th/20th century. Dear Sławka, later, much later, I went back to antiquity, and I could tell you so many wonderful stories that the women, especially the Roman women, yes, uh, the Greek women, the Roman women who spoke in the Forum Romanum, was there such a thing? Yes? Because they were very patriarchal societies. In ancient Greece the woman was not allowed to leave the house alone, and I am talking about the bourgeois woman, not the slave. So that if we want to grasp our history somehow, we have to assume, not only that there were already fantastic women in the 19th/20th century, but at all times of oppression. And you know, you know the wave, how the witches found out what happened to the women. And the more we have dealt with it, and the more historians have dealt with it, but so have we, yes? The first books that came out were "The 20th Century of Women", by a woman I know very well, Florence [surname incomprehensible] a French woman, 5000 women had that listed. That was the first one. It wasn't about feminists, as you explained earlier, but women, remarkable, great women, of course Maria Callas³⁸ as well. Nobody asked her about her feminism. Do you understand? That was, how can you describe this spirit of this time, this departure, this departure in so many places and try to go on with what? Great moments, I tell you. So, why did I go to Berlin? These people, this theatre troupe, followed. I was already studying in Berlin. That happened during my first studies. And I always kept in touch with Berlin. Because Berlin was in our imaginary world where the revolution basically took place. Which is also true. That comes later. Yes? But here's where it happened. That's when they came to us. And performed this in 1848. And we were, our circle of friends, men and women, yes, we were together. We were so enthusiastic about them, and about the theatre. And I really just sat there and dreamt, thought, that's insane, how they do something out of nothing. Yes? That's fantastic. And then we drank a beer with them afterwards, and we noticed that we already did that today with those who stand outside and live so very poorly. They were 8 people in a single apartment with one room. They all slept on the floor. We said: 'This is unacceptable'. We split up immediately, each of us took one or the other, and we lived in very nice old flats, we had space. And then we became friends. But I was with them. I always became obsessed with topics that interested me. So. Then they said, man, don't you want to come to Berlin? Yes? And then, of course, I went there. And then I also went to Berlin because of the theater group Manufaktur, at the beginning of '78. But I did the same thing, dear Sławka, because that was unprofitable. They earned maybe 800 Marks a month, or so, at best. And that was the principle in these revolutionary theatre groups, that everyone, from the stage technician to the actors they all did everything. Yes? Up to the person who wrote the plays, everyone earned the same money. Yes? That was simply set in stone. In all of them it was the same, there were such groups all over Europe. 1:02:08 So. And then I worked with them and still worked in exactly the same area as I had worked in Dortmund. That means, in order to feed myself, I first worked in the adult education centre in Kreuzberg³⁹ for quite a

³⁸ Maria Callas was a famous American soprano who lived between 1923 and 1977.

"Maria Callas." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maria_Callas (Accessed on March 27, 2020)

³⁹ Kreuzberg is a region in Berlin, Germany. "Kreuzberg." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kreuzberg> (Accessed on April 30, 2020)

while and did the same work here with the adults, who started a new life. They went back to school to get their school-leaving qualifications, in order to study. Yes? And there were great things in Berlin, there were so-called free schools in Berlin, by the way, there still are. Where everyone can go, no matter what their name is, what they look like and what kind of exams they have, and they simply take their Abitur. And this is a school that is self-governing. Which is done by those who study there. These are the results of a time when we tried to do things differently. So that nourished me, and that's where my passion stems from as well, but I actually wanted to become an actress all my life. Well, I didn't want to become an actress. But what I wanted was clear. Think about my prehistory. As soon as you step into the theatre or into this room, yes, you'll find that acting in theatre is to a great extent a woman's business. There are an incredible number of women who act.

The offer of the rolls is reciprocal. There are perhaps 10% roles for 90% actresses. And you know, you can, you can think of the following sentence. My goal was, I don't just want a women's theatre, I want a women's theatre with contents that come from us. Because look, sure, it's wonderful, these female roles that men have created. Everything from the point of view of men. Now please let's not go back and say how awful that is, or how many of these are clichés. We have wonderful things. Look at Heinrich von Kleist's *Penthesilea*.⁴⁰ What a man that was. Yes? Well, the men who also showed this brokenness. Büchner, Georg Büchner in *Woyzeck*.⁴¹ Or so. These women, or the roles in general, are fantastic. It's not like that wasn't great art. But, my dear, where were the women's roles created by the women? And where were the male roles created by women? You had a complete vacuum for a time, because it never got that far. And I can tell you, it is not like that today. While you are reading, in our *Zitty*⁴², yes, the *Volksbühne*⁴³ has a new director, very controversial, and he even hired a woman as director. A woman! Great! And I heard her on the, uh, radio, the interview. It wasn't zero, it was minus ten, but we can do that, you will say, that I only avenge [?], that they didn't take you, I never wanted to be taken by them. I just wanted to do something of my own. And I stayed in Berlin for a while, for about two years. And then I learned that there were even more revolutionary theatres in Paris. And that made me go to Paris. That's it. That's that for now. Yes, you say, but that's exactly, uh, I had a small theatre troupe in Paris for about seven or eight years. I did- we couldn't do as much as we wanted. Yes? But tried to do something in this direction, especially women's roles, plays by women, imagine I met a woman from the

⁴⁰ *Penthesilea* is a play from 1808 by German playwright Heinrich von Kleist. It is about a mythological Amazonian queen, Penthesilea and the exploration of her sexual frenzy.

"Penthesilea." Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Penthesilea_\(Kleist\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Penthesilea_(Kleist)) (Accessed on April 13, 2020)

⁴¹ *Woyzeck* is a play from 1837 by German playwright Georg Büchner. It is about a religious man with a sexually independent common-law wife, who has his child out of wedlock and later also has an affair.

"Woyzeck." Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Woyzeck-dramatic-fragment-by-Buchner> (Accessed on April 13, 2020)

⁴² *Zitty* is a biweekly Berlin city magazine. <https://www.zitty.de/> (Accessed on May 10, 2020)

⁴³ The *Volksbühne*, translated to the 'People's Theatre' is a theatre in Berlin, Germany. It originated from an organization called '*Freie Volksbühne*', or 'Free People's Theater' in 1890 and has been called Berlin's most iconic theatre.

"Volksbühne." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Volksb%C3%BChne> (Accessed on April 13, 2020)

national archives in Paris who told me - an excellent archivist - who told me: 'I have at least 50 handwritten plays of women around the turn of the century, 1900.' Then she had something- you may not publish that, I can talk about the woman, you can record it, but it's interesting. Did she say - she was already the executive director at that time - I'll photocopy that for you, you come to me during the break and I'll give it to you. Yes? Secretly, no. So if you knew the Paris bourgeoisie, society, you'd call it a tremendous act of courage to have done something like that. Yes? I'm still grateful to her, and I performed one of these pieces. And that was just a great experience. But what I didn't see at the time was I went to Paris to learn more, you know. To also learn to make theatre. I was with the great theatre teachers. Of course I also did a lot of seminars and things like that. Even at the age of 35, I still did handstands to physically express myself. But I myself, I wanted to know all that. You know, doing a lot of body work, doing a lot of voice work, doing literature work. But I tried that on my own, but I never wanted to become an actress. I wanted to create plays. And then do these plays with actresses, that's what I did. I've worked with people, I have to say today, I've just been looking at pictures and even back then I realized, those women were really, really good. But I completely misjudged Paris at the time, it is still the same today in a way. They are very much behind German society in regards to a lot of things, and even more behind the Berliners. I suppose there have already been- I have also been very involved, of course, what have we done if they went somewhere? Whether I went to Rome or to Palermo⁴⁴ or to Paris, we first went to see the women's bookstore. Then we first looked at what the women did, how they organized themselves, where the centers were and so on. That is, if you will, the crème de la crème of French feminism, I knew them all from A to Z. Yes? Of course I continued to get involved, that was the first thing we did as feminists. Yes? And then, the theatre work, learning something really nice from the ground up. There with great, with good theater makers to learn from, also good teachers. There were some excellent teachers there. And then you start it yourself. At the same time I have already started it myself. Yes? Then I brought different pieces to the stage. Basically in the same way we did it before. But it was completely unthinkable. It was also really unrealistic of me. To think that Paris could have the same breakthrough. And society was not at all ready to do that. And that led to, you know- in the meantime- you have to imagine I was in the beginning or middle of my forties. Over forty anyway. And then I also had to think about whether I want to live my whole life on 800 francs. Yes? That was not even 300 D-Mark⁴⁵ at that time. And that's the kind of misery that creates fear. If you have no money. So, and thereupon, my Berlin friends, theatre friends had also come to me, also looked at that. Then they said, listen, if you can't get through this, then come back to us. Yes? And then I went back to Berlin. End of the 80s. So you shouldn't think that all this is just such, you know, so unbelievable, today it would be so much, so much easier to get through with something like this here in Berlin. But I didn't want to work as a director

⁴⁴ Palermo is a city in Sicily, Italy. "Palermo." Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Palermo> (Accessed on April 13, 2020)

⁴⁵ D-Mark is a reference to *Deutsche Mark*, the official currency of West Germany. The interviewee is referring to the fact that 800 Francs was not even 300 Deutsche Mark at this point in her life. "Deutsche Mark." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deutsche_Mark (Accessed on April 13, 2020)

again. I did that for a few years. Working with actresses has been the most beautiful work in the world for me. That's the kind of work I was really suitable for, yeah? I think I was made for that and this is still happening now, [laughs]. I can't stop working at all. You know? Somebody has to say, it's over now. You know? It's a fantastic job. Fantastic. And it's not just about the work in the theater, Sławka, but above all it's the fact that I want to work with women. How many women do you think I met, even those who were 35, 45, 55 years old, and they said, finally someone who is starting to create female roles here. Another phase in my life. But some of them were women who had no idea what we were doing. Yes? So it was like that, that I first worked with them during the day. I'm certainly not an organizational genius either. But I first worked with them during the day, then drove home, and then worked on my stuff. So that I really- nobody should tell me what I am, [laughs], I am not sorry about that. I forgot, at the time, that I wasn't 50 anymore, but that I really had some real health problems. That's what happened. And, of course, that has subsided, especially since I retired. But now I would have to conclude by saying what I did, why I founded EFA⁴⁶ together with other women, in other words the European Women's Action. What we wanted, and what we did, and what we, I saw [laughs] It was a very nice sentence and an excellent portrait of Eisenstein. Outstanding French film critics. We don't have such a quality as [name incomprehensible] And I was never a fan of Eisenstein, not only because of his pathos, yes, but above all because I consider him an absolute misogynist.⁴⁷ Yes? Let me tell you about the scene in October, yes, the scene when it conquers the Tsar's Palace,⁴⁸ the crowd conquers the Tsar's Palace. Yes? They're on the other side, it's a women's battalion. They were always very famous for their fighting spirit. But they were all perverted lesbians. I swear to you. You have to see how they were shown to behave among each other. What a picture he draws of these weapons, so that dude must have really had problems with women, yes, I'm sorry. Maybe he was just gay or something?⁴⁹ I mean, it was certainly not that easy under Stalin, was it? But I want to tell you, I think he is- the pictures of women he drew that I remember well, he didn't attract me so much to this work. But [laughs, raises your index finger], as it is, after all, he belongs to the greats of the film industry and in general, of all films, certainly

⁴⁶ The Women's Foundation eFka is a feminist organization founded by the interviewee in March 1991.

"Women's Foundation eFka." EuroGender. <https://eurogender.eige.europa.eu/users/womens-foundation-efka-fundacja-kobieca-efka> (Accessed on May 1, 2020)

⁴⁷ Sergei Eisenstein was a Soviet film director in the 1900s.

"Sergei Eisenstein." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sergei_Eisenstein (Accessed on April 13, 2020)

⁴⁸ October, here, is a reference to Eisenstein's silent historical film 'October: Ten Days That Shook The World' from 1928, which is about the 1917 October Revolution (a revolution in Russia that overthrew the previous Russian Provisional Government led by Alexander Kerensky). The movie opens with the invasion of the Tsar's Palace. "October: Ten Days That Shook The World." Wikipedia.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/October:_Ten_Days_That_Shook_the_World (Accessed on April 13, 2020)

"October Revolution." Wikipedia. https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/October_Revolution (Accessed on April 13, 2020)

⁴⁹ Interestingly, a 2015 film called 'Eisenstein in Guanajuato' directed by Peter Greenaway explored Eisenstein's 10-day homosexual love affair with a male guide in Mexico.

"Greenaway offends Russia with film about Soviet director's gay love affair." The Guardian.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/30/peter-greenaway-sergei-eisenstein-in-guanajuato> (Accessed on April 13, 2020)

filmmakers. It was as interesting as those who researched him, what they told me, what I didn't know. How much he oriented himself towards Berlin and Paris. How much he did here in the 1920s with the Bauhaus movement,⁵⁰ what he himself was looking for. And I can tell you, it's not comforting, Eisenstein had over 200 film projects. Do you know how much he realized? 8. At least, they are masterpieces. There's no other way to put it. So. And that brings us to a wonderful topic, because that's now the very topic of the importance of creativity. Not only that of women, but also of men in our society. And I have- Thérèse, you haven't met Thérèse, have you? Nope? That's really a pity. You two would have gotten along very well. I always called Thérèse Créatrice de Tous les Jours. In other words, Thérèse was in herself such a bundle of invention and creating thing, yes, she simply always implemented everything she could think of. She says, [breathes excitedly] Thérèse, one of the most elegant women I knew in Paris, yes? I have nothing to wear. Oh, I'll just take a pair of trousers. And above all the famous one, la fête chez Thérèse, the festival at Thérèse, yes? She has a club, so Thérèse belongs to it, as I belong to these rebellious people, that would have been a woman, I have- I am- I don't know why I didn't do it. I think because Sigrid didn't ask me. But she would have, especially since she also knew her, and was also more often with her for dinner. She would have been as rebellious, she was in a way rebellious, I can tell you, I can still hide behind that today. Yes? Thérèse was, was married at the age of 19, of course as it should be, you know that, not only from Islam. The men are usually 10 years older, because they need experience. Yes? We know that. Good. And then she had four children, raised these four children, and then at 40 she also- French people are very Catholic, in church, she was such a good wife, yes? Then she had a Marxist priest who introduced her to Marxism. Thereupon a process of rebellion began, so that she divorced her husband at the age of 41. All four children said, Mama, we want to be with you. [Laughs] We don't want to stay with Dad, right? So, and then she- you have to imagine, she never learned anything. She belongs to this generation where people still said: 'Why, she's going to be married anyway. Right?' Then she started working as a saleswoman somewhere. Yes? Until she founded a fashion brand herself, yes? And above all that, she participated in all the rebellious movements in Paris, both mixed and female. It was one of those movements in France, when the fight against the ban on abortion began, the women in Paris, they carried out the abortion themselves. Yes? Totally illegal. All these things, both from a political point of view and above all from what Thérèse still was in a much larger sense, she was a doer. By the way, I have to do a portrait about her.

I still have a lot of shots of her. But you know, they're always projects like that, I tell myself, when I finish that, I'll do that, but you know how it is when you have several, and like you, you have to prioritize at some point. But I still have to do that. And then she founded an association called La Fête chez Thérèse, the festival at Thérèse. It looked like this, Thérèse was an incredibly good cook, a French cook, yes? I always said: 'man, I'll come, I will help you. She said: "Oh, chérie," she always said chérie to everyone, yes, "Oh, chérie, I'm much faster,

⁵⁰ The Bauhaus was an influential modernist art movement of the 20th century, examining the relationship between art, society and technology.

"Bauhaus." The Art Story. <https://www.theartstory.org/movement/bauhaus/> (Accessed on April 13, 2020)

let me do it." And then we were in her apartment, which was a big one-room apartment, very, very nice in an old house, one of the most beautiful apartments I saw in Paris, you come in and then she said: 'please don't be confused, half of this stuff comes from bulky waste. Yes? But she worked things out and did it. She laid her own floor, she bought an attic, she built it herself, I don't know, where from? Yes, but she always did. And then, La Fête chez Thérèse, that was always the case. First Sunday of the month, a very important political debate. A person was invited who gave a lecture, yes? And then it was discussed. And then there was dinner. No? And sometimes, often times we danced afterwards. Yes? That was Thérèse. And Thérèse did that in her apartment. And when I gave my Beguine⁵¹ lecture to her, yes, they were, everything was open. The people were still sitting in the hallway, on the stairs, they were sitting in their bedroom, in the kitchen, in the bathroom, everywhere, every seat was occupied. And I can still see that I was the only one sitting on a chair, so that I sat a little higher. And then a friend of mine, who I also like very much, an architect, said to me, "Gudrun, don't worry. We both sit on a beam when that collapses," [laughs], yes? And then it was like that, then she had to go somewhere else, then she rented a room, right? It was very nice. With the Protestants,⁵² that's always a minority, they had a nice hall. And there we were always a hundred. 01:20:16 And after she had been doing that for years, yes I said: 'Thérèse, I will be your dishwasher.' [laughs] I wanted to do something, yes? Then she said: 'everyone pays 30 francs.' There was an uncanny meal, yes, for eight, nine marks, yes, and the crazy thing, dear Sławka, that's perhaps nothing new to you either. Guess who always forgot to pay? A large part of those who had a lot of money. "Oh, I didn't see anything." "Oh, where's the plate?" Always forgot, so we knew exactly who it was, and Thérèse didn't care. Yes? So most of them, so a large part paid, yes? And only once it was the case that this covered the purchase. No? And they, uh, I had to observe that on several occasions, it makes me pretty furious when I see people who really, let's say, have good money, come from a rich family, and who then think it's really great that they're not obliged to pay.

There's a very dark side to this. But no matter. We had each other, and then Thérèse turned 70. And when she turned 70, we all said, Thérèse, now we all cook for you today. Yes? And everyone who came there made a wonderful meal for Thérèse, yes? It was wonderful. Then she stood up and said, yes, and with this I announce my farewell from my professional life and from my activities. So we said, yes, yes, Thérèse, go ahead, go ahead, yes? And a year later, after the year was over, she founded the women's centre in [Mont (?) unintelligible]. [laughs] That's it. I still miss it a lot. Very, very nice, it was also nice that we stayed very close friends for so long, that we were friends until the end, and when I heard that, you know, she had some bad tracheal cancer. And that was when she was 89, no? Within two months her health really went downhill, yes? So that was really unstoppable. That's when the body gets

⁵¹ Beguines were holy women in northern Europe who followed religion without joining an approved religious order. The movement began in the 1300s.

"Beguines." Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Beguines> (Accessed on April 26, 2020)

⁵² Protestantism is a form of Christianity that is separated from the Catholic church.

"Protestant." Collins Dictionary. <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english/protestant> (Accessed on April 26, 2020)

weaker and the cancer takes over. And then I immediately decided that I would stay in Paris. And accompany her. That was very, very important to me. It was very, very important for me to accompany her to the end. Well, that was, yes, it was just incredibly important to me. It was part of my mother's education, those are the ancient rural traditions. When someone died, we didn't run away, we went there. And I- that was very funny, I already indicated that to you. In my family it was the girl, my brothers didn't have to go there. My mother said you would come with me, yes? If someone died. And she also took care of the dead person. That had nothing, uh, I knew the people who had died. Yes? There were no personal relatives now, but, and my mother, she took care of them, you know? That was somehow- she looked after them and made sure they were also properly bedded and so on, you know? That was- that had nothing- for the first time I was scared. I was twelve, of course I was a little scared. But I am still of the opinion today that people should not be removed from the sight of death and the concept of death as a whole. That concept should be something we teach each other about. And children as well. I can also remember when my great-grandmother died, yes, we children always played around the coffin. We used to run around there all the time. Well, somehow, this distance also does something with death, first of all I think- look, they used to be, you know, they certainly still know that, they hold a vigil for three days, yes, even at night, with the dead. And, so I still knew that in my family, for example. But above all, uh, not, that is of course also against- of course the wind of our society and our time. To remove people from the dead in hospital if possible and then to remove them from it if possible. On the contrary. I think we should approach them.

[01:24:59.03] SW: Gudrun, allow me a journalistic question. That is, journalistic, but actually it's meant differently. You've been in that, in the feminist women's movement since the student revolt.

[01:25:10.21] GK: Yes.

[01:25:11.10] SW: What changed? Has anything changed during this time...?

[01:25:15.11] GK: Oh, well, the result?

[01:25:16.00] SW: What do you think? What...

[01:25:19.04] GK: Yes, I can tell you that very clearly. I told you that yesterday. I called my listening feature over 100 years of women's struggle, if you like, for equal rights for women, from 1900 to 2000: "100 Jahre und k_ein Stückchen weiter".⁵³ The "k" jumps out. I think that's one hundred percent my view. We still have a long way to go. We came a bit further. But we are still miles away from what we wanted. And I'll put it this way, I think that in order to understand our society, which has also been the case with women to a large extent, we have to face the analysis of a social situation. For example between 1968, '73 or '77 and 2017, yes, we are almost now, '68, 50 years further. The society against which we are competing is no longer today's society. It has changed in an unbelievable number of ways. But it is still a

⁵³ "100 Jahre und kein Stückchen weiter" translates to English as "100 years and a bit further."

patriarchal society. That's an unpopular word by the way. We now took the first steps towards to dealing with women's problems, getting these topics into society, also into the media, but to what extent? And at what price? And something that is lacking in this MeToo movement is more people talking about their experiences, telling others that someone may have touched them inappropriately. This way, like a phenomenology, to treat topics without seeing the background. Just think of this, in France there was this Strauss-Kahn story. He had raped this woman in the hotel.⁵⁴ Think of him, what's his name, your Polish, tell me, your Polish director, film director. This little one? Well? Talk to me. Rosemary's baby.

[01:27:44.05] SW: Ah. Polanski.

[01:27:46.25] GK: Polanski. "I didn't know she was 13."⁵⁵ Do you understand? It's a phenomenon that this Weinstein,⁵⁶ has fallen, it's a medium miracle. This means that the problem is now really in the public eye. And to think that America is an incredibly prudish country would be a mistake. If you step into the theatre, or the film industry, somewhere and see what price the women are paying, that's nothing new, that's everyday life. That's not just Weinstein or Strauss-Kahn, who thought that what he's doing isn't bad. Yes? In this context, where is the question of male sexuality basically posed? That would interest me. That doesn't concern the two, three, five men, it concerns an entire society, and we know that. In the companies everywhere, if you ask women they will tell you that. And as we know a large part of the media are sensationalists and while they might show how someone was treated they aren't dealing with the actual topics, which is bad. Back to your question. Yes? I say we need the analysis that we also did on patriarchal society. And we women, who want a society that is designed, constructed and carried out equally by men and women. Let me tell you a very simple example. The wars of the 20th century. The First and Second World Wars. Imagine if the voices of the mothers had been heard. Yes, we have our wonderful Tucholsky,⁵⁷ "Mother, what did you raise your children for, did you educate them for twenty years just to put them into a mass grave? We have wonderful poems from the time, against the war. Imagine if the mothers had been heard. With the same power as the men were heard. Yes? Maybe we

⁵⁴ *The People of the State of New York v. Strauss-Kahn* was a criminal case filed by New York hotel maid Nafissaou Diallo against French politician Dominique Strauss-Kahn relating to her sexual assault and attempted rape by Strauss-Kahn.

"New York v. Strauss-Kahn." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_v._Strauss-Kahn (Accessed on April 26, 2020)

⁵⁵ Roman Polanski is a film director who fled after being arrested and charged for raping a 13-year old girl, among other offences. "Roman Polanski sexual abuse case." Wikipedia.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Polanski_sexual_abuse_case (Accessed on April 29, 2020)

⁵⁶ In 2018, American film producer Harvey Weinstein was sentenced to 23 years in prison after over 80 women spoke out and made allegations of sexual abuse against him. This sparked the social media #MeToo movement, where more people continue to publicly speak out about their experiences with sexual abuse. "Harvey Weinstein." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harvey_Weinstein (Accessed on April 29, 2020)

⁵⁷ Kurt Tucholsky was a German poet, essayist and critic who wrote through the World Wars. "Kurt Tucholsky." Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Kurt-Tucholsky> (Accessed on April 29, 2020)

wouldn't have had such wars. The point for me is that we men and women together create a society that takes this into account, and which also - this is a question with which I also remain behind - of course, Sławka, if you imagine that - can you imagine how big the differences between men and women are? We are always told something about testosterone congestion, yes, that men can't help it, that men are power-determined, that men can't handle their sexual instincts differently. None of that is true. We know that. Thank God there are a few others, too. But the system we have is still determined by these criteria.

Now the women are advancing. Shall I tell you something? I would like to really hold on to that at this point. I'm afraid, if we don't already have it, that we really have a crisis of masculinity/the man image. What I told you from Algeria, that women are trained just like men, that's what we have. We have more female students than men. And there is the fact that they are supposed to be more successful in their profession. That's what is happening. But at the same time we have to consider whether this will not lead to a crisis of the man image, and whether we don't already have one. We are happy that the men are carrying our children, our babies, pushing the prams, helping the household to share this. Is this really our idea? And how do we get on with what we haven't achieved and what we actually want? Very briefly, I think we have achieved a fraction of that. And now the second question, in the minds of an incredible number of people, especially women, that's what was incredibly important to me in my feminist struggle at some point, that I said I'd bring you a little text from me, right? We screamed for so long, we don't want that, we don't want that, we don't want that, until we came up with the question, "What do we actually want? Where do we have the strength, yes, to dream of a world, yes, a so-called utopia, which does not mean a place, nowhere, but really a place, where we have the strength to do something - and I believe that parts of the women's movement have done that. And that parts of the women's movement also produced such ideas. But we are still very far away from what we are after, we are still very far away from really creating a different world according to different principles than the one we have at the moment. Look what we haven't talked about at all, Sławka, we know, you know, when I'm down there in the South of France, I always think that there's such a big villa on the right, probably it's a person selling armor. Yes, you know, you don't see that after all. You don't see that after all. Take a look at what war machines they have today. What weapons they have today. It's about whether Assad used poison or not.⁵⁸ Halabja ⁵⁹, this Kurdish city that was wiped out in the first Iraq war by a poison operation, 5000 dead. And then you learn with great regret that this poison was also supplied by a German company. This kind of stuff makes you so angry, you don't even know what to say,

⁵⁸ The interviewee is likely referring to the investigation on whether Bashar al-Assad, the President of Syria, used poisonous gas in the Syrian Civil War, which is ongoing.

"Use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Civil War." Wikipedia.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Use_of_chemical_weapons_in_the_Syrian_Civil_War (Accessed on April 29, 2020)

⁵⁹ Halabja is a Kurdish city in Iraq where a chemical attack against the Kurdish people in March 1988 took place during the closing days of the Iran-Iraq War. Wikipedia.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halabja_chemical_attack (Accessed on May 10, 2020)

right? And this power, which doesn't show itself at all, but which exists, we know that today, Sławka. Well, that can't be the world we want to live in - with all the things that are good in our world - it can't be the world that we women and we feminists wanted. That is very important to me.

And then, of course, I always told them about Berlin, and as a result we did something here back in '88, something that was discussed in the city, "Berlin - City of Women". Yes? And it was exactly about our utopias and the French women were mainly interested in our realisation. Because that was a great weakness of the Parisian bourgeoisie of these ladies, that they had very excellent demos and also very wonderful speakers. At the end of the day, this realization, as it existed in Berlin, they did not know that at all. Yes, they didn't know what 40 squatted blocks were. That's no reproach, Sławka. This is simply a historically changed situation that we had in Berlin, which the people in Paris didn't know at all. They also didn't know where West Berlin was. They had to ask me. They didn't even know that West Berlin was in the middle of the GDR. They didn't know that. Well there was just too little contact between the countries and then there was also their history. That's it. Then we said we'd make an exchange. We invite the feminists from Paris to Berlin. With the representatives of the women's projects and women's groups in Berlin. And then we had a small preparatory group, where the Women's Foundation had just come into being. Do you know? Then we had a preparation group and a woman came up with the idea and said, we call the meeting "But how to carry the laughter of my dream into the institutions? No? Like this. Great. They arrived, they visited us, the Parisian women, they saw what we created here, and that was in the time, even in the 80s. The squatted houses. They knew that in Paris - a house had been occupied before. The following always happened immediately, then the drug dealers went in. And so it was criminalized and of course immediately cleared with police power. For us in Berlin it was like that, dear Sławka, that was in Kreuzberg, you know, we had this special status in West Berlin, financed by the Federal Republic of Germany, but still under allied sovereignty. Yes? West Berlin was never a part of the Federal Republic, but under the grace of all four Allied Nations, yes, the Russians, the Americans, the English and the French were allowed to have a government here. They had no vote at all, no voting right at all in Bonn.⁶⁰ Yes, you see, and in this city there was this very special situation. You know how destroyed Berlin was. The following happened, these big gaps in the house and these old houses. Students had no living space.

The Turks arrived. They were crammed into such rooms [pointing to the room where she was sitting] of eight and ten people. I saw that myself. Yes? And there was anger, and you have to imagine, yes, even in the 70s, that they said, "That's unbelievable what's happening there. The big real estate companies, they got money for demolishing old houses. The houses, they had nothing, they were just old, you had to paint them and fix a staircase or something. Yes? And then they got money from the Federal Republic when they demolished these houses, and they got money when they built new houses there. That sparked such rage

⁶⁰ Bonn is a city in the North Rhine-Westphalia state of Germany. "Bonn." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bonn> (Accessed on April 30, 2020)

among us that we said, well, it's been good for a long time now. And what have we done, squatting. Do you know what the squats looked like? Of course there were some connections, so we knew when the police came. Then there were 5000 people with us. Next to the *Beginenhof*,⁶¹ at the *Stuk* project⁶² next door. Yes? The students and Kreuzberger was what our club was called. There were 46 apartments between 50 and 250 square meters. It became its own alternative world. Not only because it had such beautiful corridors on top, all shapes, shops, two cafés, crèche,⁶³ gallery, theatre, everything, it was a world of its own. And in the middle was a ruin. You haven't been in there yet, that would interest you too. A ruin of one that wasn't rebuilt on purpose. And that's where the first plants were planted that were in danger of disappearing. That was that, that wasn't the women's movement now, that was the whole of Berlin, from which later the "Alternative Liste", that is to say "Die Grünen",⁶⁴ emerged. They said that we needed something different here. A reality. And you know, our advantage was that we were the shop window to the GDR. They couldn't afford to bother us with the police all the time, but they had to prove to the GDR that we were ruled by the golden calf. Do you understand? And that led to the fact that here- after we had occupied it for the first time- it took years and was negotiated with the Senate, then we got rental contracts. What happened, what did we do when we moved in? We started renovating first. Simply to renovate the flats. Why should it be demolished? The house has nothing. Yes, it has to be renovated and maybe a shower has to be installed or something. Yes? But that was- it was really unbelievable, what a mismanagement has been done. And that, of course, the Federal Republic of the 70s, no, the flaming capitalism, that was clear. And so a whole world came into being, with completely different rules. And what I said earlier. There are 40 such occupied houses in Kreuzberg that have been rescued, let us say. Different in size.

Now exactly what I told you about the women earlier is happening. Because now the forms of the rediscovered collective are here so to speak: how do we want to live together? They were different in all these houses. So I know, for example the *Stuk* there, let's say, 150 meters away, there lived a friend of ours, they had completely different rules than we had. And also there next to the Jewish synagogue, there on the *Fraenkelufer*,⁶⁵ those were houses where you were entitled to a room there, you know? That was the right thing to do according to the Soviet model. How it was in the Soviet Union after the October Revolution. They all got a room, and you had to cook together and so on. And for us it meant that we lived in flat-sharing communities. But in locked flats. You know, but there were already several of them. And also in such a way that they were distributed by the right wing. So that was a world that has

⁶¹ *Beginenhof* is the German translation of beguinage, which is a residential area for beguines, women who lead religious lives without religious order. "Beginenhof." Wikipedia.

<https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beginenhof> (Accessed on April 30, 2020)

⁶² The *Stuk* project was a housing project in Berlin, Kreuzberg from 1978–86. <https://www.db-bauzeitung.de/db-themen/db-archiv/in-die-jahre-gekommen-wohnprojekt-stuk-in-berlin/> (Assessed on May 10, 2020)

⁶³ A crèche is a day nursery for children, a popular word in the United Kingdom. "Crèche." Cambridge Dictionary. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/creche> (Accessed on April 30, 2020)

⁶⁴ *Die Grünen* translates to English as 'the green.'

⁶⁵ The *Fraenkelufer* is a Jewish synagogue in Berlin. "Fraenkelufer Synagogue." Jewish Community of Berlin. <http://www.jg-berlin.org/en/judaism/synagogues/fraenkelufer.html> (Accessed on April 30, 2020)

produced wonderful flowers that have blossomed fully. Yes, and that because of the fact that- I tell you the most beautiful story another time. This is the one of the so-called no-man's-land struggle, on the wall where the Martin-Gropius-Bau⁶⁶ stands today. That was fantastic. Where simply new principles were introduced into them, into society. Yes? And where, for example, something came into being, dear Sławka, nobody ever thought it was possible, the sunflower bread was invented. Everyone said they were all crazy, the alternatives. Yes? And today every chain, every supermarket chain has sunflower bread. And in the beginning, I still remember, our new baker, an alternative baker, who was a studied philosopher, yes, who, I say- say- I can never shop with you. I worked in the theatre, I work in the afternoon, I said: 'you're never up in the morning, right?' He said: 'I don't get up at two o'clock in the morning because of you', and put the box there to donate for the Sandinists.⁶⁷ Well, the German society was already- everything that concerns the departure- I leave that now- at that moment there was once again this debate of the RAF being searched out, but what this actually was, it really was a positive movement, which also very strongly changed the society we know today. But, I still refer to the Habermas⁶⁸ here if I am not mistaken, of our great spirits of the Frankfurt School, yes, one of them had written, I think it was Habermas, one of them had written that the only revolution that had taken place was that of the feminists. Because they have fundamentally changed their living conditions and society. Wanted change and also brought change. 01:43:17 So. That is somehow... Back to EFA for a moment. We made this exchange, that was a wonderful success, yes? Carrying the laughter of our dreams into the institutions. And then we said that we absolutely must do something for the exchange between the French women and us. And we then founded this association, the European Women's Campaign. We were active worldwide at that time. Beyond Europe, we also had a Tunisian representative during the exchange, who was very precious, because she put this Eurocentric view, which we all shared, into perspective, and she questioned it, yes? So it was actually meant to be international from the outset, even though we said European. Yes? And that is how it came about, we set ourselves a, uh, this goal, that was the case. On the one hand, there were an infinite number of women, Sławka, like me, who did research without being tied to a university, who also did not want to go down the road. But which also brought excellent research results.

Yes, and maybe founded a women's history society in another way, or something like that, but were good scientists. And then there were the women artists. And we said, the artists and the researchers, and the free researchers, also those from the university, but above all the free researchers, yes, that's where the switch to a new society lies. And that was part of our utopia. Yes? And it was in this sense that EFA was founded. It was immediately about, so

⁶⁶ The Martin-Gropius-Bau is an exhibition hall in Berlin-Kreuzberg. "Martin-Gropius-Bau." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin-Gropius-Bau> (Accessed on April 30, 2020)

⁶⁷ Sandinists, or Sandinistas are members of the Sandinista National Liberation Front, a socialist political party in Nicaragua. "Sandinista National Liberation Front." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sandinista_National_Liberation_Front (Accessed on May 1, 2020)

⁶⁸ Jürgen Habermas is a German philosopher famous for his work on critical reasoning. "Jürgen Habermas." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J%C3%BCrgen_Habermas (Accessed on May 1, 2020)

to speak, the cultural creation of women all over the world, both the women who I don't know, I say I invented a knitting pattern like women - you know what is never considered in knitting patterns or in weaving, you know what is never considered? That these are thinking systems. You have to take a look at the sophistication of a loom. Like the threads around which it runs - I'm not just talking about the result, I saw that with the Berber women afterwards, how they incorporated their own language, their own symbols, their own beliefs. Not only that, but those were incredibly clever ways of thinking, yes? It's about, both these works and works of artists, - and don't forget, they were founded in 1990, that was really an uncanny struggle of recognition of women back then, everything they did. And within that framework, as you know, after 1990, we did not do much until '91, that was part of our history. We had meetings with Jewish women. Because we were dealing with the history of women, and we were also looking for women, women who were Jewish feminists, but also women who were not. Yes? For example, we invited one rabbi, two rabbis. A writer. I think her name was Barbara Honigmann.⁶⁹ And Simone Süskind,⁷⁰ who had just won a big prize in Belgium. She was one of the first rabbis, too. And we tried to find out whether we could find each other as women with those who, so to speak, attack the Jewish patriarchy, whether it was between feminists and their images, women's images, also feminists, but also not feminists, whether we could somehow get together as women. We did that for two years. That was very interesting, it was also filled with a lot of conflicts. Yes? Well, that wasn't easy at all. And then in '92, as you know, we did this so-called Feminarium, what's it called, polski-niemiecko, what's it called again, a German-Polish or Polish-German seminar.

That's when I thought it was nice that the word Feminarium came from the Polish women. And that was an incredibly interesting exchange. And from there we tried more and more projects, at that time still very, no, that's not right for me to say that- at that time we were still very political. That was very political, it is political at all times. And yet, of course, the view of feminist politics and feminist campaigns has also changed in these 25 years. Yes? I myself then worked in the European Women's Campaign. I served as managing director. Our little modest exchange, things we did, again and again in this context. We also did something else, 75, 50 years of war, we talked to the Polish, Warsaw, Parisian and Berlin women, who then presented biographies like you did now. That was also very great. Then, little by little, we established very good contacts to the Maghreb,⁷¹ especially to Tunisia, also by chance, through these beginnings. And we tried to establish a women's cultural centre in Tunisia. That was very difficult, because in this case it was still a real military dictatorship. And the women had just received permission, had received permission, Sławka, to exist at all as a feminist, feminist association. Yes? Those were the so-called democratic women. We did a lot of projects with them, we also published books, we looked for money here, we got money.

⁶⁹ Barbara Honigmann is a famous post-Holocaust German-Jewish writer. "Barbara Honigmann." Jewish Women's Archive. <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/honigmann-barbara> (Accessed on May 1, 2020)

⁷⁰ Simone Süskind is a Belgian-French politician. "Simone Susskind." Wikipedia. https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simone_Susskind (Accessed on May 1, 2020)

⁷¹ Maghreb is an Arab-dominated region in the north of Africa near the Sahara Desert. "Maghreb." <https://www.cs.mcgill.ca/~rwest/wikispeedia/wpcd/wp/m/Maghreb.htm> (Accessed on May 1, 2020)

Yes, and then we published the first women's calendar, which tells the story of the women of the Maghreb over there, and we found the money to help them. 01:49:37 And that was such a great success, yes, it was also widespread, also to Algeria and Morocco, that we had great difficulties with the military, with the government. And they then addressed me personally, said that we could continue this, but only if we would cooperate with the official party and their women. And all I said was that we are very sorry, but we gave our word to the Democratic Women and we cannot change that. Then we made another wonderful calendar, and imagine that they had the calendar produced so that we could spend the money, and then confiscated it when it was delivered. So I just want to see- so we have also changed the fight there, have of course continued to work here in the meantime. And then I shared my work. Do you know that?

I shared my work. On the one hand, I did cultural management. And on the other hand, I continued my own research. And that- do you remember- there was all this discussion about matriarchates, right? I honestly always thought it felt like it was very brief to me, you know? Because quite simply the idea- because we have now been living in a patriarchal society for four or five thousand years, not so long at all, yes, and then I should imagine that it was previously a matriarchal society. Why is that? So that the men could say that we had to take the power away from the women, so that we could also get involved? What is that supposed to mean? That has been so abused.. And I am not interested in a matriarchal society in the sense that women have the power alone. I'm interested in a society that consists of two sexes. It is very important that we try, although it is infinitely difficult. We are two genders on this earth, we must rethink how we want to deal with each other and how we want to construct society, or the societies in which we live, how we want to shape them. This is incredibly important. I don't approve "That was a long time ago", "Look, it wasn't like that at all. There were matriarchates." There have certainly been societies, as we know, even today, in southwest China, where there were other forms of family, where women played a completely different role. We know that. But the only interesting thing is to find out, for us now, in our cultural circle, how this has developed into such a one-sided system and how it has been able to last so long. Of course we know, with brute military force. Yes? Some people can't imagine what happens if you have two sexes, and one sex, in this case men, determine the position of the other sex, right? How far may she go, what is she there for, why perhaps one is only used to become pregnant, who gives birth to children, yes? But on the other hand men know that all forms of upbringing, of infantile upbringing, which is so important, ultimately comes from the mothers. 01:53:28 That cannot result in a system in the first place, do you understand where you can say that this is a system that actually brings peace? It's a system that can only bring huge problems between the sexes. And women adapt to it, some adapt, some do not adapt. I come back to the sentence I said some time ago, it's incredibly important to see that there's always the confrontation between the miraculous, Sophocles so wonderfully captured, between the Antigone and the Ismene. Yes? Antigone says, "Help me bury my brother" and reaches out his hand to her, and Ismene says, "I don't have the strength to fight against this system". These are the two female roles that we still have today. Yes?

And Antigone appears before Kreon and Kreon says to her, "You dare to violate my laws". And she answers, "Your laws are those of a man.' I follow the laws of the gods of the upper world and the underworld." Whatever that is. "I follow the laws of the earth, I follow the laws of the higher powers. Compared to them, you, Kreon, are nothing. Do you understand?" And she dies for her beliefs. Yes? You have to see that. Well, I think it is beautiful and as with Sophokles it's the same for Haemon, her fiancé, who loves her so much. Kreon orders for her to be walled in, and his orders are carried out, yes? And Haemon then takes his own life. And he is the only son of Kreon and his wife. Whereupon the mother takes her own life. Imagine the Greek tragedy, the ripples, the ripples it created. Humans never managed to put something greater into such a literary form. And the topic is still present today. And I have met many women in my life who have followed Ismene. And some who still follow Antigone.⁷² Excuse me. [Cut, new interview, new background] [01:56:08.21]

It's about the fact that the women who were and have become members of our society are still partly women today, women who have gone their own way in research, independent of the structures within universities or in research institutes. So this is also something that is like a free research, but also clearly leads to the right results, and in no way has it been reprimanded or limited in any way by others, both in its aims and in the way it is processed. That is why I say this, but to a large extent it was also women who had, of course, already completed their university education. And then they decided to earn money with something else and to continue researching freely themselves. That is one thing. That leads to an interesting phenomenon, and for me that is the second point. I have stated in various places that it is not just a matter of doing something outside the given paths, but of doing it with exactly the same seriousness as others who do research in large institutes and so on. But that led to an interesting phenomenon, which also led to the fact that you set processes in motion in your thinking that normally, I would say, yes, those from other sources fed themselves. I have tried to explain this elsewhere, I can also say that about my own situation. I once tried to explain it in such a way that the men's thinking often seemed to me to be tremendously limited. But in the first years I couldn't formulate at all what I was missing. And here we reach a dimension that deals with this question, do women actually think differently? Can they think differently? Are there differences or do we actually think like men? That's what we learn at universities anyway, to follow what we are told. Or is it the case that we- that there are still other dimensions. And in this context, of course, what I neglected yesterday becomes very important, that is the so-called spiritual dimension. What is that, spirituality?

We know that also in the women's movement there were whole branches of movement that were on this path of, or in search of, their own, women's spirituality. How is that to be described? How can we determine that? It's also far too easy to say, yes, men think abstractly and women don't think abstractly, but perhaps they have a different background. That's hard to define. It's about how they are dealing with things, dealing with nature, dealing with one's

⁷² The interviewee is recounting a play by Greek tragedian Sophocles. Antigone, Ismene, Creon and Haemon are all characters in this Greek mythological play. "Antigone (Sophocles play)." Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antigone_\(Sophocles_play\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antigone_(Sophocles_play)) (Accessed on May 1, 2020)

own body. That has certainly played a much greater role in the thinking of women, especially feminists. That kind of stuff was customary in counter-research. And you can't do that, you have to be careful, you have to be careful, you can't just call it that, it's just something we started, but something we don't necessarily have a lot of results for yet. In other words, it is another way. But one thing is certain, and that's why it was important for me to add that. This kind of thinking created the problems for ourselves not to be recognized. It was not about what we found as results. Much less to step into a really big public. That was certainly incredibly difficult. And on the other hand, that also meant that we- our position- how am I supposed to do that, it cannot be said outside, we were also part of society, but did not follow the given guidelines, and took these paths, that the one in society played a role for us, that we did not only take a parallel path, but that this was also not directly recognised in any case. That is very important, that is this external position that needs to be emphasised once again. And yet the importance of this kind of investigation, just as I said before, is incredibly important for what we want as a society. And it's also the case that I think that society in general simply needs that a lot. But what we still know as a patriarchal society is of course not convinced of that. But that is very important to me, this external position. And to understand the other as a search mechanism. A thinking process. Something that doesn't just happen in your head and is thought of as an abstract, but that the very great- that is in connection with the person we are, with the body we have, and how this mixes together, so to speak. And that is for me, from what I know about literature, a very important way to this day. But we haven't made much progress yet.

[02:02:49.09] SW: Would you like to add a few examples from the history of EFA? What did you do?

[02:02:55.23] GK: Yes. What for example takes place- I can still send you a text by the way, I once wrote a very short text many years ago about how we always- how we first revolted, always screamed no, up to the point that we noticed that our own echo caught up with us. Yes, this eternal no. And that we have come to the point of saying, yes, what do we want? And where do we want to go? After all, we don't just want to yell this out loud all the time, here, [counts down on the fingers], we don't want that, and that doesn't work for us, and you don't do that, do you? It's all about that, and through this form of thinking you've basically not only made a paradigm shift, but a great change of perspective. You suddenly have a different point of view on the whole of society, and from it develops a life that is not a life that exists, but that develops, yes? You basically have a change of position. And this form of thinking, I still think, above all for the whole of our society of enormous importance. But if you don't doubt the perspectives and the guidelines in this way, but don't follow them, but develop your own perspectives, your own perspective, and also develop your own patterns of thinking, you inevitably position yourself, be it on the margins or even outside society. And getting this into society is still the question. And I'm not necessarily a pessimist, but my doubts that this, the transformation of patriarchal society into the kind of society we might want, will take place in a peaceful way, are very limited. So I think that's a fear, by the way, it's like all wars, then suddenly you don't know any other way. But we certainly do not want war, nor do we

want violence. But we have no answer - I say this also as a feminist, for myself as well - to how this process of transformation should go, yes, without, virtually abolishing certain power structures, abolishing certain forms of manners among us, and how this should basically go for all people. So this is, realistically you can say, it is not a utopia, but rather an illusion. Perhaps. But don't think that in any way it leads, or can lead, to giving that up just because we don't have the answers. Absolutely not. These two points were important to me, you know? [End of interview]