

## ALEXANDRA KOLLONTAI AND THE POLITICAL MEANING OF LOVE

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### Abstract

In the given article I analyze the contribution of the prominent socialist feminist thinker and politician Alexandra Kollontai to the development of conceptual vision of a just society, that would be based on the equality of the sexes, and to the formation of contemporary views onto the problem of the political, intellectual and emotional autonomy of women. In my view, the rethinking of Kollontai's views in regards to the issues of love, sexuality and the role of emotional life under socialism and capitalism may be helpful for better understanding of the complex relationship between gender and class identities, collisions of public and private lives, and the emancipation of women (politically, economically, emotionally and symbolically). I also argue that Kollontai's legacy is relevant for the contemporary scholarship on political, gender-specific aspects of emotional life as well as the affective dimension of the politics.

My analysis is based on three types of sources: theoretical works and literary texts by Alexandra Kollontai, in which she developed her views on love relationships and women's autonomy; selected works of other Marxist and feminist thinkers of the early XX century (V.I. Lenin, I. Armand) that dealt with the questions of free love and sexual mores; the works by contemporary gender scholars and feminist thinkers, that engage with the texts of Kollontai and debates on love and sexuality in the Soviet 1920s.

**Keywords:** Alexandra Kollontai, socialist feminism, love, free love, love-comradeship, 'Winged Eros'.

### Introduction

#### *The Un/claimed Legacy of Alexandra Kollontai*

2022 marks the 150th anniversary of the birth of Alexandra Kollontai, a Marxist feminist, politician, diplomat and writer. Even if 2022 had not been marked by the tragic events and political challenges faced by the countries of the former USSR, the celebration of this jubilee would most likely have passed almost unnoticed in the post-Soviet countries. There are plenty reasons for this.

Firstly, 30 years after the collapse of the USSR and the demolition of socialism as a political system, much of Soviet history has been ousted from the official historical narratives and cultural memory of socialism. Moreover, the remembrances of the Soviet past have been severely impoverished, simplified and eventually reduced to very few plots and some events, the main of which, for a number of political reasons, became the commemoration and glorification of the victory in the Great Patriotic War (this applies to Russia and Belarus<sup>1</sup>). In addition to this, in each of the nation states that emerged or regained independence on the ruins of USSR, national history and its politically correct framing is given a priority, and in many cases it has been divided into before and after the USSR, for the Soviet past in many postsocialist countries is assessed negatively as the period of occupation, colonization, Russification, which were accompanied by physical and symbolic violence. Accordingly, the theme of the imperial Imaginary in the political construction of the USSR and in the post-socialist context, unresolved issues of national politics or the legacy of totalitarianism are much more pressing and important topics for public discussion than issues related to the early period of Soviet history or the theoretical foundations of socialism.

Secondly, the significant contribution of Alexandra Kollontai and many other women to the development of a socialist state, the formation of its legislative foundations and its recognition on the international arena through diplomatic activities was not appreciated in the Soviet era, and later on was entirely forgotten, leaving no traces in the memory of post-Soviet generations. In other words, women's voices and faces of the revolution dissolved in the shadow of the cult of Lenin and Stalin, and remained invisible behind

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<sup>1</sup> Not accidentally, the history of political repressions and Stalinist purges, as well as anti-Semitism and ethnocide became the tabooed topics in both of these countries.

the façade of the Communist Party as the collective governing body in the USSR. Though, this is not a unique time in history when women had done "much of the grunt work of revolution" [1;162] but later on their contribution to the political struggle turned out to be devalued.

Thirdly, throughout the entire period of Soviet history, feminism (including socialist feminism) was considered to be an ideological opponent of the Marxist-Leninist ideology (due to the hegemony of 'class' as more universal category of analysis). As Brigitte Studer notes, revolution "opened a historical window of opportunity by inscribing the principle of equality not only in its political doctrine but also in its initial governmental practice". However, the emancipation of women "had been seen more as something that would happen automatically when socialism had been achieved", and "woman's question" soon faded in importance to communist leadership. In addition, the concept of emancipation was based on a definition specifically and more-or-less exclusively aimed at working-class women, at women as members of a class and not as representatives of a gender" [2; 136].

It is worth mentioning, that Alexandra Kollontai was the first female member of the government in history ever, as well as the first woman-ambassador. Yet, this was rather an exception than a rule even in the Soviet state, as women under socialism did not have real instruments to be actively involved in the political decision-making. Indeed, Constitution of 1936 stated the achieved equality of the sexes, but there was a huge gap between the declared principles and the actual policy of the state towards the involvement of women in the decision-making processes. In the 1920s Soviet women were very active in political life and in the sphere of production, although already at that time the state "formalized women's "double burden" (long before the model became established in the industrialized West" [2;133]. Since the 1930s and until the end of socialist era, Soviet state upheld the patriarchal status quo in the sphere of political governance. The militarization of the economy and politics, which began in the mid-1930s, left no room for women in the governing bodies. Women could have entered the highest body of the state power - the Supreme Council, but the Council itself was purely decorative. Not surprisingly, there were no women among the members of the Politburo and very few held the leading positions in the government. To sum up, I would quote here Žarana Papić who noted, that "socialism was a conglomeration of various social and ideological elements that were communist, male, patriarchal and authoritarian. It offered women a very specific mixture of progressive legal rights and a very real and persistent patriarchy which governed their destinies and everyday lives" [3; 116]. In this sense, the exclusion of women from the political decision-making and state governance in many of post-Soviet states reveals an obvious path-dependence of the "modernized patriarchy" [4; 20] from the socialist system.

And last but not least, in most post-Soviet countries as well as in some countries in Eastern Europe, the dominant political trend today is conservatism, that manifests itself in strengthening of right-wing populism, propagation of patriarchal discourse, the increasing of the political role of religious institutions, the restoration of traditionalist values. All this results in the limitation of gender equality, abuse of women's rights and sexual minorities. Gender-conservative ideology may have some specifics, depending on the particular political and social context, but in general it is characterized by the policies that promote concept of the "traditional family", "encourage women to prioritize their heteronormative roles as mothers and homemakers" [5; 2], state support of the essentialist "anti-gender" attitudes of the church, decriminalization of domestic violence, "the organization of reproduction in accordance with pronatalist policies", including the restrictions on abortion [6; 258]. Therefore, it is not surprising that in the conditions of a neoconservative turn, feminist activism, as well as gender studies, became the target of intimidation and pursuance on behalf of the state ideologists and supporters of right-wing views in power.

## **Materials and methods**

Thus, given the abovementioned circumstances, one might draw a conclusion that this might not be the appropriate time (at least in the post-socialist space) to discuss the legacy of Alexandra Kollontai. Nevertheless, I consider that the 150th anniversary of Alexandra Kollontai may be a good reason to cast on her theoretical heritage and to rediscover it in new historical circumstances. Her works remain relevant for feminist theorists and gender scholars in different countries. During 2020-2022 many new works, dedicated to Kollontai's legacy, have been published. Along with academic texts, there have been various exhibitions, art projects and other forms and formats of the popularization and medialization of her ideas for a larger audience. Here are but a few examples.

In honor of the 150th anniversary of Alexandra Kollontai, the International Union of Left Publishers published a special edition "Alexandra Kollontai 150". It was released on the same day (International Workers Day) in 20 different languages in a joint effort of 25 publishing houses. This volume "brings together four of Kollontai's texts on topics such as the role of the women in social struggles, the history and importance of

International Women's Day (March 8), and reflections on love as a social relation" [7]. In March of 2022, the St. Petersburg Museum of Political History of Russia opened an exhibition under the title *Who are you, Alexandra Kollontai?* The recent volume, published in Sweden under the title *Red Love: A Reader on Alexandra Kollontai* [8] presents theoretical works as well as artistic projects that underline the relevance of Kollontai's thought in what concerns the critical analysis of the love relations and affective politics in contemporary era.

The new book of an American scholar Kristen Ghodsee, titled 'Red Valkyries: Feminist Lessons From Five Revolutionary Women' (2022) deals with the history of socialist feminism in Eastern Europe, is based on the study of biographies of five women Alexandra Kollontai, Nadezhda Krupskaya, Inessa Armand, Lyudmila Pavlichenko and Elena Lagadinova (Bulgaria). The author notes, that thanks to the efforts of women from socialist countries, the political rights, social protection measures, and tools for realizing gender equality that Western feminists have fought for a long time have become a reality for women from the countries of the former socialist camp. She argues, that "despite the inefficiencies of the planned economy, the paucity of liberal freedoms, and the continued persistence of patriarchal norms, the efforts of many socialist women's activists paid off in the end. Although mostly forgotten today, not only in the West but even in their own countries, their work lived on in the daily realities of hundreds of millions of lives, especially in the lives of women who had opportunities for education, professional training, and work experiences that their mothers and grandmothers had never dreamed could be possible [1; 156 – 157].

Many contemporary feminist theorists agree on that Alexandra Kollontai, with her personal (biographical) example, theoretical works and literary texts, was far ahead of her time, having anticipated the theoretical discussions on the whole series of topics that only became relevant in the second half of the 20th century. In my view, the analysis of Kollontai's conceptual propositions in regards to the issues of love, sexuality and the role of emotional life under socialism and capitalism (given that she had this unique experience of comparison) may be helpful for better understanding of the complex relationship between gender and class identities, collisions of public and private lives, of the issues of women's autonomy, and the emancipation of women in every possible aspect (politically, economically, emotionally and symbolically). I would also add, that the theoretical legacy of Alexandra Kollontai is highly relevant for the studies of political, gender-specific aspects of emotional life as well as of the affective dimension of the politics in general.

Thus, this text may be regarded a tribute to the memory of Alexandra Kollontai, an outstanding socialist feminist thinker and politician, in a year of her 150th anniversary. At the same time I would like to underline that this article is based on my long-term study of the relationship between marxism and feminism (in the 20th and 21st century), as well as on my research of the discourses and representations of love and emotions in Soviet culture.

## Results

### *The question of Love and women's autonomy in a class/less society*

The Soviet 1920s were an unprecedented time, for the revolutionary changes affected all spheres of life. The establishment of Soviet power began with the adoption of new laws. In the immediate aftermath of the October Revolution Bolsheviks' government passed a plethora of legislation<sup>2</sup>. The legislation of many former socialist states still contains, in one form or another, the norms and provisions first introduced by legislative acts of the Soviet government in the first years of its establishment. The Constitution, introduced in 1918, proclaimed the equality of women with men in their civil rights. The civil marriage was introduced and the new civil code on marriage established an equal legal status between husband and wife. Divorce procedures were made much easier, based on the concept of mutual agreement allowing immediate divorce [9]. The department for the protection of maternity and youth was officially established in January 1918. The legalising of abortions came in 1920.

These changes undermined the patriarchal foundations of family and marriage and lead to the considerable transformation of private life, love relations and sexual mores in Soviet Russia. The process was accompanied by the heated debates on the new socialist morality. The famous Russian revolutionary and Marxist-feminist theoretician Alexandra Kollontai was among the authors and initiators of those decrees as well

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<sup>2</sup> The legislation of many former socialist states still contains, in one form or another, the norms and provisions first introduced by the legislative acts of the Soviet government in the first years of its establishment.

as of the new policies. She believed, that revolution opened “the road to true happiness» for «the new class, the new youth with its new experiences and its new conceptions and feelings» [10].

Public discussions on love matters, sexual mores, and the «revolution of byt»<sup>3</sup> were taking place in various environments from factories to the universities, and involved the representatives of different social groups. The denial of love as a bourgeois prejudice became a common view among the proletarian youth of the 1920s. “We don't acknowledge any love! All of that is a bourgeois trick that hinders the cause! It's a diversion for the sated!” - said those for whom the sexual liberation of the proletariat was the main achievement of the new regime [11; 175]. Others, on the contrary, believed that sexual pleasure is bourgeois in its essence, and saw in love not only the solid foundation of proletarian marriage, but also a panacea for sexual licentiousness, for the «excesses of sexual anarchism», and for everything that contradicts the goal of the proletariat to create the «New Man». There was no consensus either among the political leaders of the Soviet state.

Among the political leaders of the Soviet state there was no consensus either. Vladimir Lenin, Bolsheviks' leader and Marxist theorist, in his conversation with Clara Zetkin commented on the common preoccupation with ‘revising bourgeois conceptions and morals’ in the sex question, in the following way: “I may be a morose ascetic, but quite often this so-called ‘new sex life’ of young people and frequently of the adults too seems to me purely bourgeois and simply an extension of the good old bourgeois brothel. All this has nothing in common with free love as we Communists understand it” [12]. Lenin considered that «emancipation of love» should not turn into «emancipation of the flesh». In the same conversation with Zetkin he also said, that «communism should not bring asceticism», but «promiscuity in sexual matters is bourgeois. It is a sign of degeneration», and «this is not good for the political struggle and for the revolution» [12].

Both the advocates of sexual emancipation and the adherers of sexual asceticism mercilessly branded each other for a perversion of the principles of communism and smuggling of philistine ideology, but ultimately it was an old discussion on the separation of “sensual love” and “sentimental love”. However, the belief that love should be based on the «affinity of souls», that is on the «similarity of the struggle interests» and on «the same class ideals», was shared by many. In «The Twelve Commandments of Revolutionary Sex» the Soviet psychiatrist (also known as “party doctor”) Aron Zalkind formulated it as follows: «Sexual selection shall always be conducted along the lines of revolutionary-proletarian class objectives» [13].

What position in this discussion was taken by the socialist feminists who were actively involved also in the political praxis? To answer this question, we should turn to the concept of *free love*, as it was elaborated by socialist feminists Alexandra Kollontai, Inessa Armand and few others.

Alexandra Kollontai's role in the process of revolutionary changes in early Soviet society is hard to overestimate. During the first post-revolutionary decade of Bolsheviks' governance it was her who proposed and elaborated the most systematic and coherent views on the relations between woman's question and the transformations of love and sexual relations under socialism. In various texts she provides a detailed analysis of different historical conceptions of love and marriage in the context of the development of European culture. She was convinced that under socialism love is no longer «a private matter» [14; 279], but the question was how could this ‘valuable socio-psychological factor’ serve to the needs of a new Soviet society?

One of the most debatable concepts that is most often associated with Kollontai's writings is the topic of «free love». It is here that we find not only the ideological divergence between feminist Marxism and Bolsheviks' Marxism, but also the intrinsic links between the ideas of Kollontai, Armand and «bourgeois» (i.e. liberal) feminism. It is in the articulation of the idea of «free love» that one can hear the female voices of Revolution: the reflections on «free love» and its potential in women's emancipation also meant the possibility for women to develop their own vocabulary of feelings in a new social context.

The theme of “free love” was much discussed during the first two decades of the 20th century. In Soviet Russia, after 1917, the very concept was largely avoided even in the texts of socialist feminists, not because of the censorship, but because of the ideological divergences. The development of these ideological controversies can be traced from the correspondence of Inessa Armand and Lenin in connection with the unfinished project of her brochure. She started elaborating this topic while preparing to the women's congress in St. Petersburg in 1908, where the issue of the freedom of love became one of the most debated. Few years later, in 1915, she started working on a pamphlet about free love, but then a serious controversy arose in her correspondence with Lenin. From those letters it becomes evident that Inessa Armand associated the concept of free love with the issue of women's emancipation. Lenin categorically opposed it and proposed to delete this paragraph: «I advise you to throw out altogether § 3 -the “demand (women's) for freedom of love” [15].

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<sup>3</sup> The sphere of ‘byt’ was at the very center of political and cultural debates in Soviet Russia in the 1920s, as it was inseparably connected to the question of modernization and the socialist reorganization entire way of life, including ‘cultural front’ and everyday life.

Despite the fragility of the discursive boundaries between the concepts of sexual freedom and free love in the 1920s, these were not at all identical concepts. In mass consciousness, the idea of sexual freedom was largely perceived as sexual anarchy, promiscuity and «debauchery», which dismantle family values and challenge the institution of the marriage. The opponents of this idea considered «free love» to be a cause of such social problems as the deterioration of women's reproductive health (because of abortions), venereal diseases, various mental illnesses and rapes.

The position of Alexandra Kollontai on the issue of sexual freedom was often misinterpreted as a theory of «a glass of water». However, Kollontai's interpretation of the concept of free love was much more nuanced. Besides, the very association of love with a glass of water appeared much earlier in a different historical context, in the 19th century, and that referred to sensual emancipation. The authorship of the idea that «love is like a glass of water given to the one who asks for it» was attributed to French female writer Aurore Dudevant (known better under her literary male pseudonym George Sand). Kollontai herself spoke about the need of contemporary individual to «quench thirst» in her/his need to find true love.

The problem of *free love* was first raised by Alexandra Kollontai in *Love and New Morality* [16]. This text reads as an elaborated response to the book “The Sexual Crisis: A Critique of Our Sex Life”, published in 1909 by Grete Meisel-Hess, Austrian Jewish feminist and writer [17]. Analysing three main forms of relations between the sexes under capitalism - legal marriage, free union and prostitution, Meisel-Hess comes to pessimistic conclusion that under capitalism, all three forms are destructive for women's souls, and they do not give women a chance for solid and lasting happiness. However, Kollontai focuses on the analysis of the third form, that is a union, based on free love relations, the imperfection of which under capitalism was primarily associated with the psyche, corrupted by double morality.

In modern society, writes Kollontai, *free love* confronts two major obstacles: first, “our inability to love (an inability that is the essence of our atomised individualistic world)”, and second, “the absence of the necessary leisure time for truly emotional experience” [16]. «Love impotence» is the destiny of men who are either engaged in making profit and career, or in pursuit of “a crust of bread,” but the main thing is that love plays a secondary role for a man, he fears that it can divert him from the “main things” in life. Free love relations (free union) “demands a much greater amount of time and emotional energy than either registered marriage or momentary and purchased pleasure. ‘Free’ lovers are usually more attached to each other than legal partners and spend more time with each other.

Kollontai analyses the challenges of free union for both sexes. In her view, “modern man has no time for love”, as he is being either engaged in making profit and career, or in pursuit of “a crust of bread“, but more important factor is that love plays a secondary role for a man, as he fears to be diverted from the “main things” in life [16].

For a woman, free union is an even bigger challenge. She also has to make a choice between love and profession. In addition, sooner or later a conflict arises between love and motherhood (not only in the aspect of the different types of love in relation to the partner and the child, but to an even greater extent this is due to the responsibility for the consequences of free love). Kollontai sees potential in erotic friendship, which contributes to the development of the human psyche, allows for self-preservation of the person, helps to get rid of egotism through the cultivation of mutual respect. But the highest form of love according to her, is *love-comradeship*, which opens the possibility of establishing parity in love relationships. Meanwhile, when love is free from material dependence (and the associated humiliation), it should be not so much the main goal in a woman's life (in this case she turns out to be a slave to love), but one of the steps in comprehending her “spiritual Ego” [18].

Few years later, Alexandra Kollontai returns to the question of free love, but under different circumstances, when Revolution opened the new possibilities for people of previously subordinated classes, and the women of working class at the first place. One of her most famous works “Make Way for Winged Eros!”, written in 1923, provides a comprehensive answer to the question: “What place proletarian ideology gives to love?” [14; 276]. Unlike other party comrades, who considered that the questions of love and debates on sexual ethics distract the energy of working people from the more urgent political and economic tasks, Kollontai argues, that «love is not a symptom of decline» of revolutionary creativity [14; 292] but quite the opposite. Therefore, it is time firstly, to «recognize openly that love is not only a powerful natural factor», but also a social factor, it is an emotion that unites people, and secondly, that love has always been an integral part of culture, hence new society needs to develop its own new emotional culture.

She notes, that in the years of Civil war («under the shadow of death»), the «natural voice of nature dominated the situation»: women and men came together much more easily, than before, «with no obligations to each other», and «parted without tears or regret» [14; 277]. That what in those years was erroneously identified

as 'free love' was in essence the «satisfaction of purely biological needs», leaving no room for true love and mutual commitments. However, the time has come when the undemanding Wingless Eros (once sexual intercourse turns into the self-fulfilling goal) should be replaced by all-embracing Winged Eros («whose love is woven of delicate strands of every kind of emotion»). The absence of an emotional proximity in sexual relations is an obstacle that prevents the formation of social ties between the members of the work collective. «Essentially love is a profoundly social emotion» [14, 278]. The Winged Eros, according to Kollontai, implies the retrieval of interest to the psychology of sex, the recognition of the right to love outside the «narrow framework of legal marriage relations» [14, 284], the overcoming of the biological instinct of reproduction, and the renunciation of the wish to possess a loved one entirely and dividedly.

Kollontai returns to the topic of free love comes within the framework of the reflections on love-comradeship. In Kollontai's vision, freedom in love can be achieved only through the establishment of equality in mutual relations (without «the complacency of the man and the self-renunciation of the woman»); through the respect of the «right of the other's personality» and suppression of the private property instincts; and, finally, through the establishment of a relationship between two lovers and the collective. In other words, «the task of proletarian ideology is not to drive Eros from social life but to return him according to the new social formation» [14; 291 – 292].

As it was shown above, for Lenin and other Bolshevik leaders (men) the theme of love seemed both marginal and ideologically harmful. They considered love discourse to be a product of bourgeois ideology and saw in it the basis for the emergence of a double morality. Feminist Marxists, on the contrary, considered it possible and necessary to incorporate the European tradition of romantic love as a cultural tradition into the project of socialist reconstruction of a society, arguing that love is a form of emotional improvement that fosters the education of new citizens, and that form of subjectivation which, without destroying the collective connectivity, allows to ensure a harmonious combination of individual and collective goals.

## **Discussion**

### *Alexandra Kollontai as our contemporary*

Given the limited volume of the article, I was able to consider only some of Alexandra Kollontai's theoretical ideas regarding the role of love and women's autonomy in a just society. All of them were closely connected with the historical context, as they were addressing the urgent questions of revolutionary praxis of the 1910-1920s. But what is the relevance of the legacy of Alexandra Kollontai in contemporary society? Here I would like to highlight four key points.

First, in many post-Soviet countries, as noted above, the interests of women are rarely taken into account when making political decisions (even in matters of social policy and education). Feminist activists as well as gender experts and scholars have to apply a lot of effort in order to defend women's rights and promote gender agenda at different levels and sector of a society. In this regard, “Bolshevism's Utopian phase” [2; 126] which lasted until the mid-1920s, remains a unique period in history when women's voices of the revolution were really important, whilst their theoretical works provided more differentiated analysis of the relations between class and gender. That experience should not be neglected.

I believe, that the legacy of socialist feminists of the 1920s is important for the formation of intersectional approach in contemporary gender studies. According to Julia Cámara, “The rejection of the existence of a specific ‘woman question’ separate from the general social question is a constant throughout Kollontai's work and one of the most controversial statements for a contemporary reading. Yet, strictly speaking, it is an accurate observation. There is no ‘woman question’ that can be separated from the question of class, migration, or race, as indeed important feminist sectors have been warning for some time. Any denial of this reality can only end up justifying and reproducing the logics of systematic exclusion and oppression, as has happened on many occasions throughout history” [19; 19].

Secondly, as we all know, the project of socialist reorganization of society, launched by the October Revolution, ended in a historical fiasco. But this does not mean that its conceptual foundations, including the recognition of the importance of "woman's question" at the level of state politics, the expunging of the mechanisms of patriarchy through the legal reform, the Soviet Enlightenment project (from the elimination of illiteracy to the education of feelings) lost their relevance. Unfortunately, in the process of post-Soviet transformations, many of these achievements were devalued. In this vein, returning to the ideas of Alexandra Kollontai is important not only for the critical rethinking the very idea of communism (an important component of which from the beginning was the idea of women's emancipation), but also for better understanding the specificity of gender-conservative turn in the post-Soviet countries.

Thirdly, the legacy of Alexandra Kollontai is to be recontextualized and reviewed in light of contemporary studies of social, economic and cultural contradictions of love and class relationship in late capitalist society<sup>4</sup>. Grahame Hayes argues, these days "the discourse on love has become highly individualised, focused on the private sphere of romantic love", "positivized into sexuality" where the stress is on performance and "consuming" the other [21; 76]. In accordance with the market logic of a consumer society, the variety of services and specialists in love matters (be it psychologists, dating coaches, and even flirting techniques experts), as well as the quantity of "technological solutions" (mobile applications for dating, courtship, marriages) are constantly growing. The concerns, often voiced by pop psychologists, on that "it's hard to love today", that "dating is dead", etc., on the one hand, fuel the demand for such services and platforms, such statements may be interpreted as an articulation of an existential anxiety, related to the deficit of love in the contemporary society.

Accordingly, the theme of "Winged Eros" and the questions formulated by Alexandra Kollontai a hundred years ago, about whether contemporary individuals have time for psycho-social improvement in matters of love, how the models of love relations relate to the social and political order, and what are the possibilities for the egalitarian love-comradeship relations in contemporary society, sound especially relevant. Following the path of Alexandra Kollontai, new generation of feminist theorists propose to "reinvent love", to revise its social relevance, and to rethink it as a "valid public emotion" [21; 76].

### Conclusion

Finally, I would also like to draw attention to a less obvious, but none the less important aspect in the study of Alexandra Kollontai's works. It is a question of her ability to communicate with different audiences and of the strategies of appeal to those people whose emotional experience was unlikely to have been shaped by great literature and European love narratives, as well as to those, who were hostile to the feminist ideas. Let us not forget that most of Alexandra Kollontai's works were intended for people with very different cultural, educational and class backgrounds and political views, but that was also a time when the channels of mass communication were limited to printed media, radio and cinema. In contemporary, fragmented and diversified media environment (social networks, Internet, TV, Youtube, Instagram, Telegram, TikTok and so on) the language of communication, the rhetoric and the discursive devices matter more than ever. Therefore, the questions on how to promote feminist agenda for diverse audiences, explaining the connection between politics, gender inequality and private life, and how to make complex theoretical ideas accessible for masses, are of crucial importance for the feminist movement. And this is exactly what we can learn from Alexandra Kollontai, given all the above mentioned historical, political and cultural circumstances, that separate us from the socialist 1920s.

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<sup>4</sup> Eva Illouz in her book "Consuming the Romantic Utopia" elaborates on these issues. She does not refer to Alexandra Kollontai in her research, but there is a thematic and conceptual proximity in the very mode of formulating problems [20].

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## АЛЕКСАНДРА КОЛЛОНТАЙ ЖӘНЕ МАХАББАТТЫҢ САЯСИ МӘНІ

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Бұл мақалада мен көрнекті социалистік феминистік ойшыл және саясаткер Александра Коллонтайдың гендерлік теңдікке негізделген әділ қоғамның тұжырымдамалық көзқарасын дамытуға және әйелдер туралы саяси, зияткерлік және эмоционалды автономия мәселесіне қазіргі заманғы көзқарастарды қалыптастыруға қосқан үлесін талдаймын.

Менің ойымша, Коллонтайдың махаббат, жыныстық қатынас және социализм мен капитализмдегі эмоционалды өмірдің рөлі туралы көзқарастарын қайта қарастыру гендерлік және таптық сәйкестілік, қоғамдық және жеке өмірдің қақтығыстары мен әйелдердің эмансипациясы (саяси, экономикалық, эмоционалды және символдық) арасындағы күрделі қатынастарды жақсы түсіну үшін пайдалы болуы мүмкін.

Мен сондай-ақ Коллонтай мұрасы эмоционалды өмірдің саяси, гендерлік аспектілерін, сондай-ақ саясаттың эмоционалды өлшемін зерттеуге қатысты деп санаймын. Менің талдауым дереккөздердің үш түріне: Александра Коллонтайдың махаббат қатынастары мен әйелдер автономиясы туралы көзқарастарын дамытқан теориялық еңбектері мен әдеби мәтіндеріне; ХХ ғасырдың басындағы басқа марксистік және феминистік ойшылдардың (В. И. Ленин, И. Арманд) еркін махаббат пен жыныстық моральға қатысты таңдалған мәселелерге ; қазіргі заманғы гендерлік зерттеулер және Коллонтай мәтіндеріне және 1920 жылдардағы кеңестік махаббат пен сексуалдылық туралы пікірталастарға қатысты зерттеушілер мен феминистік ойшылдар жұмыстарына негізделген.

**Түйін сөздер:** Александра Коллонтай, социалистік феминизм, махаббат, еркін махаббат, махаббат-серіктестік, "қанатты Эрос".

## АЛЕКСАНДРА КОЛЛОНТАЙ И ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЙ СМЫСЛ ЛЮБВИ

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В данной статье я анализирую вклад выдающейся социалистической феминистской мыслительницы и политика Александры Коллонтай в разработку концептуального видения справедливого общества, основанного на



равенстве полов, и в формирование современных взглядов на проблему политической, интеллектуальной и эмоциональной автономии женщин. На мой взгляд, переосмысление взглядов Коллонтай в отношении вопросов любви, сексуальности и роли эмоциональной жизни при социализме и капитализме может быть полезным для лучшего понимания сложных взаимоотношений между гендерной и классовой идентичностью, столкновениями общественной и частной жизни и эмансипацией женщин (политически, экономически, эмоционально и символически). Я также утверждаю, что наследие Коллонтай имеет отношение к современным исследованиям политических, гендерных аспектов эмоциональной жизни и эмоционального измерения политики.

Мой анализ основан на трех типах источников: теоретические работы и литературные тексты Александры Коллонтай, в которых она развила свои взгляды на любовные отношения и женскую автономию; избранные работы других марксистских и феминистских мыслителей начала XX века (В.И. Ленин, И. Арманд), которые касались вопросов свободной любви и сексуальных нравов; работы современных гендерных исследователей и феминистских мыслителей, которые связаны с текстами Коллонтай и дебатами о любви и сексуальности в советские 1920-е годы.

**Ключевые слова:** Александра Коллонтай, социалистический феминизм, любовь, свободная любовь, любовь-товарищество, "Крылатый Эрос".

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