SOCIALIST WOMEN: EUROPEAN SOCIALIST FEMINISM IN THE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURIES. By *Marilyn J. Boxer* and *Jean H. Quataert*. New York: Elsevier, 1978. xii, 260 pp. Photographs. $15.95, cloth. $9.95, paper.

*Socialist Women* consists of essays about women in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe who traced the roots of sexual exploitation to private property and industrial capitalism. Despite their best efforts, however, these women could not achieve a theoretical synthesis of socialism and feminism, and the more perceptive among them reluctantly concluded that the mutual powerlessness of workers and women was an insufficient basis on which to forge a political alliance between them. *Socialist Women,* therefore, is largely a study in failure.

The collection includes biographical sketches of such women Socialists as Flora Tristan in France, Lily Braun and Clara Zetkin in Germany, Anna Kuliscioff in Italy, Adelheid Popp in Austria, plus an essay on Alexandra Kollontai and one on women in Russian revolutionary circles in the late nineteenth century. Thus, the authors can draw specific information from their subjects which corroborates more general observations about the societies and Socialist parties in which their subjects lived and worked. All of the essays are scrupulous in their scholarship, and the sympathy that most of the authors feel for Socialist women has not precluded criticism of their ideas, social values, and political choices. Although the editors declare frankly in their preface that, as feminists, they hope to find lessons in history that are relevant to feminist movements today, the essays, including those by the editors, are entirely free from extraneous polemics.

*Socialist Women* makes two points that are of special interest to Russian historians. First, male Socialists in nineteenth-century Western Europe generally proved unwilling or unable to consider the demands of Socialist women seriously. Second, as indicated in Barbara Engel's and Beatrice Farnsworth's essays, male revolutionaries in twentieth-century Russia adopted a similar form of chauvinism after maintaining for many years a degree of sexual equality probably unsurpassed anywhere else in Europe. Although the essays as a group offer explanations for the first phenomenon, none are presented for the second. The essays attribute this chauvinism in radical circles in the West to industrialization (which made women competitors in the labor force) and to the electoral strategy of Socialists who feared that female suffrage might increase the strength of non-Socialist parties, but one looks in vain for an explanation of why male revolutionaries in Russia could "tolerate," for example, an executive committee of *Narodnaia volia,* in which one-third of the members were women. To be sure, in the 1870s, Russia had not industrialized sufficiently for women to threaten men within the labor force, and the absence of a duma precluded fears that women, through their domesticity, might deradicalize the electorate. One suspects, therefore, that it was the ethos of the Russian intelligentsia, with its demand for "moral wholeness" and consistency, that accounts for such tolerance and sexual equality. Unfortunately, one cannot learn from *Socialist Women* why these virtues apparently dissipated several decades later.

In spite of this failing, the collection of essays should stimulate Russian historians to build upon the recent work of Richard Stites and other larger studies to clarify both similarities and differences in the experiences of Socialist women in Russia and in Western Europe.

JAY BERGMAN
*University of Miami*