

## A Story all-too-soon forgotten



### KURZE GESCHICHTE EMANZIPATION / A SHORT HISTORY OF FEMALE EMANCIPATION

By Barbara Sichtermann

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## A short History of female Emancipation

In most civilisations and societies in history women did not have the same rights as men, but were barred from the public spheres of politics and economy to a very large extent. Their place was at home, and their task was to raise the children and attend to their husband, their master.

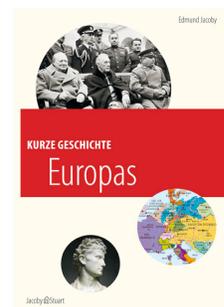
It was not until the rise of modern democracy in Europe and its claims for political equality that women gave voice to their own demands for a share in this "equality of all men". They were not very successful in the French Revolution, but in England, which forestalled a revolution by democratizing the State, women aristocrats were in a privileged condition which enabled them to fight successfully not just for themselves but also for their bourgeois and working class con-genderates. The English "blue-stockings" joined the fight for democracy and universal suffrage. By the early twentieth century women had become an integral part of capitalistic industrialization; especially as clerical staff or factory workers they were by now virtually indispensable. As a result Germany and other major Western countries introduced the vote for women after the first World War. Yet in most European countries full legal equality had not been achieved until well into the latter half of the century. Even so the women's lib movement of the sixties and seventies pointed out that legal equality for women is by no means the same thing as their factual equality in the fields of culture, economy and politics – a claim demonstrated and enforced by many a high-profile campaign. The fact remains that in 21st century's Europe full equality for women is still a far way off – and as for other parts of the globe, well...

### The author

Born in 1943 **Barbara Sichtermann** studied acting in Bochum where she subsequently worked at the theatre from 1965–68. Then she moved to Berlin to study social sciences and economics. She has been working as a freelance journalist and writer since 1978, contributing regularly to *Zeit*, a weekly newspaper, and working for the radio as well. She has had a number of quite successful books published. Barbara Sichtermann lives in Berlin.

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