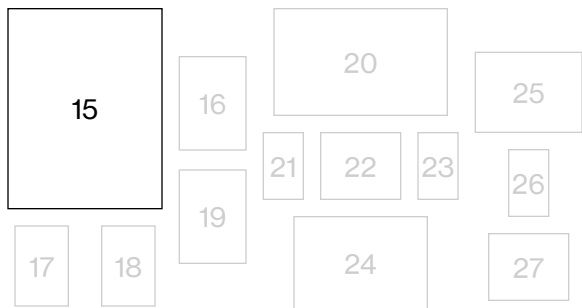
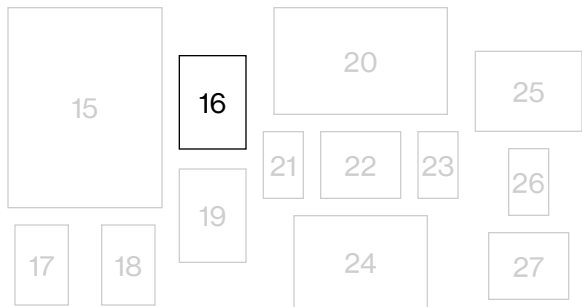


Archive documents 15–27



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- 15 Printed poster announcing the constitution  
of the *Unione Femminile*  
Milan, undated (presumably 1899)  
Archivio Unione Femminile Nazionale

The *Unione Femminile Nazionale* (“National Women’s Union”), still active to this day, is an association for equal social, civil and political rights, founded in 1899 in Milan. The association was characterized from the outset by a secular and interclass approach, and by a strong reformist vocation directed toward concrete commitment to the emancipation of the working class, often working closely with public authorities to intercept the needs of society. Her most fierce battles concerned administrative and political suffrage, the repeal of marital authorization (achieved through the Sacchi Law of 1919), access to the professions, the protection of women’s labor and motherhood, and the establishment of assistance and self-training facilities for women of all ages.

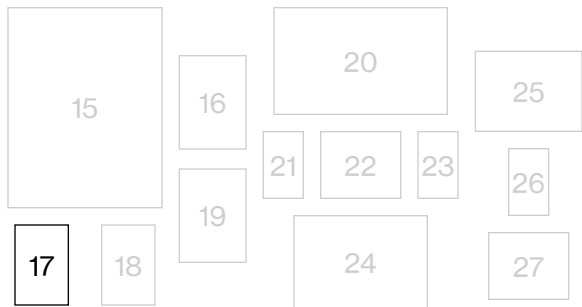


16 Certificate of property of one of the actions  
of Unione Femminile Nazionale (No. 42)

Milan, May 1, 1901

Archivio Unione Femminile Nazionale

The National Women's Union garnered widespread support right from its founding, both from individuals and associations, and thus developed a strong ability to penetrate institutions: sections of the Unione Femminile were opened in various cities in Italy, and in 1905, the Unione adopted a nationwide-looking framework by structuring itself as a cooperative. The image of the logo is the work of the painter Giuseppe Mentessi (Ferrara, 1857–Milan 1931), among the first promoters of the association and director of the professional drawing school set up by the Unione Femminile for the training of girls and women.



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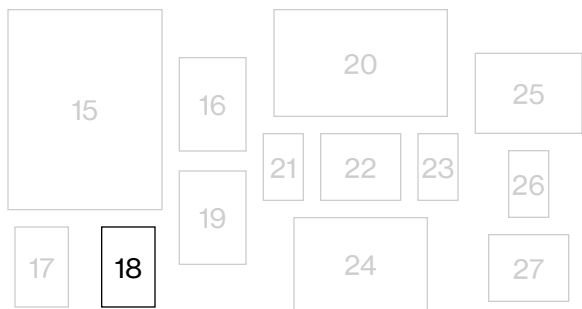
17 *Unione femminile*

Milan, September 1901, No. 9 bis, anno I

Illustration: Luigi Rossi

Archivio Unione Femminile Nazionale

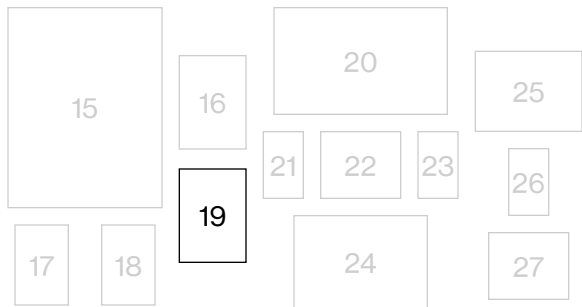
The periodical *Unione femminile* was published between 1901 and 1905 as a space for information and in-depth coverage of the campaigns and initiatives supported by the association, but it was also a place for theoretical elaboration, hosting surveys, reviews, and information on the activities of feminism in Italy and abroad, also drawing on elements from the leading foreign publications. It was from the pages of the magazine that Unione women launched the most important suffragist campaigns of the turn of the 20th century.



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18 *Per una legge sul lavoro delle donne e dei fanciulli. Notizie e documenti*  
Unione femminile, printed booklet  
Printed by Tip. Nazionale di V. Ramperti,  
Milan, 1902  
Archivio Unione Femminile Nazionale

In 1902, a bill written by Anna Kuliscioff for the improvement of the working conditions of women and children was presented by the Socialist Party. To raise awareness of the initiative, the Unione Femminile brought together in this booklet the reports and documents that had animated the debate around the law, reconstructing the positions of the various social stakeholders on the matter. The law, passed in 1902 as the Carcano Law, was not as advanced as the proposal presented by Kuliscioff, but it sanctioned key regulations to curb the exploitation of women and children's labor, also introducing maternity leave for the first time, albeit unpaid. The Unione Femminile would continue this battle in concrete terms, going so far as to establish the first Maternity Fund in Milan, and committing itself to enforcing the Carcano Law with the training of factory inspectors, sent to monitor the conditions of female workers in the workplace.



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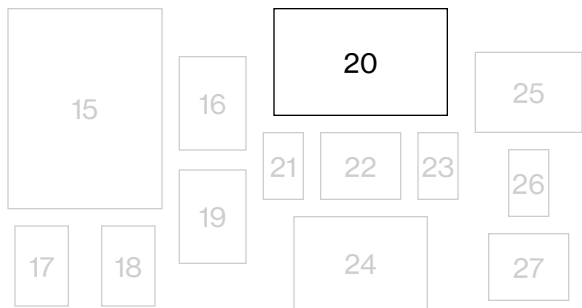
19 Giuseppe Mentessi

*Insegnamento razionale dei primi  
elementi del disegno con esempi di applicazione  
professionale*

Published by Società editrice Dante Alighieri,  
Segati & co., Rome, 1912

Archivio Unione Femminile Nazionale

This booklet gives an account of the activities carried out in the Professional Drawing School directed by painter and Brera Academy teacher Giuseppe Mentessi. The initiative had been set in motion in 1902 by the Unione Femminile to combat the exploitation of child labor and encourage the professional education of young girls, especially the so-called *piscinine*: the very young apprentice seamstresses, milliners or ironers, who had gone on strike to demonstrate against their terrible working conditions. The school later expanded to include adult women and became independent in 1911.



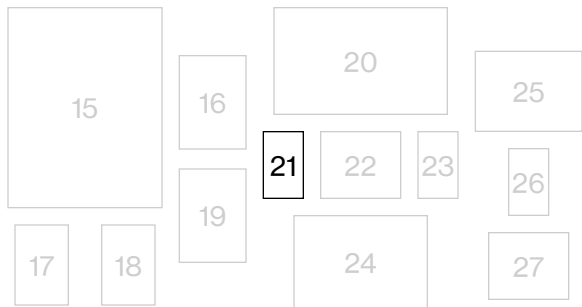
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## 20 *La Donna*

Turin, May 5, 1908, No. 81, anno IV

Archivio Unione Femminile Nazionale

The magazine *La Donna*, published between 1905 and 1968, began as an illustrated women's supplement to the daily newspapers *La Stampa* and *La Tribuna*, and from 1915 became an independent publication. This issue gives ample space to the first National Congress of Italian Women, held in Rome from April 23 to 30, 1908, and was organized by the National Council of Italian Women, a branch of the International Alliance of Women. The congress brought together militants diverse in creed and political passion for the first time: over thirty women's organizations from all over Italy participated to discuss issues such as women's working conditions, education, health, and the right to vote. The congress demonstrated the level of maturity of the women's movement, but at the same time, showed the divisions among its various member groups, particularly regarding religious affiliation and attitudes toward war.



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21 Anna Maria Mozzoni

*Del voto politico delle donne*

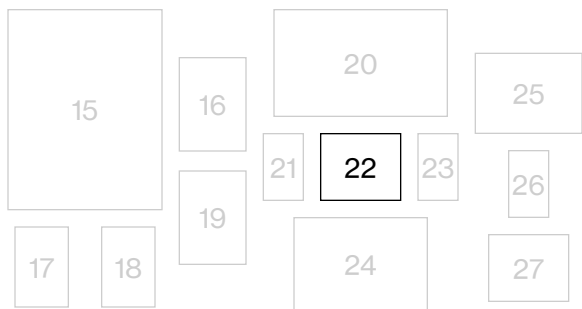
Extract from the periodical *La Donna*, IX

Marzo 30, 1877, No. 290 Bologna 1877

Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, Milano

In 1877, Anna Maria Mozzoni delivered a lecture entitled *Del voto politico alle donne*, (“On the political vote for women”) at the Democratic Society of Milan, with the aim of pointing out the government’s indifference toward the issue of universal women’s suffrage. That same year, she presented to Parliament the first petition for female suffrage and for the abolition of marital authorization, supported and conveyed by the national periodical *La Donna* (1868–1890), the main organ of Italian emancipationism. The petition was rejected, but in 1880 the first real body of the women’s movement in Italy, the *Lega promotrice degli interessi femminili* (“League for the Promotion of Women’s Interests,”)—with traits akin to those of other feminist associations abroad—came into being at the behest of Mozzoni herself. The league would be among the associations that were later to found the Socialist Party in 1892.



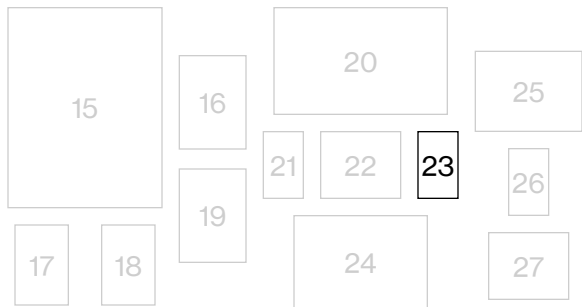


22 *Donne, nel vostro interesse, leggete!*  
("Women, in your own interest, read!")

Booklet edited by the Comitato Lombardo  
Pro Suffragio  
undated (1910?)

Archivio Unione Femminile Nazionale

The debate on electoral reform was rekindled again at the turn of the century, in 1904, with a proposal for universal men's and women's suffrage presented in Parliament by a left-wing parliamentarian. To further the discussion in 1906, Anna Maria Mozzoni presented a new popular petition, with signatures collected in support of the vote for women. A series of pro-vote committees sprang up locally, especially in large cities, to support the initiative. Soon these groups would come together at a national level to form the "Comitato nazionale pro-voto alla donna" ("National Committee for Women's Vote"), in contact with similar bodies at an international level. The Committee at this stage brought together the various souls of Italian feminism, presenting itself in a unified manner. Even though the commission appointed by Parliament to analyze the petition was to give a negative opinion on the extension of the vote to women, the action of the committees would continue..



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23 Anna Kuliscioff

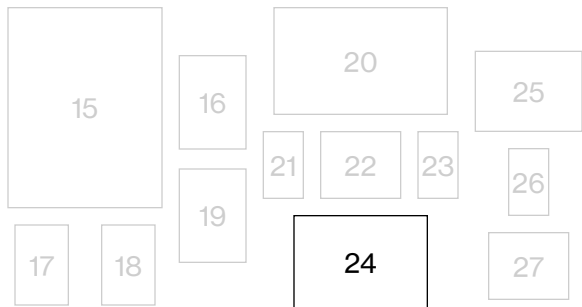
*Per il suffragio femminile.*

*Donne proletarie, a Voi!...*

Published by Società editrice Avanti!, Milan, 1913

Fondazione Anna Kuliscioff

Anna Kuliscioff wrote this pamphlet, *Per il suffragio femminile* (“For Women’s Suffrage”) in 1913, to incite fellow Socialists to continue the struggle for the right to vote. In fact, by 1912 Kuliscioff had succeeded in creating a women’s suffragist organization within the Socialist movement, at the conclusion of a lengthy conflict with Filippo Turati himself. The result was achieved after the demands of the pro-suffrage committees had been turned down, and in 1912 the government had extended the right to vote only to male citizens over the age of twenty-one.



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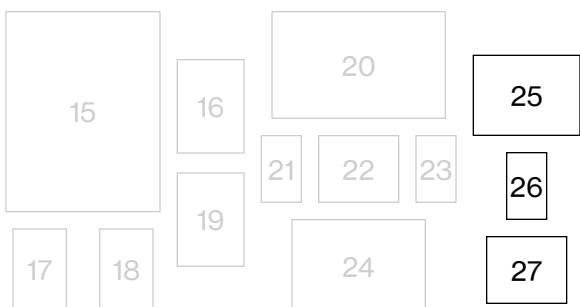
24 *Il Piccolo*

May 14, 1923

*È cominciato il Congresso delle donne  
pel diritto al voto*

Archivio Unione Femminile Nazionale

In 1923, the ninth congress of the pro-suffrage International Women's Alliance was held in Rome. The then prime minister, Benito Mussolini, gave a speech in which he demonstrated openings towards the suffrage issue, and a few weeks later the Acerbo Law (1923) was passed, allowing the female vote solely at the administrative level, to women but with major limitations on age and census. The law, however, did not come to fruition due to the rise of the Fascist regime, and it would prove necessary to wait until 1945 to see women's suffrage approved, and 1946 to obtain women's eligibility for political office.



- 25 Leda Rafanelli  
*Il canto dell'umanità*  
(Pensiero. A Luigia Pezzi)  
Published by Tip. dell'Università Popolare,  
Marmirolo, 1905  
Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, Milano
- 26 Leda Rafanelli  
*Bozzetti sociali*  
Published by Casa editrice sociale,  
Milan, 1922  
Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, Milano
- 27 Leda Rafanelli  
*Alle Madri italiane. Educazione e religione*  
Published by Libreria Editrice G. Nerbini,  
Florence, 1905  
Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, Milano

Leda Rafanelli (Pistoia 1880–Genoa 1971) was one of the protagonists of Milanese anarchism. A publisher, prolific writer and journalist, she was a whole-hearted supporter of antimilitarism and the struggle for justice and freedom, focusing on the female outlook. Rafanelli led a libertarian and unorthodox life, also characterized by her conversion to the Islamic faith and her profession as a fortune teller. Born into a humble family, she soon became interested in the printer's trade and approached Socialist thought. This period gave rise to the propaganda pamphlet, *Alle madri italiane* ("To Italian Mothers," 1905), the first she published, in which Leda urges proletarian mothers to educate their children on the path of Socialism, that of social equality, free thought and peace among peoples, which she believed could be reconciled with religious sentiment, albeit one stripped of ecclesiastical hierarchies. Rafanelli's publishing debut is linked to her poetic production, with the publication of a poem in *Avanti!*—a publication to which she would always remain closely linked (see *Il canto dell'umanità*, 1905). This is also reflected in her journalistic style, characterized from this point on by her great versatility: the themes closest to her heart—particularly those of antimilitarism and the struggle for justice and freedom—are addressed not only in provocative, sharp and original articles, but also through the use of verse and "sketches," as in the edition of *Bozzetti sociali* presented here (1922). By 1908, Rafanelli—by this point leaning toward anarchist positions—had moved to Milan to begin a new and intense chapter of her life, in contact with writers of the day, particularly in the Futurist circles. She is credited with the founding in 1909 of what would later be the Libreria editrice sociale, representing the main publishing organization of the Italian anarchist movement, marked by its production of high technical quality and a fine cultural level.