

Living War,  
Thinking Peace  
(1914-1924)



# Living War, Thinking Peace (1914-1924):

*Women's Experiences,  
Feminist Thought, and  
International Relations*

Edited by

Bruna Bianchi and Geraldine Ludbrook

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Living War, Thinking Peace (1914-1924):  
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## INTRODUCTION

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This volume is the result of a long commitment of the online journal *DEP* (*Deportate, esuli, profughe*) to the themes of women pacifists' thought and activism in the 1900s. In November 2014, to mark the centenary of the First World War, the journal organized a conference entitled *Living war. Thinking peace (1914-1921) Women's experiences, feminist thought and international relations*. The volume collects a selection of the papers delivered on this occasion as well as other chapters that complete and enrich the ideas presented in this framework.

In selecting the contributions we favoured certain specific contexts, both European and non-European, which are little known in international history studies: Italian, Polish and Austrian cases are rarely included in similar collections. Likewise, the theme of the presence and contribution of African-American women has been neglected in the history of women's pacifism, which in recent years has shown particular interest in the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and in the International Congress of Women held in The Hague in 1915. The notion of pacifist activists that emerges from current studies is in fact generally that of white middle-class women.

The volume is aimed at a wide public: students, teachers, scholars and specialists alike. It takes a comparative perspective, and links experience with reflection, including the spirit and the pacifism of working-class women and giving prominence to the originality and the intensity of reflection that is far from being fully valued.

The first section of this volume is entitled *Living War. Women's experiences during the war*. It brings together first-hand personal accounts from women's lives as they face the horrors of war, drawn mainly from original sources such as diaries, letters, memoirs and writings.

The opening chapter by Giovanna Procacci provides an overview of popular demonstrations in Italy in which she aims to fill a gap in Italian historiography by tracing women's popular protests from before Italy's entry into the war in 1915 to demonstrations and strikes during and after

the war. She reveals common patterns in the causes and forms of protest in both urban and rural settings, from the revolts against food shortages and military repression before the war to the protests against economic hardships and anti-State sentiment during the militarization of civil society during the war.

Using primary sources such as women's diaries, letters and memoirs, Matteo Ermacora paints a vivid picture of the hardships experienced by women during the occupation of Veneto by Austro-German troops after the Italian defeat at Caporetto: hunger, violence and forced labour were only some of the adversities women faced. Together with their physical and psychological suffering, Ermacora examines how women took on new roles and devised endurance strategies during the war to ensure the survival of their families. He also looks at the post-war period and the further difficulties brought about for women by return to peacetime society.

Carol Acton provides a new range of perspectives on the war drawn from the diaries, poems and writings of British, American, and Canadian women working as nurses at the front. She focuses on the complexities and conflicts faced by these women as they negotiated their pride in the importance of their work and their pacifist beliefs. Acton reveals how they questioned their role as nurses, often volunteers, and used their writings, especially after the war, to express their anti-war ideals.

Bruna Bianchi examines the devastating effects of the Blockade of Germany by the Allied forces through the eyes of women involved in bringing humanitarian aid to Central Europe, with particular focus on their first-hand experience of the suffering of the starving children. She first traces Emily Hobhouse's 1916 peace mission through Belgium to Germany, before dealing with Madeleine Doty, one of the first witnesses of hunger in Germany, and then Hobhouse's later mission to Vienna and Leipzig. She recounts the founding in 1919 of the Save the Children Fund with the aim of providing relief to the starving children. Bianchi also follows the mission of the Quakers Francesca Wilson, Ruth and Joan Fry, joined by Jane Addams. Bianchi concludes with the activism of Helena Swanwick after the war, and her fight to abolish military aviation that brought about so many deaths during the First World War.

English essayist and novelist Virginia Woolf provides the focus for the chapter by Marisa Sestito in which she examines Woolf's writings – diaries, letters and fiction – to create a highly personalized account of the war. Sestito describes how Woolf repressed or misrepresented the wartime experience as too painful for her to deal with, including as it did the deaths of friends such as Rupert Brooke and her brother Thoby. Sestito also looks at how Woolf describes the traumatic effects of the war through her

fiction. In particular, she links the post-war psychological scars of the fictitious character Septimus Smith with Woolf's own mental illness and final tragic suicide.

The second section of the volume – *Thinking Peace. Feminist thought and activism* – brings together several key figures who challenged inequalities and sought to create new opportunities for women. Their anti-war activism led them to question national political choices from a gender perspective, which brought about the definition of a transnational culture of peace.

Laurie Cohen takes two remarkable woman activists, Bertha von Suttner and Rosa Mayreder, who were active in Austria between the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, providing biographical overviews for both. Although von Suttner was principally considered a “pacifist” and Mayreder a “feminist,” Cohen’s aim is to compare their thought on war, peace, and gender relations in order to show how their work, although starting from different perspectives, ultimately came to converge in many ways.

Dagmar Wernitznig explores the work of Rosika Schwimmer, the Hungarian-born pacifist, feminist and suffragist. She looks principally at Schwimmer’s exceptional personal, political and ideological commitment to peace, and her “grass-roots” approach to pacifism. She points to Schwimmer’s pivotal role in international women’s associations for suffrage and world peace, and her important post-war legacy despite being subjected to harsh right-wing backlash, xenophobia and anti-Semitism from the 1920s.

Crystal Eastman, the American activist, pacifist and suffragist, is the central figure of the chapter by Amy Beth Aronson. Aronson mainly deals with Eastman’s role as co-founder of the American Woman’s Peace Movement and with the tensions that arose between her and Alice Paul, leader of the National Woman’s Party. Aronson argues that it was Eastman’s attempts to seek interconnectedness between diverse movements that led to her increased marginalization, despite her pioneering legislation at the Second International Congress of Women for Peace and Freedom in Zurich in 1919.

Corinna’s Oesch’s chapter on Yella Hertzka also deals with a pacifist and suffragist whose work has become lost from view. Oesch outlines Hertzka’s work in pre-war Vienna, where she founded the New Women’s Club and the Austrian section of the WILPF. In particular, Oesch investigates Hertzka’s belief in the importance of economic training for women through the women’s Association for Social Assistance work and the founding of a horticultural college for women. She also examines

Hertzka's work with the WILPF's Economic Commission and her involvement in economic and social questions in relation to peace.

Brigitte Rath reports on the work of the women peace activists in Austria in the early 20th century. She examines the different positions held by socialist, Catholic, bourgeois, and proletarian groups, and how these different ideas were disseminated. Rath looks in particular at the First International Peace Congress held in The Hague in 1915 and the post-congress meetings and activities that took place in Vienna in the following years.

The third section of the volume – *International relations. Toward future world peace* – examines the human and political experience of a small group of women who saw in the outbreak of the First World War and the emergence of an international women's movement for peace the opportunity to act for their personal emancipation, and in some cases for a different idea of politics.

Maria Grazia Suriano traces the history of the founding of the first Italian Section of the WILPF in Milan and Rome in 1915. Suriano recounts the activities the Italian WILPF carried out during the war, despite considerable police controls. She goes on to describe the work for peace carried out in the 1920s and the group's links with Italian Socialism. She analyzes how the Italian Section remained essentially an associative movement, never taking on the role of a transnational organization.

In her chapter on the work of Polish feminists after the war, Angelique Leszczawski-Schwerk focuses first on the roles of two leading Polish activists: Zofia Daszyńska-Golińska and Justyna Budzińska-Tylicka. She then looks at how the two women contributed to the First International Women's Peace Congress in 1915 and the Third International Peace Conference in 1921. Leszczawski-Schwerk dedicates considerable attention to the activity of Polish feminists in international peace work after the war within the context of the fight for Polish independence.

Marie-Michèle Doucet examines the post-war period and the assistance provided to German and Austrian children by French pacifist women, partly as a means to exercise their political rights at a national and international level. She describes the strong opposition from the French population as a whole to any rapprochement with the Germans. Nevertheless, the French women pacifists continued not only to raise money to provide humanitarian aid to these children, but also to work towards the establishment of new international relations and moral disarmament.

The volume closes with a study by Joyce Blackwell-Johnson of the issue of race and the American peace activists. In particular she examines the work of Mary Church Terrell and her fight against the discrimination

and injustice she encountered within the women's peace movements. Blackwell-Johnson traces the history of the black peace activists and reformers, who focused on the problems faced by African Americans, including the fight against the phenomenon of lynching. She recounts the international activity of the African-American peace activists in Haiti, which was under American military rule from 1917, and their opposition, together with the WILPF, to this occupation. To conclude, Blackwell-Johnson examines the white and black activists' involvement in Liberia focusing especially on the black WILPF members' successful lobbying of the State Department to avoid U.S. military intervention in Liberia.

**PART ONE:  
LIVING WAR**

**WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES DURING THE WAR**

## CHAPTER ONE

# WOMEN IN POPULAR DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST THE WAR IN ITALY (1914-1918)

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### Introduction

In recent years Italian historiography relating to the period 1914-1918 has seen the publication of a large number of studies on the active presence of women in the spheres of assistance and pro-war propaganda. Other research has concentrated on the violence inflicted on women, above all in the months following Caporetto, either because they were residents of the occupied zones, or because they were refugees, or, if they were Austrian nationals, during the period in which they had been detained in internment centres. Previously historiography had addressed the question of the exploitation of women workers in the militarized factories where, even if not as great as in the other industrialized countries, the presence of women and children represented a significant component of the workforce subject to military discipline, in labouring jobs behind the front lines, and in domestic production.<sup>1</sup> Studies on pro-intervention women or on women who were victims of the conflict form part of the dominant historiographical trend of recent years. In Italy as elsewhere there has been a tendency to favour themes relating to a simple narration, to propaganda, and to brutalization, whereas those on women in the factories were the *leitmotif* of the social history of the 1980s and

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<sup>1</sup> The reference is above all to the work by Beatrice Pisa, Stefania Bartoloni, Augusta Molinari, Emma Schiavon on women employed in the patriotic mobilization; to Daniele Ceschin on refugees and on women in the occupied zones, to Matteo Ermacora on the internees and on the women workers at the front; to the less recent works of Luigi Tomassini, Piero Di Girolamo, Laura Savelli, Simonetta Ortaggi Cammarosano, Giovanna Procacci on women in the factories. For an overview of the literature see Matteo Ermacora 2007; and Bruna Bianchi 2015.

1990s, which put the factory and the work carried out there in exceptional circumstances at the centre of historical research. However, even in this earlier period, only sporadic and partial attention was paid to any kind of reality not directly relating to the working class.<sup>2</sup>

In particular, few scholars had looked at the revolts in rural areas and cities during the war, and if they had done so, this had been purely functional to other objectives and had examined only marginally the nature and the causes of the revolts. This was the case with the demonstrations of 1914-1915, analysed in terms of popular attitudes towards intervention in the conflict, and the same was true of the revolts of spring 1917, considered in the light of the incapacity of the Socialist Party to either understand or lead the protest (Monticone 1967; De Felice 1963; Vigezzi 1968). Here we can see the negative influence of the presupposition, still present in much of the historiography, that popular protests were nothing more than pre-industrial episodes – explosions of rage with neither political relevance nor consequences in so far as they were spontaneous, not led by the socialists, and (perhaps above all) because they were organized and carried out by women (Ortaggi Cammarosano 2003).

I myself, when writing at length about the living conditions of the urban and rural female population (Procacci 1981; 1989), was motivated by the intention of demonstrating that the existence of dissent with respect to the war was widespread throughout the country. This was to counter the prevailing line of interpretation (in no sense totally discredited today) that argued for a unanimous consensus for the war, disturbed only by the socialist opposition, whose influence was considered decisive in the culminating episode of revolt – the insurrection of Turin in August 1917. Only comparatively recently has Roberto Bianchi addressed more thoroughly the question of popular revolt, arguing – from a comparative analysis of certain examples of female protest both during the war itself and in the disturbances that shook the Italian countryside for several days immediately after the war – that there was a substantial continuity between war and post-war periods (R. Bianchi 2001; 2006). The demonstrations of popular protest have thus finally emerged from the limbo of episodic pre-industrial spontaneity and entered into the mainstream of study as a phenomenon that in certain specific conditions

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<sup>2</sup> A rare exception is represented by the volume of the *Annali dell'Istituto "Alcide Cervi,"* 1991, 13, *Le donne nelle campagne italiane del Novecento*, with contributions by Simonetta Soldani, Giovanna Procacci, Laura Savelli. Soldani (1986) had already published an important article on living conditions in Tuscany, but containing information valid for the whole country.

– the war and the ensuing traumatic social transformation – can itself be considered a protagonist of modernity.

In the following pages I shall attempt to describe the progress of popular demonstrations during the war and demonstrate the continuity with those preceding the conflict. My aim is to underline the specific nature of the Italian example in respect to both the causes and the forms of protest.

### **The pattern of popular demonstrations before the war**

Unlike other Western belligerent countries in which bread riots had largely ceased after the first half of the nineteenth century, in the fifteen years that preceded the war in Italy there took place a large number of very serious episodes of popular unrest motivated by lack of food – in particular, of bread, the basic food of most of the population – and of huge anti-militarist demonstrations, both of which involved town and country and which were often connected.

The most significant incident occurred in 1898 when the whole country was shaken by popular riots about the cost of living and about the widespread use of the army for repression. The protest had followed the traditional line of popular uprisings (*jacqueries*): burning down of tax offices, storming of town halls and land registries, interruption of all communications through the cutting of telegraph lines, looting of bakeries, and the destruction of the clubs of the landed nobility. The protest involved the towns and the rural areas of the whole country and culminated in the tragically famous events of Milan: the bread riots and the consequent ferocious repression carried out by the army in which 400 civilians were killed and 1000 injured. Throughout Italy the protagonists and victims were peasants, workers, and the poorer elements of the population. Women had participated actively, even in certain areas of the South such as Puglia.

As far as the content of the protest went, the classic protest “about hunger,” although it still dominated, was accompanied from the start by an anti-war undercurrent, as indicated by the cries of “Long live Menelik” and “Out of Africa” with which, in 1896, several thousand people in Milan had expressed their opposition to the African war of conquest. This was a war that, because it was a failure, left the ruling group with aspirations to colonial expansion (Levra 1975).

In the following years, thanks to a more careful approach to economic problems and social relations by the new government dominated by Giovanni Giolitti, a liberal open to democratic impulses, but always

heavily conditioned by conservative forces linked to the monarchy and to the military, protests related to hunger died out. There were nonetheless ample motives for continuing popular uprisings, such as the breaches of contract by landed proprietors, failures of local administration, and the use of the armed forces for the maintenance of public order. These demonstrations concerned mainly the agricultural regions of the South. The North had seen the gradual establishment of a more modern system of mediation between employers (both industrial and agricultural) and workers, with the consequent appearance of strike action as a weapon, involving women workers on occasions, both in rural areas (in particular in the rice fields) and in the factories. The use of strikes spread widely and very quickly, and reached its high point in the years 1912-1913, producing a violent reaction from the employers. However, in an economy in the process of industrialization as was the Italian economy, protest was obviously expressed in different forms, characterised by both popular riots and disturbances, and more organised strikes.

Both forms of protest were present in what was a real revolutionary event that involved the whole of Italy in June 1914, just before the outbreak of the world war, and which has been termed, precisely because of its radical character, the “Red Week” (*Settimana rossa*). The protest sprang from purely political issues: the killing of two people in Ancona during a demonstration for the liberation of two anarchists, one of whom was in prison, the other in a mental asylum, who were held because they had participated in a protest against the Libyan war of 1911. This war had represented a new attempt at colonial conquest by the government and had been met by anti-militarist demonstrations organised by socialists and other political groups opposed to the war. The demonstrations, which had spread even to certain areas of the South – in particular, to Naples – and had seen the very active participation of women, continued even after the Libyan war was over and undoubtedly contributed to the events of the “Red Week” of 1914.

This insurrection, which saw the involvement of a large number of women, began in the Romagna, but extended very rapidly to other rural areas, where it often assumed the traditional festive and triumphalist characteristics of popular protest. There were attacks on town halls and railway stations, assaults on the houses of the proprietors and appeals for a more just and equal world (the division of wheat in the public piazza); people erected the “tree of liberty” and arrested army officers with the cry of “Long live the republic and the revolution.” The insurrection then spread to many cities, including Turin, Milan, Genoa, Florence, Naples and Bari, where barricades were erected in some places (Lotti 1965;

Martini 1989; Aragno 2005). The whole episode of “Red Week” finished dramatically with 16 dead and 600 wounded among the demonstrators and one dead among the government forces. Nevertheless its duration and extension to a large part of the country, and the simultaneous involvement of both rural areas, where popular riots took place, and cities, with a general strike called by the General Confederation of Labour and the participation of workers in the revolt, together with its spontaneous nature – the Socialist Party and the unions were caught unprepared and tried to hold back the movement – terrorised the Italian ruling class. It never forgot this shock, and reacted politically with drastic measures of repression, rendered even harsher by the exceptional legislation of the war, legislation that would become part and parcel of the institutional structure of the fascist regime.

When the First World War broke out in August 1914, “Red Week” was only just over. After a few days of uncertainty during which there were fears of renewed disorders, the declaration of neutrality seemed to offer Italy an unexpected prospect of tranquility. But such hopes were soon shown to be unfounded. In the following months the country experienced a very serious economic, social and political crisis, which the government was unable to handle. Although Italy depended to a large degree on the import of cereals, the necessary measures to ensure a continuing supply were not taken. At the same time, in order to meet the economic difficulties related to the European war, the government pursued – even during the months of Italian neutrality – a monetary policy based on increasing circulation and raising indirect taxation rather than imposing heavier direct taxation, as happened in England and, to some extent, in France. As a result, there was a massive increase in prices, which rose by 60 percent even in the period of neutrality. This was accompanied by an increase in unemployment, both because many factories had closed due to a lack of raw materials and difficult trading conditions, and because of the disorderly return of thousands of emigrants from the countries of central Europe.

Economic conditions, together with concern about a possible Italian entry into the conflict, were the principal reasons for the renewal of protest. From November 1914, and above all between January and May 1915, all the regions of Italy witnessed demonstrations that linked strikes and marches in the cities with the more traditional popular riots in the rural areas and in the villages. There were clashes at railway stations, railway lines were blocked, and the trains sent to take away those called up to the army were sabotaged; there was looting at bakeries, at flour

mills, and from lorries carrying wheat and flour; and there were the usual attacks on town halls.

The disorders were particularly severe in the poorer areas of the South and the islands, and in those areas of central and northern Italy that had seen large numbers of workers laid off by industry (Veneto, Emilia, Tuscany, Lombardy, Piedmont) and a lot of returning emigrants. Hundreds – sometimes thousands – of people took part in the demonstrations, which often ended with bloody clashes with the police forces (B. Bianchi 2002; Cammarano 2015; see also B. Bianchi 1998).<sup>3</sup>

The presence of women became more marked after January and February 1915, as food became more difficult to find because of the winter, and prices rose day by day. The sharpening of the protest was also linked to premonitions of war, made explicit in many of the main cities, especially in those with a university, by the pro-war demonstrations of groups of young men, usually students, either nationalists or, as they were called at the time, “democratic interventionists” and/or “revolutionary interventionists.” These young, middle-class men distinguished themselves for being noisy and aggressive in their attitudes towards the much larger pro-peace demonstrations usually organised by young supporters of the Socialist Party and by the workers. Often the opposing groups limited themselves to slogans, but increasingly the shouting turned to violence, where those opposing entry into the war came off worse as those in favour of the war were protected by the police. So, by spring 1915,

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<sup>3</sup> Thus – to give a few examples of the most clamorous episodes – as early as December 1914, 6,000 workers of the Terni steelworks went on strike in Perugia because of the cost of living, and were immediately supported by the rest of the population; in February 1915 a crowd of women and unemployed building workers were involved in a protest in Rome; in Naples, in the popular areas of the city, 15,000 workers from the steelworks demonstrated, together with several thousand women and children; in Scandiano, in Emilia, at the beginning of March, 25,000 people took part in the funeral of two men, killed during a demonstration of 600 landless agricultural workers, protesting about unemployment and the high cost of living; 80,000 workers in Turin demonstrated on 3 March, complaining about the high price of bread; in Venice, where in September 1914, women and unemployed had already united in protest, more violent riots broke out in March 1915; in Ginosa, in Puglia, two thousand people attacked the flour mills, with one death: Archivio centrale dello Stato, *Ministero dell'Interno, Direzione generale di Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Affari Generali e Riservati, cat. A5G, Conflagrazione Europea, 1914-1918* [henceforth A5G], bb. 88, 198, 1 (Bologna); 94, 212, 1 (Firenze) 103, 225, 1 (Milano); 108, 227, 3 (Napoli); 123, 250, 1 (Torino).

discontent and popular protest about food supplies was accompanied by protest related directly to opposition to the war.

The days immediately before Italy's declaration of war on Austria saw clashes in the principal cities of the centre-north between those favourable to intervention, led by their chief political and cultural representatives (Mussolini in Milan, D'Annunzio in Rome) and favoured by the police, and crowds of people, including a large number of women, who protested against the war. In Turin on 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> May more than 100,000 people demonstrated against the war and put up barricades against the police, resulting in clashes that left one dead, many injured, and the arrest of over 100 demonstrators. There were clashes in Milan as well (with one death) and in Florence. At the same time, in many smaller centres in Emilia-Romagna, Lombardy, Veneto, Lazio, Puglia, Calabria, Sicily, and at Terni and in Naples, the population – in particular, the women – tried to prevent the departure of those called up, using the usual, well-tried, methods: cutting telegraph and telephone wires to prevent the arrival of reinforcements for the carabinieri, damaging the locomotives, stoning and struggling with the police, all accompanied with shouts of “Down with the war” (Vigezzi 1960).<sup>4</sup> The clashes left one dead in Vignanello in the province of Rome on 27th April.

At this point the exceptional legislation, passed immediately, compelled silence.

### **Protest against the war**

The war against Austria began on 24<sup>th</sup> May 1915 and for several weeks there was no protest; war had been declared and it was necessary to prepare to face the consequences. It was generally believed that the ordeal of war would be over within a few weeks, a conviction shared by the politicians and the military and put around by propaganda. In addition, the apparent inevitability of the conflict, for which the population had been summoned by patriotic appeals urging the need for sacrifice by the whole community, the harsh repression of any kind of opposition, the concession of certain benefits regarding agricultural contracts and rents, and the fact of money being available through the subsidies paid to the families of those called up – something quite new for many women –, all this, together with the burden of seasonal agricultural work, silenced protest for a few months.

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<sup>4</sup> ACS, A5G, b. 68.134. 83-98.

Protest began again, however, in the winter of 1915, when women began to hear the first reports about what was really happening at the front, thanks to the news of the indescribable suffering in the trenches that soldiers on leave recounted or to the contents of letters the censor (who was not too careful in the early months of the war) had missed.

During these months the economic situation in the country had not improved. Certain that the war would be short, the government had been concerned above all with two considerations, thought to be priorities. Firstly by crushing protest at home through the exceptional legislation: decrees that harshly repressed any kind of public assembly or the diffusion of any “alarming” news; and secondly by reinforcing the army. In fact 82 percent of war expenses were devolved to the military ministries during the course of the conflict, to which were also entrusted the administration of large areas of the country and numerous responsibilities within the sphere of civilian life. This was a political choice that sacrificed any measures in support of the civilian population to the strengthening of the military sector. It aligned the government of Antonio Salandra, a man of the Right who had favoured the repressive policies at the end of the previous century, with the authoritarian positions of other continental belligerent nations – in particular, Germany, Austria, and Russia – where there was a similar neglect of investments in support of agriculture and foodstuffs. These policies differed markedly from those of the western powers and of England in particular, which was careful to balance military spending with that in favour of the civilian population (Winter 2007). And while even in England and in France there were protests about rationing and rising prices (in northern France there had been protests of this sort in 1911), a careful policy of supply, together with measures designed to prevent an excessive devaluation of the currency, with consequent price increases, served in these countries to avoid hunger riots and with them the accompanying delegitimization of the political governing class.<sup>5</sup>

But let us return to the conditions within Italy after the entry in war. Since the government had not envisaged that the war would last long and had taken inadequate measures to ensure imports, and given that a large amount of the reserves of foodstuffs were allocated to the armed forces,

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<sup>5</sup> On the 1911 demonstrations in the North of France in protest at the price of certain food products (butter, meat, eggs), see Hanson 1988. On the uniformity of motivation at the heart of popular protest in London, Paris, and Berlin (inequality of access to food) and on the differences between the first two capital cities and the last (where speculation and black marketeering generated popular anger until rationing was imposed): see Bonzon and Davis 1977; Davis 2000.

the country soon found itself in a dramatic situation, with shortages of bread, flour, and rice. As far as prices were concerned, the government pursued the inflationary policies already followed in the period of neutrality, with the result that food prices continued to rise. The price index for meat and cereals in the period between July 1914 and October 1918 showed an increase of 267 percent (Bachi 1919, 95) while the currency, devalued by 56 percent in the same period, made the subsidies given to the needy families of soldiers totally inadequate.<sup>6</sup> Only in August 1916 was a central agency set up – the Commissariat for supply and consumption, which subsequently became a ministerial agency – with the task of fixing prices for a limited number of essential food products and which, in 1917, began first rationing and then the issue of coupons. But the Commissariat was not up to the task, with the result that food distribution remained without coordination into 1918.

A similar situation existed in the sphere of assistance. While the government had abandoned the principles of non-intervention in the industrial sector and had instituted an obligatory regulation of labour through the Institute for Industrial Mobilisation (entrusted to the military), in the sphere of assistance to civilians it maintained a rigid liberalism, delegating the task of assigning subsidies to local private associations which were often not in a position to assess individual family needs. Many families, therefore, although poor, got no financial help. As before the war, women volunteers worked to help the needy (for example, running kindergartens, soup kitchens), but such assistance was inevitably inadequate and, in the smaller agricultural centres and in the mountains, practically non-existent. As the prefect of Rome wrote in 1917, the assistance committees “either do not work or don't work effectively both because of lack of funds and because of the lack of concern of the component members.” The government began to worry about the problem of assistance in 1917 but, as well as being late, the intervention attempted was subject to such bureaucratic obstacles and such poor financing that it realized little (Pisa 1989, 957).

The conditions of the poorer classes therefore worsened progressively. There were, however, notable variations between regions. In the North and the Centre a significant number of young women (198,000), even though proportionately fewer than in other belligerent countries, were employed in the factories that produced for the Institute for Industrial Mobilisation. Besides working in the big industrial complexes of the towns, many women were employed in the small factories – mainly making bullets and shells – set up during the war in the smaller towns or

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<sup>6</sup>On the value and distribution of the subsidies, see Serpieri 1930, 57, 122 ff.

in the surrounding countryside, as with the arc of small centres around Milan. Yet even in these areas food was short and prices impossible. In the countryside, where most of those called up to the army came from, in the Centre-North – cultivated by share-croppers, small proprietors and small leaseholders – the women worked in the fields (unlike in a similar economy such as that of France), doing the same heavy work as men. The result was that, through a massive increase in female labour, agricultural production did not fall and living standards were maintained. But in those regions in which salaried day-labour was the norm and in which fewer men were exonerated from military service, women could not replace men. Here, as in those areas where the men had emigrated to the Americas, conditions were often dramatic. The situation was particularly difficult in the South, where there was no industrial network and where the socio-geographic structure, characterised by agglomerates of houses a long way from the fields and by large, extensive, landed properties, had traditionally kept women away from agricultural work. Moreover, cultural norms also made it difficult for women to work outside the home. In the South there was not even any real diffusion of domestic uniform-making for the army – something which, run by patriotic associations in the cities and surrounding hinterlands, provided work for 600,000 women. The wages were, however, miserable: 0.82 *centesimi* for a 12-hour day) (Pisa 1989, 957). In many areas of the country, therefore, the only resource was the subsidy, insufficient for needs and in any case not always granted.

These tragic conditions of existence, not mitigated by an adequate policy of assistance, produced inevitably protest, which began again soon after the outset of the war and continued uninterrupted and with increasing extension and intensity, in wave after wave, for all the following years. If, prior to the conflict, the presence of women in the protests had always been constant and committed, with most of the men now at the front, protest became almost exclusively that of the women, at times accompanied by large groups of children and a few old men. Only in the last year of the war did those men remaining take part in the protests, and even then in limited numbers because they risked being sent immediately to the trenches. In the factories as well, strikes usually began through the initiative of young women workers, often employed in the factory for the first time, as a reaction to the harsh working conditions and the severe discipline. Often, at that point, the spontaneous and unexpected demonstration would spread to the sectors where the men were working.

Unlike in the western powers and in Germany, in Italy, given the limited extent of industrialised zones and the rigid discipline in the factories, which was more severe even than in Germany, protest against the war took the form above all of popular demonstrations, although factory disputes were also numerous. Popular protest began early. From the winter of 1915 prefects signalled the presence of protest in the rural areas of the North. This was principally in the poorer areas of Piedmont, Veneto and Friuli, where returning emigrants and unemployed added to problems, but also in the agricultural plains of Emilia, in the Tuscan valleys, and in all the very poor South and islands: Puglia, Calabria, Sicily and Sardinia. In Sicily, between the end of 1915 and the summer of 1918, prefects reported more than a thousand demonstrations, with the participation of thousands of women and children and with occasional acts of violence against the municipal authorities, against the police forces, and even against priests.<sup>7</sup> In 1916 the protests spread from the countryside to the smaller urban centres, and reached the big cities in 1917. According to one prefectorial report, there were more than 500 demonstrations across the whole country in the period from October 1916 to April 1917.<sup>8</sup>

The protests usually followed the same pattern. They broke out spontaneously when the women went together to claim their subsidy or when, in the countryside, they blocked lorries carrying away food products. The demonstrators marched along the roads shouting slogans: “War against war” was the slogan people used in Chianti on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1917, together with appeals to others to join the protest march (R. Bianchi 2005). They would direct their attention to the houses of the powerful, to schools, and then to the town hall, where they would break windows and sometimes burn the furniture and seize the lists of those called up. In the cities the gathering point was also the town hall, but often the women would begin the protest at the market or in front of the bakeries, where, on occasion, they would raid the storerooms (B. Bianchi 2002; Piva 1977). The poor distribution of food produced some tension between town and country: the peasants protested about products being requisitioned at prices that gave them no profit and then passed to the army and the cities. City dwellers complained that the prices of agricultural products were too high, accusing the peasants of hiding food in order to sell it on the black market. However, unlike in Germany, the

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<sup>7</sup> ACS, A5g. b. 81, 162, 1; on Sicily, see Bonomo 2014, 237.

<sup>8</sup> The summaries of the prefectorial reports for the period October 1916 – April-May 1917, conserved in the *Archivio centrale dello Stato* (A5G, b. 81, 162, 4, 2), have been published in De Felice 1963.

tensions were never really acute in Italy, where almost all the cities, apart from two or three large industrial centres, had close contact with the land. If anything, the resentment of the peasants was directed against those responsible for requisitioning, and mirrored the anti-authority sentiments of the cities.

What were the motives for demonstration and protest? In some respects – the protests about lack of bread, about the cost of living, or about the inertia of the local administration – we can see an unbroken continuity with the protests seen during the period of neutrality. The demonstrations by the women when those called up were leaving can be considered as belonging to a traditional register connected to the sphere of emotion. However, the war had altered mentalities and, with them, the forms of protest. As protagonists on the home front in both the private and the public spheres, women had acquired new social awareness. The responsibilities of work, as well as the anger directed at the authorities who had deprived families of indispensable male assistance, had given women, who had filled the gap with success, a new image of themselves, very different from that of the subaltern female. Forced to face up to new family responsibilities and to find food, women were pushed into the position of having themselves to deal directly with bureaucratic structures and state authority, whether it was the local administration responsible for the subsidy, the private associations for assistance, or even the military authorities who requisitioned agricultural products. If these new tasks had generated within the women a new awareness of their role, the fact of being wives and mothers of soldiers had produced the realisation that there were rights that should be recognised in their regard, such as the right to have a subsidy, something to be considered not as a generous act of beneficence but as an obligation of the State. Equally, it was considered a duty of the State to provide the families of soldiers with sufficient food at reasonable prices. In this way food became a symbol of the *right to exist*, which the State had the duty to ensure on the home front, at a time when other family members were being sacrificed at the front.<sup>9</sup>

Given that it had been officially declared that all members of the national community were called upon to make the sacrifices imposed by the conflict, the shortages of food served to make evident the unjust distribution of those sacrifices. In the cities, while the poor had difficulty in finding food and spent a lot of time standing in tiring queues, the better-off could avoid restrictions by buying the much more expensive,

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<sup>9</sup> On the demonstrations in the countryside and on the moral – and not simply economic – justifications that lay at the heart of them, see Procacci 1989.

non-rationed, foods, by going to restaurants, or by purchasing on the black market. For certain social groups, life in the city seemed to have changed very little: young officers strolled with their elegantly dressed fiancées, giving rise to suspicions that they had been favoured with leave or with office jobs; the cinemas functioned normally, the cafés were open, and – outside the towns – the resorts and spas were as full as ever. Although lack of food was a daily reality, it was often rather the sense of injustice, of moral outrage, that pushed people to protest. And the protest was directed predictably not only at the shopkeepers, but also at the houses of the upper classes or at holiday-makers. It could be said that there was a shift from protest at an event – the war – to a protest against those who had provoked it and who did not suffer the consequences directly, or who were even making a profit from it.

However, while at the outset of the conflict the protest was directed above all at the local authorities – in line with the anti-authoritarianism of the preceding decades – hostility very rapidly began to be aimed directly at the central State. The traditional anti-state sentiment of the Italian masses was given fresh impulse by the expansion of the state functions.<sup>10</sup> It was further reinforced by the knowledge that it was central government that had entrusted the organisation of requisitioning and, for a certain period, the distribution of food to the military. In the same way, within the factories, it was the presence of the military in its role of enforcing discipline and carrying out mediation that led the industrial workers to see the State as their principal enemy, side by side with, perhaps even more than, the traditional bosses.

The militarization of civil society increased anti-state sentiment, therefore, and contributed greatly to delegitimize the governing class. In this sense, the Italian situation resembled that of Russia, Austria, and Germany, while differing from the experience of the western powers where, due to the attention paid to the welfare of civilian society, sacrifices and shortages were made acceptable. Protest, although still about food, was not so much about its absence but about prices and rationing, and was aimed less against the State than against those within the national community who seemed to be taking advantage of the condition of the weaker members of the population, getting rich at their expense: the “intermediaries,” the speculators, and the shopkeepers.<sup>11</sup> As

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<sup>10</sup> On the massive intrusion of the State in private life, see Soldani 1991.

<sup>11</sup> In both England and France the protests had their origin not in the shortages of food, but in the fear that it might run out or because legal prices were not being respected (England); because of injustice in distribution and the evident privileges reserved for certain social groups (France), see Waites 1987; Coles 1978, for the

in other countries, in Italy there was no lack of diatribe against the profiteers and the “sharks” (the arms manufacturers). However, in a nation profoundly divided after the rout of Caporetto, which was attributed by the nationalists to socialist “defeatism,” an accusation not refuted by the government, these diatribes became part of the larger “we-them” division. For the ordinary people, “they” were the profiteers, those in favour of the war, and, above all, the government, while for the nationalists “they” were the socialists, the pacifists, the masses and those soldiers influenced by them.

The transfer of resentments from the level of the local authorities to the national was reinforced by the news of the appeal for the conclusion of the war made by German diplomatic circles. This news spread during the winter of 1916 with the diffusion of leaflets that reproduced the text of the appeal and the passing, at the same time, of the motion of the socialist parliamentarians calling for peace, and the publication of the Zimmerwald manifesto of the socialists opposed to the war. The idea that the decision to enter the war had been unavoidable, spread by propaganda, was no longer tenable, in confirmation of the opposite idea that the war was really “a war wanted by the prosperous classes to the cost of the poor,” as proclaimed in more than one leaflet.

In the North and the Centre, the demonstrations became more precisely directed, often promoted and/or encouraged by socialist women, as, for example, in the province of Florence, where, in the winter of 1916-1917, demonstrations against the war took place almost daily. But even in the not traditionally socialist areas, with the passing of the months the protests became increasingly explicit in their denunciation of the war. Thus, in all parts of Italy and often moved by soldiers who, from the front, reproved the women “for prostituting themselves for 70 *centesimi* a day,” the amount of the subsidy,<sup>12</sup> women passed from protesting against the inadequate nature of the subsidy to refusing it in the hope that this would prevent the continuation of the war. On other occasions, groups of women refused to harvest the crops, with the intention of depriving the army of supplies, or else they appealed to both male and female workers in the factories to go on strike to stop the production of munitions and other requirements of war. Or else, much more directly, they helped deserters (B. Bianchi 1998, 174 f., 177-830; De Felice 1963, 483 f., 488, 503; on help given to deserters, B. Bianchi 2001, 280-294 and 1995, 133-141).

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description of the demonstrations for the *taxation populaire* among the miners of North Cumberland; Darzon 2004, 216-220; Purcher 1994, 155-219.

<sup>12</sup> Letter of 5<sup>th</sup> July 1917 sent to Carpineto Romano: ACS, A5G, 118. 242. 2.

Tensions reached their height in May 1917 when news of the Russian Revolution began to circulate and when censorship was no longer able to conceal the truth about conditions at the front and the terrible bloodbath that was taking place. Shortly afterwards, the Pope's comments about the tragedy of the war and its uselessness encouraged people to think that peace was near. Desperation, anger, hope and courage united to give birth to a series of simultaneous initiatives that had the realisation of peace as their objective.

News of the February Revolution passed from mouth to mouth, and arrived in April not only in the cities but also in the countryside. Prefects reported that everyone was talking about the revolutionary movement, but the significance given to the event was not always the same. In most of the countryside and in the South, revolution was considered the same as the riot (as if "making the revolution" was the same as organizing a demonstration) and was considered above all as a means for obtaining peace ("peace or revolution"). Where the socialists were traditionally strong, people went much further: "Everyone is talking about revolution ... which is supposed to take place shortly," warned the prefect of Turin, while in Tuscany children shouted "Long live the revolution, death to the nobles, we will celebrate." Sometimes the reference to the French Revolution was evident, "We want to have a revolution and cut off the heads of the *signori*," was the cry in Polesine in February 1918. *Ça ira* was the phrase circulating in Piedmont.<sup>13</sup> Hopes for the end of the conflict were now being replaced by the certainty of a revolutionary event. If, in the previous disturbances, it had been possible to see elements typical of the "moral economy" described by E. P. Thompson – indignation for the increase in prices and at speculation, appeals to the principle of equity and of the right to food and to survival – now characteristics were evident that went beyond the re-establishment of order according to "natural justice," because the objective had become the transformation of the social order.

It was above all in this period that the phenomenon of the conjunction between protest in the countryside and protest in the towns grew. In Italy, in part as a consequence of rapid industrialization, not only had the industrial centres seen an enormous rise in the number of inhabitants, but even the small rural towns had expanded into the surrounding countryside, with the creation of new factories, now the centres around which most peasant families tended to gravitate. This close connection between factory and countryside and between workers and peasants,

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<sup>13</sup> ACS, A5G, 81, 162, 1; De Felice 1963, 479 ff.; R. Bianchi 2010, 121; B. Bianchi 1998, 183.

often members of the same family, produced an intertwining of strikes and popular protest. Groups of women and children from the rural hinterland would march towards the munitions factories, where the majority of the workers were women, and incite the workers to join the procession. On other occasions the demonstration would begin within the factory and then later involve the peasant women. Usually the cause of the revolt – what pushed the women factory workers to unite with the peasant women – was not working conditions within the factory but the lack of food or its high cost.<sup>14</sup> Demonstrations frequently then turned into general protest about the war and the absence of husbands.<sup>15</sup>

The biggest episode of this kind took place in Lombardy, where the demonstrations started by the women textile and munitions workers, spread across the countryside of the Milan hinterland, reaching fairly distant centres (Como, Lecco, Pavia, Monza) and finally reaching Milan. There the around 10,000 demonstrators were “a large number of women who had come in from the countryside and who were joined by men and women workers from the factories [...] they broke what they could lay their hands on, doors, factory windows, and were in charge of Milan for 24 hours” (Martini 1966).

Turati wrote to Kuliscioff: “It is above all the women who have become furies. They want to stop the war immediately; they want their men back. They are hostile to Milan, seen as first wanting the war and now taking away everything – wheat, lard, rice ... They want to do for these *signori*” (Turati and Kuliscioff 1977, 501).

Similar thoughts and worries were expressed at the same time by Luigi Albertini, the Editor of the *Corriere della Sera* newspaper: “It is the women who make themselves felt, who break the windows, who demand the closure of the factories ... The pretext is the lack of rice or its high price, but in reality what all these women want is that their menfolk return home and that the factories close because the production of munitions just prolongs the war.”

The anti-war protest in the Milan area represented the largest phenomenon of association between town and countryside, but it was not

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<sup>14</sup> As Barrington Moore (1983: 435) observes, more than discontent at work, it is the disruption of daily life created by the scarcity of consumables that generates revolt.

<sup>15</sup> “Bread, liberty, and peace” was the slogan of thousands of demonstrators in Berlin on 1st May 1916 – an example soon followed in other cities. “Bread, peace, and land” is what the peasants and workers in Russia demanded, after February 1917 when the food crisis became desperate: Chickering 1998, 156; Daniel 1997, 246 ff.; Engel 1997.

the first such episode. Similar alliances had already occurred in 1916. In March 1916 women in Pisa had formed a procession protesting about the war and the high cost of living and had marched to the factories and compelled the women workers to leave their jobs, threatening to break the windows of the factories with their clogs. There were similar protests in the provinces of Alessandria and Asti in February and April of 1916, around Biella, in Venice, around Ravenna and in Emilia and in Tuscany.<sup>16</sup> In the same period women in Lazio began the occupation of the land and protested against the war, while in Naples workers and other citizens clashed with the police forces. In the rest of the South, demonstrations spread to the cities, transforming festivals for patron saints (as in Lentini, in Sicily, on 4th April 1917) or the commemoration of entry into the war (as in Scordia, in Sicily, on 24<sup>th</sup> May) into demonstrations against the war. On occasions these popular protests were accompanied by what was, in effect, a “*quasi* general strike.”<sup>17</sup>

The growth of protest could not but shock public opinion, which, because the demonstrations were occurring more or less simultaneously, tended to attribute them to a pre-arranged plan on the part of the Socialist Party and the unions. In fact, not only was the Socialist Party not behind the protest – it was still following its line to “neither support nor sabotage” the war effort, decided at the outset of the conflict – but had even taken its distance from the non-organized popular movements. The PSI kept on stimulating opposition to the war – many militants were given long sentences or interned without trial in distant places (mainly in Sardinia) – but gave no lead for an articulated political struggle.<sup>18</sup> And, as

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<sup>16</sup> In April 1917 in Bologna, where the wage claims of the women workers in the munitions factories were subordinated to those related to the problem of food and, together with the women from the rural hinterland, to demands for the end to the war. In the province of Modena, where a demonstration that had originated among the women workers of a tobacco factory spread to the hinterland and to the factories involved in war production. And in Tuscany, the valley of Bisenzio, where, in July 1917, hundreds of women from the higher valleys, organized by the socialist Teresa Meroni, persuaded 1,500 women factory workers and “groups of children of all ages, to form a procession which, growing as it progressed, marched as far as Prato and even to the gates of Pistoia”: Degli Esposti 2012; Soldani 1986; Cintelli and Marchi 2007; R. Bianchi 2010, 120 f.

<sup>17</sup> On Sicily, see Bonomo 2014; on the land occupations and the struggles of the agricultural labourers, see Procacci 1991 (then, with modifications, Procacci 1999).

<sup>18</sup> B. Bianchi 1998, 163, 176. Even Modigliani, among the socialist leaders most opposed to the war, condemned the popular demonstrations, precisely because they were not organized: De Felice 1963, 490.

far as the unions were concerned, their operation in the factories was more limited than in other western countries or in Germany because the task of mediation had been assigned to arbitration boards directed by military personnel or by the industrialists. If the unions continued to have an influence over the established male working class, they had much less over the workers who had recently entered the factories for the first time. They had little authority with the women in particular, who were less ready to put up with harsh discipline, low salaries, and the problems related to having to work and perform their traditional roles at the same time, such as feeding and looking after their families and who, precisely because of this newly-acquired double role, were reluctant to accept the control of the union.

It is significant that the Turin insurrection of August 1917 – the high point of political protest against the war – broke out, as in Russia on 8<sup>th</sup> March 1917, at the initiative of women workers who, trying to buy bread before going into the factories in the morning, found the bakeries empty. The women attacked the bakery lorries and were very soon joined by the working-class population of the poorer zones of the city. The demonstration developed into a mass revolt, which went on for several days, with barricades erected and lengthy battles between the workers and the army until it was brutally crushed. There were between 50 and 100 dead, a large number of wounded, many imprisoned, and several hundred workers despatched immediately to the trenches. The ferocity of the clashes was here related to the working-class nature of the city, strongly influenced by the Socialist Party and, above all, by the left-wing faction within it. However, it is interesting to note that the metalworkers' union had managed previously to reach an agreement with the boards of the Industrial Mobilisation, with the result that the number of protests within the factories had up to that point been much lower in Turin than in other industrial centres. Clearly, although the union had succeeded in reaching agreements on wages and hours of work, it had not done the same where food was concerned, and as a consequence it had lost control.

The protests of the spring and summer – in particular the insurrection in Turin – persuaded the more radical interventionist political forces to compelled the moderate Interior Minister, Vittorio Emanuele Orlando, to pass a decree “against defeatism.” This was a decree that further strengthened the already very severe repressive legislation by targeting not only protest demonstrations, but even ordinary opinions that did not correspond to the expected patriotic level among the population. In the past punishments for the crime of unlawful assembly had been extremely

severe. For example, the demonstration in Modena in May 1917, in which 600 civilian workers, 100 women and 38 soldiers took part, resulted in the latter being sent immediately to the front, and fines and days in prison for around 20 women and 10 men workers. However, with the new decree the fines and the possibilities of imprisonment reached new levels: thousands of lire in fines and months in prison. This harsh regime was widely applied after the rout of Caporetto and used by the military tribunals, now empowered to try civilians in the areas of the country subject to their jurisdiction (the so-called “war zones”). These zones, in which around a third of the entire population of Italy lived, were extended to almost all north and central Italy after the defeat. In the factories, the women – who clearly risked less than the men – were hit hard. The militarization of a part of the peninsula and the widespread application of the repressive norms in the rest of the country meant that in Italy, unlike in the other European countries, open protest, both in the countryside and in the factories, declined in 1918.<sup>19</sup>

At the beginning of 1918 the economic situation was so bad that famine was feared. Several million hundredweight of grain had been lost in the zones occupied by the Austrians and a large part of the food reserves were sent to the front. In some cities there was no food at all, but even in the smaller centres the situation was not much better. One young soldier from Prato, on leave for a month because his mother had died, went back to the front early: “I had nothing to eat. For three or four days the officer gave me something, after which I had nothing and so I asked to return to the front early even if my leave was not finished ... at home there wasn't even a slice of bread left.”<sup>20</sup> In May the situation improved, due to import agreements between the allies and certain measures taken finally by the new government of Orlando-Nitti, which rationalized agricultural production and improved the distribution of foodstuffs. At the same time an increase in subsidies, the concession of more permits and exemptions for men to permit them to carry out agricultural work, and the increase in the price of certain agricultural products, served to reduce the number of protests. However, although protest diminished, expectations did not. On the contrary, the defeat of Caporetto was experienced by much of the peasant population as an event that would end the conflict. The rout of Caporetto disturbed the middle class very deeply, but did not stimulate patriotic sentiments in the countryside, where, as authoritative observers noted from Veneto, to Tuscany, to Puglia, the women were hoping for the arrival of the Germans.

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<sup>19</sup> On the militarization of the country, see Procacci 2005.

<sup>20</sup> Account reproduced in Cintelli and Marchi 2007, 24.

Despite repressive legislation, therefore – indeed, at times in open opposition to it – popular protest continued in 1918 both with strike action in the cities (which in certain places such as Biella and Viareggio turned into general strikes) and with demonstrations in the countryside against those who spoke about the need to carry on with the war. These were the propagandists, sent to tour the provinces by the government in the last year of the war, the priests who preached patriotic sermons, the promoters of the national loan, schoolteachers and members of the welfare committees.<sup>21</sup> Anonymous protest grew, with writings against the war on walls, whistles in the dark of the cinema, furious threatening letters to the authorities, leaflets.

Emotional tensions also produced forms of millenarian expectations. In the final year of the war, while the certainty of an imminent revolutionary event was generalised among the population and among socialist militants, the eschatological expectations by the words of Pope Benedict XV were further increased by the intervention of the American President, Woodrow Wilson (Rossini 2000). In several areas of Italy there was a repetition of what had happened at Fatima: the appearance of the Madonna, recounted by young children, Crowds of believers formed when these miraculous visions occurred and often these religious gatherings were transformed into protest demonstrations against the war. Such events took place along the Adriatic coast, in particular in the area around Rimini, in Ancona, and in Forlì. Expectations of miracles persuaded women to gather in the town squares in the Marches and in Tuscany, in Sardinia, in Calabria, in the provinces of Benevento and Lecce. But the most striking episode took place in Centuripe in Sicily, where, at the beginning of May, following the appearance of the Madonna to a young girl, hundreds of people formed a procession, calling for peace.<sup>22</sup> It was this new mystical, millenarian climate, strongly encouraged by the Pope's judgement on the war, which would allow the new political and union movement of the Catholics to become the voice of certain demands that the peasant masses would advance for renewal and for compensation for sacrifice in the immediate post-war period. Revolutionary millenarianism, on the other hand, found fertile ground above all in the large working-class cities.

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<sup>21</sup> On the 1918 protests, see Procacci 1997.

<sup>22</sup> ACS, A5G, b. 3. 7. 24 and Procacci 1986 (then in Procacci 1999); B. Bianchi 1995: 171-83; Bonomo 2014.

## Conclusion

Popular protest spread widely in Italy both in the countryside and the cities despite a much more extensive repressive apparatus than among the other western allies. It was generated by the inefficiencies of welfare and of the distribution of food and was characterised by an increasing aversion towards the State and its representatives and symbols. Initiated by women in rural areas and in small towns, it extended to the cities and the factories, involving women, men, children civilians and soldiers. The process of national integration and of the “nationalizing of the masses” which, according to the ruling class, should have been produced by the war, had evidently not taken place.

Protest would explode again in 1919 in the food riots of June-July. These began spontaneously, as in Romagna in 1914, and in them the women performed their usual role of leading the others. These riots were characterised by the open invocation of social revolution (R. Bianchi 2006). In the same period, almost all the factories saw strike action, signalling the beginning of what has been called the *Biennio rosso* (two “red” years). In reality it would be more correct to refer to “seven red years,” beginning in 1914, given the continuities in strikes, protest, and rebellion that I have described in these pages. In the face of this continuing protest in the post-war period, the authorities finally adopted solutions already tried out during the conflict: the delegitimization of protest via exceptional legislation and repression, carried out by a government no longer simply authoritarian but now openly dictatorial.

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## CHAPTER TWO

# INSIDE THE STORM: THE EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN DURING THE AUSTRO-GERMAN OCCUPATION OF VENETO 1917-1918

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### **Introduction**

In October 1917, after three years of war, the Italian army suffered a heavy defeat at the battle of Caporetto, which led to the occupation of the eastern provinces of Veneto by the Austro-German troops. In these conditions some 250,000 people fled into the country, crossing the Piave river, while about 900,000 people were forced to suffer harsh domination for a year. The economic management of the Veneto region in 1917-1918 cannot be separated from the catastrophic food situation of the Central Powers, due to the Entente Powers' blockade, which used hunger as a real "weapon" of war (Bianchi 2010; Offer 1989). In fact, from December 1917, following orders from the Austrian high command, the occupying forces had to rely for their sustenance only upon food from the occupied territories, and this resulted in a systematic plundering of local resources, so that the occupation was recollected by people as "the year of hunger" (Horvath-Meyerhofer 1985, 12-20; Corni 1990).

The invasion brought about a marked change in women's wartime experience. In the first phase of the war, women participated in war mobilization in the countryside and in military logistics (Ermacora 2014). However, the occupation represented a sort of watershed as these events exposed civilians to "total war," in which they experienced violence, hunger and forced displacement on a large scale. The occupation led women to describe their material and moral sufferance in their diaries and

in post-war memoirs. These private writings, which represent precious sources not only to analyze civilian conditions, but also to explore women's perceptions and feelings, have enabled historians to develop a gendered history of the war, and therefore make new reflections on wartime legacies. This chapter, based on different types of sources (official documents, diaries, parish reports, oral histories, military judgments), deals with women's experiences. I will focus not only on issues of violence and hunger, but also on the collective actions of survival, and on the perceptions and the new dimension that women experienced during this last phase of the war.

### **Present but invisible. Women's occupation memories**

Although the invasion of 1917-1918 had a significant impact on the collective imagination, the memory of that event has been largely overshadowed in public discourse because it was directly linked to the issue of the defeat at Caporetto. In addition, the memory was essentially feminine, far from manly values that liberal governments and the later Fascist regime built around the "myth of victory" and the (male) "nation at war" (Bravo-Bruzzone 1995, 10). Furthermore, this memory was weak because these events were geographically and socially "peripheral" in relation to the national picture. Although the majority of the occupied population of Veneto were women, in the aftermath of war, they were considered by the Italian government only as victims of the occupying troops, as evidence of German "barbarism." During the investigations of the Royal Commission of Inquiry for the violation of the rights of populations, promoted by the Italian authorities to denounce the Austro-German oppression, women's voices were obscured by "male" administrators (mayors, priests, even officials who had fled and had not even experienced the occupation). For instance, in the sixth volume of the official Inquiry devoted to the occupation experience, only 16 percent of the reports are by women (55 out of 327). Otherwise, occupation meant defeat, betrayal or even collaboration with the enemy, so female experiences were not considered at that stage.

Hence, the creation of female memories followed two separate phases. The first occurred during the post-war period and women – especially those from educated and middle classes – published their diaries and memoirs characterized by justificatory tones, as they wanted to reaffirm their patriotism and tried to compensate the lack of public consideration (Borra 1919). In these publications women focused especially on the issues of violence; they represented themselves as victims of brutal

occupation. Then followed a long oblivion. These dramatic events became “local memories” and were removed from the national collective memory almost until the 1990s, when non-academic historians started to study war violence in the areas along the Italian border. Thus they “re-discovered” civilian wartime experiences by collecting oral interviews or analyzing parish priest reports. The oral interviews – “childhood memories” as the protagonists were children at that time – underlined the issues of failed escape, hunger and the desperate search for food. These recollections also show a sort of compassion for the hungry and tired Austrian soldiers, who were considered as victims of war as well as the occupied population, and also provide new insights into the issues of popular strategies for survival and collaboration with the occupier (Viola 1987 and 1998; Fabi and Viola 1990; Urli 2003; Pavan 2004).

### **Violence, displacement and forced labour**

The Austro-German invasion took place in a climate of violence exacerbated by the soldiers’ fatigue after the bloody battles on the Isonzo front and by the deteriorating situation of the Central Powers’ home front. These aspects, alongside the Austrian propaganda that depicted Italians as “traitors,” were translated into a harsh management of the occupied territories. The violence of war against the civilian population took on an unprecedented importance, especially during the initial phase of the breakthrough, marked by the movement of armies. In fact the retreat of the Italian army and civilians towards the Piave river created general chaos.

As soon as the Austro-German troops had conquered the territories of Veneto region, there was a huge wave of looting and rapes. In the central phase of the occupation there was a sort of forced cohabitation of civilians and occupied armies, but the deterioration of living conditions and scarce supplies available aggravated the relationship and increased the harassment of the population, which was subjected to forced displacement and labour in favour of the Austro-German armies.

The social outcomes of the occupation, as appears in the data provided by the Royal Commission of Inquiry, were dramatic: in the occupied towns there were 553 victims of “acts of cruelty,” meanwhile 24,597 people died from causes related directly or indirectly to the war, of whom 12,649 for lack of medical care, 9,797 due to malnutrition, and 961 died while they were trying to escape from the enemy (Reale Commissione d’Inchiesta 1919, vol. IV, 181-185).

As the occupied society was highly “feminized,” women and girls were overwhelmed by a large influx of violence and constraint. In this

framework, historians have recently focused on war rapes (causes, dynamics, social and cultural stereotypes) and on the issue of sexual violence as a propaganda topic (Gibelli 1999). Rapes were particularly frequent in the months of November and December 1917 when armies were on the move. Although this kind of violence was not preordained, it continued throughout the period of occupation, as in many cases rapes occurred during soldiers' searches for food and requisitions. In the Royal Inquiry, 735 cases were reported, and 53 women were killed after rape. Indeed these figures are under-estimated: the real number of rapes perpetrated was certainly higher – maybe about 2,000 – because many women refused to denounce this violence to the authorities, as they felt humiliated, or due to family pressures or, not least, because they did not want to relive the pain they had experienced (Calò 2003; Ceschin 2006). As rapes were considered crimes against “women’s honour,” Austro-German officers did not prosecute these crimes, and the soldiers who were guilty of them were not punished.

Research has shown that such violence had painful consequences on women’s lives, and that mothers and the “children of the enemy” – symbols of guilt, weakness and immorality – were marginalized by families and communities, and became the subject of social and moral condemnation. Women were forced by their husbands to abandon their children. In the aftermath of the war, the priest Celso Costantini founded a special charitable institution devoted to offering assistance to the children born from the occupiers’ violence (Ospizio dei Figli della Guerra San Filippo Neri) in Portogruaro (Venice province). In many cases the children were abandoned definitively. The letters the mothers wrote to this institution show their deep anguish for the abandonments and the social pressures to which they were subjected (Falcomer 2008).

The searches, the military requisitions of goods became daily violations of domestic spaces, often characterized by abuse, kidnapping and violence; alone, without men, women experienced anxiety, uncertainty and fear. Sometimes soldiers killed those who resisted or who refused to deliver goods. Despite these dreadful circumstances, women had to continue providing protection and emotional support to their families. As women’s diaries demonstrate, soldiers policing and looting determined a state of “constant concern” as they feared both violence and consequences for their families and children as they could not survive without supplies; Isabella Bigontina, a woman from Belluno, after a requisition, in January 1918, wrote in her diary: “I’m going to become crazy” (Lotto 1996, 38). Women also feared being evicted from their houses as new troops arrived

in the villages; displacement became synonymous of mistreatment, poverty and disease.

In this perspective the Royal Commission of Inquiry and personal writings offer a large range of cases of violence against women and looting; many of these abuses – largely unpunished by military authorities – were perpetrated by groups of soldiers against unarmed women and girls; the mistreatment, fear and psychological trauma brought women to abortion, illness, and death. As women played a key role within their families in this period, the violence that hit women multiplied its intensity and painful outcomes on the entire family.

The developments of the military operations and the creation of a new battlefield along the Piave river caused the forced displacement of some 55,000 people towards the far areas of Friuli (Corni 1990, 40-42). Military authorities forced entire villages to flee. Forcibly driven from their homes, deprived of everything and excluded from the food rationing system, the so-called “refugees from Piave” were abandoned and forced to depend on the solidarity of the hosting communities. Sometimes the refugees were despised, as they were considered responsible for the decreasing availability of goods (Pivetta 2012, 85-87) The conditions were so miserable and poor that among the refugees the mortality ratio was very high, and reached 6 percent among adults and 15 percent among children (Ceschin 2013, 174).

Alongside these evictions, the occupied territories were considered a source of labour, and thus women and children were exploited by military authorities to work on road maintenance, to collect debris and the remnants of war or to work the land. The workforce was recruited by local civil authorities or by military commands; when there was lack of manpower, the commands requisitioned the civilian population and forced them to work in the military yards. Several hundred women and girls of the districts of Feltre, Belluno, in Carnia and in the areas near the battlefield of the Piave river were employed in logistical work, transporting ammunition or building roads and new railways (such as the San Boldo, Toblach-Cortina and Sacile-Vittorio Veneto railways).

The military authorities did not care about the physical conditions of women, and they were forced to work in all kinds of weather or even under Italian artillery fire. The workers were victims of exploitation, mistreatment, displacement, beatings, and temporary imprisonments. The recruitment of female workers for the textile industries of Germany and Austria-Hungary, which occurred from March 1918, given the leverage of hunger and coercion, may be configured as form of violence. This kind of employment, which offered the opportunity to obtain meagre food rations

and low wages, gradually turned into a process of intense exploitation, so that young workers from the districts of Pordenone, Treviso and Belluno died of starvation while they were working or even after they returned to their villages (Reale Commissione d'Inchiesta 1919, vol. VI, 279; 313-315; 400; 708).

### **Coping with Hunger**

One of the central elements of women's memories was the distressing need to procure food for their family members. If, on the one hand, daily needs compelled women to play an important role in the occupied society, on the other hand this situation increased their stress and moral suffering. The occupying forces were also in search of food and started to systematically loot local resources, and as a consequence the living conditions of the civilians deteriorated. This situation engendered a sort of competition for survival between occupants and occupied. Parish reports and diaries show that during winter 1917-1918 the alpine communities of Veneto were the first to suffer from hunger. In the following months, due to the forced displacement of populations and the increasing presence of troops, the civilians that lived in the hills and plain areas also started to starve. From January 1918, as occurred in the Central Powers, civilian food rations were reduced to 150 grams of flour per capita. People had to eat grass, to grind corn cobs or pods of beans. Teresina Zanutto, from Teor (Udine province), a rural village in the lowlands of Friuli, noted on 15<sup>th</sup> June 1918: "We're starving: in the morning [we eat] a watered-down soup, at noon an unseasoned soup, in the evening salad with vinegar" (Fantin 2008, 135).

Although not obsessively, as in the concentration-camp narratives, "hunger," the need to find supplies, is one of the recurring elements of women's narratives and oral histories. In their diaries women annotated the progressive exhaustion of food resources and expressed their impotence and helplessness in the face of disease and the emaciation of the elderly and children. At the end of August 1918 alpine populations were about to starve. Ersilia De Maria, wife of a pharmacist in the alpine village of Forno di Zoldo (Belluno province), wrote in her diary: "We really suffer, the nightmare of hunger plagues everyone. Oh our suffering will never be believed" (De Maria 1918, 56). In many cases, such as in the alpine areas and among populations who lived near the Piave battlefield, children died from starvation and illness. This situation was perceived by women as a violence; as they could not feed their children, they were anguished and frustrated.

On the whole, the physical hardship, edema, malnutrition and disease (which were combined with typhoid, diphtheria, smallpox, malaria, and later with the “Spanish flu” in the autumn of 1918), led to great moral suffering, anxiety, and feelings of anger. In March 1918 Caterina Arrigoni wrote:

Hunger, hunger, hunger! Oh, if I could have tons of flour and give it to everyone! At least [I would give it] to all those children, who come here every day more and more emaciated, their noses sharper, a great resignation in their sad eyes, . . . their thin and crooked shoulders, their legs thinner and thinner (Arrigoni 1918, 346)

Indeed the women’s responsibilities related to family survival also increased their subordination and weaknesses. As they had an extreme need for food, mothers and girls were directly and indirectly subjected to violence, because they were compelled to sell their personal belongings and effects (linens, jewellery, wedding rings, dowry), or they had to travel in search of supplies, and in these circumstances they were subjected to sexual blackmail.

The phenomenon of prostitution in exchange for food was in fact widespread, especially among the poorest women, such as the female refugees from the Piave area, whose dreadful conditions made them vulnerable to violence, blackmail and oppression. This situation often resulted in attempts to get an abortion or even in infanticide (Fantoni 2013, 202).

On the other hand, motherhood represented a sort of great strength that forced women to leave their houses in search of food for their children. The urgent need of supplies hastened an intense mobility of women and girls, who challenged the military circulation laws, and headed for the Veneto-Friuli lowlands in search of flour, wheat, salt in exchange for cheese, butter, linen or handicrafts. Women and girls, alone or in small groups, walked for 50 or even 100-150 kilometres in search of food. In January 1918 the priest of the alpine village of Luincis (Udine province) wrote: “Women continue to trickle down through the Friuli . . . It’s a heartbreaking scene . . . Gloomy eyes, swollen faces. Their outlines show an ill-concealed pain that may burst. Women are the living image of sad and melancholic resignation” (Dreosti and Duri 2006, 138).

These attempts often ended up in failure because women were arrested as they violated the rules of movement, and in many cases they were put on military trial (ASTS TG 1917-18, b.8, K3432/18). The grain purchased with so much fatigue was stolen or confiscated by soldiers or military policemen. Maria Todoverto Pasquale, from San Vito di Valdobbiadene

(Treviso province), born in 1899, remembers: “We were put in prison. [The military policemen] locked us in a room and they took away the bag [with the grain]. They left us there, maybe a week, with a little water and food . . . When we walked to the plains, the bog was up to mid-leg. In the evening we slept on the hay . . . We walked barefoot” (Pavan 2010).

The “hunger treks” had debilitating consequences, as women and girls were raped by soldiers or they got sick or died from physical exhaustion. The priest of Ampezzo, in the alpine area of Carnia, in June 1918 reported that women were bedridden, they even could not claim for the grain confiscated because they their feet were injured by the long-distance walks (Martina 1999, 56).

It’s worthwhile remembering that – in official documents, diaries and parish priests reports – during 1917-1918 similar stories spread through occupied territories. These stories – such as the answer that soldiers gave to women who asked for supplies (“Eat your children!”), or the story of a desperate woman who drowned herself in a river (in Tagliamento, Livenna or in Meduna) because she could not provide food for her children – highlighted both the cruelty of the occupiers and the mothers’ suffering (Reale Commissione 1919, vol. VI, 703; 395). Nonetheless women made great efforts and had some success in providing food for their families. Some personal narratives are focused mainly on the capacity to face difficulties and ensure food. For instance, Ersilia De Maria was able to organize several expeditions by truck to procure grain for the populations in the alpine area. As she wrote proudly in her diary, at night she had to cross the military checkpoints and hide to escape from controls (De Maria 1918, 58).

### **Women’s protagonism in a society turned “upside down”**

Notwithstanding the difficulties, women were far from being passive victims as they played a considerable role in managing family survival. Invasion and then occupation changed the social landscape of the rural communities: in 1917-1918 there was a “new” wartime society, characterized by a lack of male authority (only priests and occupier-appointed officials remained in the communities). Civilian life was bureaucratized and subordinated to the occupying forces; in addition the situation was troubled by the presence of prisoners of war and disbanded soldiers who hid in the mountains or in the villages. Although women were overwhelmed by war, they perceived themselves as non-combatants; they were geographically and emotionally isolated, therefore tried to humanize the war and establish new relations. Despite their tones characterized by

fatalism and resignation, diaries and memoirs reveal courage, perseverance, the will to fight and resist, ability to adapt to the new wartime circumstances. Indeed, women became “custodians” and organized a new existence in the occupied society: they became household heads, worked the land, and dealt with local authorities and with the enemy.

As the living conditions deteriorated, popular attempts to survive implied the rupture of moral and social rules. Compromise with the enemy was necessary. In some cases relationships with soldiers were characterized by a sort of mutual help, with exchanges of food for laundry services, cooking or sewing clothes. In other cases women had sexual relations with soldiers and officers to avoid violence and to ensure food for the family (ASTS TG 1917-18, b.1, K2455/18). This latter issue was largely censored (and self-censored), but forced cohabitation and relationships of protection and prostitution were common. These were closely linked to the asymmetrical relations between occupiers and occupied, the male-violence and power, and different access to food. At the same time, these relationships engendered tensions within rural communities and precipitated the search for “scapegoats,” often identified among refugee women who did not belong to rural communities and were amongst the poorest people.

Women had to make an extra effort to ensure the survival of their families: they defended their daughters from the attackers, searched for supplies or looted. Sources show that the atmosphere of violence and the absence of menfolk strengthened the solidarity between mothers and daughters; women in fact lived and worked together, encouraged, helped and protected each other. Many women, as they feared violence, started to live together with other women, and therefore acted collectively to overcome terror and anguish. Life under occupation became a sort of daily survival “operation” in which women and girls developed strategies with the aim of hiding goods, supplies and animals from military requisitions. In this perspective, the oral histories reveal a number of episodes in which mothers and daughters helped each other to build double bottoms in floors or walls, to hide animals in the woods or in the cornfields, to conceal clothes, corn and cheese under the tiles or in holes dug in the ground (Viola 1998). Compelled by hardship, women “invented” new practical cookery: they learnt to grind grain with stones or with a coffee machine. Moreover, uprooted women joined disbanded Italian soldiers and started to steal goods, a phenomenon that sometimes undermined the communitarian solidarity and gave rise to complaints.

In a general framework marked by fatigue, women were also involved in episodes of unarmed resistance, which had high symbolic value. In fact

they often opposed requisitions, kept the soldiers at a distance, refused to participate in public events or to learn German, made clothes in the colours of the national flag. In many cases, they also used irony and dissimulation as “weapons” against the soldiers, and these events constituted a sort of liberating moment that enabled women to cancel the asymmetry of positions in the occupied society, such as woman-man, civilian-soldier, occupied-occupant.

Exasperated, women had to act collectively and protested against army commands, and they pleaded against or resisted requisitions. In January 1918, women in Calalzo protested after repeated episodes of mistreatment of civilians perpetrated by soldiers (Reale Commissione 1919, vol.VI, 45); in May 1918 mothers in the alpine area of Carnia opposed forced recruitment of their daughters (Dreosti and Duri 2006, 97); in April 1918, the female workers in the textile industry in Udine went on strike as they demanded improved food rations and higher wages (Blanchini 1921, 153). In many cases, as oral stories or military judgments demonstrate, they also challenged military bans, hiding or hosting soldiers in their barns and stables. However, women also showed humanitarian attitudes as they expressed concrete solidarity with disbanded soldiers, prisoners of war, civilian refugees or even with occupation soldiers (Reale Commissione 1919, vol.VI, 297).

To summarize the new role assumed by women in a “world turned upside down” by war, it is worthwhile remembering that, in many areas of the Veneto, women wore trousers, dressed up as men and defended their own land with day and night patrols to prevent theft and looting by soldiers. Amelia Burba, twenty-two, from Ampezzo (Udine province), in the autumn of 1918, reported her experience of night surveillance in her diary. The words she wrote expressed irony but also pride in their new tasks: “Virginia and I we dressed like men . . . , we looked like tramps or deserters . . . . Even the saddest and most afflicted person would have laughed seeing us ending up like this” (Martinis 1999, 139-140).

After the first traumatic phase of the occupation, women had to face forced cohabitation with soldiers and officers in domestic spaces. Despite the unavoidable subordination of their positions, women played an important role as mediators with the enemy. In this perspective women demonstrated compassion towards occupying soldiers. Moreover the culture of exchange, which was a typical attitude among rural populations, let women cross the boundaries between occupier and occupied, and soldiers were perceived as their “own sons” or as victims of war, because they shared the same experiences of violence, hunger and hardship (Bravo 1991, 98-99). In particular, among mothers or wives of mobilized men,

there was a widespread idea that solidarity towards Austrian soldiers would be mutually exchanged with their loved ones in the ranks of Italian army (Biedermann 2008, 137-138).

After four years of war, people were war-weary and perceived the conflict as a useless “slaughter of the young.” However, relationships with soldiers sometimes resulted in friendships, especially with the educated officers. The “enemy” became a human being, or a friend or even a lover. The names of the soldiers and officers that appeared on the pages of the diaries (Gustaf, Willy, Alfred, Alois) show that women achieved a certain degree of intimacy with them. Sometimes there were romantic relationships that, because of self-censorship and patriotism, were omitted. If, on the one hand, priests underlined that these relationships were hindered by the lack of knowledge of German and by female patriotism, on the other hand – as occurred in occupied Northern France or in Belgium – these relationships were considered a betrayal, a unbearable violation of the gender and communitarian hierarchies, and therefore were highly stigmatized, both in moral and political terms (Le Naour 2000, 151; Cadeddu 1998, 36).

### **Perceptions: “The village is a graveyard”**

Private writings, in particular women’s diaries, offer significant insights into morale, the perceptions of occupation and the enemy, and the intensity of the hardships. Diaries were mostly written by wealthy and educated women (such as Caterina Arrigoni, Isabella Bigontini Sperti, Maria Spada), but also by teachers and young girls (Angelina Casagrande, Brigida Salvadori), variously motivated by the need to demonstrate their patriotism, to bear witness to the hardships of invasion, or to react to the trauma of chaos and disorder. Other popular subjective narratives focused on death, disease and illness, and the ways to escape from these situations. In her diary, written in May 1918, Maria Villotti, a 25-year-old peasant woman from Teor (Udine province), described the occupation with a sort of restless stream of events marked by violence, solitude, hunger and the sudden deaths of her mother, sister and nephew from disease (Villotti 1990, 12-13).

Diaries and memories were far from being uniquely patriotic. In fact they are often characterized by feelings of hostility and compassion towards the invader or, on the contrary, express criticism for the behaviour of Italian soldiers during the retreat (Martina 1997, 27; Nodari 1921). As women tried to preserve their identity in a collapsing world, the act of writing became a sort of passive resistance, a way of understanding the

dramatic events, explaining the feelings and concerns that could not be publicly expressed, or attempting to counteract isolation, with the aim of overcoming the feelings of abandonment and separation from their loved ones. Moreover, writing was a means that enabled women to restore their dignity, a consolation and, at the same time, the decision to write made women more autonomous and reflective.

These private writings constitute an important source of women's feelings and perceptions. In describing their condition, they used images and cultural stereotypes that can be related to the Holy Bible ("slavery," "via crucis," "Calvary," "ordeal"), to the rhetoric of the Risorgimento ("captivity," "vassalage," "exile") or to wartime propaganda ("barbarians," "huns," "animals" and so on). Often women related attitudes, behaviour and violence to the different national groups of the multiethnic army of the Dual Monarchy.

The female gaze is characterized by highly-involved observation, especially when women described the poorest and most vulnerable. At first women described in the pages of their diaries their emotions and their disorientation determined by the quick succession of wartime events, such as the trauma of the impact with the enemy, anguish for the lack of news of their loved ones who fled over the Piave river, the hopes of an immediate Italian counter-offensive. Later, during winter 1917-1918, as the occupation consolidated and seemed to be endless, they expressed their despair, tiredness and apathy; the isolation, the deterioration of living conditions and the repeated army requisitions engendered pain, anguish feelings of hopelessness. The presence of the enemy influenced perceptions of time and space. The description of landscapes and the seasonal changes underlined the contrast between the beauty of nature and the sadness of their condition under occupation. Malnutrition prevented them from taking on the everyday functions as household heads, and this fact generated feelings of great discouragement.

As war dragged on, the unprecedented intensity of suffering and hardships made captivity seem more prolonged; time seemed still, "everlasting." As they wanted to endure, women tried to remove the present time and the brutality of war. Brigida Salvadori, a primary school teacher, aged twenty, from a village near Pordenone, wrote on 9<sup>th</sup> February 1918, "What about us? We live every hour in a sea of troubles." A few days later, on 22<sup>nd</sup> February, she wrote: "What dreadful days, in which I think of my home, my loved ones far away, and my heart is so torn; I can find neither peace nor rest. Today is one of those days. I do not know where to go, I cannot stop, I would put my brain to sleep because my restless thoughts are constantly tormenting me" (Salvadori 1918).

Isolated, with no news of their loved ones, women developed a keen sensitivity to perceiving signs of change. There was a sound dimension (the roar of the guns in the distance, rumours and news), a visual dimension (the movements of the Austro-German troops, the Italian planes), but also the circulating news of diplomatic and political issues. Sounds, signs, and voices had to be analyzed and interpreted in the light of the longing for peace. In this framework, as shown in several sources, women mostly turned to news and rumours, raised hopes that were followed by bitter disappointments. These dwindling emotions forced women to rely on traditional sources of stability and resilience, such as religion (“divine providence”), collective celebrations and popular piety. In many rural villages, women took part in pilgrimages and celebrations, and prayed for peace. Nonetheless, in 1917-1918, the religious interpretation of war as a collective sacrifice (“God’s punishment”) or “natural calamity” became less persuasive. Meanwhile war-weariness engendered popular pacifism based on prophecies, holy apparitions, rumours and false news which were expression of eschatological anguish and uncertainty (Procacci 1999; Ziemann 2007, 161). Thus the occupation made women’s desire for peace more acute. In this perspective – like the German or Austrian women struggling with hunger – they longed for peace, at first mostly interpreted as the end of hostilities, as an “immediate peace.” Later, the failure of the Austrian offensive on the Piave river in June 1918 played an important role in raising new hopes and the idea of peace was now interpreted as liberation from constraint and military occupation.

## Conclusion

The final retreat of the Austro-Hungarian troops in November 1918 led to a new wave of violence, moral suffering and tension. The great enthusiasm for liberation was soon obscured by feelings of bitterness and sorrow for the losses, widespread disease, and devastation of the land. In the immediate post-war period the atmosphere in the liberated territories (“Terre Liberate”) was poisoned by suspicions and accusations of collaboration with the enemy. In public discourse, refugees were “patriots” who escaped from German slavery, meanwhile those who had remained in the invaded territories were considered collaborationists and traitors (the so-called *austriacanti* or Italian supporters of Austrian politics). Big landowners, people of the middle classes who fled in October 1917, expected to find their property as they had left it. When they returned to find their homes looted and devastated, they began to

express feelings of anger against the people who had remained in the occupied territories as they were considered responsible for the lootings. Moreover, those returning did not want to recognize the hardships the people had experienced under enemy occupation. Therefore, during winter 1918-1919, many women also had to endure the shame of trials, accused of theft and misconduct (ASUD T SP 1919 b. A129). In addition, as refugees and soldiers came home, women who had been raped were socially marginalized.

The process started during the war that led women to expand their social role in the public sphere had had a very high cost in terms of physical and moral suffering. At the end of the war they were exhausted, traumatized by violence, ragged, poor and ill. Unsurprisingly, they wanted to return to their pre-war lives and to their traditional roles. For these reasons, adult women considered the war experience as “exceptional,” “extraordinary,” a sort of dramatic and negative “parenthesis,” as the autonomy, freedom and responsibilities were generated by the dramatic needs of the moment rather than by processes of social evolution and emancipation.

However, while adult women emphasized unprecedented sufferings, fears and anxiety, the younger generation on the contrary had acquired new roles and skills that were used during the inter-war years when young women were protagonists of emigration to help their families and later during the Nazi occupation in 1943-1945. After the war there was no room for women’s wartime experiences. The only public image of women was that of *mater dolorosa*, or mourning mother. Likewise there was no public recognition either of female mobilization in support of the war effort, or of refugees or women under enemy occupation, as they had become the symbols of military defeat. In this latter case, women had multiple and weak identities as they were women, civilian, non-combatant, and occupied. In addition, during the last phase of the war they were stereotyped by propaganda: on the one hand they were considered the “body of the nation;” on the other they were despised for their alleged distortion of gender roles and collaboration with the enemy. In this perspective cultural stereotypes and wartime propaganda increased their victimization and their passivity.

Despite the public oblivion of this period, women wrote their diaries as they considered their suffering important and valuable to remember. To some extent women considered their life as having been as hard as, or even harder than, their husbands’ experience at the front. At the same time, the awareness that those who had not experienced enemy occupation could not comprehend it contributed to isolating them, and compelled

them to remain in silence. Moreover, after the war, women were subjected to new pressures, such as unsure family life, re-building a devastated nation and repopulating it. In public discourse, liberation was interpreted as an opportunity to return to normality, as a “moral” regeneration and a restoration of gender hierarchies, so that women were forced to forget those dreadful experiences of 1917-1918.

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## CHAPTER THREE

# “THEIR WOUNDS GAPE AT ME”: FIRST WORLD WAR NURSING ACCOUNTS AND THE POLITICS OF INJURY

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In volunteer nurse and writer Mary Borden’s poem “Take Me Away From My Wounded Men,” the speaker is haunted by injury: “Their wounds gape at me/Their stumps menace me/The bandaged faces grimace at me” (Borden 2009, 14-16). In direct contrast to Borden’s nightmare images, American volunteer nurse Shirley Millard opens her 1936 memoir, *I saw them die*, by remembering her naive enthusiasm generated by the idealised public image of the war nurse, as she imagined “kneeling beside dying men in shell-torn No Man’s Land ... gliding silently among hospital cots, placing a cool hand on fevered brows, lifting bound heads to moisten pain-parched lips with water” (Millard 1936, 4). But Millard immediately sets this against the “indelible” memory of the actual experience that still haunts her so many years later:

*March 28<sup>th</sup>*

Terribly busy. It is all so different than I had imagined. No time to write.

There was no need to write. The memory remains indelible. Thirty-five hundred cots filled with wounded men . . . hundreds of men lay out [on the grounds] in the cold and rain, sometimes for three days and three nights, without blanket . . . From the black shadows under the trees came their moans, their cries and sobs. Some were unconscious from pain and fatigue. (Millard 1936, 11)

By the end of the war, the public rhetoric that persuaded her to volunteer has been transmuted into a profound private sadness. Notably,

the dying soldier and his pain replaces the heroic nurse at the centre of her imagined narrative, and her actual role is to bear witness to that suffering. As the Armistice is announced she watches the slow painful death of a young patient:

*November 10<sup>th</sup>*

Charley died this morning. I held his hand as he went and could not keep back the tears. Near the end he saw me crying and patted my hand with his two little fingers to comfort me . . . He took part of my heart with him . . .

Just after he went someone came into the ward and said: "Armistice! . . .  
"What a time and place to come in shouting about an Armistice! I said  
"Sh! Sh!"

There is no armistice for Charley or any of the others in that ward.

. . .

I am glad it is over, but my heart is heavy as lead. Must write that letter [to Charley's mother].

One of the girls came looking for me. They have opened champagne for the staff in the dining hall. I told her to get out.

Can't seem to pull myself together (Millard 1936, 109-110).

Her memoir closes with Charley's mother's reply to her letter, which ends, "Perhaps you will have a son of your own some day. Then you will know how much they mean to us. I can only pray God there will never be another dreadful war like this has been" (Millard 1936, 114). Millard's last words are a warning: "Now the world is once again beating the drums of war. To my son Coco, his friends and their mothers I offer this simple record of the dark caravan that winds endlessly though the memory of my youth" (Millard 1936, 115).

This is the closest Millard comes to an overt statement of pacifism in her memoir; that is left to her editor, Adele Comandini, who writes in her prefatory note,

When Mrs. Millard placed her diary of 1918 in my hands, I had just finished declaring that in spite of my distaste for violence, I could never quite bring myself to embrace the negative philosophies of pacifism. Today I cannot truthfully repeat this assertion. The part I have played in preparing this manuscript from Mrs. Millard's journal and notes has left its mark on me. (Comandini, preface to Millard, 1936)

While Millard's setting of her idealised version of nursing against the real experience in her opening is an obvious rhetorical device, more subtly, the "mark" that convinces Comandini of the validity of pacifism is

imposed through the personal engagement with unrelenting injury and suffering that make up the memoir.

Mary Borden, a wealthy American living in Britain, financed and administered the setting up of a mobile ambulance unit (Hôpital Chirurgical Mobile No.1) immediately behind the lines, the area known as *la zone interdite* or “the forbidden zone,” under the auspices of the French Red Cross. Although she was not a trained nurse, Borden was part of a large number of women from Britain and the United States who became volunteer nurses and worked alongside the trained nurses and surgeons.<sup>1</sup> Her memoir of this time which spanned most of the war, *The Forbidden Zone*, was not published until 1929, but her letters show that an earlier draft was being considered for publication as early as 1917.<sup>2</sup>

While several of Borden’s poems were published in her memoir and some during the war, they only become readily available in 2009 when they were published in the journal *Modernism/Modernity* (16/3). Unlike the more worldly-wise Borden, who was married with two children and moved in avant-garde literary circles, and would see four years of wartime suffering, Shirley Millard arrived as an eager and naïve American volunteer with her unit in 1918, and was sent to support the French Red Cross who were overwhelmed by the German advance. While Borden was a professional writer, Millard is perhaps more representative of the volunteer nurses of her time who may have kept private diaries that on their return were packed away in boxes and almost forgotten. She does not collect her wartime diaries for reworking and editing until the rise of fascism in Europe in the 1930s and the fear of another war acts as a catalyst to her making public her experience as an anti-war statement.<sup>3</sup>

While some women did publish letters and memoirs during the war that documented their experiences, these were necessarily subjected to censorship. Most wartime writing was published in the plethora of accounts that came out in the late 1920s and early 1930s, part of a post-war disillusionment narrative. Women’s voices made up some of these accounts, but most of them fell into obscurity and remained out of print

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<sup>1</sup> For a specific discussion of Mary Borden’s nursing context see the excellent introduction by Margaret Higonnet to her edited collection of extracts from Mary Borden’s *The Forbidden Zone* and Ellen La Motte’s *The Backwash of War: Nurses at the Front*. For a very comprehensive history of nursing in the First World War, see Hallett 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Borden’s letter to Edward Spears, 20-8-17 in Churchill College Cambridge, Spears archives SPRS 11/1/1.

<sup>3</sup> In 2011 *I Saw Them Die* was reissued by Quid Pro Publishing with an introduction by Elizabeth Townsend Gard.

until the last fifteen years or so. Recently, in the lead up to the First World War centenary, many of these accounts have been reissued either in print or as e-books, and others have been published for the first time. These women's voices have been crucial in telling the story of injury and death that resonates beyond the combat narrative. However, in spite of the attention paid to combatant writing from the First World War, it is only in the last approximately twenty years that nurses' accounts have been reclaimed as part of the war story.

Initially, the literary critical and historical focus centred on legitimizing the woman's voice as witness to war, and reclaiming work that had all but disappeared.<sup>4</sup> Central to this approach was an interrogation of the gendered binaries of home and front, which had relegated women's experiences to a place outside war. More recently, writers have focused on nurses' subjective experience, often placing this in the context of the public representation of nurses both during the war and in memorialising the war in its aftermath (see Higonnet 2002; Das 2005; Hallett 2010; Fell and Hallett 2013). Alongside such analyses have come nursing histories that draw on the voices of the nurses themselves in their letters and diaries to tell the story.<sup>5</sup> This discussion builds on these analyses, but focuses more specifically on nurses' writings in the context of the psychology of bearing witness as it informs pacifist leanings, though these may be implied rather than stated directly. Unlike other approaches, it theorises the experience using Elaine Scarry's work on "the body in pain" as a framework within which to read these accounts. Especially, it considers these women's writings as a form of witness wherein the expression of the experience offers us ways of examining the complex psychological and emotional dilemma that was war nursing: healing men while returning them to be killed or injured and thus participating in the perpetuation of the war itself. As it does so, it draws on lesser-known writings alongside more canonical works such as Brittain's and Borden's, to provide a range of perspectives that have often been omitted from the current scholarship.

Both Borden and Millard claim the legitimacy of their message through graphic images that only those caring for the wounded can see. The emotional weight of this burden – Borden is "menaced by wounds," and Millard "Can't seem to pull myself together" – demands that they place those images on public view. If, as Elaine Scarry contends in *The*

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<sup>4</sup> In addition to works included in this chapter the following are important contributions to the field: Tylee 1990; Higonnet *et al.* 1987; Potter 2005.

<sup>5</sup> See Norris 2002; McEwen 2006; Mayhew 2013. See also Hallett, *Containing Trauma* and *Veiled Warriors* referred to in the discussion.

*Body in Pain*, “the main purpose and outcome of war is injuring” and, following from that, that the “perpetuation of war would be impossible without the disowning of injury” (Scarry 1985, 64-65), then the representations of injury we find in nursing accounts arguably serve a political purpose in owning injury, even when there is no overtly-stated political agenda in the writings. Such accounts strip away the abstract language of heroic suffering and sacrifice through which war is presented in the public domain, what Scarry calls “redescription” (Scarry 1985, 66-69), that allows “the attributes of injury to be transferred elsewhere, as they cannot if they are permitted to cling to the original site of the wound, the human body” (Scarry 1985, 64). In wartime, it is nurses’ writings, above all, that permit the wound to “cling to the original site.”

Yet even as women like Millard and Borden return the wound to the body, the public discourses surrounding war nursing, as Millard shows in her initial naïve idea of her role, encouraged “redescription.” Nurses’ accounts are written in the cultural context of their work and its relationship to representations of the war. What they say and how they say it is necessarily bound up in public rhetoric around the war, even as it merges with the more private emotional response to their work and their relationship with the injured patients.

Carden-Coyne’s analysis of the combatant experience of wounding, where “war wounds [involved] a bio-psycho, social and cultural experience,” and where “wounding and treatment entwines the personal and the institutional aspects of [the men’s] encounter with military medicine” (Carden-Coyne 2014, 5), is equally relevant to understanding the relationship between nurse and wounded combatant. In particular, the nurse’s response to treating the wounded is complicated by the wartime construction of her role through an idealised rhetoric that in turn relies on an idealisation of wounding, wherein both the wound and the healer carried cultural capital in a state at war. Thus, for example, Field-Marshal Viscount Allenby’s Preface to Kate Luard’s *Unknown Warriors* (1930) applauds “the amazing endurance and self-sacrificing devotion of those Nursing Sisters in their work of mercy” (Luard 1930, vii), an idealized language that obscures the actuality of the work.

More broadly, Susan Mann, in her introduction to *The War Diaries of Clare Gass*, draws attention to the alignment of wartime politics with the abstract ideals that accompanied war nursing, claiming of the Canadian nurses that “the cause for which the war was being fought, interpreted by the time as the defence of civilization, righteousness, and justice, they neither forgot nor questioned. Indeed, that cause gave their work a higher moral purpose” (Mann 2000, xxi). Mann also emphasises that “the

presence of the nurses themselves added to the moral force of the war” (Mann 2000, xxii). Mann’s claims imply that the nurses’ war experience never brought them to contest the abstract ideals surrounding their war work and the war itself, but we find just that in Gass’s diary. Rather than accept the cause unquestioningly, throughout nurses’ writings, from no matter what political position, we find that they grapple with the tension between the concept of a “higher moral purpose” and the terrible mutilation visited on the human bodies they nurse. Their accounts reveal the relationship between representation of injury, Scarry’s “owning,” and a rejection of war, to be complex and conflicted.

That complexity and conflict is especially visible in the way they negotiate the gap between the ideal and the real that Millard identifies, both in terms of their own role and in their representation of the wounded soldier. This negotiation occurs in the immediate term in letters and diaries written during the war, spaces nurses gravitate towards to try and articulate to themselves or others the often-overwhelming nature of their work, and in more considered memoirs written after the war.

The complexity of these writings is further confounded by the circumstances in which they were composed. Letters written (and sometimes published) during the war were subject to official and personal censorship. As nurse E.B. Pemberton writes to her father on 20<sup>th</sup> November 1914,

Letters are to be very strictly censored now & no one is to take them over by hand so if you don’t hear anything very interesting from me, you know why it is. There are such heaps of things I should like to tell you, but cannot. It is very trying but we must wait until after the war.<sup>6</sup>

Representations of injury and of the nurses’ role articulated in letters and diaries written during the war are also influenced by being composed under the day-to-day pressures and uncertainty. With no sense of an ending to the war, some nurses’ writing points to the emotional need for an idealised rhetoric through which to view their unrelenting work and the witnessing of terrible mutilation. Further to that, many saw themselves as supporting the war effort, though their position is, of course, tempered by their recognition of themselves in terms of the Red Cross motto, *Inter Arma Caritas*. In contrast, memoirs written in a post-war climate of disillusionment, such as Lesley Smith’s *Four Years out of Life* (1931), could frame their work as contributing not to victory in a cause, but as

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<sup>6</sup> E. B. Pemberton OBE. Private Papers, Imperial War Museum, Department of Documents, 3684.

collusion in destruction caused by war itself, where healing wounded men to send them back to the front makes the nurses *embusqués* [cowards or shirkers] who use the all-consuming work to “shirk” confronting its larger implications (Smith 1931, 67).

For writers like Smith, especially those publishing after the war, representation of injury deliberately carries a specific pacifist agenda. As Alison Fell writes of Vera Brittain’s 1933 memoir, *Testament of Youth*, “Brittain exploits her experience of nursing as the means to fulfil her pacifist mission, and deliberately structures her story and colours her descriptions in order to do so.” Fell argues that when “wounds are described as ‘obscene horrors’ this is not the perspective of the trained nurse she argues she was, but of the pacifist writer persuading her audience of the futility and horrors of warfare” (Fell 2011, 16).

Yet not all nurses’ writings that expose injury do so with the agenda we find in Brittain. In her history of First World War nursing, *Veiled Warriors*, Hallett notes that

[s]ome openly questioned the processes that “patched men up” only to return them to the firing lines, but others saw their work as a vital element of the war effort – healing wounded and broken men in order to give them back “to the nation.” (Hallett 2014, 66)

This chapter examines nurses’ private writing to understand the complexity and nuance that lie behind this statement. What we find in these accounts by British and American trained nurses and volunteers is that there are no clear boundaries separating the responses of those who believed in their work as part of the cause and those who contest that ideology. Thus while writers like Millard and Brittain expose the injury and suffering they witnessed to denounce what they saw as the obscenity and futility of war, other accounts show conflicting responses to the paradox that defined their work: as they confronted the horror and sadness of severe wounding and death, so they needed to find meaning in the suffering, for their own emotional support and, importantly, to acknowledge the injury and the attendant courage of the men they nursed.

As Carden-Coyne argues, the nursing context was one where “wounding and treatment entwine[d] the personal and institutional” (Carden-Coyne 2014, 5). It is important to understand this connection beside Hallett’s discussion of the practical level of wartime nursing, where the nurses’ role was to create a safe environment for men suffering from injury and physical and mental shock as they tried to alleviate their suffering, what she calls “containment,” essential to the nurses’ work:

Those who nursed the wounded of the First World War worked hard to control their own emotions and behaviour. This self-imposed discipline was a form of containment designed to keep both nurses and patients safe within a potentially dangerous physical and emotional environment . . . one way in which [nurses] could help their patients was by remaining emotionally “strong” themselves (Hallett 2009, 201-102).

More specifically, Hallett emphasises the integration of physical and psychological care of the patient with the carer’s self-containment:

Healing was seen to depend upon containment – of the physical self (by the prevention of shock or the healing of wounds), of the emotional self (by psychological reintegration) and of the moral and social self (by self-composure and the restoration of faith in one’s world). (Hallett 2009, 205-206)

Thus, even as the nurse confronts the damage of the wounds, a belief in the value of her work could be necessary to the containing of her own emotion and thus to the larger role of containment within the hospital setting. To convey “the restoration of faith in one’s world” while witnessing the devastation of war, could thus mean imposing meaning on injury: “They are more than mangled bodies to be shuddered at, quickly cared for, and passed hurriedly by. Each day men are brought in who have kept the enemy back and saved those behind the lines” (Walker Black 1919, 61).

Arguably however, even as injury is “owned,” when containment draws attention away from the reality of physical injury towards its perceived value it can be read as a form of “redescription” wherein the nurses’ representation of the violence war inflicts on the human body, Scarry’s injury, may paradoxically collude in its disowning even as it reveals it. Such paradoxical representations of injury in these narratives point to the larger contradictions that complicate how we respond to war. How, in the immediacy of caring, can the nurse deny value to the suffering of the wounded and dying as she intimately participates in it and seeks to “contain” it, and what role does injury as heroic sacrifice play in offering a narrative through which individuals can make emotional sense of suffering and death on a massive scale?

In *Testament of Youth* Vera Brittain draws on her nursing experience to explore larger questions concerning war, idealism and pacifism from an intellectual position. She identifies what she sees as “the pacifist’s real problem” as the meaning war purports to offer at the personal level:

The causes of war are always falsely represented; its honour is dishonest and its glory meretricious, but the challenge to spiritual endurance, the intense sharpening of all the senses, the vitalising consciousness of common peril for a common end, remain an allure to those boys and girls who have just reached the age when love and friendship and adventure call more persistently than at any later time. (Brittain 1978, 291-292)

Her later commitment to pacifism arises out of the equally personal experience of nursing wounded German soldiers in France in 1917. When a badly wounded German thanks her as he leaves and they shake hands she thinks

how ridiculous it was that I should be holding this man's hand in friendship when perhaps, only a week or two earlier, Edward [her brother] up at Ypres had been doing his best to kill him . . . The world was mad and we were all victims; that was the only way to look at it. These shattered, dying boys and I were paying alike for a situation that none of us had desired or done anything to bring about. (Brittain 1978, 376)

Brittain here represents the conflict between the ideal and the real: for her the private nursing experience negates the public rhetoric that would “re-describe” this suffering as a cause. Hallett observes of *Testament of Youth* that “it was nursing that enabled [Brittain] to expose the trauma of war – to lay bare its destructive capacity through the sufferings of real, named human beings” (Hallett 2014, 1). At the same time, however, she asserts that “even as it exposed the truth about war, Brittain’s memoir also constructed a “mythology of wartime nursing” in her image of the romanticised, sacrificial, courageous volunteer (Hallett 2014, 2). This “mythology” in Brittain’s essentially pacifist text points to the very specific problem that confronted nurses (and not only volunteers) during the war and in its aftermath as they cared for wounded men and constructed their own role in the context of the soldier’s suffering. Even as the actual nursing work quickly negated the kind of expectations Millard satirises in the opening pages of her memoir, public discourse offered nurses an abstract rhetoric within which they could find meaning in the grim, exhausting and unrelenting nature of their work, and in the terrible injuries of the combatants. Santanu Das posits that

[i]f physical wounding and pain cannot possibly be shared, the . . . nurses repeatedly dwell on acute body memories and body knowledge to establish a physical continuum, a bodily bridge, as it were, over an ontological impossibility: touch becomes the ground of both testimony and trauma. (Das 2005, 244)

Given her intimate involvement in the combatant's pain and mutilation, and driven by the need to connect "testimony and trauma," how can his carer reject the value of the wound as a mark of endurance and suffering?

One of the most matter-of-fact and comprehensive wartime accounts comes from Kate Luard, a senior nurse who had served during the South African Wars, who began nursing on an ambulance train in 1914. Written during the war for the purpose of describing her experience to her family, Luard's letter-journals home give us a very immediate sense of the day-to-day practicalities of the work and of the need to affirm meaning in the face of terrible injury. Her ongoing narrative enacts the tension between the need for containment on the one hand and the often-chaotic situation she and her fellow nurses faced when treating the wounded on the other, alongside the need to impose meaning on the suffering of the combatant. On 25<sup>th</sup> October 1914 she opens, "Couldn't write last night: the only thing was to try and forget it all. It has been an absolute hell of a journey – there is no other word for it" (Luard 1915, 88). Hinting at what she would prefer to "forget," she quickly moves past the physical suffering to focus on the heroism of the patients:

They were bleeding faster than we could cope with it and the agony of getting them off the stretchers on to the top bunks is a thing to forget . . . The outstanding shining thing that hit you in the eye all through was the universal silent pluck of the men. (Luard 1915, 89-90)

It would seem that Luard needs to redirect her visual focus away from injury to the endurance of the men, their "universal silent pluck" to affirm containment in this "absolute hell." Such redirecting from injury to "pluck" is arguably a form of redescription. In two collections published in 1915 and 1930, Luard narrates stories of suffering side-by-side with courage, and it is through her writings that we see very vividly the tension between owning injury and the need to find value in it at a human level. While she only occasionally makes direct statements against the war, her accounts are crowded with the very human stories of her patients whose suffering is in itself an indictment of war. Although contending with censorship in the first collection, as well as the possibility of having her letters home censored en route, as early as May 1915 she represents the war in terms of its violence to the human body: "One of the most stabbing things in this war is seeing the lines of empty motor ambulances going up to bring down the wrecks who at this moment are sound and fit, and all absolutely ready to be turned into wrecks" (Luard 1915, 279); by her second year of nursing she defines nursing expertise in terms of injury:

“There is no form of horror imaginable, on any part of the human body, that we can’t tackle now” (Luard 1930: 119).

Rather than reflect directly on public rhetoric around the war, she often uses the voices of the men themselves to subvert the heroic narrative:

They get awfully sick at the big-print headlines in some of the papers – “The Hill 60 Thrill”!

“Thrill indeed! There’s nothing thrilling about ploughing over parapets into a machine-gun, with high explosives bursting round you, it’s merely beastly,” said a boy this evening who is all over shrapnel splinters. (Luard 1915, 279)

By 1916, however, in a collection published after the war, Luard makes her own direct indictment of the war, writing on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> March, “Snowing hard this morning and to-night, and men are lying out in the cold slush the better to kill each other. Isn’t it insane and immoral beyond description?” (Luard 1930, 44), and in May, “the whole thing seems the same utter waste of life and suffering it was last May” (Luard 1930, 68).

In the face of such “suffering,” the courage of the wounded offers the only mitigating factor. Luard never constructs her own role through an idealised lens, but other nurses find psychological support in a raised rhetoric that elevates their physically and emotionally exhausting work to the level of self-sacrifice, what Brittain calls the “challenge to spiritual endurance” (Brittain 1933, 291). Thus Elizabeth Walker Black can, in a description very like Luard’s, acknowledge the seeming futility of the war: “It seemed so futile, all this struggling and misery in order that one army of frozen men could take away some snowy, uncomfortable holes in the ground away from another army, equally wretched” (Walker Black 1919, 124), but at the same time affirm the value of her work: “I would stagger back at the end of my twenty-four hours to report, with an apron and often a face spattered with blood and mud, and yet a spirit radiant and unwearied with the thrill of service” (Walker Black 1919, 219).

More usually, nurses use language that is less idealised and more prosaic than Black’s to affirm the value of their work. Thus Miss A. Hills, a nurse on the HS *Syria*, sets her sadness at the patients’ condition against the worthwhile nature of her work. Bringing wounded and sick from Gallipoli to Alexandria in November 1915, she records, “Our patients are splendidly brave and grateful. It is so sad to see some of them that I should be miserable only that I am happy in doing so much for them,” and

later, “we are so busy that I have lost count of the days . . . I have got such bad cases . . . The work I am doing is just what I have always wanted.”<sup>7</sup>

Canadian Sophie Hoerner is similarly candid about the paradox that defines her experience. She can at once express her extreme distress at the sights she witnesses and at the same time affirm that she is well and happy. Her affirmation comes out of the satisfaction of the work itself, where her knowledge that she is doing necessary work in caring for the wounded is set against the traumatic nature of their injuries. On 8<sup>th</sup> June 1915 she writes to a friend “Oh dear, if you could see the dreadful smash-ups of these splendid fellows. It’s awful and I cry many, many times. I can’t get used to it. It’s so dreadful.” Again on 2<sup>nd</sup> July she writes

The patients are so ill in my ward and suffer so terribly that before afternoon came I thought I should scream myself. I am seeing the grimness of war now and it’s awful . . . every patient with more than one wound, so terrible I can’t describe them . . . but I’m glad I’m here and I am happy.<sup>8</sup>

Yet shifting the emphasis away from the “grimness of war” to her belief in the importance of her work and sense of well-being, a necessary containment, avoids confronting the source of that grimness.

Susan Mann notes that the nurses “loved their work” quoting Canadian nurse Claire Gass as saying “if it were only possible to forget its cause” (Mann 2000, xxi). Gass’s diary shows the impossibility of forgetting. Unlike Hoerner’s letters written while working at the same hospital, which may need to reassure her addressee of her well-being, the private space of Gass’s diary allows her the freedom to work through the experience for herself alone. As the space within which she can express her private feelings about the injury she witnesses, the way she constructs that injury in her diary becomes an indirect protest against the war. She describes nights where she cannot sleep for the sounds of the ambulances bringing in the wounded, “listening and thinking what it all means & the condition of these poor lads; tired in body and spirit, sick of the war, sick of France, aching for their homes & their dear ones” (Mann 2000, 39, 6<sup>th</sup> July 1915). Of a convoy of patients she describes

some terrible cases, oh so much better dead (one young lad with eyes and nose all gone – one blur of mangled flesh. . .) heads shattered to pieces . . . Oh why must such things be. All are so brave, & yet those who are not

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<sup>7</sup> Miss A. Hills, unpublished diary, Imperial War Museum (Documents 9601). [Extracts are reproduced by kind permission of John D. Ferrett.]

<sup>8</sup> Nursing Sister Sophie Hoerner, Library and Archives Canada, R2495-0-7-E.

badly wounded are so tired of the war . . . - tired in such a hopeless way.  
(Mann 2000, 32, 19<sup>th</sup> July 1915) (ellipses added)

As noted earlier, Mann asserts in her introduction to Gass's diary that the Canadian nurses did not question the validity of the war. Gass's very subtle reaction against the war is crucial to note, however, since it represents the way many nurse narratives, unlike those of Brittain and Millard, for example, demand careful close reading to identify protest. Gass's protest is carried in her representation of wounds at particular points in her diary. Thus on 6<sup>th</sup> June 1915 she writes: "an Ambulance Train arrived about 9 pm. 118 patients admitted" (Mann 2000, 25). She follows this with a quotation from a poem by Austin Dolson entitled "Rank & File" which begins "O Undistinguished Dead!" and ends "Hotly you fell – with all your wounds in front: – /This is your fame" (Mann 2000, 25-26). Immediately following this last line, her entry of 7<sup>th</sup> June begins

Some of these new patients have dreadful dreadful wounds. One young boy with part of his face shot away both arms gone & great wounds in both legs. Surely Death were merciful . . . These are the horrors of war, but they are too horrible. Can it be God's will or only man's devilishness. (Mann 2000, 26)

The juxtaposition of the heroic narrative of the poem and the subsequent description of actual wounds is no accident. Her nurse's knowledge of injury here challenges and negates the abstract rhetoric that would obscure the reality of wounding. This is more directly apparent in an entry on 28<sup>th</sup> September 1915: "Harold Begbie's [a composer of propaganda verse] talk of wounds as 'scratches & pink marks' is a trifle out of place in the face of these shattered limbs & great areas of lacerated flesh" (Mann 2000, 66). Her understatement is a direct attack on the false assumptions of those who represent war without having witnessed it. It is, in fact, the same rejection of "redescription" that would later be made by the poet Wilfred Owen in "Dulce et Decorum Est," which sets a soldier's death by gassing against the popular propaganda that reinforces a false ideology of war: "If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood/Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs?/. . . My friend, you would not tell with such high zest/To children ardent for some desperate glory,/The old Lie: Dulce et Decorum est/Pro patria mori" (Owen 1983, lines 21-28).

In this private writing, Gass does not seek containment, either for herself or for the wounded, but her protest would remain private. Other nurses, such as Millard and Brittain as we have seen, return to their

experience after the war and use it to construct a public protest in works published in the late 1920s and early 1930s.<sup>9</sup> Three women who published post-war, Mary Borden in *The Forbidden Zone*, Ellen La Motte in *The Backwash of War* (originally published during the war) and Lesley Smith in *Four Years out of Life*, go further than Brittain and Millard in negotiating their own position in relation to the wounded they treat. Whether or not they identify their writing as pacifist, it goes beyond the condemnation of the war to a condemnation of their work as nurses as colluding in what Borden calls the “conspiracy” of a state-managed murder of men.

In the “conspiracy” men are continually repaired like clothing, until they are rendered useless and “thrown into the ground”: they are abject, the waste from the battlefield. Borden thus shows war to be a categorical rejection of the value of the human being where the nurses as menders are complicit in the process. While the abstract rhetoric in the public realm constructs war service in terms of an ideal-sacrificial heroism—the nurses’ perspective on war reveals cynical exploitation.

It is all carefully arranged. Everything is arranged. It is arranged that men should be broken and that they should be mended. Just as you send you clothes to the laundry and mend them when they come back, so we send our men to the trenches and mend them when they come back again . . . we send our men to the war again and again, just as long as they will stand it; just until they are dead, and then we throw them into the ground. (Borden 1929, 117)

Through what she calls the “fragments” that make up her memoir Borden questions not only her role as nurse but her very identity in the face of the fragmented men she nurses: “There are no men here, so why should I be a woman. There are heads and knees and mangled testicles . . . There are these things but no men, so how could I be a woman here and not die of it” (Borden 1929, 60). Borden’s representation of the fragmented body throughout *The Forbidden Zone* asks how Scarry’s call to “permit” “the attributes of injury . . . to cling to the original site of the

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<sup>9</sup> While both Ellen La Motte’s and Mary Borden’s accounts were published after the war, as noted in the discussion, La Motte’s work was written and published during the war but subsequently repressed and republished much later. Borden’s memoir *The Forbidden Zone* was published in 1929, but as she notes in her Preface, “The sketches and poems were written between 1914 and 1918, during four years of hospital work with the French Army. The five stories I have written recently from memory; they recount true episodes that I cannot forget.” Lesley Smith’s *Four Years out of Life* was written and published after the war.

wound, the human body” (Borden 1929, 64) can be accomplished when the body is reduced to body parts. For Borden war is an absence of wholeness. “Once they were real, splendid, ordinary men . . . Once they were fathers and husbands and sons and the lovers of women” (Borden 1929, 61). Their only relief from their agony, caused by the wounds of war and by the further ministrations of the medical teams, is “Death—the angel, the peacemaker, the healer, whom we wait for, pray for” (Borden 1929, 54). Furthermore, for Borden, revealing injury is not enough: “owning” it must involve recognition of the nurses’ participation in the process whereby men are valuable only in so far as they can be remade to fulfil a military purpose. Further fragmenting the already fragmented body they “conspire against his right to die . . . dig into the yawning mouths of his wounds . . . add the insult of our curiosity and the course of our purpose, the purpose to remake him” (Borden 1929, 120). In *Four Years out of Life*, Lesley Smith similarly connects the fragmentation of bodies with her own sense of complicity in the process: “Hour after hour, day after day, we cut down stinking bandages and exposed great gaping wounds that distorted the whole original plan of the body; human figures had become mere curious abortions” (Smith 1931, 119). In addition to her need to bear witness to the effect of such wounding, it is as if the “curiosity” with which she looks and her exposure of the body makes her complicit in the “distortion” of these helpless men.

Ellen La Motte, a nurse who worked with Borden in her mobile ambulance unit at the French Front, employs the construction of war itself to strip away the rhetoric that purports to reward injury and death in war by exposing it as empty of all value. In the Preface to her second edition of *Backwash of War*, published in 1934, La Motte notes that, originally published in the autumn of 1916 in the United States, but kept out of England and France, the book was suppressed when it came to the attention of the American authorities in 1918. Arguing that her accounts of Britain were “true” she was told that “that is exactly the trouble,” and comments, “Truth, it appears, has no place in war” (La Motte 1934, v-vii). As finds war’s “honour dishonest and its glory meretricious,” so for La Motte the nurse’s “truth” exposes idealism as empty rhetoric imposed from without. The values that persuade men to fight are revealed to be a sham; like the medals pinned on the dying men in her ward they are “base metal, gilded” (La Motte 1934, 23). To illustrate its emptiness and dishonesty, in her story “Pour la Patrie” La Motte deliberately sets up the reader’s expectations of a heroic narrative that can retrieve some meaning from a long drawn-out and excruciatingly painful death. Here a dying man is forced to acknowledge that he has given his life freely for his

country. At the very end of the story, La Motte removes herself as narrator from the text and gives the last words to the dying soldier to subvert the ideal offered by the state in the form of the *Médaille Militaire*. His is a brief narrative: “I was mobilized against my inclination. Now I have won the *Médaille Militaire*. My Captain won it for me. He made me brave. He had a revolver in his hand” (La Motte 1934, 131). La Motte’s very deliberate construction of the narrative brings the reader through the ideal represented by the medal and into the reality of its context: there is no bravery, merely military expediency.

Writers like Borden and La Motte strip away meaning as they reveal not only the wounds themselves, but the false rhetoric that has caused them. As the nurse witnesses the wounds that others will never see, she carries the burden of that witness, but at the same time must also carry the burden of her own complicity in the process. Acknowledging that complicity is rendered more difficult by the intimate physical relationship between the nurse’s own body and that of the wounded, what Das calls “the impotence of sympathy.” When this relationship is set alongside the nurses’ work as containment, the emotional burden is almost unbearable, as we find in Mary Borden’s poem “Take Me Away from my Wounded Men,” where the pressure to “contain,” “my wounded men,” is held in tension with the desire to escape, “take me away.” Where Black translated her emotional burden into a rhetoric of sacrifice as a way of coping with the overwhelming nature of the experience, Borden articulates the opposite, the desire to abandon the men she cares for when the intimacy of their relationship becomes overwhelming. In this poem wounds are terrifying, the wounded predatory in their needs. The nurse addresses her “clean, strong, whole” lover asking him to

take me away from my wounded men -  
I cannot bear their pain anymore - (lines 1-2)

...  
They cling to my skirt, my arms, my hands  
They clutch at my strength (lines 7-8)

...  
Their wounds gape at me -  
Their stumps menace me -  
The bandaged faces grimace at me -  
Their death rattle curses me -  
Give me rest - Make me clean  
I am stained - I am soiled -  
I am streaked with their blood -  
I am soaked with the odor of their oozing wounds -  
I am saturated with the poison of their poor festering wounds -

I am poisoned - I am infected - I shall never wash it off - (lines 14-23)

...

For I am heavy with the weight of my helpless wounded men (line 33)

...

When they clung to me I held them -

When they tossed I held them still -

When they fought I held them down -

When they clutched at me, flailing, drowning in their agony, I held them.

(lines 39-42)

Borden is trapped in a paradox: the desire to escape is simultaneously the desire to regain strength to return to them. She feels both disgust and guilt at her body's immersion in their blood. This is a world of fear and menace, but one in which she is implicated. Like Lady Macbeth, she is complicit in a murder she did not commit and can "never wash [the blood] off." Owning injury for the nurse is not only bearing witness to wounds, but a physical immersion in the wounds themselves. And as she is physically immersed, so she carries that immersion in her psyche: "I'm infected." The actual poison of infected wounds becomes a metaphorical poison. The war itself is a poison that infects not only the nurse, but all those who engage in it.

It is from this position as "carriers of a terrible knowledge" (Marcus 1989, 245) that these writers claim the legitimacy to reject war. As the narrator of Smith's *Four Years out of Life* comments: "I saw and admitted the triumph of ugliness and evil, and I knew that wherever I went afterwards, I would take my own Bedlam with me" (Smith 1931, 93). Writing after the war, and thus in a position where she can interrogate the values surrounding the nurses' work that offered necessary emotional support at the time, Smith uses injury to expose the nurses' work as the means by which they avoid its larger political implications. Her "Bedlam" not only comes out of the traumatic nature of the work itself, but also through the knowledge of her collusion in the conspiracy. In an exchange between two volunteer nurses discussing extending their service, Smith deliberately employs the rhetoric of nursing service to subvert an ideology of self-sacrifice and deconstruct it:

"Of course we'll sign on again," said Gratton acidly. "Are we not the complete *embusqués* [cowards]?" "We do our job and it uses up every scrap of time and energy so that we've forgotten there's a war on."

"... I feel we're shirking something horribly by just working hard and feeling useful..."

"You'll take to drink if you're not careful, Gratton..."

“Here we are clearing up the mess all the time so that they can go on again making more of a mess.” (Smith 1931, 68)

The self-sacrificing hard work becomes a form of cowardice because it allows the nurse to avoid confronting the real reason for what she is doing, that is, “clearing up the mess” so that it can continue. Once the work is revealed as a furthering of the futility of war, then reliance on a rhetoric of sacrifice that would affirm the validity of their work is impossible, and without that support, owning injury is an internalising of the “Bedlam” or, as Borden puts it, “I am saturated with the poison of their poor festering wounds.”

When the nurse’s role is to contain the physical and psychological environment for the soldier patient, once the belief in the value of that containment breaks down she is unable to contain her own psychic demons. It is noteworthy that Smith is writing after the war, and thus within a cultural climate of disillusionment. The stripping away of an affirmative rhetoric after the war allowed nurses like her not only to reveal injury, but also to reflect on their own position in relation to it and thus to question their role as nurses, especially those volunteers who had gone to war in a haze of idealism. Unlike nurses writing during the war, whose “redescription” of injury must be understood in the context of their need for emotional support that allowed them to survive the physically and emotionally exhausting conditions, post-war writers were in a position to use their experience to own injury and to strip away what they now saw as false values that obscured the reality of war. In doing so they also make the inordinately difficult decision to understand their seemingly affirmative nurse role as its opposite, that is, as a contribution to the “conspiracy” that is war. They thus carry their protest against war in their interrogation of their own work.

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Mary Borden’s poetry © Patrick Alymer.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

# “THAT MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS HAS HAUNTED US FOR YEARS”: WOMEN WITNESSES OF HUNGER IN CENTRAL EUROPE

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The suffering and wastage of children surpass in accumulated horror the scenes of the actual battlefields. Less bloody, but more revoltingly offensive, they are a blatant outrage on all sense of pity, all desire to protect the helpless. (Lind af Hageby 1924, 18-19)

### Introduction

During the First World War many women, humanitarians and pacifists, committed themselves to aiding civilians: refugees, homeless, orphans, internees, enemy aliens, conscientious objectors. They attempted to prevent mass suffering and to rescue people in imminent danger. Crossing physical, social and psychological barriers, and often national borders, facing public abuse and serious danger for their own lives and personal freedom, they acted independently from governments and sometimes in open conflict with them (Oldfield 2001, xi).

The features common to these women of various orientations and from different walks of life (nurses, doctors, social workers, journalists, sociologists, students, religious activists, but also women from very modest backgrounds) were outstanding moral courage, an altruistic personality, the inability to watch those suffering without trying to relieve them, and the desire to denounce the new face of a war that was intentionally striking the defenceless (Oldfield 2001, xii).

During and immediately after the war, when hatred, lies and insensitivity ruled, offering help, sharing risks and suffering with the victims had the great value of showing that courage and self-sacrifice were expressed not only in bringing death and destruction, but in defending life. These gestures proved that behind the world of political struggle there still existed a real world, a world of brotherhood and generosity. Compassion and help, not abstractions, could eliminate war from the human horizon, and demonstrate that means and ends should be consistent. The concrete manifestation of the desire to heal the wounds of war violence could break the artificial barriers erected by the conflict between peoples and individuals.

In this spirit, hundreds of volunteers of the Friends' War Victims Relief Committee (WVRC) founded in London in September 1914<sup>1</sup> engaged in their missions abroad for the life-saving work.

In the United States (during neutrality), and especially in Britain, humanitarian activism was particularly strong as in those countries pacifists were able to act, write and express themselves more freely than in other European countries. The awareness that Britain and America had not suffered invasion and occupation, and had not experienced the horrors of modern warfare, aroused in many women a high sense of duty towards civilians in the countries most affected by the conflict. In 1916 Helena Swanwick wrote in her pamphlet *The War and Its Effects upon Women*:

Although [British women] suffer like all the other women by the death and maiming of their men, they are curiously removed from the stunning effects of a war on their own soil. Their grown men die, it is true, too young and very dear. But they do not see their babies killed by thousands; they do not see their daughters outraged, they do not have their homesteads and fields defiled and burned and blown to atoms; they do not have to take part in those hideous retreats of women and children and sick and old, starving and dying on the cruel roads; they do not bear their babes to the sound of cannon. So they keep their minds alert for thinking and organising. But if they ever allow themselves to forget those other women in invaded lands; if they do not remember them, not only for the alleviation, but also for the prevention of such hideous sufferings, their day of reckoning will come. They will be held to account. They will be hated. (Swanwick 1916, 30)

But it was the outrage over the Blockade by the Allied powers, considered a crime of war and for which they felt a particular moral

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<sup>1</sup> Ruth Fry was the Secretary. On WVRC, see Fry 1926; on Fry see Bianchi 2008.

responsibility, which induced them to condemn their own governments and engage in an anti-war campaign and in risky relief work.

By 1915 Dorothy Buxton tried to gather as much information as possible about the consequences of the blockade in Central Europe and published them in *The Cambridge Magazine*, arousing in many women a desire to go to those devastated places to tell the truth and bring their own witness of peace. Nevertheless, only after the war was it possible for most of them to go to Germany, Austria, Serbia, and Poland.

From the magnitude of the suffering caused by disease, infant mortality, deprivation and despair of mothers, the women drew new impetus for activism, strengthened their pacifist and feminist beliefs, elaborated a philosophy of aid as an instrument of international peace and reconciliation, and worked out a new economic vision. They also developed new strategies for disarmament and claimed the right of women to make their voices heard on issues of international politics.

This chapter focuses on the testimonies of five pacifist women who brought humanitarian aid to the countries of Central Europe between 1915 and 1919: Emily Hobhouse, the pacifist and humanitarian who at the beginning of the century had denounced the concentration camps in South Africa, and went to Belgium in 1916 and in 1919 to Austria and Germany on behalf of the Save the Children Fund; Madeleine Doty, an American lawyer and a prison reformer who went to Germany in 1915-1916 on behalf of the Christian Work Fund for Starving Children; the volunteers of the Friends' War Victims Relief Committee set up at the outbreak of the war and coordinated by Ruth Fry; Jane Addams and Alice Hamilton who went to Germany in July 1919 with a delegation of the Society of Friends. The essay also mentions Helena Swanwick, first secretary of the British branch of the WILPF –, who organised aid for German babies – and dwells on the consequences the experiences of these pacifist women had on their lives and thought.

### **“In the interest of truth, peace and humanity.”**

#### **Emily Hobhouse's Peace Mission, 1916**

In the last days of July 1914, when the war was imminent, Emily Hobhouse returned with her mind on the concentration camps in South Africa where she had seen the Boer children in their thousands slowly dying of hunger and disease (E. Hobhouse 1984; Bianchi 2005). On 1<sup>st</sup> August 1914, in a letter to the *Manchester Guardian*, she wrote in support of the newspaper's demand for England's neutrality:

Few English people have seen war in its nakedness . . . They know nothing of the poverty, destruction, disease, pain, misery and mortality which follows in its trail. I have seen all this and more and my experience adds force to my appeal to all lovers of humanity to avert the horror that is threatened. (B.J. Hobhouse 1994, 543)

From September 1914 in England she observed the condition of the Belgian refugees. On 29<sup>th</sup> October she wrote to Jan Smuts “Here we have the Belgian refugees, and I sit and listen to the self-same stories I heard in such number fourteen years ago, and see the same war-look stamped upon many faces” (B.J. Hobhouse 1994, 546).

As the war went on, the desire to bring testimony of compassion and aid to civilians hit by the violence of war grew more and more intense, and she made all possible efforts to find a way to tell the “enemies” that many English people did not hate them and still held the principle of internationalism politically and the principle of love religiously. “I wanted as far as an individual may to begin laying the foundations of international life, *even while war was in progress* and say: ‘Here I come, alone, of my free will into your country to bear you, even while our Governments are at war, a message of peace and goodwill’” (B.J. Hobhouse 1994, 546).

In 1915, when Britain’s anti-German campaign had intensified to the point of paroxysm, she decided to travel to Belgium to see first-hand the conditions of the occupied country, and to Germany to assess the situation of food supplies and its effects on women and children. “I went prepared to see a devastated country. My long sojourn in South Africa had taught me what to expect when soldiers have done their work with fire and sword” (E. Hobhouse 1916, 39).

She contacted the Foreign Minister, Gottlieb von Jagow, and received permission to visit Berlin and Belgium. It was her “secret peace mission,” determined to do all she could to bring Germany and Great Britain to a “better understanding” (Crangle and Baylen 1979). The Police intervened immediately and asked the Home Office to intern her for being in contact with enemy subjects. To Lord Robert Cecil – Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs – she declared:

I’m not a diplomatist but a very simple direct person. I never tell a lie and have never made a false statement in my life. Neither do I go back from my word when given . . .

The German Minister von Jagow is an old acquaintance . . . when convinced of the innocuous nature of my proposed visit – in the interest of truth, peace and humanity – they gave me an informal permit bearing the

words: “with humanitarian object.” (Crangle and Baylen 1979, 740; Kaminski 1977, 331)

Rejecting the charge of collaboration and sympathy towards the enemy, she said:

Holding, as I do, that a war is not only wrong in itself, but a crude mistake, I stand wholly outside its passions . . . My small means are devoted entirely to help non-combatants who suffer in consequence of war, and in supporting every movement making for Peace. I believe it useless to soften or civilize war – that there is no such thing as “civilized war” . . . Hence all the Governments concerned in making this war are to blame in my eyes . . . I blame them all and am against them all equally. On the other hand my heartfelt sympathies lie with all the peoples of Europe, sacrificed, ruined and destroyed by their blind incompetent rulers. They also are to blame in so far as they allow their better judgment to be led astray by their rulers and do not rise up in a body to stay the tide of bloodshed. But they are all to be pitied, for the poverty, starvation, misery and universal ruin fall upon their shoulders, besides disease, destruction and countless worse evils. (R. Fry 1929, 267)

The government decided not intern a frail 55-year-old woman suffering from heart disease who, 14 years earlier, it had opposed and deported, and Hobhouse was able to relate her experience in journals and reports. In 1916 she travelled to Cologne, then to Brussels and from there to Berlin. Crossing the German border in time of war aroused a feeling of euphoria:

To me it was a wonderful moment. It was as if in a dream. In a moment of time one’s mental orientation was changed – the foolishness of it all was startling – Nature had made no barrier . . . a long level road swept through green meadow land on both sides the same. (R. Fry 1929, 269)

In Belgium she visited Aerschot, Cambrai, Liège and Louvain and there, as she said to Basil Thomson – Chief of the Criminal Investigation Department of Scotland Yard, who summoned her at the beginning of July – she saw the distribution of food and formed the opinion that the blockade was responsible for heavy infant mortality. At the sight of the long lines of people waiting to be fed in various quarters of Brussels – she wrote in a report published by the *Daily News*, 4<sup>th</sup> September 1916 – “one halted involuntarily as before a passing funeral and then crept past them with a sense of awe and shame” (E. Hobhouse 1916, 41).

There is something very still and orderly, almost solemn in the aspect of these queues which render them the more pathetic. They arrest and fascinate the observer, these women and girls with worn, patient faces, each bearing a jug or platter. They embody and are eloquent of tragedy which reaches far beyond themselves and of which they know nothing. . . . And the next day the same sight aroused the same feelings and the next and the next, till slowly the mind grasped something of what it must mean to stand thus for hours, day after day, week after week, month after month, mounting at last two years. For in those queues one faced a bit of war in everyday grab, stripped of glory – war in its ultimate effect upon a civilian population in misery and broken lives (R. Fry 1929, 274).

One day she was allowed to visit one of the communal kitchens and had the opportunity to have a conversation with the Belgian Manager. He told her of the serious outbreak of tuberculosis affecting the glands of the neck and filling hospital with patients, particularly children and adolescents. “Afterwards when I told my Baron about this tuberculosis he seemed seriously disturbed and even annoyed, and it was plain that I was *not* being allowed to know the truth” (*Ibid.*, 275).

Escorted by her guide, a young German officer, unable to approach people directly, Hobhouse could only observe the destruction of villages and buildings. Ultimately they were not so badly injured as commonly supposed. Out of a total of 2 million houses about 15,000 had been destroyed. Comparing these figures with South Africa she noted “it would seem that the Belgians have escaped the talons of war” and concluded: “We are all Huns in turn” (E. Hobhouse 1916, 44).

In Germany she was able to see even less of the civilians’ conditions, except for the British citizens internees in the camp of Ruhleben. But she got in touch with Elizabeth Rotten, Secretary of the Berlin Committee for the relief of foreigners in Germany and Alice Salomon, and visited the *Arbeiterinnenheim* Salomon was running. The diet of the poor – said Salomon – was still not so bad. The consequences of the blockade would soon reverse that situation.

Von Jagow, with whom she had an hour’s conversation, told her that she might take the hint to England that Germany was willing to negotiate a peace if London would make some proper advances.

Back in England, Hobhouse had a letter published by the *Union of Democratic Control Magazine* that, as Arthur Ponsonby declared, brought many new subscribers to the association.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless she soon lost hope in a possible mediation and lived in anguish till the end of the war. The

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<sup>2</sup> The UDC was founded in 1914 with the purpose of bringing the foreign policy under the control of Parliament.

time of the Boer War, when her report on the condition of the concentration camps in South Africa for women and children had forced the government to change its policy, was definitely past. The World War left little room for individual actions. Only in 1919 was it possible for her to take action, as we shall see.

### **Madeleine Doty: An American Woman in Germany, 1915-1916**

What Emily Hobhouse could not see about the living conditions of German civilians were described in detail by Madeleine Doty, a member of the Woman's Peace Party, one of the first (maybe the first) eyewitness of hunger in Germany.<sup>3</sup> In spring 1915, Doty went to Germany where she stayed till July 1915. She returned in July 1916, and stayed till mid-October 1916. "The country goes spiritually and materially bankrupt – she wrote in the *Introduction* to her book *Short Rations. An American Woman in Germany 1915...1916* –. It is in this sense that I use the title "Short Rations"" (Doty 1917, xi).

She made her decision to go to Germany for the first time at The Hague, after attending the First International Congress of Women, where day by day she had learned of the suffering in war-ridden lands.<sup>4</sup>

Black-clad wives had made speeches. Sorrowing mothers had shown their agony. The battlefield became a reality, covered with dead and dying sons an husbands. These glimpses of tragedy wrung our hearts. We ceased to be enemies or friends. We were just women. (Doty 1917, 23)

To go quietly home had become impossible; she wanted to do something immediately.

I packed my bag with beating heart. My head was full of tales of hardship and imprisonment. The Lusitania had just been sunk. I had never been to Germany. Berlin was a strange city. I pinned my little American flag and my Hague Peace Congress badge on the lapel of my coat. My passport I tucked in my pocket. With a small hand-bag and no printed or written word I started forth (Doty 1917, 26).

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<sup>3</sup> On Doty, see Duffy Rinehart 2001.

<sup>4</sup> Her reports were published in the *Evening Post*, *The Nation*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *The New York Tribune*.

The first descriptions of hunger and poverty in Germany we find in her book are those of Hamburg, “a city of sleepers,” a still, dying city: the docks and the stores closed, the buildings left to rust and crumble. “All is silent and still, as though some great calamity had fallen upon the city” (*Ibid.*, 98). On the streets there were only long queues of women and children, each bearing a pail, in front of a big building, formerly a dock and then a feeding kitchen.

When the women leave, a whistle blows. Then from every direction come old men and young boys. They come running, hopping, jumping, each striving to be first, driven by hunger, or by fear that the last may have nothing. The police keep them in order. They file into the big building to eat. (Doty 1917, 103)

In the midst of poverty, many were those who could still afford to pay at high prices for the basic necessities, and even some luxuries or to send the servants to queue.

It is foolish to starve out Germany – she comments – this procedure does not hurt the governing classes and the rich. They will not suffer until the rest of Germany is dead. Starvation kills off the poor, but leaves the militarists intact. This is not the way to crush militarism . . . What shall the world do? Shall it stand idly by, or shall it stretch out a hand of sympathy and understanding to these troubled people and help them? (Doty 1917, 134).

Constantly watched by German spies, Doty felt exactly as if she were in prison. The image of prison recurs constantly; a nation under siege that keeps her citizens in captivity, suppresses discontent and revolt by force. Magistrates, police, political authorities appeared to the American journalist cruelly indifferent to the fate of the poor and hungry people.

Accompanied by a Social Democrat woman who spoke English, Doty reached Berlin. The women and children she saw in the streets were pale, weary, thin and sunken eyed, affected by what was angrily termed “the English sickness.” “The tragedy of Germany is not a quick starvation for a few; it is the under-feeding of a whole race. Mothers and babies are gradually going down hill” (Doty 1917, 132).

It was not easy to bring aid and to invest the money given her by the Christian Work Fund for Starving Children and avoid speculative prices. Finally she managed to buy goats to provide milk for children. With a social worker she visited many families; none of them had enough to nourish a child and the infant mortality was appalling. 160 died at the Children’s hospital in Berlin in the first three days of 1915. But the worst

was yet to come in the winter 1916-1917, the “turnip winter,” when even potatoes disappeared from the market.

Now and then riots erupted; women in queues, exhausted after a day’s work, with babies and tiny children clinging to their skirts, suddenly began waving their fists, then a whisper passed along the line starting the protest.

Berlin has had several riots. In some cities women have been shot. “It is quite easy to start rebellion,” said a Social Democrat to me. “Several times we went to the market and urged the crowd to riot. But we stopped, for women were put in prison and the children left destitute.” But when there are no potatoes there will be riots. As long as there is food for the children, however inadequate, the women keep quiet. Their hearts are sore, but they dare not rebel . . . they fear their children will be taken from them. But these women when spoken to look wise and say: “Wait until our men come back from the front, then you’ll see.” (Doty 1917, 148)

Since she realized that many of these women standing in a line, “ready to drop with fatigue,” were industrial workers, she decided to visit two factories. In the first factory where a kind of silk from wood fibre was extracted, women unloaded tree trunks handling logs “five times as big as themselves.” In the Bosch munitions factory, 4,000 women handled big machines; they were exhausted, often fell ill, and – as the employer said – had to be laid off to a greater extent than men.

Women’s unemployment was a death sentence to children.

The suffering of destitute children haunted me until an idea came. No one in the world could willingly want babies to starve. The thing to do was to charter big ocean steamers, gather up hungry children, and bring them to America . . . No nation in earth would dare molest such a shipload. (Doty 1917, 163-164)

Although her project was rejected by the German Red Cross, she did not lose her confidence in the role America could play. “America, what you say?” was the last sentence of her report.

But her greatest confidence was placed in motherhood. The values of motherhood, so cruelly violated during the war, would have been able to change human and political relations. The last chapter of the book is devoted to an exchange of letters she had found at the Red Cross offices in Geneva, between a British soldier and the mother of a young German soldier he had killed. The mother welcomes the pain and remorse of the young Englishman, and accepts him as her son. Only motherhood is universal, comments Doty, only in motherhood was there the wise

awareness that each life hangs on every other, a wisdom that could heal the world. This brief chapter, illustrated by an engraving by Kaethe Kollwitz: *Die Mutter*, was also published in the journal of the New York branch of the Woman's Peace Party, *Four Lights* (Doty 1917b, 2-4).

The journal published also a review of *Short Rations*, but only after the Armistice could the curtain on the real conditions of civilians in Central Europe be raised. In December 1918 German women sent a telegram to Wilson's wife, Edith Galt, and Jane Addams begging them to protest against the requisition of 3,000 milk cows in Germany destined for France and Belgium and reminding them the sufferings of the starving German children. Jane Addams was never allowed to receive the cable, but the newspapers did and they published the public opinion's angry reactions. "A wave of rage seemed to roll over the country . . . I never saw anything so full of hate and bitterness as the letters [Jane Addams] then received, all of them from people of the educated, well-to-do class" (Hamilton 1943, 228).

Nevertheless, moved by the cable, Madeleine Doty and other women of the Woman's Peace Party pressured Jane Addams to convene a Second International Congress of Women, which opened in Zurich on 12<sup>th</sup> May 1919.

## **The Zurich Congress and the founding of the Save the Children Fund**

Four years had elapsed since women from neutral and belligerent countries had first convened at The Hague. Now, after the most terrible war years, they could meet again. It was a moving experience for most of them.

In Zurich women from the victorious countries regarded the Central Powers women (who constituted the largest belligerent delegation) with "a sense of apology, of embarrassment." "We were the fortunate and the safe – wrote Hamilton – , they the helpless who did not yet even know what fate awaited them" (Hamilton 1948, 234).

There they had the first sight of the famine in Central Europe. Austrian and German women appeared as emaciated shadows of their former selves. On that occasion Addams met an Austrian delegate, an old acquaintance who appeared so shrunken and changed that "[she] had much difficulty in identifying her with the beautiful woman [she] had seen three years before." The woman died three months after her return to Vienna. A similar moving experience is recalled by Helena Swanwick in her *Autobiography*:

One woman was tortured by daily news of her daughter dying of tuberculosis in a sanatorium, who died before the closing of the Congress. . . . One little, eager, thin, gentle woman died from exhaustion almost immediately after the congress. They dared not indulge in the good food spread before them; they had been too long starved, and their weakened digestion could not cope with an ordinary meal. (Swanwick 1935, 319)

Many relief workers, assisting German or Austrian children – hundreds of little skeletons who could not walk or even raise their hands – devoted themselves body and soul to the relief work. The hardest thing they had to bear was hearing the children whimper and moan for hours after they were put to bed because they were too hungry to go to sleep.

This modern massacre of the innocents haunted us for years . . . One of the best of our workers in Scotland, a wise and charming teacher, killed herself with overwork for the starved children. As she lay dying, she saw in her delirium, as a frieze in her bedroom, Della Robbia's foundlings. (Swanwick 1935, 317)

"Every instinct cried out against this wanton waste. It was wrong! It was wrong! It was wrong!" another relief worker wrote in her *Memoir* (Swanwick 1935, 317).

At the Congress the participants were shocked not only by the extreme weakness of Austrian and German women, but also by their sadness and deep demoralization. In her *Autobiography* Alice Hamilton recalled the dialogue with a Viennese woman who spoke of the tension, the despair that gradually changed people making them irritable and resentful: "Our nerves were so on edge all the time, we lost our habits of courtesy. You see, we could not think of anything but food, all the time, scheming and contriving, and failing almost always. That makes one a primitive creature again. One's civilization is lost" (Hamilton 1943, 234).

In 1922 Jane Addams remembered

A woman told us that many Austrian women had resented not so much the starvation itself as the fact that day they had been obliged to keep their minds steadily on the subject of procuring food until all other objects for living were absolutely excluded. To the horror and anxieties of war had been added the sordidness of sheer animal hunger with its inhibitions. (Addams 1922, 159-160)

For many women who attended the Congress, it was impossible to stand outside the widespread effort to avert starvation. "None of us from

the Allied Countries – wrote Hamilton to Rozet Smith – can help now doing all we can to get the food blockade raised” (Sicherman 1984, 229).

In 1915, at the Hague Congress, women had expressed their sense of outrage for the mass murder in the trenches and for the violation of women. At the Zurich Congress, the illegal continuation of the blockade was the central theme of discussion and the delegates asked for its immediate termination. Just as in 1915 the delegates ruled out any discussion of war responsibilities, so in 1919 the delegates from the vanquished countries made no mention of the blockade and left it to the delegates from the victor countries to protest against this crime.

The Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), born out of the Congress, was the first political group in the world to prophesy the fatal results of the Treaty, especially on economic matters:

By the financial and economic proposals a hundred million people of this generation in the heart of Europe are condemned to poverty, disease and despair which must result in the spread of hatred and anarchy within each nation. (Report 1920, 242).

The indignation over the punitive peace, the anguish for the black prospects of the future, gave them a deep sense of catastrophe and a new impulse to act.

Swanwick engaged in fund-raising to send one million teats for German children and started to work at a disarmament proposal (a project she developed from her experience in the Union of Democratic Control, of which she was co-founder). In April 1919 the British section of the WILPF issued a leaflet that reproduced a photograph of two starving Austrian children and asserted: “Our blockade has caused this . . . We are responsible . . . How can we stop it? . . . Write to Lloyd George and say you won’t stand it . . . Raise the blockade everywhere” (Swanwick 1935, 317). For having distributed a similar leaflet Ayrton Gould and Eglantyne Jebb were arrested in Trafalgar Square, charged, and fined.

Photographs and documentary films with their incontrovertible value of testimony could counteract hatred based on stereotypes and on abstractions. They had the immense value of cultivating truth, the first thing the war had destroyed: “The world – wrote Eglantyne Jebb – is not ungenerous, but unimaginative” (Jebb 1929, 1). There was a moral obligation for the British public to confront those photographs. Jebb wanted to touch the imagination of the world; direct experience and evidence had the power to dissipate hate and prejudice as Helena Swanwick wrote in her autobiography:

I heard of a woman who said it would be quite a good thing if a million of German babies did die, but that's the sort of idiotic thing that giddy people say without any realization of the meaning. I don't believe her macabre fancy would have survived five minutes in a Dresden or Vienna children's clinic. (Swanwick 1935, 318)

In May 1919 Eglantyne and Dorothy Jebb at the Royal Albert Hall announced the foundation of the Save the Children Fund with the aim of reducing the mortality rate among children and of expressing women's protest while launching a challenge to governments. Dorothy, while shaking a can of condensed milk, declared that "there is more morality in this can than in all the creeds" (Mulley 2009, 245.)

While the women who convened in Zurich criticized the terms of peace formulated at Versailles (WILPF 1920, 241), Dorothy and Eglantyne Jebb declared:

Paris is very self-important. It believes it is making a new Europe, that it is writing history with a large and firm hand, but history is being made elsewhere. It is being made in 1,000 hospitals, in innumerable humble homes all over Europe. The cry of the child for bread is hushed in a nameless grave, but surely his voice will waken again. It will resound down our century. All shall hear it. It will become a voice of thunder which shall send statesmen and politicians, Parliament and Churches to their doom (Mulley 2009, p. 231).

Though they were not eyewitnesses, as early as 1915 they did more than any others to make the evidence known – mainly through their translation of the foreign press for *The Cambridge Magazine* – of what was happening in Central and Eastern Europe as a result of the blockade. In a posthumous essay edited by her sister, Eglantyne Jebb so resumed what they came to know:

Hundred of thousands of children were starving. Mothers killed the babies whom they could not feed. Parents sent their children to the hospitals when they could not give them any bread, but in the denuded hospitals they were simply placed in rows to die. Old people committed suicide so that the hungry members of the family might have more to eat. Even children killed themselves when unable to endure any longer the pangs of hunger. (Jebb 1929, 3-4)

When Eglantyne Jebb was arrested in May 1919, she launched an appeal to British women: only women's international solidarity, only their independent and direct action could redress international relations so that

they could be based on essential human needs and on a politics of compassion.

Children became the symbol of a new internationalism and their suffering an indictment against the politics of men. "Every generation of children offers a fresh opportunity for the reconstruction of civilization" (Jebb 1929, 5), and she dedicated herself to this mission with all the conviction and passion of a deeply religious nature always trusting in women's commitment.

From then on they launched a publicity campaign on an unprecedented scale: they gathered information, promoted enquiries, organised research missions giving women the opportunity to participate in a great humanitarian undertaking, to encourage a moral revival that would embarrass governments (Mahood 2009).

### **Emily Hobhouse's mission in Vienna and Leipzig**

Emily Hobhouse undertook one of the first missions on behalf of the Save the Children Fund in the years immediately after the war. In September 1919, at the age of 60, and despite her weak health, she set up three projects to relieve the suffering of children in Central and Eastern Europe.

We have already had, over and over again, reports on conditions in Germany and Austria. We have been reading them such with tears for many months past. What is wanted is *medicines*, disinfectants, soap, bedding, linen, milk, and all food. And an army of doctors and nurses to cope with the disease. And organise distribution. (B.J. Hobhouse 1994, 563)

Hobhouse went to Austria and Leipzig to organise a fund to relieve the most urgent needs. Under her direction, the fund was able to feed 11,000 children, and brought thousands of them from Leipzig to Switzerland.

The sight of children in Leipzig was particularly distressing and she asked a Swiss doctor, Fritz Schwytzer, to make a comparative study on children in Vienna and Leipzig with her. On their journey they visited Innsbruck, where the Italians had taken all the supplies.

Back in England in July 1920, she later returned to Leipzig in November of the same year to bring stocks and to work for continuity of the aid. She did not approve of the Hoover method of feeding some children for a few weeks at a time, and then dropping them. To grant unbroken aid, she sold her house, her piano and destined most of her

property to relief, and then collapsed. After a heart attack, she was forbidden even to walk and was forced to use a wheelchair.

If in South Africa Hobhouse's humanitarian spirit turned to pacifism, the experience in Austria and Germany radicalized her anti-war stance, and in the last years of her life she reflected on the practice of nonviolence, on the way mass movements worked, and on the thought of Gandhi she had met years before in South Africa.<sup>5</sup> On 27<sup>th</sup> April 1924, she wrote:

Just now I am reading Gandhi's life and work by the great French writer Romain Rolland. I have always felt Gandhi to be far and away the greatest man I ever met and no man in the British Empire, no man in the world has such a widespread influence today three hundred millions follow his lead devoutly and more and more I notice his wonderful personality and his vast influence, so beneficent in his character. (B.J. Hobhouse 1994, 579)

When in India the Rowlatt Act was passed in 1919, restoring the emergency laws against dissent approved during the war, and marking the beginning of the campaigns of civil disobedience, Emily Hobhouse sent a letter to Gandhi encouraging him to pursue to the end his opposition to the government. "She said – wrote Gandhi in July 1926, after Emily Hobhouse's death – that I must end my life in prison if not on the gallows and that she did not deplore it." "She herself had full strength for such sacrifice. It was an article of faith with her that no cause prospered without the sacrifice of its votaries" (Gandhi 1926, 37). As she had written to Jan Smuts in 1918 hoping he could become a leader of the peace effort in South Africa: "It only needs the courage to risk all" (Kamiski 1977, 345).

### **With the Quakers' missions: Francesca Wilson, Ruth and Joan Fry**

On 7<sup>th</sup> July 1919, a Quaker delegation composed of Ruth Fry – a friend and biographer of Emily Hobhouse – Joan Fry, Marion Fox and Thompson Elliott managed to reach Berlin where it met with the U.S. delegation led by Jane Addams and Alice Hamilton to organize the first interventions. Other missions went to Austria, Russia and Poland where they stayed for years. Ruth Fry visited every stricken country.

The attention of these eyewitnesses was always directed to children, to their sad eyes, to their swollen glands, to the limbs that no longer

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<sup>5</sup> On the relationships between Gandhi and Hobhouse, see Weber 2011.

supported them, to their miserable rags with which they had to face the winter. The privations mothers inflicted on themselves to save their children had elevated the rates of mortality and morbidity among women.

The cities are always described as silent and dead, as Francesca Wilson wrote in 1945

Vienna in the Autumn 1919 . . . was a city of the dead . . . — The streets were deserted except for queues of people waiting for rations of wood or sore bread, all of them, women and children as well as men, huddled in old patched army coats . . . everybody pale, everybody hungry, everybody silent and waiting. (Wilson 1945, 114)

In Vienna, as in Berlin and other German cities, the worst conditions were those found in the tenements in the poorest districts. “They seemed like the circles of the Inferno:”

We came upon a family of thirteen – a widow and twelve children. The woman was out to work, but the children were at home. The eldest, a girl, had a little work in the cemetery, but only in the summer. A boy of fourteen was supposed to be in apprenticeship, but he was too weak to go. The rooms were squalid. There were only three beds for thirteen people. There was nothing to eat in the kitchen . . . They had been boiling their ration of bread to make a change of diet. (Wilson 1945, 120)

Still more desperate were the conditions of those who, mainly refugees, due to housing shortage, made little shacks out of packing cases, petrol tins and pieces old iron where they lived in summer as well in winter (Wilson 1945,130).

But mainly what they saw was beyond all possible description. In their letters and reports volunteers did not dwell on the civilians’ terrible conditions, nor do they mention the despair that led children to prostitute themselves and to take their own lives. At the beginning of 1920, Joan Fry wrote: “Life is breathlessly at times so sad that one cannot write about it.” Still in 1944 she could not recall the “deplorable sights” she was bound to see and were never sufficiently understood in Britain: “Suffice it to say that the horror of those child skeletons, looking almost like little monkeys, or the weary cries of the babies sore from their wet beds when there was nothing in the shape of linen to keep them dry and only paper napkins, which were all but useless, is unforgettable” (J. Fry 1944, 15).

The anguish at not being able to cope with the immensity of the needs led many volunteers to devote themselves to relief work and the results of their activities were undoubtedly extraordinary. Thanks to the generous donations of the German communities in the United States, food supplies

collected by the Quaker missions allowed 1,750,000 children to be fed. It is estimated that at least 100,000 people contributed to the distribution of milk, mostly mothers and teachers. In June 1921, the work of volunteers made use of 8,364 distribution centres and 2,271 kitchens .

The Friends' relief in Austria was initiated in July 1919 by Hilda Clark; she imported 1,400 cows and bulls from Switzerland, Holland and Britain. The farmers paid for them by sending free milk to the infant welfare centres in Vienna where it was distributed to children under 2 years. In July 10,000 children were fed with Quaker milk (Jones 1929, 55; Hamilton 1943, 249).

Nevertheless, eight years after the end of the war, conditions in Austria and Germany remained desperate, as Ruth Fry wrote.

A visit to Frankfurt on Main in 1926 impressed upon me the acute misery of the German people consequent on the war and blockade. For instance, in the municipal hospital I saw terrible cases of rickets, tiny children whose legs and arms had no power in them and whose weak skin was creased over their bones. Premature births, which before the war were a negligible number, were now 40%. Milk was so scarce that the children over four could have very little, if any. Open tuberculosis, also practically unknown before the war, had become quite common. (R. Fry 1941, 16)

Moreover, the efforts toward reconciliation, many had to admit, had not given the expected results though Quakers had certainly done much in that direction. Joan Fry wrote: "I can say from my own experience that the hopelessness of the situation did not tend towards reconciling efforts, and the future seemed too black to allow of even a glimmer of light" (J. Fry 1945, 70).

Ruth Fry, as other women witnesses, constantly returned to the depth of the wounds left by the naval blockade in their writings in the following years. To heal those wounds, and above all to prevent another war, they relied to a greater extent than in the past on women, on their compassion and moral responsibility.

The years in which Ruth Fry headed the Friends' War Victims Relief Committee were years of reflection on the vulnerability of women and children in modern warfare, on the way they react to misfortune, on their part in the relief work. Not surprisingly, one of her first writings after the war addressed the issue of women's role in international affairs.

Four years after the Armistices, then we see Europe in the throes of a life and death struggle with economic and psychological forces which have been let loose by the Great War.

Can women see these things and remain inactive? Will not their sense of

economy in the widest sense, of justice and righteousness, be outraged? (R. Fry 1923,10)

As many pacifists of her time, Ruth Fry identified the source of women's tension to peace in motherhood. The emphasis, however, was not on the values of care, but on the role of women as educators. In the primary relationship, that between mother and child, founded on pure altruism, a special sensitivity is developed that holds in high esteem the values of mutual understanding, benevolence, tolerance and persuasion.

Mothers know that persuasion and love are stronger than hatred and coercion and do not easily fall into the error, common to many men, of thinking that punishment and violence can right wrongs. Women, aware of having something different from their "strong right arm" to rely upon, could help to break down the barriers between nations; they are less blind to the faults of their government and are able to raise their judgment beyond the narrow limits of national principle.

At a stage in history in which ethics of obedience increasingly permeated social life and tended to make individuals unable to recognize their moral responsibilities, women, more inclined to adhere to the dictates of individual conscience, had the responsibility to bring into the world a new vision of human coexistence, to oppose governments and commit to disarmament.

The military conduct of the Great War, the violence strategically planned on civilians had sown the seeds of new, increasingly destructive wars. In the blockade she always saw the inevitable outcome of the "philosophy of force" of very serious consequences: the accumulated sense of injustice and the desire of revenge would break out with an unpredictable violence.

Do we remember the blockade which we maintained against Germany in order to enforce acceptance of our terms, and children were starved in order that their misery would induce submission? . . . It is to be wondered if now that that generation is grown up, the country is sprouting soldiers and tanks? (R. Fry 1936, 5).

In the late 1940s, after another and more terrible war, women's engagement in international affairs appeared to her the "the only hope for mankind." Commenting on the human condition in the atomic age, Ruth Fry wrote:

It has been truly said: 'Men have had exclusive political power up to now, we see from what has happened since August 4th 1914, how they have

used it. And now that bull ape, the human male, is staggering about, dementedly, clutching the atom bomb, his latest contribution to the welfare of women and children. He is now the most dangerous animal this world has ever known, and unless women tame him he will destroy civilisation. (R. Fry 1948, 5)

### **Jane Addams: the subversion of economy and international relations**

Jane Addams underwent a similar process of radicalisation after she and Alice Hamilton joined the Friend's delegation in Germany, crossing the border in July 1919 with the first passport granted to civilians. Before they reached Zurich, in a car provided by the Red Cross, she toured the devastated regions of France where she witnessed something of the widespread European starvation. In the city of Lille they visited a school room in which the children were being examined for tuberculosis: a line of silent, pathetic moving skeletons: "their little shoulder blades stuck straight out, the vertebrae all perfectly distinct as were their ribs, and their bony arms hung limply at their sides" (Addams 1922, 169-170).

Though shocked at the children's emaciation, they soon realised that their condition was not as bad as those of the Viennese children they saw later in Switzerland, six hundred of them arriving in Zurich to be guests in private households. Again they had the painful impression of complete lack of vitality, "as of a mortal illness" (Addams 1922, 170.) But what they saw in Germany surpassed their imagination:

Our impressions crowded each other so fast that they emerged into one, an impression of mass hunger as we never imagined it, hunger of millions continued month after month for three years or more; combatted desperately by the doctors, the experimental chemists, the government authorities, the social workers, even more desperately perhaps by the mothers who were urged on by the primitive passion to save their children from starvation; but combatted largely in vain because the necessary weapons were not there. (Addams 1919, 47-248)

"My German diary, wrote Alice Hamilton,<sup>6</sup> is a succession of pictures of starvation . . . I saw then face to face what I never seen before except in the illustration of medical books" (Hamilton 1943, 245-246). The sanatoria and hospitals had no linen, and the new-born were wrapped in newspapers.

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<sup>6</sup> Alice Hamilton (1869-1970) was an expert in occupational diseases and a resident of Hull House, the social settlement founded by Jane Addams in 1889. On Hamilton, see her autobiography, Hamilton 1943, and Sicherman 2003.

There were babies whose bodies had grown, but whose bones had remained soft and the limbs were deformed; there were children whose development had been arrested. Women had spontaneous fractures of the hips; almost no children under four years could walk and were carried in their mothers' arms.

Addams' and Hamilton's attention turned not only to the outrage to the bodies of children, but also to the spiritual side: the deep sadness, the lack of concentration, the mute and confused expressions, the lack of smiles and vitality. Faces lit up only when they were given the hope of receiving a bit of milk next day. But it was the mothers who suffered most, women deprived of their "primitive obligation to preserve the health of their children,"

these intelligent mothers who knew perfectly well how important proper feeding was and yet were unable to obtain the barest necessities for their children. One of them said to us that it was hardest at night, after the children were in bed and one heard them crying and whimpering from hunger until they were asleep and even after. (Addams 1919, 249)

Back in the United States Addams and Hamilton wrote a report of their experience. It was intended to make known to the American public opinion the sufferings of the German civilians and thus encourage donations. On the contrary, their account, *After the Lean Years. Impressions of Food Conditions in Germany When Peace Was Signed*, published in *The Survey* on 6<sup>th</sup> September 1919, was received with hostility. Jane Addams was again literally submerged by letters of protest of a rather hostile and resentful tone, and subsequently renounced publishing the second part of the report.

Nevertheless, the link between nutrition and peace remained a crucial issue in the thought of Jane Addams since her speech, *Breadgivers*, at the Rockford Seminary in 1880. The value of compassion and caring imagination in human affairs thereafter became the key aspect of her reflection. Hunger, the weapon of war that had allowed the victory of the Entente Powers, imposed a subversion of the economy in order to place the basic needs of human beings at the center of economic relations.

Her experience during the war years gave Jane Addams the conviction that social life and international relations were to change radically. After a war that, according to Herbert Hoover, had caused 10 million deaths from starvation, in a world in which even in the early 1920s famine was threatening 160 million people, Addams believed that food, considered a responsibility towards survival, should be the main goal of the economy. Food production, the very foundation of human existence should be

removed from the sphere of the market and take on the purely human meaning it had had for centuries, until the production and storage of food was stolen from women, the first agriculturists and bread givers.

We are told that when the crops of grain and roots so painstakingly produced by primitive women began to have a commercial value their production and exchange were taken over by the men, as men later turned the manufacturing of pottery and other of woman's early industries into profit making activities. Such a history, suggested that this situation might be woman's opportunity if only because foods were, during the war, no longer considered primarily in regard to their money-making value but from the point of view of their human use. (Addams 1922, 82)

During World War I Jane Addams saw the possibility for women to make up for what she called "the immense distortion in international affairs" oriented to death. Recalling her commitment, she writes:

I believed that a generous response to this world situation might afford an opportunity to lay over again the foundations for a wider, international morality, as woman's concern for feeding her children had made the beginnings of an orderly domestic life. It seemed to me the millions of American women might be caught up into a great world purpose, that of conservation of life; there might be found an antidote to war in woman's affection and all-embracing pity for helpless children. (Addams 1922, 82-83)

The commitment of women to the production and storage of food for those suffering from hunger in Europe could change economic relations and create a new internationalism based on the values of compassion, a world order based on more human relations, rooted in everyday life. The skills and knowledge of women would have to go beyond a strictly family sphere and spill out into the devastated world.

Could the League of Nations, in which she had placed so much hope – she wrote in 1922 in *Peace and Bread in Time of War* – have considered this multitude of starving children as its concrete problem, and feeding them might have been the quickest way to restore the divided European Nations to human and kindly relationships. She continues:

Was all this devastation the result of hyper nationalism and might not the very recognition of a human obligation irrespective of national boundaries form the natural beginning of better international relationships? (Addams 1922, 173)

The nationalism born out of the war was dogmatic and ruthless, sustained by an authoritative imposition of power and demanding worship and devotion for its own sake. It required unqualified obedience, denouncing all who differed as heretics.

The League of Nations soon proved incapable of mastering the new nationalism, unwilling to drop the 18<sup>th</sup>-century principles of diplomatic intercourse, and governments responsible for the devastations of the war “were unaccountably timid in undertaking restoration on the same scale.” It was apparent that the League refused to become an instrument of the new order. A genuine Society of Nations, in which new international relations could only evolve from below from millions of earth’s humblest toilers, whose lives were consumed in securing daily needs.

The sense of human solidarity for the moment seemed most readily obtained by men leading lives of humble toil and self-denial, as if they might teach a war-weary world that the religious revival which alone would be able to fuse together the hostile nations, could never occur unless there were first a conviction of a sin, a repentance for the war itself! As long as men contended that the war was “necessary” or “inevitable” the world could not hope for a manifestation of that religious impulse which feeds men solely and only because they are hungry. (Addams 1922, 221-222)

As in other periods of dilemma and disillusionment in her life, Addams’ mind turned to Lev Tolstoy, to his religious vision of life, to his confidence in the power of direct action grounded in individual conscience. Women, who more than men adhered to the “tangible realities of existence,” who more than men disliked abstractions and were more sensitive to the simple human needs in a devastated world, could play a crucial role in international affairs.

It is quite understandable that there was no place for woman and her possible contribution in international affairs under the old diplomacy. Such things were indeed not “woman’s sphere.” But . . . they might be concerned with international affairs when these at last were dealing with such human and poignant matters as food for starving peoples who could be fed only through international activities. (Addams 1922, 81)

As for the women in the WILPF, she declared, “We still believed it possible to modify, to direct and ultimately to change current ideas, not only through discussion and careful presentation of facts, but also through the propaganda of deed” (Addams 1922, 243-244).

Many other volunteers in Quaker missions expressed the same

confidence in ordinary people and especially in mothers. Dorothy Detzer, an American social worker advised by Jane Addams to join Quaker missions in Europe, wrote in her autobiography:

These Viennese babies, 86,000 of them spoke no language, recognized no frontier, felt allegiance to no flag. Yet my own beloved America, with her gallant allies, was responsible for this little war on the children. But here were Frau Guise, Frau Lieper, and I, and millions like us across the world, segregated from each other only by artificial barriers of language and nationality, but bound together by the deep instinctual ties of women. (Detzer 1948, 9-10)

Moreover, Jane Addams began to question the methods and aims of social work. Thinking back to her experience at Hull House and referring to the hungry children in Europe, she declared at a National Conference on social work that was held in April 1920:

Unless as social workers we comprehend this situation and take hold of it and cease not until it is rectified, we are not worth our salt. After all, what is the spirit of social work? It was founded upon genuine, human pity, upon the desire to relieve suffering, to give food to the hungry and shelter to the homeless; unless we can get back to that . . . and take hold of this great world-situation, we will fail in an essential obligation, in a sense we will be traitors to our original purpose . . . whether you see, as I did, crowds of malnourished children waiting to be transported to Switzerland to be rescued from actual starvation, how can we fail to regard the situation as a challenge so imperious and so overwhelming that everything else must be put aside? (Addams 1920, 44)

### **Helena Swanwick: the abolition of military aviation**

The role of the League of Nations in keeping peace, the imperative to save children's lives from the destructiveness of war is at the centre of Swanwick's reflection in post-war years. She saw the risk of an inevitable escalation of violence, a violence that would fell on civilians, in the provisions of the Covenant of the League of Nations for the use of force. The road to peace was through changes in psychology: conciliation, bargaining, abandoning the search for a legal formula and the norms associated to physical force (Ashworth 2008, 11).

Only if women learned to think as women from the depths of their experience of life, could they change the attitude of humanity in relation to war, and get men to stop using physical force. In peace – she wrote in *The Roots of Peace*, a book whose cover page bore a picture of a little

Austrian girl crippled by hunger – men have the power to determine the condition under which women’s work should be done, in war to determine whether women and their children should live or die. It was time to redress the balance “now that men have devised means wherewith to destroy humanity itself” (Swanwick 1938, 182).

The military strategy was inexorably oriented towards methods of war intended to spread terror among civilians and strike them indiscriminately. In the next war, this task would be entrusted to aviation, a weapon that no agreement would be able to control or “limit.”

In the years between the wars, while the destructive power of the weapons did not cease to increase, no single rule to protect civilians was introduced in the laws of war.

All this talk about discrimination in bombing and hitting only military objectives is sheer nonsense, when applied to a crowded country like this. So is the organization of “shelters”; for a shelter against one sort of bomb may be a death trap if another sort is used, and how can little children and sick folk and childing mothers be removed and maintained, perhaps for many days in any shelter that could be devised? (Swanwick 1938, 500-501)

Already during the First World War thousands of civilians had been victims of aerial bombardments. In 1916, bombs charged with gas were dropped on Bitola; in Britain, German air raids killed nearly 700 civilians; in Germany French and British raids killed 740 people. The bombing of Karlsruhe on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1916 killed 120 civilians, most of them children since most of the bombs fell near a circus tent. The news was given by Dorothy Buxton in 1917 when she translated and published an article that had appeared in the Socialist review of Breslau, *Wolkswacht*, in the pages of the *The Cambridge Magazine*:

With horror we remember that unhappy day of Corpus Christi on which an Anglo-French Flying Squadron appeared over Karlsruhe and discharged its load of bombs, destined for the old Railway Station, into the playing ground of Karlsruhe children. More than hundred dead and wounded children lay around with heart-rending moans or in terrible condition, parents lost one, two, three of their children whom they had just sent joyfully out on to the circus meadow. They carried away in baskets unrecognisable remains . . . The same has happened in London, and we mourn it as bitterly when it affects English children and English mothers.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> “Germany and the air raids” in *The Cambridge Magazine*, July 28, 1917: 815.

The awareness that the next war would hit women and children even harder led Swanwick to draw up a project of disarmament in 1934 that envisaged the abolition of military aviation. The booklet, entitled *Frankenstein and His Monster. Aviation Service for World War*, was published in London by the Women's International League. The war, she wrote, would be a monstrous frenzy of reprisals against civilians, the destruction of all forms of organized life, a chaos of which there was no memory in European history (Swanwick 1934, 2). "Woman's place is the home? They threaten to make that the most dangerous of all places" (Swanwick 1945, 501).

The very existence of the air force was a danger in itself. Since there was no defence against raids, she proposed to abolish military aviation and to put the civilian aviation under international control: an "aviation for world service." This could be the first step towards disarmament. "Once the Powers had actually accomplished as great a feat as the *Demilitarization of the air*, the peoples might seriously ask: if the Air, why not the Land? If the Land, why not the Sea?" (Swanwick 1935, 503).

Knowing that the blockade had sown the seeds of hatred in international relations, she believed that Britain should take the first steps towards disarmament. The League of Nations would have to work towards reconciliation, engage in negotiations and compromise and thus help to introduce a different frame of mind into international relations, easing the fear and sense of insecurity.

Late in her life she was constantly plagued by the anxiety about another world war that would lead to the "collapse of civilization." These are the final words of her autobiography:

When I talk with the little brow-eyed or fair-eyed children who hang about my garden and want to know the why of everything, I'm glad they have never asked me, "Why do those airplanes fly over like that? For I could not bring myself to tell them that they are practising so that they may be able to drop bombs on little children in other countries. I'm haunted by visions of what I might see in this little lane alone during "the next war of which people talk so lightly. What refuge could there be for Merla, or Clifford, or Sonia, or baby Brian? (Swanwick 1935, 500)

A few weeks after the outbreak of the Second World War, on 16<sup>th</sup> November 1939, alone and seriously ill, rather than witness the "slaughter of the innocents" that had obsessed her for years, and that she had unsuccessfully tried to avoid, Swanwick took her own life in her apartment in Maidenhead.

## Conclusion

For many pacifists and activists of various orientations, their experiences in Germany and Austria had been traumatic and revealing; those experiences changed their view of politics, of economy and of gender relations. The indignation over the outrages inflicted in war on children and women had given a great impulse to relief work, but also to theoretical reflection. The topics of motherhood and violated childhood, which had already been widely discussed by pacifist women during the war, became the cornerstone of a new internationalism and a new understanding of politics from 1919 on. If the “man-made world” was responsible for the glorification of war and for the systematic destruction of life, it was the task of women to protect life on earth.

Those women who witnessed the sufferings caused by the blockade expressed their revolt in their writings, projects, and in the organizations they founded in the years immediately after the conflict. To spur them to action was above all the awareness that the war strategy deliberately intended to strike civilians would not be abandoned, but made more “efficient” and destructive through the development of military aviation. They appealed to women and their creative powers, so that they would not support the war, but educate their children to peace, discourage war games, affirm the principles of compassion, empathy and reconciliation through the example of their lives, organise with clarity of purpose, and practise conscientious objection. “Time has come – wrote Lizzy Lind af Hageby, the Swedish feminist who aided undernourished children in France – when objection must be organised, touch the very roots of the social order, influence the whole conduct of human life from the cradle to the grave” (Lind af Hageby 1924, 41).

Through their different experiences and reflections the pacifist witnesses of hunger and disease in Central Europe were united by the confidence that independent action by women could change human coexistence. As Eglantyne Jebb declared in 1919: “Let women take the lead in a work which the men, in their political grouping, seem powerless to carry forward” (Mulley 2009, 243).

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## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE LADY AND THE SOLDIER: VIRGINIA WOOLF AND THE GREAT WAR

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“In 1918 the war ended. For Virginia it had meant little beyond the threat of conscription for her family and friends, most of whom were conscientious objectors.” This curt comment comes from a well-informed source, Joanne Trautmann (1989, 86), the editor of Woolf’s letters; and actually perusing the *Letters* it cannot be denied that Woolf’s references to the war are scant and usually concise.<sup>1</sup> An exception can be considered the rather extensive letter she writes to Katherine Cox right after the outbreak of the conflict on 12<sup>th</sup> August 1914. In it she describes the situation in Asheham, particularly worrying for the general insecurity. She expresses a feeling of anxiety that does not change once in London among her friends, Roger Fry, Clive Bell, Ottoline Morrell:

We left Asheham a week ago, and it was practically under martial law. There were soldiers marching up and down the line, and men digging trenches . . . All the people expected an invasion – Then we went through London – and oh Lord! what a lot of talk there was! Roger, of course, had private information from the Admiralty . . . , and Clive was having tea with Ottoline, and they talked and talked, and said it was the end of civilisation, and the rest of our lives was worthless. I do wish you would write and tell us what you hear – They say there must be a great battle. (Trautmann 1989, 11)

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<sup>1</sup> Karen L. Levenback confirms the point in regard to Woolf’s diaries: “Unlike the traumatizing effect of personal deaths . . . in her youth, death in the war would leave Woolf in denial, as the incredibly reduced entries in her journal seem also to suggest” (Levenback 1999, 16).

Afterwards, during the following eighteen months, the references to the war are almost nonexistent. Worth mentioning though is a letter in November 1915 to Duncan Grant, a good friend of hers and a committed conscientious objector. Here Virginia considers in anguish how her fellow countrymen change from meek beings in time of peace to violent predators in time of war (Nicolson and Trautmann 1976, 71). And Duncan is frequently singled out in the letters she writes to influential friends and acquaintances in 1916, trying to help him avoid conscription. But against these occurrences, she tends to raise a wall of silence and reticence: as when for a long time she omits mentioning her beloved friend Rupert Brooke's death; or when, with a similar attitude, she relates in a short note the fate of her brothers-in-law in December 1917: "On Sunday we heard of Cecil's death, & Philip's wounds" (Bell and McNeillie 1977, 83). In Levenback's opinion, these omissions imply "a reluctance to endow the deaths with reality by writing about them" (Levenback 1999, 20).

But even if her comments and notes are sporadic, their impact cannot be overlooked as, for instance, when Woolf stigmatises the press, the "damned newspapers," as she calls them, that were trying to make the war sound unthreatening. In Levenback's words allies of the government, engaged as both were "in a conspiracy aimed at hoodwinking the unthinking or searching young, like Rupert Brooke ..., and Cecil and Philip Woolf ..., into becoming players in the drama of war." This is an ideological stance that Virginia seems aware of in 1916, when she calls the conflict "this preposterous masculine fiction" (Levenback 1991, 43-44).

Woolf's attitude changes in 1918. The references to the war increase while the raids intensify, and the nights on mattresses in the kitchen become more and more uncomfortable – as on 29<sup>th</sup> January:

This time it began at 9.10: the warning at least. It was far louder this time. An aeroplane went over the house about 11.30. Soon after, the guns were so near that I didn't like to fetch a pair of shoes left in the bedroom. We had arranged mattresses in the kitchen, & after the first noise slackened we lay all together, L. on the kitchen table, like a picture of slum life. One thud came very near; but in an hour we had the bugles, & went up to bed. The thud, wh. L. distinguished from the rest, came from an explosion of bombs at Kew. Nine people I think killed. (Bell 1977, 116)

However, although the danger is approaching, Woolf does not seem particularly concerned or emotionally involved:

Home I went, & there was a raid of course. The night made it inevitable. From 8 to 1.15 we roamed about, between coal hole kitchen bedroom & drawing room. I don't know how much is fear, how much boredom; but

the result is uncomfortable, most of all, I believe, because one must talk bold and jocular small talk for 4 hours with the servants to ward off hysteria. (Bell 1977, 116)

Even more astonishing is Woolf's reaction after the Armistice, and frankly disturbing is her distance and disparagement of the common rejoicing, as the letter to her sister on 13<sup>th</sup> November plainly reveals:

I had to go to the dentist in Wigmore St on Monday at 3 [that is Armistice day] and by 4 the streets were in such a state that if I hadn't met L[eonard] and buffeted through the crowd with him I don't think I should have got home . . . everyone seemed half drunk – beer bottles were passed round – every wounded soldier was kissed, by women; nobody had any notion where to go or what to do; it poured steadily; crowds drifted up and down the pavements waving flags . . . but in such a disorganised, sordid state that I felt more and more melancholy and hopeless of the human race. The London poor, half drunk and very sentimental or completely stolid with their hideous voices and clothes and bad teeths, make one doubt whether any decent life will ever be possible, or whether it matters if we're at war or at peace. But I suppose the poor wretches haven't much notion how to express their feelings. (Nicolson and Trautmann 1976, 106-107)

And in those first weeks in November the entries in her diary, commenting on the people's reactions to the end of the war, at the very best disclose indifference, and more often focus on annoyance and disgust.

Changing medium and considering Woolf's fiction, her detachment seems to be confirmed by her second novel, *Night and Day*, begun during the war and published in 1919, where no mention whatsoever is made of the conflict. This is an omission by Woolf that justifies Katherine Mansfield's considering the novel "a lie in the soul" in a letter to her husband, and in comparing it to Jane Austen's work in a review for the *Athenaeum*. And yet an explanation for Woolf's lack of involvement in public concerns can be found by turning to her private life, and reflecting on the difficult issues she had to face at the time. First of all the threat of mental instability, which emerged in 1895 – when aged thirteen she had her first breakdown soon after her mother's death – and recurred in 1904 when her father died. She then had to undergo arduous medical treatments, which ended in her first attempt at suicide. But probably the worst time began in 1913, one year after her marriage, with crises of raving madness, long periods in nursing homes, and again an attempted suicide on 9<sup>th</sup> September, when she swallowed what she expected to be a fatal dose of Veronal. Thus, the writing of *Night and Day*, built up around a happy ending plot, was actually a hopeful sign of recovery, and it is imaginable

that her mind had to be self-contained and concentrated on its own condition, without wandering abroad to alien battles and deaths. Many years afterwards, in the late twenties, in a letter to Ethel Smyth, Virginia sheds light on her condition at the time: “I was so tremblingly afraid of my own insanity that I wrote *Night & Day* mainly to prove to my own satisfaction that I could keep entirely off that dangerous ground” (Nicolson and Trautmann 1978, 231). It is also significant that she had then just started writing her diary as a form of mental therapy.

Of course life was not only gloom and grief. It could also be serene and offer stimulating possibilities such as travelling, teaching and collaborating with the *Times Literary Supplement*. Then a thrilling opportunity came from Virginia’s brother Thoby, whose Cambridge friends began meeting at their home on Thursday evenings, gradually forming the basis for the Bloomsbury Group, the assembly of the brightest brains of the time: intellectual writers and artists such as E. M. Forster, Lytton Strachey, John Maynard Keynes, and Leonard Woolf. And of course there were the women: the Stephen sisters, Virginia and Vanessa, Dora Carrington and Vita Sackville–West. In our perspective, it is noteworthy that many of the members were conscientious objectors and pacifists. However, Thoby’s life was not to last long, doomed as he was to an untimely death of typhoid fever in November 1906. This was another terrible loss for Virginia, who loved her brother deeply.

Although Thoby’s death is significant in itself from a human point of view, it is even more so when considered in what I would call his second life, that is his fictional resurrection in the early twenties in *Jacob’s Room*, Woolf’s first powerful experimental novel (1922). Here, through the protagonist Jacob, who unmistakably resembles Thoby in age, aspect, Cambridge studies and journeys to Paris and Greece, Virginia evokes her brother’s existence and amazingly uses the war, which she warded off and removed while it was happening, as a narrative tool to work through his death. Forgetting about Thoby’s disease and killing his alter ego in the trenches, she links war and autobiography, thus finding the means to unravel her own unresolved trauma caused by her brother’s end. And intricate indeed must that experience have been, judging by Virginia’s letters to her friend Violet Dickinson, who was suffering from typhoid like Thoby, both having been infected during a journey to Greece. In writing she tries to hold back anxiety and sound reassuring; nonetheless, the result is odd.

The point is that as long as Thoby is alive, Virginia devotes only concise notes to his state, quickly moving on to lighter topics. However, when he dies, she astonishingly replaces her previous brief comments with

detailed news of his health, food and pastimes, while hope of recovery gets stronger and stronger. Thus, a week after his death, she writes:

He doesn't sleep very much, but otherwise he is all right and is having whey and chicken broth . . . Next week they talk of jelly, which makes his mouth water. He doesn't read much, but likes to be read to. (Nicolson and Trautmann 1975, 253)

Thoby's perspectives look pleasant and lively, full of interesting plans for the near future:

Thoby would join us there in the country when he could come, or go a little to the sea first with Bell. Bell comes every day to see him and read to him. . . . Sidney–Turner came back from Copenhagen on hearing of Thoby's illness – giving up 2 of his years 6 week holiday; really T. is spoilt by his friends. Kitty comes. Nelly sends him carnations. Of course he is fearfully weak after all his fever – he did have it high really till last week – but he is all right. (Nicolson and Trautmann 1975, 251-252)

On 2<sup>nd</sup> December he draws birds in bed, on 12<sup>th</sup> he curses a good deal, on 13<sup>th</sup> he is very cheerful.<sup>2</sup>

What Virginia does here, odd as it may seem, is even more interesting if considered side by side with the novel. If, on the one hand, she reverses real events (Thoby's death) and builds up a fictionalized optimistic context (his well-being), on the other hand she reduces Jacob's "reality" through multiple, usually uncertain points of view, and limits his actual presence to short appearances and fragmental talks. Yet the character's dramatic potential is not lessened, as his identity at once declares: by naming him Jacob *Flanders* Woolf predicts his tragic end from the start, evoking the terrible battles where the first mass use of poison gas killed many thousands of young men – havoc echoed in 1915 by John McCrae's well-known poem "In Flanders Field."<sup>3</sup> Thus, *Jacob's Room*, besides being a rather extraordinary modernist work, helps to define Woolf's ambivalence

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<sup>2</sup> The "lying" letters start on 22<sup>nd</sup> November and end on 18<sup>th</sup> December (Nicolson and Trautmann 1975, 249-266).

<sup>3</sup> In Flanders fields the poppies grow / Between the crosses, row on row / That mark our place; and in the sky / The larks still bravely singing, fly / Scarce heard amid the guns below.// We are the Dead. Short days ago / We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,/ Loved, and were loved, and now we lie / In Flanders fields.// Take up our quarrel with the foe:/ To you from failing hands we throw / The Torch: be yours to hold it high! / If ye break faith with us who die / We shall not sleep, though poppies grow / In Flanders fields (McCrae 1915).

towards the conflict, contradicting the detached coolness of her letters and diaries with the dramatic involvement of her fiction. Through *Jacob* she not only faces the war that she had earlier firmly kept at a distance, but she also uses it as a key to bring to light the painful emotions aroused in the past by her brother's passing away, and in more recent years by the death of her friend Rupert Brooke, who was killed in 1915.

Inspiring as this undoubtedly is, it is in Woolf's following novel, the magnificent *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), that the most impressive testimony to the war appears. Here she enhances the process identified in *Jacob's Room*, and with increasing accuracy works on autobiography and psychic suffering. Through the novel, and the war, Woolf draws closer and closer to her own deep self, facing the fearful threat of insanity, and taking up a personal and fictional challenge, which has become by now far more engrossing than her brother's death.

The war makes its appearance in the novel right from the first pages, when some minor characters express regret for the times that are gone and grief for the beloved who have died, and Mrs. Dalloway walking through London gratefully thinks that it is over.

For it was the middle of June. The War was over, except for some one like Mrs. Foxcroft at the Embassy last night eating her heart out because that nice boy was killed and now the old Manor House must go to a cousin; or Lady Bexborough who opened a bazaar, they said, with the telegram in her hand, John, her favourite, killed; but it was over; thank Heaven – over. (Woolf 2000, 4-5)

But the most stimulating and perturbing opportunity to bring the war into the novel comes from one of the major characters, the shell-shocked veteran Septimus Warren Smith, who was introduced into the text only at a later stage. At the very beginning the plot was actually supposed to be centered on a single protagonist, upper class Mrs. Dalloway, who was intended to die at the end, presumably committing suicide. A significant influence came most probably from what Woolf read in the papers about the Report of the War Office Committee, which for almost two years had been investigating the "shell-shock," as at the time the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder was called. As Ted Bogacz relates, "English civilians were bombarded with an array of stories on war neurosis in the national press for the length of the war" (Bogacz 1989, 236). Judging by the nature of Woolf's veteran, it is very likely that she was acquainted with one of the main issues under discussion: the difficulty in distinguishing between cowardice and war neurosis. This was an uncertainty that inevitably

questioned the justice of the many death sentences carried out under this charge.<sup>4</sup>

The figure who conveyed the most empathic approach to the problem was Lord Southborough, the future chairman of the War Office Committee, who from the start expressed a humane and compassionate point of view in his address to the House of Lords in April 1920, presenting a motion for the establishment of the said Committee:

The subject of shell-shock cannot be referred to with any pleasure. All would desire to forget it – to forget . . . the roll of insanity, suicide, and death; to bury our recollections of the horrible disorder, and to keep on the surface nothing but the cherished memory of those who were the victims of this malignity. But, my Lords, we cannot do this, because a great number of cases of those who suffer from shell-shock and its allied disorders are still upon our hands and they deserve our sympathy and care. (Bogacz 1989, 227)

Observing the condition of Woolf's character, it is quite plain that the symptoms Septimus Warren Smith exhibits are all signs of a very serious war neurosis: a sense of isolation, loss of contact with reality, emotional block, hallucinations. It is also plain that Woolf's narrator shares Lord Southborough's feelings and humanity. Towards the end of the novel the shell-shock is expressly mentioned, together with the need to provide for it somehow through a Bill of Parliament.<sup>5</sup>

Very significantly the veteran, bearing like Jacob Flanders the mark of war – Septimus *Warren* Smith is his name – plays a crucial function, being intended to embody Mrs. Dalloway's double, as Woolf explains in 1928 in her Introduction to the Modern Library edition. As her alter ego, he is narratively doomed to rescue her from death, taking upon himself the suicidal act. Dismissing the original plan and the single protagonist, Woolf undertakes a very challenging task, dealing with topics that were subjected to severe censorship and usually banished from fiction, such as disease, homosexuality, and suicide. In this respect it is worth quoting what she writes in 1926, soon after the publication of the novel, in "On Being Ill:"

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<sup>4</sup> Definitely relevant and enlightening is Bruna Bianchi's (2001) study on war neurosis.

<sup>5</sup> At the party Sir William Bradshaw tells Richard Dalloway about Septimus' suicide: "They were talking about this Bill. Some case, Sir William was mentioning, lowering his voice. It had its bearing upon what he was saying about the deferred effects of shell shock. There must be some provision in the Bill" (Woolf 2000, 201).

Consider how common illness is, how tremendous the spiritual change that it brings, how astonishing, when the lights of health go down, the undiscovered countries that are then disclosed, what wastes and deserts of the soul a slight attack of influenza brings to view, what precipices and lawns sprinkled with bright flowers a little rise of temperature reveals, what ancient and obdurate oaks are uprooted in us by the act of sickness, how we go down in the pit of death and feel the waters of annihilation close above our heads and wake thinking to find ourselves in the presence of the angels and the harpers when we have a tooth out . . . – when we think of this, as we are so frequently forced to think of it, it becomes strange indeed that illness has not taken its place with love and battle and jealousy among the prime themes of literature. Novels, one would have thought, would have been devoted to influenza; epic poems to typhoid; odes to pneumonia, lyrics to tooth-ache. But no; with a few exceptions . . . literature does its best to maintain that its concern is with the mind; that the body is a sheet of plain glass through which the soul looks straight and clear, and, save for one or two passions such as desire and greed, is null, negligible and non-existent. On the contrary, the very opposite is true. (Woolf 2008, 101)

Deciding for Septimus, Woolf chooses to tread on slippery ground, very well knowing how far-reaching her project is: “In this book – she notes down in her diary – I have almost too many ideas. I want to give life & death, sanity & insanity; I want to criticise the social system, & to show it at work, at its most intense . . .” A very difficult task indeed, which forces her to delve into painful memories and fears: “Am I writing *The Hours* – the title of the manuscript – from deep emotion? Of course the mad part tries me so much, makes my mind squint so badly that I can hardly face spending the next week at it.” Later, on the same day, Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> June 1923, she writes:

I foresee . . . that this is going to be the devil of a struggle. The design is so queer & so masterful. I’m always having to wrench my substance to fit it. The design is certainly original, & interests me hugely. I should like to write away & away at it, very quick and fierce. Needless to say I cant. In three weeks from today I shall be dried up. (Bell and McNeillie 1978, 248-249)

Fortunately for us and for the history of literature nothing of the sort happened.

Through Septimus, Woolf meets her aim, building up a figure whose life could have been fairly normal and moderately happy had the war not taken place. As it is, the conflict works as a watershed in the young man’s life: at first, dreams and romantic orientation drive him away from family

and provincial hometown. Self-taught and ambitious, he longs to become a poet, and finds his ideal setting in London,<sup>6</sup> where life follows the hoped-for direction: cultural growth, professional work, attempts at poetry, and, of course, love, addressed to his totally unaware evening class teacher, Miss Pole. But then, the narrator informs us, everything breaks up when Septimus enthusiastic and full of the rhetoric of war, “was one of the first to volunteer; he went to France to save an England which consisted almost entirely of Shakespeare’s plays and Miss Isabel Pole in a green dress walking in a square” (Woolf 2000, 94-95). This part, the pre-war story of Septimus’ life, is reported much later in the novel, while his first impact, powerful and disconcerting, highlights his being a victim of neurosis and misery. Disconnected from the real world, he claims attention with his unnatural, disorienting thoughts and behaviour, fixed as his mind is on an obscure hallucinated tangle, a sort of visionary maze inhabited by the figure he keeps talking to: his dead comrade, killed a few years earlier in the trenches.

Their relationship had been strong, the narrator informs, reporting Septimus’ war experience: “He developed manliness; he was promoted; he drew the attention, indeed the affection of his officer, Evans by name. . . . They had to be together, share with each other, quarrel with each other” – and here the homosexual hints, the playful tender mutual feelings are unmistakable. Then Evans dies, and Septimus, “far from showing any emotion . . . congratulated himself upon feeling very little.” But later, unexpectedly, he breaks down, falling prey to panic attacks and gradually, to madness. After the war Septimus is an explosive mix of facets, which is very effective not only on the narrative, but also on the social ground. In Woolf’s hands he is the means to openly confront the crucial question of war neurosis. It cannot be ignored how the blame of cowardice imposed on the veteran is contrasted with the mention of the valour he has shown in the trenches, and also with the desperate defence of his dignity and freedom in committing suicide. This is a self-destructive act that falls heavily on the medical class that is exposed in all its inability to cope with shell-shock and its consequences, in all its brutal attitude toward the suffering. Through the character of Septimus, that is, Woolf succeeds in foiling censorship, demanding attention both for mental disorder and for homosexuality.

This is dangerous ground indeed because the forbidden themes, besides creating structural bonds between the lady and the soldier, obscurely and

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<sup>6</sup> And maybe here again autobiography intrudes, in the person of Virginia’s brother-in-law Philip who aspired to become a poet before the war, and accepted to work in agriculture after the war ended and after his brother Cecil’s death.

powerfully link the narrative texture and the author's life. For Virginia, as we know, was personally involved in homosexuality, hinted at through Septimus and transparently dealt with through Clarissa Dalloway. But even more engaging is the connection between author and character established by insanity, a complex visionary web that is the common ground where Septimus and Virginia meet. Through the perturbing mirror of the veteran, she can sound her own depths, and denounce the unbearable medical treatments she herself has had to submit to. Illuminating are the overlappings, haunted as they are by the same visions, birds which sing in Greek, liquid glitters which flow on sunlighted walls observed by the character and its author in the same position, lying in bed. Sharing Septimus' insanity and pain, in her diaries and letters Virginia traces her own awful past experience; leading him to commit suicide she prefigures, unaware, her own future and its final tragic step.

The intriguing connection between autobiography and fiction is even more so if "The Hours" is taken into account, and the transfer from manuscript to novel considered. Leaving aside parts that are inessential for the present discussion, it is rewarding to reflect on Woolf's different handling of war and insanity in the two narratives, which reveals, in regard to what is relevant here, the diversified perspectives she adopts in dealing with Septimus and his context: a difference which also implies an altered personal involvement on her part.

As a matter of fact, when Septimus is directly concerned, the changes are significant both in reference to his experience of the war and to his consequent psychic disruption. Unsurprisingly, in the palimpsest-like nature of "The Hours," the writing and rewriting process favours the veteran, while other references to the conflict do not generally change: the ladies' grief for the deaths of their young quoted above is identical, Clarissa's comment on the prewar "almost perfect gloves" purchaseable in Bond Street is unaltered, and the ruin caused by the bombs in Mr. Brewer's garden and household is also unvarying. However, when Septimus is the subject, the manuscript offers alternatives and details, giving the reader an amount of knowledge that the novel denies. Both through the narrator's statements and comments and the use of extensive dialogues – e.g., Septimus and Rezia, Septimus and Bradshaw – we come to know various circumstances and events regarding Septimus' life and relations before and after his escape to London, which in *Mrs. Dalloway* are no longer mentioned. Manifest in the transition is an overall drastic reduction, sometimes amounting to an actual elision of episodes and situations: facing alternatives, Woolf more often than not privileges ellipsis and obscurity. (Incidentally, while translating the novel into

Italian, in some tough cases I found “The Hours” a useful key to interpretation).

Choosing among many possible examples and concentrating on the character’s neurosis, we notice how the symptoms are enumerated in detail – “sleeplessness . . . palpitation of the heart . . . pressure on the top of the head, pain at the back of the neck” –; and how the suggested cure includes a telling hint, “there’s no harm in five grains of veronal” (Woolf 2010, 119), which implies a strong autobiographical involvement, an unmistakable allusion to the barbiturate Virginia knows well and used a decade before to attempt suicide. In the novel, the long paragraph shrinks to a concise aside, “Doctor Holmes came again. . . . – headaches, sleeplessness, fears, dreams – nerve symptoms and nothing more, he said” (Woolf 2000, 100). And later, observing his new patient and reflecting on the serious damage produced by the war, the psychiatrist Bradshaw compares it to the slighter effects of typhoid fever; this again amounts to an autobiographical aside, being a brief and yet significant hint to Thoby Stephen’s death, and possibly to his fictional resurrection through Jacob Flanders. (Moving a step further, perhaps this meta-narratively suggests the increased difficulty encountered by Woolf in *Mrs. Dalloway*, compared to *Jacob’s Room*).

Yet he had fought in the war. He ought to have been kept at home. A fanatic probably; <But> poor fellow, <he was> he had been through the devil of a time. Typhoid fever is a mere joke to this sort of thing; Sir William never underestimated the gravity of a hurt . . . to that complex and mysterious organ the nervous system . . . but in this case it <was> purely physical; he had decided. (Woolf 2010, 136)

More detailed in “The Hours” and laden with a different emotional impact, is also the episode of Regent’s Park, where Rezia’s despair and Septimus’ strangeness come into full view, and their “encounter” with Peter Walsh – confused by Septimus with the dead Evans – takes place:

From behind some hedge (he kept his eyes shut) a bird chorus now sang, one voice separating off from the rest, singing by itself, . . . singing to Septimus, the voice of Evans, undoubtedly, . . . who hid himself behind the leaves, so that he might not frighten Septimus by the sight of his mud & wounds. His mud & wounds, the birds voice sang, making the words into . . . a chant about death; and adding, without pausing, . . . stanza after stanza . . . of such perfection that Septimus thought this is Greek poetry. Then all the birds laughed. Then the leaves rustled, & Septimus saw something grey and moving – . . . Evans, it must be Evans, coming towards him. Evans came towards him in a grey suit. (Woolf 2010, 65)

Concise and intense is the resulting episode in *Mrs. Dalloway*, owing to the decline of the realistically descriptive elements – e.g., Evan’s more human than ghostly attitude, the insistence on his wounds –, decisively subordinated to the powerful visionary quality of madness:

He sang. Evans answered from behind the tree. The dead were in Thessaly, Evans sang, among the orchids. There they waited till the War was over, and now the dead, now Evans himself —

“For God’s sake don’t come!” Septimus cried out. For he could not look upon the dead.

But the branches parted. A man in grey was actually walking towards them. It was Evans! But no mud was on him; no wounds; he was not changed. I must tell the whole world, Septimus cried, raising his hand (as the dead man in the grey suit came nearer), raising his hand . . . (Woolf 2000, 76)

The proximity of the war is at its most intense in *Mrs. Dalloway*. Afterwards it gradually fades away, becoming more and more impersonal. As in *To the Lighthouse* (1927), where the impact of World War I is definitely reduced and relativized: those four tragic years, that is, are enclosed within a longer period of ten years, marked by its own gloom and sadness. In “Time Passes,” the central part of the novel, only faint echoes of the war reach the deserted house living its own heartbreaking decay, in utter indifference to the lot of its ancient inhabitants. Fleeting and quietly in this highly experimental section is the human lot noted down, shown in its irrelevance by the brackets which contain the cases of the living and the dead, nullifying hierarchies and distinctions.

Leaving aside the survivors, it is worth quoting the dead. In Chapter 3 the sudden passing away of Mrs. Ramsay: “[Mr. Ramsay, stumbling along a passage one dark morning, stretched his arms out, but Mrs. Ramsay having died rather suddenly the night before, his arms, though stretched out, remained empty.]” In Chapter 6 the end of her children, Prue’s death in childbirth, “[Prue Ramsay died that summer in some illness connected with childbirth, which was indeed a tragedy, people said, everything, they said, had promised so well]”; and, in our perspective the most relevant of all, her eldest son’s death in the trenches: “[A shell exploded. Twenty or thirty young men were blown up in France, among them Andrew Ramsey, whose death, mercifully, was instantaneous.]” And also the closing remark of the same chapter cannot be left out: “[“Mr. Carmichael brought out a volume of poems that spring, which had an unexpected success. The war, people said, had revived their interest in poetry.”]<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Woolf (1927) 1973: 147, 151, 152, 153.

Woolf proceeds along similar lines in *The Years*, the last novel published in her lifetime (1937), where for the last time she returns to World War I, telling the story of the Pargiter family from 1880 to the nineteen thirties. Well aware of the European dictatorships and the brewing of a possible new conflict, in spanning the four years of the war she disappoints all expectations. In 1914, it is the pre-war spring she is referring to, following her characters during a sunny peaceful afternoon. In the following long section of 1917, she concentrates on a night of bombings in London, but the episode deals with a dinner in a basement where everything is muffled and the aggression is perceived only through a texture of sounds: aeroplanes, guns, sirens, feet quickly shuffling on the pavement above. And even if one of the Pargiters dies during the war, his end – and for all that also his life – is handled with the same muffling technique. Charles, that is, having had no part whatever in the novel, owes his existence merely to his death, the only reason for being briefly mentioned for the first and last time: a fact not even related in the section it should belong to, but reported well after the end of the war, in the mid thirties, in the last section of the novel, “Present Day”.

Going back to the war years, the 1918 section is enthralling. It is a fragment of three pages in which Woolf amazingly revisits the past, following the Pargiters’ former maid through the streets of London. The old woman, plagued by rheumatism, hears sirens and guns in the distance while walking along, and casually learns that the war has come to an end. The episode recalls the letter quoted at the beginning of this essay, where Virginia tells her sister of Armistice Day and her difficult walk through the crowded streets, annoyed by “the London poor, half drunk . . . with their hideous voices and clothes and bad teeth.” But now, after twenty years, using one of those London poor in her fiction, perhaps she is erasing the ancient annoyance and scorn, maybe finding a melancholy and humane alter ego in the humble lonely old woman:

The guns boomed again. The man on the ladder said something to the woman on the pavement. She nodded her head. Then he dipped his brush in the pot and went on painting. The woman walked on. Crosby pulled herself together and tottered across the road into the High Street. The guns went on booming and the sirens wailed. The war was over – so somebody told her as she took her place at the counter of the grocer’s shop. (Woolf 1965, 305)

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**PART TWO:  
THINKING PEACE**

**FEMINIST THOUGHT AND ACTIVISM**

## CHAPTER SIX

# “FIGHTING FOR PEACE AMID PARALYZED POPULAR OPINION”: BERTHA VON SUTTNER’S AND ROSA MAYREDER’S PACIFIST-FEMINIST INSIGHTS ON GENDER, WAR AND PEACE

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She [Bertha von Suttner] is doing it exactly right: being stubborn and tenacious in her idealism. (Jean Jaurès<sup>1</sup>)

### Introduction

Quite a number of feminist and pacifist movements were founded in Europe during the late nineteenth century. Organizations attached to the latter were generally headed by male peace advocates (such as Elihu Burritt, Ruggiero Bonghi and Hodgson Pratt) and were largely focused on an “ethic of justice” (or equality), which promoted the foundation and use of an international arbitration court. These ideas go back to the London Peace Congress, held in 1843, and the establishment of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in 1889. By contrast, organizations of the former, which were headed exclusively by women (such as social justice reformers Dr. Aletta Jacobs, DBE Henrietta Barnett, and Jane Addams), emphasized an “ethic of care.” As Carol Gilligan (1982, 147) argued in her now classic “second-wave” feminist exposition *In a Different Voice*, women of a certain generation and class – which would also include many in the “first-wave” European women’s movement – attributed the motivation of their thinking and public actions to a sense of moral responsibility. What is

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Zweig 1916, 3. This and all other translations from German in this chapter are by the author, unless otherwise indicated.

striking, and what will be the focus of this chapter, is that a subset or synergy of mostly women pacifist-feminists arose in the first two decades of the twentieth century, promoting both an ethic of justice and of care. This small group actively championed peaceful (nonviolent) resolutions of inter- or transnational conflicts, which in turn called for the preservation of human (as well as animal and plant) life. At the same time they forcefully advocated social and political equality among the sexes. Two exemplary protagonists of this synergy were the extraordinary Austrian activists Bertha von Suttner (1843-1914) and Rosa Mayreder (1858-1938).

Bertha von Suttner was “the most popular pacifist in the world,” according to Rosika Schwimmer, Hungarian-Austrian feminist, peace activist, diplomat and co-organizer of the First International Congress of Women in April 1915, who had also met Suttner on several occasions (Schwimmer 1938). Albert Fuchs (1949, 258) named Suttner “the creator of Austrian pacifism.” And most recently, Madeleine Herren (2013, 46), a historian of internationalism, summed Suttner up as “a female public relations star.” In fact, Suttner had co-founded and presided over the Austrian Peace Society from 1892 until her death, and in 1905 she became a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, not least based on the international success of her anti-war novel *Die Waffen nieder! (Lay Down Your Arms)* (1889), as well as on her regular and numerous political pacifist columns spanning two decades. A writer thus by profession, Suttner also authored works that focused on or addressed women exclusively, with titles such as “Eine erwachte Frau” (A woman who has [politically] woken up) (*Pester Lloyd*, 1907); “Wie können Frauen die Friedensbewegung unterstützen?” (How can women support the peace movement?) (*Kölnische Volkszeitung*, 1911); and her so-called “Letzter Brief an den deutschen Frauen” (Last letter to the German women), written in late May or June 1914. This letter would ultimately serve as a type of manifesto for Frida Perlen, Lida Gustava Heymann and other German as well as Austrian feminist pacifists who in 1915 would organize the Austrian and German branches of what would become the International Women’s League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), a league that celebrated its centenary in The Hague in April 2015. This letter well underlines the special feminist-pacifist synergy, as follows:

I greet you and wish you all the best, my esteemed female fighters. Because as such you must defend yourselves. It will not be at all easy for you to stand up for pacifist ideals. This includes standing up to women, many of whom will become your enemies. Some people assume, completely incorrectly, that the peace movement is made up solely of

unmanly sentimentality,<sup>2</sup> or that all women inherently, by nature, are averse to war. This is wrong-headed. Only progressively minded women, only those who have internalized the teaching of thinking of the [common or] social good have the fortitude to liberate themselves from the directives of century-old institutions. Likewise, it is only these [right-thinking] women who possess the energy to fight against these very institutions [institutions such as the military]. . . . So, dear sisters, get to work and be unwavering. [Someone once] said, “To wage war one needs money, money and more money.” I will not say that our campaign couldn’t use some of that. But the main thing is still: perseverance, perseverance and more perseverance!

My second protagonist is the Austrian feminist, sociologist, painter, and philosopher Rosa Mayreder. Although less well-known internationally than Bertha von Suttner, Mayreder was esteemed enough in Austria, especially by the “second-wave” Austrian feminist movement, as to have been chosen to represent Austria’s 500-Schilling banknote in 1997. Among other publications, Mayreder authored *Zur Kritik der Weiblichkeit* (To Critics of Femininity) (1905), which was among the first treatises authored by a woman that explained women’s equality from a philosophical and psychological perspective. In 1915 Mayreder became an outspoken critic of World War I, and in 1917 she co-founded the Austrian Peace Party (Friedenspartei), which was organized as a section of the General Austrian Women’s Association (AÖFVV). In 1919, Mayreder became the president of the Austrian branch of WILPF.

Suttner’s and Mayreder’s life courses and especially their political interests thus clearly overlapped, even if there is no record to my knowledge of their ever having met. Likewise, and paradoxically, they and their followers have largely kept these common interests apart: that is, Suttner “the pacifist” or Mayreder “the feminist.” As if an imaginary line divided the two or kept them hermetically sealed from one another, as if one could not combine in one person both a leading feminist and a pacifist, as if one could not advocate simultaneously both an ethic of justice and of care. This odd division in fact has long accompanied much of the biographical and historiographical writing on these two leading personalities as well as on the pacifist and feminist movements in general: two separate and independent rather than interdependent bodies.<sup>3</sup> By contrast, ironically, pacifism and “first-wave” feminism were actually

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<sup>2</sup> “Sentimentality” in this sense was defined as a purportedly shallow, exaggerated show of emotions.

<sup>3</sup> See, among others, Leisch-Prost 2006. A key exception is Schnedl-Bubeniček 1984.

equated in the contemporary minds of many of the general public, as I shall illustrate below by way of a couple of contemporary Austrian satirical caricatures.

My intention in this paper is to follow a suggestion of historian Marilyn Boxer (2010, 301): namely, that “historians today might begin by opening previously closed categories.” I will therefore provide a brief biographical overview of these two women and then link their ideas. In particular I shall point out similarities and differences in their perceptions of war and peace as well as their understandings of self and society, which we today might call, at least in part, their understandings of the term gender or gender relations. Whereas Suttner “the pacifist” eventually drew nearer to the organized feminist movement as a pragmatic means of lobbying more support for the peace movement, Mayreder “the feminist” moved towards the peace movement in the course of her first-hand experience in war, which also underlined in her eyes the significant failings of the women’s movement.

### **Bertha von Suttner**

Countess Bertha Sophia Felicita Kinsky von Chinic und Tettau was born in Prague on June 8, 1843, a few months after the death of her 74-year-old father, Habsburg Imperial General Franz Joseph Kinsky. Her much younger mother, Sophia Wilhelmine Körner, remained a widow. Bertha Kinsky and her brother Arthur were raised in Brno (Moravia), and for the first 30 years or so of her life, Bertha Kinsky lived a rather typical life for a woman of her station: She was taught by English and French governesses, excelled in foreign languages, and enjoyed reading and at times acting out with her cousin, Elvira, philosophical texts by Kant and Hegel as well as Shakespeare plays and romantic novels by, among others, French female author Georges Sand. Professionally Bertha Kinsky strived to become an opera singer; failing in talent and opportunity, however, she ultimately had to find some other work to support herself. She chose to become a governess, at least temporarily, in 1873.

There she met Arthur Gundaccar Freiherr von Suttner (1850-1902), a son of her employer, who was seven years her junior. In the winter of 1875/1876, Bertha Kinsky briefly came into contact in Paris with the Swedish dynamite inventor Alfred Nobel, which sparked a friendship – mostly a pen-pal friendship – that would last until Nobel’s death, two decades later. Arthur von Suttner and Bertha Kinsky married secretly in Vienna in 1876 before heading off to the Caucasus, on Bertha Kinsky’s long-standing invitation from her friend, Princess Ekaterina Dadiana. They

remained in this region for nine years (see Cohen 2005a). In their self-chosen exile, they both eventually made their main living as professional writers. They never had children.

Soon after their return to Austria, they each co-founded a kind of humanitarian rights non-governmental organization: Arthur von Suttner's association, which was mainly made up of Christian male politicians, sought to defend and protect the rights of Austrian Jewish citizens; it was short-lived and largely unsuccessful in its confrontations with Viennese Mayor Karl Lueger and his populist anti-Semitic appeal. Bertha von Suttner's peace society (*Österreichische Gesellschaft der Friedensfreunde*), by contrast, following up on the huge success of her aforementioned novel, *Die Waffen nieder!*, became the Austrian branch of the International Peace and Arbitration Society (see Cohen 2005b). It was as if Suttner, now in her late forties, had suddenly discovered the meaning or value of political life, which would remain her *Sache* or *Ding* ("thing"), as she called it, from then on. As she wrote to Alfred Nobel in early June 1892 (see Biedermann 2001, 105):

I'm now almost fifty—that's an age when women in earlier centuries were at risk of being burned as witches—and now: truly, I feel energized, so ready to work . . . although it is a terribly difficult job, which weighs on my shoulders; although I have so, so much to worry about and to fight against; and although the work increases so much, that it will soon overwhelm my capacities. (Biedermann 2001, 105)

Bertha von Suttner's peace organization was bolstered by a lively monthly journal initially published by Alfred Hermann Fried.<sup>4</sup> Suttner and members of her organization lectured publicly on a range of peace-related issues and attended yearly peace meetings mainly in various European capitals. The movement – and Suttner in particular – then achieved far-reaching acclaim at the First International Peace Conference in The Hague in 1899. As historian Sandi E. Cooper explains:

A thunderclap revived the [peace] movement. The movement was saved by a Russian Rescript that recognized that no real security came from perpetually increased arms expenditures and that the misuse of capital and labor would eventually destroy European culture and economies. The doctrine talked about justice and human rights, the welfare of peoples, the security of state. (Cooper 1991, 97)

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<sup>4</sup> Alfred Hermann Fried was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1911.

Nevertheless, the momentum of support reached at The Hague soon faded. Rising militarism, the armaments industry, and armed conflicts between European states and in their colonized territories and even between Russia and Japan soon commenced, and Suttner’s peace movement never solidly served as an alternative. In 1912 she made a six-month coast-to-coast tour of the United States, speaking to women’s as well as peace organizations. Thus, although she had until then by and large avoided national women’s organizations (except, for example, her acceptance in 1903 of the leadership of the Women’s Peace Section in a newly constituted League of Austrian Women’s Associations (BÖFV) and her keynote lecture at the International Women’s Congress in Berlin in 1904), by October 1912 she was now actually advocating women’s suffrage alongside universal peace. Indeed, she declared pacifism and women’s suffrage “the two great movements for the betterment of humanity” (*Christian Science Monitor*, October 5, 1912, 27).

Suttner died of stomach cancer on 21<sup>st</sup> June 1914, one week before the fatal shots in Sarajevo. It was also eight weeks before what would have been the first annual Universal Peace Congress to be held in Vienna – which included in its program a pioneering synergy between women activists and the peace movement – which the organizers cancelled in late July 1914.<sup>5</sup>

## Rosa Mayreder

Rosa Adolfine Katharina Mayreder née Obermayer was born in 1858 to a well-to-do Viennese pub owner, Franz Obermayer, and his much younger second wife, Maria Engel. She grew up with twelve siblings. Like Suttner she was tutored at home and excelled in painting, music, and French. At age 23 she married a young architect, Karl Mayreder. Upon her father’s death in 1893, she gained complete financial independence (see Schmölder 2002 and Semanek 2011). In the 1890s, more or less at the same time as Bertha Suttner, Rosa Mayreder too began to engage in politics, co-founding the General Austrian Women’s Association (AÖFVV),

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<sup>5</sup> The Austrian branch proposed Vienna in 1921 as WILPF’s third congress (after The Hague in 1915 and Zurich in 1919), but a lasting synergy between the organized pacifist and feminist movement during the interwar years never materialized. The (once again mostly male-led) international peace movement largely ignored the feminist-pacifists, as did most post-World War II historians of the peace movement. Similarly, men are largely absent from WILPF’s historiography, in spite of the fact that a number of male peace activists openly supported it, such as Louis Lochner, Frederick Pethick-Lawrence, and Ludwig Quidde.

whose motto was *Durch Erkenntnis zu Freiheit und Glück* (From awareness to freedom and happiness). Not long thereafter she coedited with Marie Lang and Auguste Fickert, the short-lived liberal intellectual feminist journal *Dokumente der Frauen*. Around this time she also started campaigning against the regulation of prostitution in Austria. In 1905 she authored, as mentioned above, the highly influential feminist text *Zur Kritik der Weiblichkeit*. The First World War triggered some rethinking, and in 1915 Mayreder published a piece called “Die Frau und der Krieg” (Women and War) in the Swiss journal *Internationale Rundschau*.<sup>6</sup> According to Mayreder: “No one can close their eyes to the devastation of war and not speak of organized mass murder, which is on top of everything degenerated by the means of modern war technologies” (Mayreder 1915, 56).

Although Mayreder did not attend the historic First International Congress of Women in The Hague, attended by over 1,000 women, she openly supported it.<sup>7</sup> Delegates to the Hague Congress – over a hundred of them – found solidarity in agreeing to both promote women’s suffrage and seek ways of ending the war. In a speech on 18<sup>th</sup> May 1915 (then still semi-officially International Peace Day) in front of an assembly of Viennese women coming to hear reports about the Hague Congress, Mayreder concluded to “great applause”: “The saying ‘whoever wants peace, prepares for war’ ought soon to be exchanged for ‘whoever does not want war, prepares for peace.’”<sup>8</sup>

Mayreder, as president of the Austrian Branch of WILPF, chose to remain outside of its day-to-day workings, and was thus more of a figurehead or honorary president: Leopoldina Kulka, Yella Hertzka and Olga Misař were its more day-to-day pioneering leaders. But Mayreder did participate in the League’s meetings and wrote many articles on the women’s peace movement (see Oesch 2009, 13). As one post-war adherent

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<sup>6</sup> Mayreder later gave speeches in Austria on this topic. See, for example, the announcement of such in *Neue Freie Presse*, February 7, 1916: 9.

<sup>7</sup> On October 25, 1915, Olga Misař of the Austrian branch of the International Women’s Committee for Permanent Peace (IWCfPP), WILPF’s predecessor, wrote to Emily Hobhouse that Rosa Mayreder had joined the Austrian section. See Records of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom Papers, Microfilm Edition, Reel 55.

<sup>8</sup> Austrian State Archive (ÖStA), AVA, Mdl, Präs, Signatur 22, Box 2051 (1915). Report by O. J. Husak on May 26, 1915, attached to “Protocol 11799/1. Juni 1915, Internationaler Frauen-Kongress im Haag.”

wrote: Rosa Mayreder is “our leader, our guide, our trailblazer.”<sup>9</sup> Mayreder died childless in January 1938 from natural causes.

### On war, peace and gender

As Mayreder wrote (1915, 53): “The law of war, its most inner essence, is to destroy.” This included destroying family life (*Ibid.*, 57). For Suttner, for example in a speech she held in San Francisco, California, in July 1912, “‘All war’ to quote former Union General William T. Sherman ‘is hell.’ Your Secretary of War is a secretary of hell, and your War Department is a department of hell. Your great generals and military men are hell lords, perpetuating barbarism” (Suttner 1912, 187). Likewise, as Suttner expressed it in a 1904 speech entitled *Der Krieg und seine Bekämpfung* (War and the war against war):

Our opponents think that the wish to get rid of war is absurd, like the wish to get rid of death. Such a thing would truly be fine, but it is impossible, they say. Yet war is not death; it is murder. And not to murder someone is not an impossibility. (Suttner 1904, 4)

A state of war was thus considered by both Mayreder and Suttner an anachronism. War was uncivilized; it was barbaric. It was a social crime.

In arriving at their thoughts on peace, Suttner and Mayreder were both strongly influenced by Immanuel Kant’s treatise entitled *Perpetual Peace* (1795), which suggested that a state of peace required three things: (1) the right to express one’s individual freedoms – that is, the right to make conscious choices, to think and act outside the box; (2) a rule of law that assured legal equality – that is, a state in which the law treated all its inhabitants as equals before the law; and (3) a self- or representative government. Charles Darwin and other evolutionists also influenced the thinking of these two women. Indeed, both of them considered a peace culture a progressive stage in human civilization. Finally, they also believed in “positive peace” or, paraphrasing British military historian Michael Howard (2005), a peace which was more than just the absence of war: a peace that implied a social and political ordering of society that is generally recognized as just. Such a society denied the idea of any “natural” militaristic ordering of society – one fostered, for example by Prussian General Field Marshall Helmut Graf von Moltke, who infamously wrote: “Perpetual peace is a dream, and not even a beautiful

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<sup>9</sup> Anonymous. No date. “Zur 70. Geburtstag.” In Records of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom Papers, Microfilm Edition, Reel 56.

one: and war is an inherent part of God's world order; without war, the world would get bogged down."<sup>10</sup>

For Suttner this status quo was unacceptable, as she stated in her Nobel Prize acceptance lecture, entitled (Darwinistically) "The Evolution of the Peace Movement" (Suttner 1906):

Up to the present time, the military organization of our society has been founded upon a denial of the possibility of peace, a contempt for the value of human life, and an acceptance of the urge to kill . . . most people believe that it must always remain so. This, however, is a system doomed to failure.<sup>11</sup>

Suttner's conviction was a moral or ethic one (though also backed by socioeconomic and political arguments): "Thou shall not kill," well exemplified in a proclamation authored by German suffragist and pacifist Lina Morgenstern in 1895, and which Suttner signed on to (reprinted in *Die Waffen nieder!* November 1895, 416-417):

We are convinced that there is only one morality, and that is the Fifth Commandment: Thou shall not kill, which war most of all desecrates and injures. It is perverse, to punish individual murders and command mass deaths during war. It is perverse, to teach Christian love and yet stir up hatred and passions among nations. We believe it possible, wished for and realizable to mediate international conflicts peacefully, by using arbitration courts.

At the same time, Suttner's three simple words – *Die Waffen nieder!* (or "Disarm! Disarm!" in her feminist American colleague Andrea Hofer-Proudfoot's translation) – which she stubbornly fought to keep as the title of her oeuvre, despite twelve publishers rejecting it (Suttner 1965, 141) – was an immense and I would say clearly feminist challenge specifically to the male population, whose manhood or manliness over the centuries was asserted among other things by their prerogative to display and carry a weapon. Telling – not asking – them to disarm, to "give it up" could be read as a subtle (or not so subtle?) act of (self-)emasculatation. Suttner, by arguing that society – but men in the first place – had to put down its/their weapons (and likewise by arguing that children needed new types of heroes, who would replace the typical military ones) was in fact attacking

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<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Helbig, Friedrich. 1882. "Der 'ewige Friede' – ein Menschheitsideal," *Die Gartenlaube* 26: 434.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. May Wright Sewall. 1904. "The Peace Cause at the Women's International Council in Berlin." *The Advocate* (September): 176.

a hegemonic masculine normative ideal of her day: that of the heroic knight or warrior. A disarmed society would thus entirely shake up the status quo, one that established manhood as a man’s duty to protect his wife, sister, mother, or daughter.

The same year that Suttner published *Die Waffen nieder!* she also published – under the pseudonym “Jemand” (Someone) – a most feminist and philosophical-sociological text entitled *Das Maschinenalter. Zukunftsvorlesungen über unsere Zeit* (Age of Machines. Future lectures about our age). In this treatise, Suttner explicitly ridiculed the “scientific” norm of the day that equated weak muscles with a weak mind, or vice versa. Indeed, women, she wrote: were understood in society as the “weaker sex”: “In every way, in mental as well as physical, . . . women have just as little thinking power as brawn; she is incapable of qualified mental labor” (Jemand 1889, 85). In opposing such biologically deterministic (or pseudo-biological) thoughts, pacifists and feminists were actually united.

This prevalent theme of the peace and feminist movement as threatening an essentialist masculine “nature” is aptly demonstrated in a number of satirical caricatures that focus on “the pacifist” Bertha von Suttner. For example “Die Einleitung der Friedenskonferenz in Haag, oder die russische Friedensliebe” (The introduction to the peace congress in The Hague, or the Russian love of peace), published in Vienna’s *Neue Glühlichter* on 11<sup>th</sup> May 1899. Bertha von Suttner is presented here as a blue-eyed naïve, young – actually she’s fifty-five years old – and beautiful woman, whose bent-over bottom is about to be kicked by a huge Russian – and obviously male – riding boot (with spurs attached). As much a comment on not trusting the above-mentioned Tsar’s Rescript, it is, from a male caricaturist’s point of view, an example of putting women who want to change the male-female status quo “in their place.” Or consider another caricature: “Altweibersommer. Der Friedenskongress in Judapest” (The Indian Summer of the Peace Congress in Jew-dapest) in the Viennese journal *Kikeriki*, dated September 1896. The main point here is bluntly anti-Semitic: Suttner (representing the European peace movement) is caught up in a web that is spun and controlled by Hungarian Jews, turning her into a type of marionette. But also perceptible is a gendered subject: an enormous sword symbolically serves as the demarcation line between Vienna (depicted by St. Stephen’s Cathedral) and Budapest. The man’s large weapon, in other words, is down, inert; on top of it rests Suttner’s tiny, delicate foot. Look at what happens, the caricaturist seems to sketch, when men drop their weapons.

Suttner herself opposed any open “battle of the sexes.” Membership in her peace organization, for example, was open to both (or all) sexes and genders. For her, it was the type of person you were (*Edelmensch*), not your sex that mattered. Indeed she seemed to fluctuate in her thoughts about whether biology determined one’s personality more than socialization or nurture.

Rosa Mayreder’s feminist approach to women’s rights and human nature were slightly more reflective and stemmed from an individual and specifically from a psychological perspective. She too rejected generalizing about “the woman” and “the man,” finding the range of differences (intellect, strength, etc.) among males and among females greater than the range between them. Like Suttner, Mayreder (1915, 55) seemed to accept that socialization perhaps stemmed in part from biological qualities, which made women tenderhearted, tolerant, filled with empathy, and peace-loving, which she considered ideal traits for bearing and bringing up children, whereas men, by contrast, were prone to aggression and violence, and “as long as this type of male-sex impulse dominates, the woman cannot hope to be considered equal in a proper sense“ (Mayreder 1915, 57). In *Kritik der Weiblichkeit* (1905, 119) Mayreder wrote – in hindsight much too optimistically – that heroism defined as a physical battle against immediate danger had largely been overcome. Self-emancipated women she expected would become agents of human history and not merely its objects.

War interrupted women’s emancipatory evolution. Mayreder, in her essay “Die Frau und der Krieg” (1915), suggested that in wartime both conservative and progressive women hardly had any room for manoeuver. For the conservative woman, war was a continuation of the status quo: “uncritical subordination to the will and needs of man, congruent to her second-place standing in the ruling order” (Mayreder 1915, 51). The progressive woman “can hardly do otherwise . . . Her fate is bound to that of the men who theoretically might oppose the war but fail to avoid the demands of the draft, which overpower them in these conditions” (Mayreder 1915, 52).<sup>12</sup> Women during wartime thus became reduced to their (biological) sex: responsible for amply replenishing the wartime loss of sons, which eliminated time necessary to become enlightened and educated and equal partners in the undertaking of their societal responsibilities (Mayreder 1915, 58).

Rosa Mayreder’s legacy as an Austrian pioneering pacifist was long neglected: she herself seemed to prefer a background position. As an

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<sup>12</sup> Indeed in Germany and Austria, unlike in Great Britain and the United States, no anti-conscription organizations were founded, let alone active, during World War I.

unsigned eulogy that was printed in WILPF’s interwar journal, *Pax International*, put it, somewhat ambiguously: “It is difficult to describe all that Rosa Mayreder meant to the WILPF and especially the Austrian Section.”<sup>13</sup> There is no doubt, however, that she clearly condemned war and military conscription, promoted internationalism, and called the “thirst for blood [a] remainder of the primitive man.”

## Conclusion

Austrian writer Stefan Zweig offered one of the most moving and powerful eulogies for Bertha von Suttner on the fourth anniversary of her death (printed in *Neue Freie Presse*, 21<sup>st</sup> June 1918), thus while World War I was still ongoing. He began:

I’m one of those all too many people who did not appreciate [this extraordinary woman] Bertha von Suttner during her lifetime. And it could have been so easy. But no, it is war mongering that is easy, not pacifism. Bertha von Suttner had known about this war twenty years ago!

Zweig also recognized in hindsight the sexist hegemony that contributed to mainstream society not taking Suttner seriously:

One called her passionate monotony weakness of thought; her clarity—banality. Eventually she became ridiculous, the “Peace-Bertha” of satirical journals and people called her “a good woman” in that pitying tone, which equates goodness with stupidity.

Third, Zweig praised Suttner for recognizing among other things the force of organization, of belonging to, as being a member of a long-term project. He, like so many others, distrusted associations or leagues that work for the common good. At the end of his long testimony, Zweig became once again self-critical, recognizing in himself that

everyone has peculiar way of knowing, a habitual and dangerous way of knowing, and simultaneously a desire of not wanting to know anything (*Nichtwissenwollens*). . . . We notice quite a lot and yet do not quite see it consciously, because we do not want to see it, because we forcefully repress it and push it back into our subconscious. . . . Thus it came to pass in peacetime that we did not believe in war, out of nonchalance, out of recklessness, out of a misguided mental instinct of self-preservation, because we did not want to believe it—because we did not want our

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<sup>13</sup> Unsigned. 1938. “Rosa Mayreder.” *Pax International* 13/1: 8.

comfortable way of life to be in any way disturbed.

Challenging this way of life appears possible only by the bravest among us. As Bertha von Suttner lectured to adherents gathered at Chautauqua, New York, on 31<sup>st</sup> July 1912: “Now our adversary seems in the ascendancy, because he has been able to paralyze popular opinion with threats and scares, therefore I believe that it is our task now to fight rather than to teach or to preach.”<sup>14</sup> *Sapere aude*.

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## CHAPTER SEVEN

# LIVING PEACE, THINKING EQUALITY: ROSIKA SCHWIMMER'S (1877-1948) WAR ON WAR

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I am an uncompromising pacifist for whom even Jane Addams is not enough of a pacifist. I am an absolute atheist. I have no sense of nationalism, only a cosmic consciousness of belonging to the human family.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter contextualises Rosika Schwimmer's pioneering and progressive pacifist efforts during the First World War. She was a feminist-suffragist activist who remains overwhelmingly marginalised to this day. Largely eclipsed from historiography, the Schwimmer narrative offers us new perspectives on the First World War, precisely because Schwimmer herself practised an alternative interpretation of war and peace and pursued unique approaches regarding gender and (pacifist-militarist) politics. Ironically, Schwimmer's "politicisation and professionalisation" of gender and peace, which juxtaposed her not simply to militarists and patriots but also to feminist, suffragist, and pacifist peers, served as a template for future developments in peace politics.

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<sup>1</sup> Rosika Schwimmer to Colonel Lee Alexander Stone, MD and president of the Military Intelligence Association in Chicago, 19 Sept. 1925, Transcript of Record, *The United States Court of Appeals for the Seventeenth Circuit, Schwimmer v. United States*, 14, Rosika Schwimmer Papers (hereafter RSP). Manuscripts and Archives Division. The New York Public Library. Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations, Box 494.

Schwimmer was born in 1877 into a secular Jewish household in Budapest.<sup>2</sup> Already at a very early age, she attained a prominent and innovative role in the Hungarian women's movement of the *fin de siècle*.<sup>3</sup> Multilingual and a gifted public speaker, she also productively liaised with the Woman Suffrage Alliance (hereafter IWSA), organising its seventh congress in Budapest in 1913. At the outbreak of the First World War, she held the post of corresponding and international secretary for the International Woman Suffrage Alliance and their journal *Jus Suffragii* in London. Throughout the war, Schwimmer remained one of the most steadfast peace proponents, igniting the foundation of many peace groups and parties, such as the Woman's Peace Party (hereafter WPP), on her lecture tour for an armistice in the United States. She also played a pivotal part at the First International Congress of Women at The Hague in the spring of 1915 and conceptualised the subsequent women envoys to the neutral and belligerent nations. In her relentless pursuit of continuous mediation and stop-the-war-at-any-cost efforts, she found herself increasingly alienated from former mentors or confidantes and scapegoated by the general public. Her negative image consolidated during the ill-fated Ford Peace Ship Expedition, sponsored by automobile tycoon Henry Ford and arriving in Europe from the United States in 1916.<sup>4</sup> After serving unofficially as the first female diplomat of modern times, appointed by Count Mihály Károlyi to Switzerland in 1918, and her adventurous escape from Hungary under Miklós Horthy, Schwimmer immigrated to the United States.<sup>5</sup> There she fought (and lost) a paradigmatic naturalisation case and co-launched the so-called Campaign for World Government and World Citizenship with Lola Maverick Lloyd (1875-1944), a social activist and Texas heiress.<sup>6</sup> In the 1930s, Schwimmer was also instrumental in originating the project of the so-called World Center for Women's

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<sup>2</sup> Biographical entries about Rosika Schwimmer can be found in Dubin 1971, 246-249; Wynner 1973, 724-728; Hardy 1993, 338-341; Zimmermann and Major 2006, 484-489. For a biographical sketch, see also Rauther 1984, 63-75.

<sup>3</sup> For Schwimmer's pre-1914 activism, see especially Zimmermann 1997, 195-236, and Zimmermann 1999.

<sup>4</sup> A particularly hostile account of Schwimmer is Kraft 1978. Contrastingly, a much more sympathetic portrayal of Schwimmer can be found in Hershey 1967.

<sup>5</sup> For Schwimmer's ambassadorial mission to Switzerland, see Pastor 1974, and Glant 2002.

<sup>6</sup> For Schwimmer's failed citizenship application, see Flowers and Lahutsky 1990. For a more detailed discussion of Schwimmer's case, see also Flowers 2003. For Schwimmer's U.S. exile generally, see Wenger 1990; McFadden 2011; and Wernitznig 2015.

Archives, spearheaded by historian Mary Ritter Beard. Shortly before her death in 1948, Schwimmer was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

### **Schwimmer's feminist-pacifist politics: interfaces and interdictions**

Schwimmer consciously and deliberately honed her career as a *professional* feminist and pacifist. This also meant that she inevitably tried to professionalise and emancipate feminism and pacifism as independent and at least equal forces in relation to patriarchy and militarism as well. For instance, she was significant in professionalising and internationalising Hungarian feminism by taking women's work beyond maternal, domestic activism such as charity work and philanthropy, which – as it remedied the negative side effects of industrialisation and urbanisation while still confining women to the private, non-political sphere – was easily tolerated by the authorities. With her Feminist Association (Feministák Egyesülete; hereafter FE), for example, Schwimmer worked for autonomous and authentic female engagement in public life, based on political and economic equality. In fact, her affirmative choice of name for her Hungarian women's group, *Feministák Egyesülete* or *Feministenverein*, founded in Budapest in 1904, was unique for its time and quite exceptional in international circles.<sup>7</sup> Feminists at the turn of the century did not generally refer to themselves as such, and the term “feminist,” rarely incorporated in official organisational titles, became only gradually applied positively on a larger scale from 1914 onwards.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, in many national, *fin-de-siècle* environments, it even bore a derogatory meaning when applied by anti-feminists to male sympathisers of the women's movement. As Harriet Anderson explains, for example, the German noun *Feminist* was used negatively in Austria by the

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<sup>7</sup> As, for instance, Karen Offen in an overview of how and when “feminism” was used in individual countries argues, the origins of this term, first circulated in nineteenth-century France, are still unclear. See Offen 1988, esp. 126. For a contextualisation of the term *féminisme*, see also Roberts 2002.

<sup>8</sup> Indeed, contemporary feminist scholarship is divided over whether to classify nineteenth-century reformers as “feminist.” In her discussion of American women's movements, Nancy F. Cott strictly applies “feminism” to post-1900 campaigns, looking at the universal implementation of the term after the First World War, whereas Linda Gordon defines the term more widely to signify a deconstruction of gender patterns, regardless of time or context. See Cott 1987, and Gordon 1986. For a reassessment of this terminology, see, for instance, Alcoff 1988.

opponents of women reformers to label male supporters of women's rights in order to criticise them as effeminate (Anderson 1992, 9-10).

Accordingly, as a feminist-pacifist and with the outbreak of the First World War, Schwimmer refused to exercise the designated niches of occupation for female citizens, for instance, nurse or "munitionette," while also eschewing relief work, "which unfortunately narcotises so many good people to believe everything is done if we care for the victims, while we don't care to prevent as much as possible the making of new victims," as a wartime equivalent to charity and philanthropy during peacetime (i.e. a placebo to problems, preventing the actual solution of these problems).<sup>9</sup> Instead, Schwimmer aimed to operate on a political level with both her feminism and pacifism and hence realised a double helix of emancipation: she emancipated feminism from a patriarchal grip or gridlock of prescribed and widely accepted (even by most other feminist activists) roles and pacifism from its status as secondary to militarism.<sup>10</sup> This rationale, obviously, was too radical, even for her most open-minded collaborators. For her immediate surroundings, Schwimmer's feminist pacifism of endowing women with tasks beyond social approval, for example, as diplomats, political agitators and negotiators, or as mediators, and of elevating pacifism from a mere observatory, "backstage" role while a "war to end all wars" was waged by the militarists, struck people as too futuristic and especially idealistic or unfeasible.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, Schwimmer's pacifism, appropriating tactics and strategies, such as NGO-affine "grass-roots" initiatives and "bottom-to-top" logistics, petitions, boycotts, civil disobedience, and harnessing the mass media, was too novel for contemporary audiences and bystanders.

Schwimmer's case also offers a re-examination of the role and impact of reform groups as a part of the bourgeois public sphere à la Habermas (Habermas 1962). The overwhelming majority of activists preferred to exercise indirect political power, rarely the Schwimmer model of taking matters into one's own hands by direct and active interference. Creating and disseminating political treaties and manifestos for boycotts, individual resistance, and civil disobedience, contacting officials with peace and mediation plans, becoming a diplomat oneself to personally shape post-war ideological landscapes, whether as a feminist or as a pacifist, Schwimmer

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<sup>9</sup> Schwimmer to Mrs M. H. Illingworth, 18 Aug. 1914, RSP, Box 41.

<sup>10</sup> Clearly these observations hark back and reverse the not undisputed Higonnet-simile of the double helix. See Higonnet and Higonnet 1987.

<sup>11</sup> The pre-1914 Hague peace congresses, for example, rather concerned themselves with *jus in bello*, less with *jus ad bellum*, hence evoking a certain futility regarding war prevention.

strived for executive, politically decisive, not merely symbolic or second-hand, powers in the public sphere. As an officially depoliticised female citizen at that time, this endeavour was a double dare, during wartime it became a triple dare, and Schwimmer tried to realise a threefold negative: as a woman, she wanted to be dissenting and autonomously political during a global state of emergency. In fact, Schwimmer attempted to deconstruct separate spheres on several levels: as a female citizen, the separation between the private and the public sphere; as a feminist pacifist, the subtle gender segregation between feminism and pacifism; as a professional pacifist, the economic divide between militarism and pacifism; as a political person, the invisible barrier between passive and active political engagement within the (modernist) public sphere.

Regarding women's status in modern or industrialised nations and societies, particularly before the First World War, the Aristotelian and Victorian tradition of the separate spheres was a multiple myth: due to the principle of *patria potestas* and the doctrine of coverture laws, men held a legal authority over the home, the supposed domain of females, while women increasingly had to enter the public sphere as wage earners, now doubly burdened in addition to the domesticity cult.<sup>12</sup> Thus their engagement in this public sphere (mostly, again, to fulfil domestically connoted roles and tasks) was never an independently political one. Most importantly, however, this politically limited venturing into the public sphere for women either as an economic necessity or as a charitable activity, permitted by society to prevent a welfare crisis, prepared the sociological conditions for women's public (yet still apolitical) war efforts later on. Furthermore, Schwimmer's political failure has to be related to her unique place amidst the divergent histories and antagonistic interplays of feminism and pacifism before and during the First World War. Despite obvious synchronicities, both groups also operated in decidedly separate spheres to ensure their steady and substantial growth of followers and the gaining of momentum. The crux of Schwimmer's dilemma of how to mobilise war resistance from 1914 onwards can be localised in this feminist-pacifist dialectic.

Pragmatic intersections between feminism and pacifism were not unproblematic before 1914, regardless of common assurances on paper. In order to maintain their impetus for social change, every reform group had to specialise in one topic, because pursuing more than one controversial subject offered critics more chances for attacks. That adopting more than one cause was ideological and political suicide for any activist was shown

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<sup>12</sup> For the separate spheres as an artificial construct, see, for instance, Cott 1990. See also Kerber 1988.

by an inflation of accusations against Bertha von Suttner (1843-1914), for instance, when she took on the so-called anti-anti campaign (i.e. the fight against anti-Semitism) in addition to her peace crusade. Suttner thus became known as *Judenbertha*, next to *Friedensbertha*. Although interested in the woman question, Suttner, again, avoided open affiliations with feminist groups and shied away from intertwining feminist issues with peace in her writings.<sup>13</sup> Also, certain German feminists, while proclaiming anti-militarism and disarmament, excluded members who had also signed up for peace groups. In fact, the First International Congress of Women at The Hague in the spring of 1915 was originally convened by the Dutch suffragist Aletta Jacobs (1854-1929) as a substitute meeting for the scheduled conference of the IWSA in Berlin, cancelled due to the war, and not explicitly as a peace gathering. Similarly, the International Council of Women (hereafter ICW) refrained from addressing peace openly, despite incorporating a Standing Committee on Peace and International Arbitration since 1899. In fact, the ICW, established in 1888, could only expand so successfully globally by avoiding controversial subjects, even the franchise for women. In 1904, the IWSA was therefore founded under Carrie Chapman Catt's (1859-1947) pragmatic leadership, emphasising exclusively women's votes and thus not elaborating on peace, either. By solely prioritising a transnational, non-militant woman suffrage campaign, the IWSA did not simply detach the transatlantic women's movement from former (religious) liaisons with abolitionism and temperance, but also opened up its membership to otherwise unlikely candidates like Schwimmer.

Conversely, pacifism, like militarism, was a man's world, and women faced many barriers in peace groups.<sup>14</sup> Hence activist women joined other reform movements, dealing with abolitionism, temperance, or suffrage, for example. It is quite striking that before the outbreak of the First World War and the subsequent foundation of the WPP in Washington DC in January 1915 – mostly due to Schwimmer's U.S. speeches and agitation – no autonomous women's peace organisation had existed on either side of the Atlantic. The WPP, heavily inspired by Schwimmer, is generally considered a first pacifist expression and visibility in politics, particularly for female citizens, preceding the League of Nations (Patterson 2008, xv). Before the WPP, the peace societies in Europe and the United States, again, were a predominantly male affair. If at all, women's roles in such groups were simplified and limited to symbolic figureheads or motherly peacekeepers, mystified and celebrated as naturally more peace-loving, while at best

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<sup>13</sup> Apparently, Suttner was uncomfortable with editors' requests to produce peace articles, stressing her female sex, as in Suttner 1899.

<sup>14</sup> For the lopsided gender ratio in pacifism, see Cooper 1983; also Cooper 1987.

allowed to assume clerical but not executive positions. In fact, Bertha von Suttner's popularity exemplified these mere allegorical qualities as a symbolic "brand name" of pacifism with hardly financial impact or political significance, fronting a noble cause like Harriet Beecher Stowe and, incidentally, also compared to her by Tolstoy.

Additionally, American and British pacifism showed religious undercurrents, while European continental pacifism was more secular and slightly more tolerant towards the acceptance of women.<sup>15</sup> Quakerism in Britain was an exception, offering women like Ellen Robinson a public forum, but merely as speakers, not in decision-making ranks. Even the gradual secularisation of these peace groups by no means improved the perception of female pacifists. The modernisation and secularisation pacifism had undergone by the late nineteenth century was a direct consequence of the increasing militarisation and the rapid technological advancement of warfare.<sup>16</sup> Pacifist ideologies therefore attempted to establish a more effective counterargument by disassociating their pacifist philosophy from religious connotations. Non-sectarian rhetoric about war and armament as uneconomic phenomena was to neutralise iron-fist idioms, and scientific professionalism should establish the peace societies as a respectable counterpart to the spreading militarism. The juxtaposition of militarism with scientific rather than moralistic arguments about war as a non-profitable, Pyrrhic depletion of economic and human resources is best captured by Norman Angell's *The Great Illusion* (1910), for example. Industrialists like Andrew Carnegie and Henry Ford also reasoned along those lines, unless profit was to be made from the manufacture of weaponry.

As these debates about peace took place against the background of dwindling birth rates due to industrialisation, war and bloodshed were characterised not simply as immoral, but also as unprofitable, even for the winning nations. Peace, again, was advertised as a positive means to handle population growth, and women in that scenario, again, were overwhelmingly cast in the role of depoliticised, nurturing mothers. Therefore, this "scientification" of pacifism excluded women further, reinforcing images of the emotional, peace-loving mother figure, banished to the private sphere and diametrically opposed to the public, rational-logical, male pacifist. In

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<sup>15</sup> For an analysis of American and European pacifism from the Congress of Vienna until the Great War, see Cooper 1991.

<sup>16</sup> Émile Arnaud, president of the Ligue internationale de la paix et de la liberté, is to be credited with coining the term pacifism/*pacifisme* in 1901 at the Universal Peace Congress in Glasgow to connote an international, as well as scientific or secular ring to the peace movement. See Clinton 2001 and Chickering 1975, 14-15.

this perpetuation and fortification of the separate spheres doctrine, pacifists more or less indirectly fostered anti-suffragist standpoints. This belittling of women as empathetic peace angels in the home (somehow mirroring the perception and treatment of females during the Enlightenment), for instance, was even reflected by the founder of the German Peace Society (Deutsche Friedensgesellschaft) and Nobel laureate, Alfred Hermann Fried (1864-1921), denouncing and downgrading Suttner's pacifism as a *Gefühlspazifismus* (emotional pacifism), a feminine, amateurish passion. Schwimmer, evidently, was anything but a passive, apolitical, soft-spoken, or dilettantish peace angel.

Although increasingly secular, scientific, and international, the decision-making core of pacifists on both sides of the Atlantic remained exclusively male. Hence women had no place in the infrastructure of the reformed pacifist groups, either, and the First World War, paradoxically, offered them a chance to breach the gender boundaries of this quite monolithic peace movement. The outbreak of the war now provided certain women, first and foremost Schwimmer, with a unique chance for a public pacifist mobilisation for the first time and a legitimate reason to establish their own and "new" peace groups, particularly so, as the "old" male pacifists mostly sided with their governments, tolerating the war as a means and necessary evil to bring a permanent peace and thus were in accordance with most suffragists and suffragettes. The exclusion from orthodox pacifist matrices also enabled these "new" pacifists to embark much more easily on flexible peace itineraries, like street demonstrations, for example. For a very brief time window, namely from the autumn of 1914 to the spring of 1915 in the United States, Schwimmer could use this niche to win followers, especially Americans who felt excluded from and betrayed by the traditional pacifist institutions, for her cause. As a pacifist newcomer on American soil, Schwimmer became a catalyst for "new" U.S. peace groups and the first explicitly political merger of peace and gender.

Apart from being almost exclusively masculine, pacifism was also "elitist in character," particularly in the United States (Lutzker 1996, 321).<sup>17</sup> Demographic homogeneity amongst international pacifists coupled with ideological fragmentations was, interestingly, a feature shared with the international women's movement.<sup>18</sup> This situation gave Schwimmer an

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<sup>17</sup> For elements of elitism in the almost exclusively (upper-) middle class, well-educated strata that formed peace societies, see also Patterson 1973, and Chickering 1975, 7.

<sup>18</sup> Equally, Leila J. Rupp shows campaigners for the women's cause to be on average elderly and wealthy with a predominantly Protestant background. See Rupp 1997, especially Chapter 3.

opportunity to address and reach traditionally excluded supporters of the peace cause with her message of mediation in the United States in 1914. Schwimmer certainly galvanised the foundation of many to this point atypical peace initiatives in the United States of 1914. Although there had been moderate attempts to diversify the American peace movement before 1914 by the main pacifist players, social reformers like Jane Addams (1860-1935) were still uneasy about joining, and the then still European war and especially Schwimmer's rallying empowered many disillusioned and previously excluded citizens to engage actively in peace forums for the first time.<sup>19</sup> Igniting "grass-roots" peace organisations by formerly barred persons, based on sex, age, location, or social background (i.e. women, younger generations, rural residents, working-class citizens), truly was one of Schwimmer's biggest achievements. Again, as a virtual alien everywhere, Schwimmer had more leeway and could articulate more radical thoughts than any native feminist, suffragist, or pacifist activist on home turf.

Whereas traditional peace groups, spearheaded, for instance, by Andrew Carnegie, stayed complicit with White House policies and devoted their energies to red-tape peace negotiations after the war, alternative peace initiatives sparked by Schwimmer openly called for immediate mediation and an armistice. Although this new wave of pacifist enthusiasm clearly could only have its heyday until approximately the spring of 1915 and then gradually ebbed away with the sinking of the *Lusitania* and increasing U.S. military commitment, Schwimmer's role in it and contribution to it is quite remarkable and so far underrated. In the long run, however, crafting this blatant nexus between feminism and pacifism, which all other activists had wisely shied away from to sustain their core campaigns, proved fatal for Schwimmer and, finally, terminated her career.<sup>20</sup> As she heartily adopted both "isms" and flexibly oscillated between feminist and pacifist cadres, she represented the most ideal and rewarding target for critique, blacklists, slander, and persecution.

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<sup>19</sup> Jane Addams understood the need for "grass-roots" pacifism during the First World War, for she worryingly noticed her Chicago Hull House immigrant neighbourhood – stemming from multiple European nationalities – splitting into Triple Alliance and Triple Entente residents as well. See Addams 1922, 3; and, further, Addams 1907 (predating William James's "The Moral Equivalent of War" by three years) is an early quest for alternative peace practices, later displayed by Schwimmer. For Addams and James especially, see Schott 1993.

<sup>20</sup> Moreover, women were easily regarded as traitors, using feminism to conceal the selling of pacifist propaganda to soldiers, as the example of Hélène Brion (1882-1962), tried for treason in France, demonstrated.

Pacifism, again, was not identical with anti-militarism, which also underwent a metamorphosis around 1900 from protecting private citizens against their home governments to support of these same governments against foreign enemies. Early women activists were generally anti-militarists rather than pacifists, comparing military aggression with violence against women, while being usually complicit as civilising agents with schemes of nation building and imperialism. Thus their nearly immediate and unquestioning support of the home nation in the First World War was the direct consequence of this ideology, especially since the foreign enemy used violence and military aggression against (female) civilians, as in the notorious case of Belgium. By contrast, the Habsburg Monarchy could not fashion itself as a nation state, nor had it actual colonies, while it was in itself an “ethnic battlefield” (Jacques Le Rider 1993).<sup>21</sup> This may explain some of the most prominent names in pacifism, disconnected from religious reasoning, springing forth on Habsburg grounds: Bertha von Suttner and Alfred Hermann Fried, but also Leopold Katscher (1853-1939), Schwimmer’s uncle.<sup>22</sup> Schwimmer, by far, was unique amongst her international peers with these pacifist roots and surroundings.

Consequently, Schwimmer could not elicit support amongst traditional “troublemakers,” because the war offered these “troublemakers” an opportunity to lobby for their cause: suffragists and suffragettes redirected their protest and struggle against their home nation, denying them basic rights, to the outward, foreign enemy, threatening this same home nation and also committing crimes against other females in need of protection by their home nation (i.e. the “rape of Belgium”). The total war effort, requiring everyone’s support, also allowed previously subversive elements such as the suffragettes to rehabilitate themselves in contradistinction to “disloyal” pro-peace advocates like Schwimmer. Indirectly and ironically, Schwimmer’s dissent as a negative example helped to speed up the franchise cause. Another parameter that aided negativities and rumours about Schwimmer was, of course, her insistence to introduce a genuine paradigm shift and to enter political spheres with her feminism-pacifism. Whereas, for example, the women delegations to the belligerent and neutral governments, initiated personally and tenaciously by Schwimmer at the First International Congress of Women at The Hague in 1915, gained relatively easy access to parliaments, ministries, and palaces throughout

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<sup>21</sup> Leo Valiani also argues that these ethnic disparities worked as *divide et impera* strategies to keep the Habsburg system afloat. See Valiani 1973.

<sup>22</sup> Detailed biographical data about Leopold Katscher can be found in Josephson et al. 1985, 336-337. See also Daniel Laqua 2014.

Europe, precisely because of their sex (which was classified as apolitical) and thus informal envoy rank, they were also ridiculed by the press and the wider public for exactly the same reason.

Schwimmer was a female pacifist with political ambitions, rejecting feminine spheres. Furthermore, she was a non-imperial feminist and non-sectarian pacifist amidst predominantly imperial feminists and religious pacifists. While Schwimmer certainly wanted to embellish her heritage with Bertha von Suttner's fame, she even went further than Suttner – practically the only prominent female and a-religious pacifist of that era – by expressively conjoining atheist pacifism with feminism. As already mentioned, Suttner deliberately avoided an explicit cooperation with feminists so as not to endanger the prestige of her own campaign. Reversely, early women's groups held very imperial and, as a further consequence, not necessarily pacifist views. At the same time, social reform movements led by women, like the temperance movement, were initially inspired by religion, while many male-dominated peace groups tried to reduce the influence of religious motivation in their campaigns by 1900. Schwimmer's activism in particular has to be located within these idiosyncrasies in feminist and pacifist agendas during the nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth century.

### **Schwimmer's total peace effort and its aftermath**

Schwimmer was an extremely sophisticated and erudite political analyst and strategist, yet she considered indulging in theoretic – perhaps more commonly known as “mainstream” or “pessimistic” – pacifism, particularly during wartime, a criminal luxury; she was a proactive or rather “optimistic” pacifist, emphasising every individual's responsibility for preventing and stopping wars.<sup>23</sup> Although not acknowledged during her lifetime, Schwimmer's pacifist prudence, entailing detailed plans for mediation, multilateral negotiations, and reparations, are in many instances a blueprint for today's scenarios of dealing with international crises. When it came to implementing these plans, Schwimmer, bizarrely, strategised like militarists, utilising stringent chain-of-command hierarchies. In order to venture outside of their designated domestic realm, all women activists had

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<sup>23</sup> The threefold differentiation of pacifism as a policy between “optimistic,” “mainstream,” and “pessimistic” derives from Martin Ceadel 1987, 5-6: “optimistic,” actively pursuing an immediate and international abolishment of warfare; “mainstream,” considering peace politics realistic only from a long-term perspective; and “pessimistic,” rendering pacifism a credo rather than a feasible option in politics.

to have a robust ego to withstand attacks; unlike most, however, Schwimmer refused to downplay it. Whereas craving for devoted attention by followers was symptomatic of a lot of women leaders, facing public scorn and hostility, Schwimmer fulfilled her egotism at a very despotic level.<sup>24</sup>

Nevertheless, she helped to shape the modern face of pacifism in the short twentieth century, percolated through to the twenty-first century. For instance, she was an atheist amongst predominately religious pacifists, especially Quakers. Pacifism was hence endowed with modesty and moderation, conveying philanthropic humility. Schwimmer, alternatively, tried to emancipate pacifism from militarism also economically by glamourising it and by taking it out of its humble or quaint shell and hence anticipated our contemporary, glitzy fund-raising events, hosted by celebrities. She did not simply lack the spiritual mentality of average pacifists, but distained the equation of pacifism with altruism, benevolence, or religious mercy:

Be pacifists, and not passive-ists!<sup>25</sup>

My experience with European pacifists during last year's contact was that those who are 100% pacifists like Meller, Misar, Katherine [*sic*] Marshall, are all poor. Those who are good pacifists and have money like Mrs. Szirmay prefer to divide their devotion between pacifism and immediate charity like Jane Addams. Others, like Mien, have the petit bourgeois idea that a peace movement must get along with pennies where the militarists have millions, and while they are more generous than anyone else, [illegible] still compared to what they could do with larger gestures within their means.<sup>26</sup>

In Schwimmer's time, opulence and PR were a stigma for reform groups, and investing capital to source donations and ideological support was not yet programmatic. Ahead of her time by commercialising pacifism, Schwimmer became labelled as a reckless spendthrift and as an irresponsible

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<sup>24</sup> In his biography of Jane Addams, Allen F. Davis, for instance, is very explicit about the Hull House founder's yearning for admiration and constant affirmation by her peers. See Davis 1973. Generally, all women activists must have had a resilient nature to address progressive and hence controversial topics openly, especially in front of crowds.

<sup>25</sup> Schwimmer's address, entitled "The Press and Internationalism," to the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom in Chicago in 1924, RSP, Box 146.

<sup>26</sup> Schwimmer to Lola Maverick Lloyd, 22 May 1930, RSP, Box 203.

money waster, even as a financial fraud and as a pied peace piper. Her heterodox approach to and interpretation of pacifism, as well as practice of feminism, became a substratum for many groups later on, but at that time was even too avant-garde for her peers. Palpably, against major ideological undercurrents, she tried to introduce profound socio-political transformations, many of which are not fully realised to this day. The aftermath of the First World War witnessed a certain professionalisation of pacifism, as almost prophetically practiced by Schwimmer during wartime. This lucrative professionalisation, again, went hand in hand with a masculinisation of pacifism, sidelining women once more. Now a politically and economically valuable entity, pacifism and war prevention became hijacked by patriarchy and institutionalised, as demonstrated by the League of Nations, with women's groups like the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) relegated and somewhat ghettoised, forced to lead shadow or para-existences. Even the twenty-first century has yet to witness the nomination of a female UN Secretary-General, for example.

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## CHAPTER EIGHT

# “PACIFIST REVOLUTIONARY”: CRYSTAL EASTMAN, THE DILEMMAS OF INTERSECTIONALISM, AND THE STRUGGLE FOR WORLD PEACE

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### **Introduction**

One hundred years ago, in 1910, 29-year-old Crystal Eastman was one of the most conspicuous progressive reformers in the United States. By the end of the decade, her militant suffragism, insistent anti-militarism, gregarious internationalism, support of the Russian Revolution, and uncompromising feminism led some in the press to brand her notorious. Yet a century later, Eastman is virtually unknown, nearly lost to American memory despite a political and institutional legacy within the most epochal social movements of the modern era: labour, feminism, civil rights, free speech, peace.

Eastman, a trained lawyer who graduated second in her class at New York University Law School in 1907, went on to draft the first serious workers' compensation law in the U.S. in 1909-1910. As a suffragist, she co-founded the group that would become the National Woman's Party, and later co-authored the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, the Party's signature post-suffrage stance. When war broke out in Europe, Eastman co-founded and served as Executive Secretary of the American Union Against Militarism (AUAM), the radical internationalist peace group that boldly challenged American "preparedness" and intervention, and successfully demonstrated that mediation could avert war. At virtually the same time, she also co-founded the Woman's Peace Party – today, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

(WILPF) – helping to recruit a reluctant Jane Addams to chair the national organization while she remained head of the more audacious New York branch. After the armistice, Eastman followed her anti-war politics in a turn further to the left. She co-published *The Liberator* magazine, the radical paper of record for post-war politics and letters. And all this after she had masterminded the founding of what would become the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU).

Crystal Eastman was a policy innovator, a media activist, an initiator, organizer, publisher, working mother and exceptional voice in the debates, both public and private, which shaped her world – and ours. Yet the only collections of her writing have gone nearly forty years out of print. Recent books on the fight for free speech in America suggest her successor, Roger Baldwin, launched the ACLU alone (e.g., Finan 2007; Stone 2005). They hardly note the organization was Eastman's idea,<sup>1</sup> or that Baldwin effectively began as Eastman's assistant during a maternity leave,<sup>2</sup> or that during the formative summer and fall of 1917, Eastman and Baldwin worked together to defend Conscientious Objectors and anti-war activists while Eastman both cared for her newborn and developed an ambitious program of test cases for the right of free speech where it had been limited.<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, Eastman is also relatively obscure in the annals of the women's peace movement of the era. Some historical and biographical narratives about the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom diminish her significance in its rise and formulation. Some write her out of the story almost entirely.

Yet Eastman was among the most outspoken American peace women at the Second International Congress of Women for Peace and Freedom in Zurich in 1919, where the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom was officially founded. She helped lead the criticism of the League of Nations as defined at the Paris Peace Conference. "It must not look as though we were willing to identify ourselves in any respect with the League of Nations that was being fabricated at the Paris Peace Conference," she thundered from the floor. "There is the same difference between the League of Nations that we want and the one proposed at

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<sup>1</sup> Crystal Eastman to Emily Greene Balch. June 14, 1917, Reel 1. Papers of the American Union Against Militarism, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore College.

<sup>2</sup> Minutes of the American Union Against Militarism. March 5, 13, 27, 1917, Reel 1. Papers of the American Union Against Militarism, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore College.

<sup>3</sup> Secretary's Recommendations 1917.

Versailles that there is between our idea of a possible peace treaty and that now put forward," she pressed (Report of the International Congress 1920, 86). "If this morning we most energetically repudiated the peace terms and telegraphed our view to Paris, we ought to have the courage now to repudiate the League of Nations too." "We are not here to compromise," she concluded. "We are here to work. We ought to make out a plan for a League of Nations as we want it, and stand for that and work for that" (Report of the International Congress 1920, 77-88).

The next day, Eastman authored a complex resolution, which speaks to her politics and vision, and, I believe, her obscurity in women's peace history. She proposed to "recognize the fundamentally just demands" and "declare our sympathy with" revolutionary movements, while at the same time "re-assert[ing] our belief in the methods of peace" and that it is women's "special part in this revolutionary age to counsel against violence" (Report of the International Congress 1920, 124). Her resolution was debated, amended, re-debated, and finally adopted, if in abridged form, 60-55, the tightest of the Congress.

Despite such visibility, many prominent U.S. scholars have written that Eastman did not even attend the Zurich Congress (e.g., Sklar and Palmer 2009; Witt 2007; Foster 1995). Katherine Kish Sklar and Barbara Palmer go so far as to claim that Eastman was not even missed, saying "many WILPF members were not displeased when Eastman was refused a passport in 1919 and could not attend the Zurich conference" (Sklar and Palmer 2009, 259). Obviously, it is impossible to assess how anyone felt about an absence that did not, in fact, occur. But in a way these erroneous claims underscore a real historical and scholarly problem: that despite Eastman's significance – her status as a founder and leading women's peace agitator in the US; her many and continuing policy contributions; her force from the floor of the founding event – Eastman has become marginal to organizational and institutional memory about WILPF and to the international women's peace movement itself. How could this happen?

I argue it was Eastman's intersectionalism – her attempts to bridge multiple movement identities and their varied interests and constituencies – that helped edge her from centre, to margin, to almost out of sight.

Eastman's last, brief utterance at Zurich in 1919 reminds us of the intersectional perspective that animated her identity and activism all her life. Explaining her controversial resolution from the floor, she argued, "it is illogical to be unanimously against the oppression of a small country by a large one, and at the same time to admit the oppression of a part of the people within a nation" (Report of the International Congress 1920, 129). Such analogies, and the broader intersectional vision they consistently

pressed, introduced both ideological and interpersonal dilemmas that repeatedly disrupted Eastman's institutional status, undermining the historical positioning and the ownership and belonging from which historical legacies are built.

The problem of Eastman's intersectionalism can be seen through two crucial episodes in Eastman's life and work: first, her formulative experiences in the suffrage movement; and then in the Woman's Peace Party as it evolved into WILPF.

### **Suffrage or Peace? Intersectional Dilemmas and the American Women's Movement**

Eastman was an intersectional thinker and activist from the very start of her political career. As a twenty-something young activist, she envisioned herself as "one of these circus-chariot-ladies" with one hand "driving a tandem of the arts and the law," and "the other hand holding aloft two streaming banners, – love and liberty" (Vassar Bulletin 1907, 8). Crossing the "disciplinary" boundaries of "arts" and "the law," she suggests her intersectional vision, which became an enduring hallmark of her life and work. To her, exploitation in the class system, sexism, racism, militarism and war were all linked and mutually-reinforcing social maladies. And she felt that her generation, a group Christine Stansell defines in terms of their embrace of social, cultural and political transformation, "was living through an epochal change in human history" (Stansell 2000, 1). They were bidden, and positioned, Eastman believed, to change the world.

Eastman concluded early on that with intersecting social problems, she could not fix one without fixing the others – and she wanted to do it all. Yet her life and her work, her allies and her organizations, would often ask her choose: one single-issue campaign; one vision of a better world; one identity – feminist, pacifist, revolutionary, mother, wife.

Intersectional dilemmas first substantively emerged in Eastman's suffrage work. Having established a public identity as a reformer in the workers' compensation drive and as an organizer in the Wisconsin suffrage campaign of 1911-1912, Eastman was the first person that Alice Paul and Lucy Burns contacted when making plans to pursue a Constitutional suffrage amendment in 1913. In fact, it was Eastman, along with Lucy Burns, who approached the National American Woman Suffrage Association in December 1912, deftly handling a contentious debate within the organization to establish a "Congressional

Committee” to pursue the federal amendment at all.<sup>4</sup> Shortly thereafter, Eastman became a lead strategist in a five-woman steering committee organized in 1913, and was a key operational organizer on the ground from the rise of the organization through its first crucial year in 1914.<sup>5</sup>

When war broke out in Europe in August, Eastman became animated by what she saw as strongly gendered as well as economic drivers of the conflict. By the end of the year, she had co-founded and taken leadership positions in two radical internationalist peace organizations: the American Union Against Militarism as well as the Woman’s Peace Party of New York. Both groups saw women’s suffrage as a crucial lever – not only for women’s rights, but also for the spread of democracy, equality and human rights that Eastman and others believed would foster and sustain world peace.

Through 1915, Eastman’s dual commitments to suffrage and peace resided comfortably together in her work. She managed an extraordinarily active schedule of public events and political organizing on both fronts. But by 1916, she would face a crossroads. The Presidential election of 1916 was one of the closest in American history, and it was also the year the National Woman’s Party implemented their signature political strategy: to mobilize a voting bloc of the 11 states where women already had the vote to punish the party in power – Woodrow Wilson and the Democrats – until the federal suffrage amendment was passed.

With her national reputation as a labour reformer and suffragist, and visible positions in two leading anti-war organizations, Eastman was called upon to endorse a candidate. Wilson opposed women’s suffrage, but campaigned consistently as the candidate for peace. Indeed, his main campaign slogan was “He Kept Us Out of War.” Wilson’s opponent, meanwhile, former New York Governor Charles Evans Hughes – the man who had launched Crystal Eastman’s public and political career in 1909 by appointing her to Chair the Employers’ Liability Commission where she drafted New York’s workers’ compensation law – promised suffrage but not peace. In fact, his campaign platform advocated greater mobilization and military preparedness; by the final days of the campaign in the fall, some pro-Wilson newspapers claimed that Hughes, if elected, was secretly planning to take the U.S. into the war.

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<sup>4</sup> December 5, 1912. Records of the National Woman’s Party, Box 6. U.S. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>5</sup> Report of Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage 1914, 22.

The public necessity of a political endorsement forced a choice for Eastman between two movements with which she was, and would always be, ardently involved: suffrage or peace?

She chose peace. Eastman joined the anti-militarists instead of the suffragists and endorsed Wilson. Contemporary scholars have characterized the decision as “incomprehensible”; “Crystal Eastman...now seemed to support the candidate some of her closest comrades...were picketing and jeering” (Cook 1977, 17). Eastman tried to represent both agendas. As late as September, 1916, she spoke for the National Woman’s Party when she told the papers, “It would be weak-kneed and foolish to let up on the Democrats on that ground that President Wilson needs the backing of an undivided Congress in his efforts to preserve the neutrality of this country and to keep it out of the turmoil in which Europe is involved,” she said. She positioned herself clearly as a suffragist, as one of the group. “If we let politicians call our bluff once,” she said, “they’d do it again.”<sup>6</sup> Yet by the eve of the election, Eastman was campaigning for Wilson, not against him, actions that must have seemed a betrayal to every friend and ally she had in the militant suffrage movement.

No letters or journals describe Eastman’s basis for that decision. Blanche Wiesen Cook suggests generally that Eastman had previously expressed she “did not believe that suffragists should be silent in the interests of peace” (Cook 1977, 17). Eastman almost certainly factored in that suffrage was bundled into the package of policies she was advocating to bring about world peace; both of her peace organizations included universal suffrage planks in their platforms, including the Woman’s Peace Party, where the suffrage stance had caused considerable controversy within the membership ranks and the Executive Board. A possible additional factor became detectable just 72 hours before election day. On 14<sup>th</sup> November, a wedding announcement confirmed Crystal Eastman had quietly married her peace movement co-worker, Walter Fuller. Their son would be born the following March. At the time she chose peace over suffrage, Eastman was pregnant with her first child.

While Eastman’s thinking remains obscure, its consequences for her within the suffrage movement and the National Woman’s Party (NWP) may be a bit clearer to surmise. Inez Milholland, the icon and later martyr of the militant suffrage movement, also one of Eastman’s closest friends who had been briefly engaged to her brother, Max, launched a targeted jab at Eastman in one of her last utterances before her sudden death in 1916. “There are people who honestly believe – HONESTLY BELIEVE!...that

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<sup>6</sup> “Newport’s Conference Politically Momentous.” *New York Herald-Tribune*, September 6, 1914.

there are more important issues before the country than suffrage," Millholland said, "and that it would be very becoming on our part...to retire at this time...Now I do not know what you feel about such a point of view . . . but it makes me mad . . ." (Cook 1977, 17). Millholland implored listeners, "Do not let anyone convince you that there is any more important issue in the country today than votes for women . . . We must say, 'Women First'" (Cook 1977, 17).

The choice to support Wilson may have also initiated or exacerbated tensions with the NWP's leader, Alice Paul. From her own time to today, Paul has been seen as a leader who insisted on the kind of single-minded loyalty from her comrades that Paul herself showed to the cause of the suffrage amendment (Walton 2010). Eastman certainly saw her that way, and published more than one article that made and assessed that characteristic quality (Eastman 1921; Eastman 1923).

Tensions between the two women erupted at the first post-suffrage convention of the National Woman's Party in 1921. Eastman and Paul engaged in what the papers called a "fight which rages all day" over the priorities and direction of the NWP, and the women's movement generally, going forward.<sup>7</sup> Eastman characteristically advocated an intersectional program of women's liberation that she thought would transform single-issue suffragism into bigger-picture feminism. She believed no single movement with which she was involved – not suffragism, not socialism, not pacifism – could emancipate women by itself. "The whole of woman's slavery is not summed up in the profit system, nor is her complete emancipation assured by the downfall of capitalism," she wrote in 1920 (Eastman, 1920). At the 1921 convention, Eastman pushed for a program that embraced the connections between feminism and peace, between feminism and the "rights of Negro women," and across the public-private divide. The papers noted her inclusion of causes such as divorce and child custody and the economic independence of married women, concerns that apply to gender-traditionalist and gender-transgressing women alike.<sup>8</sup> She demanded what she saw as a broad-based "program that works not just for women judges and women lawyers alone." "It is the great masses of women of this country who are still in slavery that we must rouse," she said (Cott 1984, 47).

Paul, by contrast, sought another single-issue plan, and advocated the goal to remove legal disabilities against women, an approach Eastman saw as outdated as well as too limited. At the conference, debate about the

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<sup>7</sup> "Woman's Party Will Work for Feminism Only." New York Herald Tribune, February 19, 1921.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

“fairly complete feminist program” Eastman had “roughly sketched” to Paul in the summer of 1920 was ended, Eastman felt, “before the discussion had fairly started” (Eastman April, 1921). When the vote was called for, Eastman lost, decisively, two-to-one. The papers headlined “Miss Paul wins triumph.”<sup>9</sup>

In the years following the Convention, Eastman and Paul would meet in Europe twice: in Rome in 1923 and in Paris in 1926, each time among sub-groups of women who had gathered for the annual suffrage congresses to discuss Paul’s plan for a global feminist alliances and an Equal Rights Treaty. Eastman’s only substantive connection to Paul and the Party in the twenties was her writing for its magazine, *The Suffragist* (soon to be renamed *Equal Rights*). Her only surviving correspondence with the organization after 1921 was exchanged through the magazine, particularly through its Associate Editor, Eleanor Taylor Marsh.

Years later, Paul explained what had happened in language that suggests Eastman’s marginalization. She recalled Eastman’s intersectional proposal as foreign and far afield. Locating Eastman more in connection to the radical movement, Paul remembered it was “a very involved feminist program . . . embracing everything that Russia was doing,” even though a number of Eastman’s proposals were in fact circulating among transatlantic feminists and even within the National Woman’s Party itself at the time (Delap 2007; Becker 1981). Yet Paul explicitly characterized Eastman as an outsider, “embracing” another movement, not as “one of us.” Eastman, she said, was “taking in all kinds of things that we didn’t expect to take in at all” (Cott 1984, 47). Eastman seems to have been edged out of the organization she had been the first to help her found, organize and lead. Betraying little sense of shared commitment to the organization or its ideas, or a shared history in the movement itself, Paul dismissed Eastman easily, declaring, “We didn’t give a second thought to it” (Cott 1984, 47).

### **“Pacifist Revolutionary”: Intersectional Insistence and the Women’s Peace Movement**

Some similar dynamics can be seen rippling through Eastman’s involvement with the women’s peace movement. Her work in the all-important summer of 1919 suggests connections between her intersectional identities as a pacifist, feminist and leftist and her relative

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

invisibility in the institutional history of the International Congress of Women and the establishment of WILPF.

It was Eastman's commitment to world peace that finally pushed her further to the Left after the U.S. entered World War I. She applauded the Bolsheviks in Russia, not least for their intention to get out of the war. American intervention had made plain to her the failure of liberal hopes for neutral mediation and a negotiated peace. Months earlier she had finally given up on President Wilson's evocations of a just peace, telling Jane Addams that he had been "faithless" to the anti-war movement.<sup>10</sup> Eastman had tried to embrace the arguments of some anti-militarist confreres, who believed the war was an acceptable prelude to a platform for enduring peace that could be instituted in its wake. On November 16, just hours after the Bolsheviks had secured their triumph in Moscow by forcing Kerensky to flee the country, Eastman met with pro-war liberals in New York. She found she simply could not support "a vigorous prosecution of war"; it offended her "common sense" and her "regard for human life."<sup>11</sup> Holding onto her goals of world peace and world federation, she had concluded, "the only great movement against war must be the radical movement."<sup>12</sup>

Three months later, Eastman and her brother Max published their first issue of the *The Liberator: The Journal of Revolutionary Progress*. Eastman had rapidly raised \$30,000 in start-up funds, and was to oversee day-to-day operations as Managing Editor as well as contribute as a writer to the magazine. Her work during the *Liberator* years was characteristically intersectional. She maintained organizational affiliations with multiple movements and routinely worked to bring their interests and goals together. Alongside her more strictly leftist utterances in the magazine, for example, she published a broadside in 1918, "A Program for Voting Women," which urged women to use their suffrage power to support candidates who favored the development of an international parliament and democratic control of foreign policy – positions long sought by the AUAM and WPP (Eastman 1918).

Eastman's most important work for the *Liberator* is her two-part series from inside the new Hungarian Soviet Republic – the first by any American reporter – published in July and August 1919. The articles include two interviews with Communist leader Bela Kun, once during the brief period when his government was in power, and again when he was interred in Austria after its fall. In a speech she gave while in Buda Pest,

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<sup>10</sup> Eastman to Addams June 28, 1917, reel 10.

<sup>11</sup> Eastman to Villard, November 16, 1917.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

she celebrated the hope that the “victory of the proletariat, which has come over to Hungary, will spread to all the other countries of the world” (Cook 1977, 367).

Yet Eastman’s articles are not unqualified celebrations of the revolutionary government. In each, she praises the abolition of private property, but she also exposes the hypocrisy and human cost of the violent and widespread repression under the revolutionary government. For her, a pacifist and feminist as well as a leftist, there was nothing uncomplicated about violence and the use of force. “I hope there is some pacifist revolutionary with an answer to that,” she wrote. “I have none” (Eastman 1919b).

Eastman had been thinking about this intersectional problem for quite some time. In the previous March, she had published another *Liberator* piece in which she asks a delegate at a workers’ congress about the prospects for industrial unionism. The source tells her that mass action was the answer, and would bring revolution to America. “Do you think it will come with bloodshed? Eastman immediately asks. And he answers her, “That depends on how much the privileged class resists” (Eastman 1919a).

She would attempt to address this contingency in her controversial resolution from the floor at Zurich six months later.

Eastman’s intersectionalism naggingly brought her pacifism into contact – and competition – with her radicalism, problematizing her relationship to organizations and allies in both movements. At the *Liberator*, these considerations collided with the story of pure heroic triumph written in revolutionary narratives elsewhere in the magazine, particularly by its star radical reporter, John Reed. At the time, the only major account of revolutionary insurgency in Europe to reach the American public was Reed’s celebrated *Ten Days That Shook the World* (1919), a book based on his *Liberator* reporting and published the same year as Eastman’s reporting from Hungary. Yet while Reed’s book mythologizes the Russian Revolution, in part by draining it of local specificity and human hardships, Eastman’s series confronts many of the tragic realities of revolutionary conflict. Today, Reed’s perfect faith in revolutionary solutions may seem locked in its historical moment, while Eastman’s intersectional perspective – bringing her pacifism and feminism to bear on the revolutionary change she applauded politically – resonates with the nuance and ambivalence of twenty-first century understanding. Nevertheless, Reed is identified, discussed, remembered – in fame or infamy, depending on the source – while Eastman and her work were, and remain, largely forgotten by all concerned.

Eastman struggled to bridge her intersectional identity and its mutual commitments to peace, revolution and feminism in every movement context. Just as she struggled to bridge her intersectional vision of women's liberation with the feminist identity and agenda of the NWP, so she also struggled to bridge multiple identities and perspectives on the equality and justice that grounded women's peace work. Indeed, by the time Eastman arrived in Hungary to report on revolutionary progress, she had already articulated the dilemma of the "pacifist revolutionary" – to peace women at the Zurich Congress.

That Eastman's resolution is so convoluted a proposal, awkward in its structure, speaks to the difficulties she encountered in postulating her intersectional vision in the context of any one movement. She begins by speaking from the left: "We declare our sympathy with the purpose of the workers who are rising up everywhere to make an end of exploitation and to claim their world," her resolution reads. "Nevertheless," she continues, now speaking as not only a peace activist, but a peace woman, "we reassert our belief in the methods of peace, and we feel that it is our special part in this revolutionary age, to counsel against violence." Then she returns to the trade unionist's equation, resolving, "and above all to prepare the wealthy and privileged classes to give up their wealth and yield their special privileges without struggle, so that the change from a competitive system of production for private profit to some cooperative system of production for human happiness, may be made with as little bloodshed as possible" (Report of the International Congress 1920, 124). Indeed, Eastman emphasizes the role for peace women is to convince elites and property owners to relinquish their privileges without resistance:

Only workers can bring about revolution, and a group like ours, in counseling against violence, must recognize that the only way in which violence can be avoided is for the possessing classes to give up their possessions and consent to the new order without resistance. I suggest that the chief function of women like ourselves is to prepare the minds of the wealthy and possessing classes, to persuade them to yield without hesitation, and thus save bloodshed. (Report of the International Congress 1920, 124).

The repetition does not appear to have made her proposal more practicable in the minds of delegates. Ironically, for all its tensions and complexities, Eastman's resolution met with opposition on the grounds that it was too simplistic. The English suffragette Kathleen Courtney commented it is "very simple to say that if one side yields everything there

will be no bloodshed. That does not solve the question however” (Report of the International Congress 1920, 124).

The Congress quickly agreed to postpone further debate. But that afternoon, Eastman persisted, presenting an amended version that attempted to clarify but did not remove the radical claims that had, and would continue to, trouble delegates. The second try mainly rephrased the call for peace women to extend beyond their more clearly defined anti-war work. Maintaining her intersectionalism while attempting to better align her resolution with the assembled delegates, Eastman re-words, this time affiliating feminist gender identification with the goals of the revolutionary movement. She proposes the delegation “declare our sympathy with the purpose of workers who are rising up everywhere to make an end of exploitation and claim their world” (Report of the International Congress 1920, 126).

Considerable debate ensued, but ended when another American delegate insisted on a clearer and narrower focus for the organization and its work. “The main thing is to keep alive our belief in pacifism and internationalism,” she argued from the floor. “We must avoid questions among ourselves,” she continued, as to other things, like the radical restructuring and “economic questions” Eastman’s resolution attempted to embrace (Report of the International Congress 1920, 127-129). In the end, Eastman’s resolution was narrowly adopted, and in significantly narrowed form. The new resolution, proposed by the same American delegate, was stripped of its intersectional complications, stopping at the simple assertion that the special part of women pacifists is to “counsel against violence on both sides” (Report of the International Congress 1920, 129).

The resolution, like Eastman’s intersectional vision that gave rise to it, complicated her positioning with respect to the vision of “pacifism and internationalism” that grounded the founding of WILPF. Her drive to marry multiple movements pushed the boundaries of organizational identity, forcing dicey dilemmas about mission and actions from the inside. And Eastman made such moves consistently, raising, like a pestering gadfly, quandaries that may have challenged perceptions of her identification and her belonging “among ourselves.”

The link between WILPF and the radical left that Eastman kept pushing into consideration and into view would divide and haunt organizational identity for decades (Rupp 1977). But more structurally as well, Eastman’s constant intersectional push to enlarge connections, to link “outside” issues to organizational ideas, agendas and actions, complicated her position as a leading voice of the women’s peace movement as WILPF was striving to define it. Ultimately, it challenged

her status as a bona fide member of the group, as "one of us." As may have been the case within the militant suffrage movement and the National Woman's Party, such complicated positioning, both in ideological frameworks and social networks, undermined Eastman's institutional standing, diminishing her organizational stature and the interpersonal alliances from which historical legacies are built.

Indeed, Eastman's insistent intersectionalism may have left her increasingly isolated and on her own, where it's easier for a woman to be missed in history. That Eastman, catalyst and co-founder of the path-breaking organization that became WILPF, is pictured in the Congress proceedings on page 16, unnamed and unattached to any delegation – merely as one of "an international group of women" – perhaps reflects her marginalised status as a wanderer in her own world.

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## CHAPTER NINE

# ECONOMICS AND PEACE YELLA HERTZKA (1873-1948)

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### **Introduction**

Until recently, Yella Hertzka's significant roles in the Austrian and international women's movement and in the pacifist movement had fallen into oblivion.<sup>1</sup> Her substantial contributions to the organisation of the Third International Congress of Women (1921), hereinafter referred to as WILPF Congress in Vienna, her activism for the repatriation of war prisoners, as well as her commitment to economic and social questions in relation to peace issues have long been ignored. She has been forgotten mainly due to National Socialism. At the age of 65, Yella Hertzka was forced to flee her country, leaving behind her life's work. All institutions closely connected with her name – the Viennese New Women's Club (Neuer Frauenklub), her horticultural school for women in Grinzing, Vienna, the music publishing house Universal Edition and the Austrian section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) – as well as her home and property were "Aryanized." Personal documents got lost or were destroyed except for a bundle of letters and documents, most of which were dated prior to 1910. These were preserved at the Universal Edition music publishing house. A general neglect of women's biographies as well as post-war Austria's lack of interest in the history of the women's and pacifist movements contributed to Yella Hertzka's fading into oblivion. In addition, because of Yella Hertzka's transnational spheres of action and the repercussions that totalitarian state systems have had on archive holdings, documents concerning her are

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<sup>1</sup> This article is based on my research published in Oesch 2014.

scattered around the globe, and are more likely to be preserved by transnational collections than archives in Austria.<sup>2</sup> All this makes conducting biographical research on Yella Hertzka a challenging task in which the researcher is required to retrace at least some of the journeys the biographical subject took.

## **Social Reform and the Women's Movement**

Social reform and women's suffrage were core concerns of the majority of those women who later became leading activists in the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. About 1900, Yella Hertzka participated in the Women's Association for Social Assistance Work (Frauenvereinigung für soziale Hilfstätigkeit) in Vienna, a project similar to the Girls' and women's groups for social relief work (Mädchen- und Frauengruppen für soziale Hilfsarbeit) run by Jeannette Schwerin, Minna Cauer and her comrades in Berlin some years earlier. These groups trained women for professional social work endorsing the principle "help for self-help" and were part of a transnational movement for social reform. At the same time Yella Hertzka got involved with the women's club movement. Stemming from the U.S. club tradition, women's clubs were a transnational, urban phenomenon, too. Yella Hertzka co-founded the Viennese Women's Club (Wiener Frauenklub), 1900-1902, as well as the New Women's Club (Neuer Frauenklub), 1903-1933, (renamed Wiener Frauenklub, 1933-1938, re-founded as Wiener Frauenklub, 1949-2005). The New Women's Club experienced a huge upturn under Yella Hertzka's direction (ÖBV 1959, 294). The target audience of both women's clubs were mainly middle-class working women, students, and activists in women's movements. Scientific lectures, cultural performances, a reading room offering a wide range of domestic and foreign newspapers and magazines; a library as well as cheap lunches attracted visitors and members. The emphasis on literacy pointed out that being educated was the key to club access. There is a significant parallel between the Women's Association for Social Assistance Work and the Women's Club in Vienna as they were both secular, interdenominational institutions bringing especially anticlerical, non-Jewish and Jewish women as well as converts of all kinds closer together. The New Women's Club hosted many other women's associations and was intended as a centre of all feminist projects. It was precisely the Women's Club's policy of inviting

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<sup>2</sup> See Oesch 2014, 122-123 for an overview of available documents concerning Yella Hertzka in archival collections.

women's movements' celebrities and accommodating foreign guests that contributed to their self-image of being part of an "international" women's movement. Social activist and reformer Jane Addams, later WILPF president, saw the importance of women's clubs in their potential "to create community of feeling and thought about the world and the way it works . . . which is so essential in any effort toward concerted action" (Addams 1914, 24-30).<sup>3</sup> Collecting addresses became a central strategy of networking, not only in the later WILPF, but already in the Viennese New Women's Club. Since only the heads of households were integrated in Vienna's local address book – women living in marriage or in their families of origin being excluded – Marianne Hainisch, Yella Hertzka, and Hertha (von) Sprung decided to create a women's address book. For this purpose Yella Hertzka provided the New Women's Club with her card box (Zettelkasten), which facilitated the organisation of address material reducing the investment of time and money required for adding or replacing cards due to new entries or address changes. Leading members of the New Women's Club campaigned for women's suffrage in 1905/1906 and collected signatures for the amendment of §30 of the association laws prohibiting women from participating in political associations. Yella Hertzka was also actively involved in the International Woman Suffrage Conference in Vienna (1913) preceding the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA) Congress in Budapest (Anderson 1992, 115).<sup>4</sup>

Only a minority of women organised in women's movements in Austria did not add their voices to the chorus of war supporters and warmongers after the outbreak of war in 1914. The journal *Neues Frauenleben*, organ of the General Austrian Women's Association (Allgemeiner Österreichischer Frauenverein, AÖFV), published articles by later WILPF members Leopoldine Kulka, Olga Misař, Christine Touaillon and Lida Gustava Heymann and provided its readers with news and reactions to the war from international women's and pacifist movements. In April 1915 the journal (re-)printed a call from the group preparing the Austrian participation to the International Congress of Women in The Hague, signed by 21 women:

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<sup>3</sup> Cited according to Sharer 2007, 21.

<sup>4</sup> "In June 1913 the committee, not to be outdone, organised an international women's suffrage meeting; participants at the conference included many leading figures is [sic] the women's movement – Rosa Mayreder, Marianne Hainisch, Yella Hertzka, Dora Teleky." (Anderson 1992, 115).

Else Beer-Angerer, Alice Fuchs, Johanna Friedjung, Bertha C. Fröhlich, Adele Gerber, Marie Goldscheid, Yella Hertzka, Eugenie Hoffmann, Hertha Jäger, Emilie K[a]ssowitz, Leopoldine Kulka, Klara Körber, Elisabeth Luzzatto, Rosa Mayreder, Olga Misař, Mathilde Prager-[H]olm, Aurora Pollak, Rudolfine Sperber, Ela Spitzer, Dr. Christine Touaillon, Regine Ul[ ]mann. (L.K. 1915, 86)

Although they signed as individual persons, Adele Gerber, Leopoldine Kulka, Rosa Mayreder, Olga Misař and Christine Touaillon were known for their commitment to the AÖFV, Yella Hertzka, her sister Alice Fuchs, Hertha Jäger and Eugenie Hoffmann represented the Viennese Neuer Frauenklub, Else Beer-Angerer was involved in the Austrian Council of Women (Bund österreichischer Frauenvereine) as well as the Austro-Hungarian Organisation of Housewives (Reichsorganisation der Hausfrauen Österreichs) and Elisabeth Luzzatto's name was closely tied to the Austrian Women's Suffrage Committee (Österreichisches Frauenstimmrechtskomitee). Some of them were active in the Association of Abstinent Women (Verein abstinenter Frauen) and others in the Association of Working Women, Vienna (Vereinigung arbeitender Frauen, Wien). Yella Hertzka is not listed among the six women present at the Women's Congress in The Hague (1915), although Emily Greene Balch wrote in her obituary of Yella Hertzka that she seems to remember her there (Balch 1949). On 25<sup>th</sup> October 1915 – the same day as Rosa Mayreder – Yella Hertzka joined the Austrian branch of the International Committee for Permanent Peace –, until then presided over by Olga Misař and Leopoldine Kulka.<sup>5</sup> Armed with certification to support agricultural interests, Yella Hertzka managed to cross the Swiss border and attend the Women's Conference for International Understanding (Frauenkonferenz für Völkerverständigung) in Bern in April 1918 (Zweig 1964, 84). Serving as chair for one day at the conference (Leitner 1998, 168), Yella Hertzka manifested on this occasion her ambition to play a leading role in the women's peace movement.

## **Garden City and the Horticultural School**

As the wife of the director of the well-established music publishing house Universal Edition, Yella Hertzka had been at the centre of the international cultural avant-garde for many years. In 1912, Yella Hertzka and her husband Emil Hertzka moved into their new home on the outskirts of Vienna. The same year they initiated a garden city colony designed by

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<sup>5</sup> Olga Misař to Emily Hobhouse, (two cards dated 25 October 1915). United Nations Office at Geneva Archives (UNOG), WILPF papers, reel 55.

Josef Hoffmann in the immediate vicinity. Several friends moved into the semi-detached houses, among them composer Egon Wellesz and the art historian Emmy Wellesz, Hugo Botstiber (secretary general of the Wiener Konzerthaus), Adolf Vetter (head of the Gewerbeförderungsamt and since 1920 president of the Austrian national theatre) and his wife Noémi C. Vetter, and Adolf Drucker, an economist and high-level civil servant. In the surrounding area of their home, Yella Hertzka founded an extensive market garden with 17 greenhouses and a horticultural school for women. The school opened in 1913, though it was not the first school project she was involved in. Yella Hertzka had supported her friend Salka (Salome) Goldmann in running the Cottage Lyzeum, providing her with a school building and performing administrative work for it (Oesch 2008, 128f.).

Both school projects were part of the transnational movement to advance women's education in the decades before and after 1900. Since on the one hand the state prevented women from attaining higher education and professional training, while on the other hand marriage prospects of middle-class women had worsened, some women began to campaign for their educational rights and to found private schools. The International Council of Women (ICW) propagated horticultural professions for women at the turn of the century. Yella Hertzka herself attended a gardening school for women in Godesberg (Bonn) in 1908 and directed by Olga Hasenclever and Marg[arete] Erdmann, established against the background of women's movements.

Yella Hertzka's own school project aimed at providing professional training for women and also empowering them to earn money in an occupational field previously reserved for men. She intended to train women to become reliable gardeners and was especially concerned with teaching them business administration, which would qualify them to set up and run their own businesses. When war broke out the year after her school had opened, its objectives were adjusted. In order to fight famine and malnutrition, Hertzka put the school grounds at the disposal of secondary schools in neighbouring districts and also arranged for the instruction necessary to run allotment gardens in other areas of Vienna. These activities were again based on the principle of "helping people help themselves" and formed part of the Viennese "wild settlement movement" that involved more than 100,000 people by 1918. Yella Hertzka did not break off contact with the Austrian Council of Women (Bund österreichischer Frauenvereine) though the council organised voluntary war assistance services for women. At the general assembly of the Council in 1916, she proposed to establish a women's organisation for promoting the cultivation of fruits and vegetables. Her proposal was supported by the

women's associations "Settlement," the Association of Working Women (Vereinigung der arbeitenden Frauen) and the Women's Association Self-Help (Frauenverein Selbsthilfe). Since the war highlighted the cities' dependency on food supply, Yella Hertzka drew attention to the need for horticulture and small animal husbandry. She promoted school garden teaching, leasehold properties at favourable prices in the cities and a horticulture education campaign led by associations and libraries. Together with a group of like-minded women Yella Hertzka propagated urban horticulture during the war years in order to prevent food shortages due to war and provide for the widows of soldiers killed in the war.

### **The WILPF Founding Congress**

The founding of the WILPF took place against the background of discussions about the forming of an intergovernmental organisation, the later so-called League of Nations. Having already propagated the founding of a "Society of Nations" at the First International Congress of Women The Hague four years earlier, members of the International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace aimed at launching an international women's organisation parallel to a future intergovernmental peace organisation. Austrian Committee members contributed decisively to its formation and focus. When the women at the International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace headquarters proposed to postpone the founding congress, they received a telegram from Yella Hertzka and Rosa Mayreder rejecting and denouncing this proposition. Yella Hertzka explained to Aletta Jacobs in a letter written and sent on the same day as the telegram:

"... this delay utterly horrifies us, that means, we really see an urgent need to set up the international League, at least to try to do so, so that we women will lead the way in this cause." ("... dieser Aufschub entsetzt uns geradezu, das heisst, wir halten es für so dringend nötig, die internationale Liga aufzurichten, wenigstens es zu versuchen, damit wir Frauen wirklich in dieser Sache voran gehen.")<sup>6</sup>

By mentioning the "international League" and the women's task of leading the way and by anticipating the term "League," which was not chosen until the WILPF founding congress in May 1919, Yella Hertzka pointed out that she considered the women's organisation to be seen as an avant-garde with respect to the League of Nations.

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<sup>6</sup> Yella Hertzka to Aletta Jacobs, 19 March 1919. UNOG, WILPF papers, reel 55.

The WILPF founding congress finally took place immediately after the Allied peace terms were made public in Zurich in May 1919, enabling the congress participants to protest as the first international assembly against the peace conditions as well as against the announced League of Nations constitution. Yella Hertzka made a long statement in the congress debate concerning the LoN. According to her, the present League of Nations constitution had banned the principle of mutual help and had replaced it with mutual competition. Thus, the Women's League ought to elaborate its own ideal League of Nations' constitution instead of just suggesting improvements to it. Among the supporters of her proposition was Anita Augspurg, who combined the rejection of the LoN constitution in the current version with WILPF's future reputation. Nonetheless, the Women's League's headquarters was set up at the centre of international politics in Geneva and "lobbying the League" became an important activity of WILPF activists.

The Women's Congress at Zurich adopted the name Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, which alludes to the former International League for Peace and Freedom (Ligue internationale de la paix et de la liberté, LIPL) founded in Switzerland (1866/1867) (Dickmann 2004, 111). The LIPL's journal was programmatically named *Les Etats Unis d'Europe*, and even though it also promoted women's movements' objectives, neither the WILPF itself nor historians of international women's movements later referred to it as its possible predecessor (only Swiss WILPF member Marguerite Gobat, like her father a former LIPL member, mentioned it during the debate over the organisation's future name). This shows clearly once again that the women at Zurich (and The Hague) preferred a re-start to the cultivation of tradition and that their perception of being avant-garde was closely linked to their formation as a women's (only) organisation.

Many congress participants euphorically welcomed the social changes resulting from the introduction of democracy in European countries. Yella Hertzka's speech was particularly filled with future hopes for the economic system's "socialisation," a "successive" reduction of "capitalism" and the transformation of property into public ownership (WILPF [1920], 79). She also contributed to the Congress in moving a resolution on the international resistance of women to war, adopted as follows:

This International Congress of Women, recognizing that a strike of women against war of all kinds can only be effective if taken up internationally, urges the National Sections to work for an international agreement between

women to refuse their support of war in money, work, or propaganda.  
(WILPF 1919)

Yella Hertzka's cross-national contacts, her network in the women's movement, hospitality and travels, as well as her language skills, financial and time resources facilitated her entry into the WILPF's international circle. At the Zurich Congress she was elected to the WILPF International Executive Committee, continuing to be a member till 1946 (not being re-elected only once in 1926).

### Repatriation of War Prisoners

Published in 1954 the *Dictionary of Women* (Lexikon der Frau) introduced Yella Hertzka under the heading of pacifism as a leading representative of the WILPF, who had been especially dedicated to the repatriation of war prisoners and international economic issues. The misery of war prisoners of the former Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and German Empire had already been described by the Austrian WILPF member Else Beer-Angerer at the Zurich Congress in 1919 (WILPF [1920], 211f.). Yella Hertzka's efforts started at the latest in September 1919 (the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye had just been signed), when she sent a telegram to the WILPF general secretary Emily Greene Balch in Geneva urging her to make Catherine Marshall, a suffragist and member of the Union of Democratic Control, then secretary of the British WILPF section, confer with state officials in order to mitigate the passage concerning war prisoners in the Treaty.<sup>7</sup>

In November 1919 Yella Hertzka set out on a lecture tour supported by WILPF sections in other countries. She held two lectures in Norway and took part in the founding of the Swedish WILPF branch. Members of the Swedish section formed a committee for helping war prisoners in Siberia and Turkestan, collecting money for three large transports of food, clothing, medicine, and books for prisoners of war in Siberia. During Hertzka's stay in Scandinavia Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence was in charge of organising her entry permit for England, while Hertzka's secretary Nadja Ornstein-Brodsky tried to organise her entry into Switzerland in the service of the Red Cross.

A detailed report by Yella Hertzka on her efforts in England has survived. When she arrived in London in December 1919, Catherine Marshall and other British WILPF members had already organised her dates and lectures. Hertzka spoke to 150 persons at the 1917 Club, at

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<sup>7</sup> SCPC, Jane Addams Papers, Reel 113, 12.

meetings of the Labour Party and the trade unions, she wrote articles in leading newspapers about the situation of war prisoners, she met journalists, women's rights activists and politicians, among them Charles Roden Buxton (a member of the Independent Labour Party and founding member of the Union of Democratic Control), Miss Hamilton (probably Mary Agnes Hamilton, who wrote the anti-war novel *Dead Yesterday* in 1916), Miss Sheepshanks (probably Mary Sheepshanks, member of the IWSA, secretary of the Fight the Famine Council, member of the WILPF), Raymond Unwin (architect, town planner and co-founder of the League of Nations Society), Arthur Henderson (leader of the Labour Party), Beatrice Webb (sociologist, co-founder of the London School of Economics), Ethel Snowden (suffragist, Women's Peace Crusade campaigner and member of the WILPF), her husband, the Labour politician Philip Snowden, and Lord Robert Cecil, who became the Minister for Blockade in 1916 – the first ministerial convert to the League of Nations idea – and was appointed adviser on league issues to Britain's delegation at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. Robert Cecil promised her he would exercise his influence in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

British WILPF members introduced Yella Hertzka to opinion leaders: a select circle of the academic, cultural and political elite. She spoke at various public meetings, organised by the WILPF, the trade unions, the Labour Party, the Save the Children Fund and the Theosophical Society in Manchester, New Castle, London and probably also in Glasgow and Leeds.

Yella Hertzka continued to Paris, where she talked to the Austrian secretary for finances Richard Reisch and worked with Gabrielle Duchêne of the French WILPF section, and finally arrived at Geneva in February 1920, lecturing again "Pour la rapatriement des prisonniers de guerre."

During her mission, Yella Hertzka co-operated with Austrian associations of war prisoners' relatives – among them with Mrs. Branczik, whose husband was a prisoner in one of the camps, and with whom she worked in London – with the International Red Cross, and the State Commission for War Prisoners and Internees' Affairs in Vienna (Staatskommission für Kriegsgefangene und Interniertenangelegenheiten in Wien). Due to strong support and organisational help from local WILPF members and the secretary general Emily Greene Balch in Geneva as well as her interpersonal skills and her affiliation with the cultural and economic elite in Austria Yella Hertzka acted as a transnational ambassador.

Her trip to the U.S. (from August to November 1920) was different from her mission in Europe. Actually, the plan was for Yella Hertzka to go directly from London to the U.S. However, when WILPF president Jane

Addams stated that the United States Congress would not approve an intervention of Austria, she postponed her trip. Yella Hertzka and her husband Emil Hertzka, who travelled with her in the interest of the music publishing house Universal Edition, arrived in New York in September 1920. Lecturing in New York, Wellesley, Boston, and Chicago, Yella Hertzka's mission was not only to promote the repatriation of war prisoners, but also to speak about disarmament, a revision of the peace treaties and principles of peace education. The British WILPF member Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence accompanied her on the lecture trip. While associations of war prisoners' relatives partly paid Yella Hertzka's travel expenses, Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence collected money among the audiences. There is no indication that they met policymakers in the U.S.

The impact of her information and awareness lecture tours on the repatriation of war prisoners is difficult to assess. The credit for the repatriation of war prisoners was mainly given to Fridtjof Nansen, who began his task as High Commissioner in charge of arrangements for exchanges of war prisoners, supported by the International Red Cross, in the spring of 1920. However, Yella Hertzka's commitment to peace, her travelling and lecturing formed friendships abroad and intensified transnational personal relationships. Furthermore, it strengthened her position at the WILPF's international level. Some of her contacts established during her trips helped her later, for example in organising the WILPF's third international congress, or during her exile in England after her escape from National Socialist Austria in 1938/1939. Jane Addams was full of praise for Yella Hertzka, when they met in October 1920:

But nobody was altogether more delightful than Frau Hertzka, and I almost feel as if I had attended a meeting of the International Committee. She made a very good impression in Chicago.<sup>8</sup>

On this occasion, Yella Hertzka talked to Jane Addams about her plans to organise the next WILPF Congress in Vienna.

### **The Third WILPF Congress in Vienna (1921)**

The decision in favour of Vienna as the congress location in 1921 was motivated by international political considerations. Drawing attention to the catastrophic food situation in Vienna and the severe economic

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<sup>8</sup> Jane Addams to Emily Greene Balch, 26 October 1920. UNOG, WILPF papers, reel 38.

condition of Austria was meant to reiterate the WILPF's protest against the Peace Treaty. The WILPF warned that the terms of the treaty would

create all over Europe discords and animosities which can only lead to future wars . . . By the financial and economic proposals a hundred million people of this generation in the heart of Europe are condemned to poverty, disease and despair . . . (WILPF 1919)

and these warnings were to be exemplified in the capital of a country affected by the treaty. The invitation to hold the next congress in Vienna was already issued in May 1919 "10 days after the armistice" (WILPF 1921, 14), but the final decision as to its date and place was not made until six months before the event. Since the British WILPF section intended to organise an international summer school in Salzburg following the congress, some favoured Salzburg as host city of both events. Laurie Cohen has pointed out that the enthusiasm for the Vienna WILPF Congress in 1921 was connected with the failure of the twenty-first Universal Peace Congress scheduled to take place in mid September 1914 in Vienna and cancelled due to the impending war (Cohen 2011, 517).

Another reason for assembling in Vienna was the aim to spread WILPF's ideas in the South Eastern and Eastern European countries, among them the Habsburg Monarchy's successor states, as well as to attract new members and to facilitate the founding of new sections in these countries. For this purpose, Emily Greene Balch went on a mission to the Balkans a few months before the congress. She travelled to Prague, Zagreb, Belgrade, Budapest, Bucharest and Sofia from April to May 1921. In Belgrade, she found it especially difficult to win new supporters for the Women's League, not least due to disapproval of the congress venue:

But the nationalistic feeling was strong, the fact of our meeting being in Vienna was, to some, a too bitter pill to swallow.<sup>9</sup>

Internationalising Eastern Europe was to become a central agenda of the WILPF, promoted not least by Yella Hertzka, who presided over WILPF's Eastern European Commission in the mid-1920s after Catherine Marshall's withdrawal due to illness. Yella Hertzka also got involved in WILPF's Minority Commission dealing above all with Eastern and South

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<sup>9</sup> Emily Greene Balch to members of WILPF Executive Committee (copy of a letter from Miss Balch to Frau Hertzka), Sofia, 27 April 1921. UNOG, WILPF papers, reel 38.

Eastern Europe, which was identified early by WILPF members as a region with insufficient minority rights.

The Third WILPF Vienna Congress dealt with a wide range of issues discussing educational questions, the League of Nations, the military use of colonized populations, free trade, the revision of the peace treaties, pacifism in practice, disarmament, questions of nationality, national minorities and how to interest young people. The programme of the congress placed international aid for the needy and starving population of the defeated countries in the forefront. Although the Women's League primarily pursued objectives other than charity work, many of its members were involved in relief actions for the starving people in Germany, Austria and elsewhere at the end of and following World War I.

The WILPF became a partner organisation of international relief organisations and the WILPF sections served as their local contacts. Since the caring activity has traditionally been assigned to women, famine relief united above all women pacifists from countries with differing war experiences. Furthermore, local relief work was likely to increase the WILPF's prestige and hence to promote its goals. Highlighting international aid was regarded as an antidote to nationalism and as a means of triggering positive attitudes towards former enemy countries, as evoked by Jane Addams at the First International Congress of Women in Zurich:

Let us remember that this distribution of food may be made a holy thing. It may be made the basis of the new internationalism . . . (WILPF [1920], 195)

Participants at the First International Congress of Women still recalled Else Beer-Angerer's speech in which she described children and the old starving and dying in large numbers for lack of food and medication in Vienna. In her opening address to the Vienna Congress in 1921, Yella Hertzka recalled Jane Addams' journey through Europe after the armistice and her courageous appeals to her countrymen to help the defeated country's starving population, she reminded listeners of the Anglo-American "Mission of Friends," who came "not only to bring material help but to extend their friendship to a lonely and broken-down people" (WILPF [1921], 14), and she recalled the mothers of Switzerland, of Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Holland, Italy, England, and France, who took care of the children of their former enemies. Help also came from the British and the U.S. WILPF sections, who had collected and sent a significant amount of money. Yella Hertzka wrote to her close friend and co-worker Emily Greene Balch in January 1921:

Although I absolutely do not want these activities for the League I, unfortunately, have to deal personally with so much charity work. Sunday I received 3 ½ million kronen from the American Committee in New York for welfare purposes to distribute by myself, as well as an additional 200,000 marks earmarked exclusively for intellectuals. (Ich habe nun leider, trotzdem ich, wie Sie wissen, diese Tätigkeit für die Liga absolut nicht will, doch persönlich mit so viel Wohlfahrtsangelegenheiten zu tun. Sonntag erhielt ich von dem amerikanischen Comité in New York 3 ½ Kronen für Wohlfahrtszwecke zur persönlichen Verteilung. Ausserdem noch 200.000 Mark nur für geistig schaffende.)<sup>10</sup>

Some WILPF members were at the same time leading representatives in international relief organisations, thus close ties between the WILPF and the Society of Friends or the Fight the Famine Council were also due to double or multiple memberships. When the WILPF obtained a representative clubhouse in the Hofburg, this became a meeting point for foreign and local activists in international non-governmental organisations.

## **Economics and Peace**

Yella Hertzka's awareness of social injustice and the relations between economics and peace may be traced back to her activities in the Women's Association for Social Assistance Work, the founding of a horticultural school for women, and her involvement in the wild settlement movement in Vienna during World War I. All these projects were bound to the principle "help for self-help," and aimed at encouraging and facilitating economic independence, especially for women. The garden as a symbol of peace, hope and paradise had been chosen deliberately by the women's movement to represent their ideals. Propagating gardening was tied to considerations about the rural exodus in industrialised countries and the growing need for occupational opportunities for women. The founding of horticultural schools for women was a means of emphasising women's readiness to assume socio-political responsibility.

Wartime, too, highlighted the importance of gardens in view of self-sufficiency. Thus, allotment gardens formed an integral part of the Viennese wild settlement movement. In the spring of 1915, the journal of the General Austrian Women's Association *Neues Frauenleben* published an article about horticulture as a women's profession. The author reported on Yella Hertzka's horticulture school and stressed one difference between

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<sup>10</sup> Yella Hertzka to Emily Greene Balch, 14 January 1921. UNOG, WILPF papers, reel 55.

the horticulture schools for women in Germany and Austria. He stated that students in the German schools worked towards employment in market gardens, sanatoriums, and manorial gardens, while Yella Hertzka is supposed to have prepared her students for economic independence and self-employment (Preissecker 1915, 84). Commercial training and horticultural business operations were at the top of the school's curriculum without neglecting landscape gardening. Preissecker also describes the measures taken by Yella Hertzka following the outbreak of war. Her school and the market garden focused on vegetable production and processing, particularly in offering voluntary training courses in vegetable gardening for unemployed factory workers, pupils, and teachers. Yella Hertzka took part in social welfare activities by setting up kitchen gardens for families, offering free courses on Sundays, and publishing leaflets to propagate vegetable gardening.

The participation of Otto Neurath as well as Anita Augspurg and Lida Gustava Heymann – both leading WILPF activists – in the Bavarian Soviet Republic (Münchener Räterepublik) may be the background for Neurath's acquaintance with Yella Hertzka in 1920, which was shaped by an international perspective and a common interest in economic and social questions in relation to peace. A few weeks after Neurath's release from Bavarian imprisonment, Hertzka wrote to Lida Gustava Heymann that she had discussed with Neurath the plan of a so-called Bureau for Statistical Preparatory Work to World Economic Planning (Büro für statistische Vorarbeit zum Weltwirtschaftsplan). Yella Hertzka asked for this item to be included in the programme of the WILPF. She also asked if Heymann thought they could afford to finance it and whether the WILPF German section was already campaigning for Neurath's project. A few months later Hertzka transmitted an appeal of Neurath's Research Institute for Social Economy (Forschungsinstitut für Gemeinwirtschaft) to the economist Emily Greene Balch, fired from Wellesley College due to her pacifist activities. At the end of 1921, Rosa Mayreder and Marie Goldscheid held a meeting for preliminary talks about the plan to edit an Encyclopedia of the World War. An outline for the never-published *Enzyklopädie des Weltkrieges* by Otto Neurath survived in the papers of the Austrian WILPF section – another example for the intellectual exchange on the consequences of war and on strategies for a peaceful future society in the aftermath of World War I (Kraeutler *et al.* 2011, 269f.).

At the Third WILPF Vienna Congress in 1921 Yella Hertzka brought in a resolution on "Co-operation Toward Ending Social Injustice," intended to prevent class struggle. In her speech to the Congress, she

connected the removal of social disparities with the objectives of the Women's League. Since economic dependence and existential insecurity make freedom of expression, and hence a commitment to pacifism, impossible, Yella Hertzka wanted to abolish the law of succession and to surrender property to all people. The ultimately adopted resolution urged the members to advocate

laws looking to the gradual abolition of property privileges (for instance by means of taxation, death duties, and land reform laws), and to the development of economic independence and individual freedom, and to work to awaken and strengthen among members of the possessing classes the earnest will to transform the economic system in the direction of social justice. (WILPF [1921], 261)

Yella Hertzka continued to push questions concerning economics and peace within the Women's League. Emily Greene Balch wrote in her obituary of Yella Hertzka: "The importance of the economic aspects of the problems that determine peace and war, and especially the matter of social justice always were emphatically present in her mind" (Balch 1949). Since the mid-1920s, the focus of WILPF's Economic Commission, presided over by Yella Hertzka, shifted however from approaches to legislative solutions to proposals to regulate economic issues in a democratic manner at international levels.

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## CHAPTER TEN

# “DO WOMEN WANT WAR OR PEACE?”: FEMALE PEACE ACTIVISTS IN FIRST WORLD WAR AUSTRIA

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In 1914, most Austrian men as well as women warmly welcomed war. Many Viennese women engaged in the Women's Relief Organisation (Frauenhilfswerk), a social organisation to support women's service in war.<sup>1</sup> The few peace activities of women were mainly concentrated in Vienna<sup>2</sup> and especially around the radical bourgeois General Austrian Women's Association (Allgemeine Österreichischer Frauenverein, or AÖFV),<sup>3</sup> which had been founded by Auguste Fickert (1855-1910) in 1893. A creative women's movement existed in Vienna as early as the second half of the nineteenth century. Socialist as well as Catholic and bourgeois women engaged in societies, published journals, stood up/advocated for the vote, for education for women, for better payment of women, just to name a few topics. The focus of their engagement was diverse. Socialist and some bourgeois societies were engaged in transnational

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<sup>1</sup> See Healy 2002, who particularly stresses the connection of bourgeois, Catholic, Jewish, and socialist women in this organisation.

<sup>2</sup> Sporadic peace activities can also be traced in some other Austrian cities. In 1917 in Linz, for instance, the social democrat journal published the poem “O, dass doch endlich Friede werde!” (Oh, might peace come after all!); see Gabriella Hauch 2013, 160-161.

<sup>3</sup> The number of members of the AÖFV varied between 200 and 300, which means that it was a small but committed group, many of its members being teachers or officials by profession. The group represented a broad political programme that contained education, marriage reform as well as suffrage and the improvement of working conditions of women, juridical advice and the publication of the monthly periodical *Neues Frauenleben*.

networks of the women's movement and had contact with the International Alliance of Women, whereas Catholic women stood for better education of women, but did not favour women's suffrage. Almost all of them agreed in differences between men and women, but also emphasized their equal rights. The concept of spiritual motherhood was generally accepted. But we have to keep in mind, as Maureen Healy stated, that only a small percentage of women engaged in this movement.

The socialist women's organisation views about war were ambivalent. Their best-known representative was Adelheid Popp (1869-1939), who was the secretary of the *Arbeiterinnen-Zeitung* from 1892.<sup>4</sup>

The best-known peace activist at this time was Nobel Peace Prize winner Bertha von Suttner (see Cohen 2005), who died two weeks before war began. In 1891 she had founded the *Österreichische Gesellschaft der Friedensfreunde*, which was welcomed by 2,000 people from the whole monarchy. She published the periodical *Die Waffen nieder!* which was renamed *Friedenswarte* in 1899 and was mainly led by the later Nobel Peace Prize winner Alfred Hermann Fried (1864-1921). Their pacifistic concept trusted in the power of the peace movement to influence rulers to end war and in the possibilities of international arbitration law, peace education and disarmament and organizations between nations: *zwischenstaatliche Organisationen* (Müller-Kampel 2005, 155ff.). As early as October 1914 Fried and his wife Therese had to flee from Austria to Switzerland because he was informed that he already was persecuted (Göhring 2011, 199). This shows how endangered peace activists were and how severely the state treated peace activists.

In my analysis, I will concentrate on the reconstruction of peace activities of women in Vienna and the gender images that built the basis of their argumentation. Even though there exists a broad literature about the events of war, these questions have been studied insufficiently.<sup>5</sup>

Members of big women's societies, for instance the big umbrella organisation National Council of Women Austria (Bund österreichischer Frauenvereine) or the Catholic women's movement, saw it as their duty to support the state and therefore war. In the May issue of the latter's periodical *Der Bund* Daisy Minor (1860-1927), also active in the Austrian Women's Suffrage Committee (Frauenstimmrechtskomitee) wrote:

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<sup>4</sup> See Hauch 2009. On the division of the bourgeois and proletarian Women's Movement, see Boxer 2010. Recently, Gisela Bock (2014) proposed the term "Civic Women's Movement."

<sup>5</sup> Generally, on the Austrian Women's Movement, see Anderson 1992. On the Women's Peace Movement in Austria, see Flich 1987 and Lackner 2005.

But we Austrian women feel as one with our country and our people, and despite the deep shock which the suffering and horror of war bring, we cannot, detached of our men, advocate for peace, but we have to fulfil our duties completely, which the fatherland demands, we have to keep up, like the combatant in the trench. (Minor 1915, 10)

In March 1915 the journalist and suffrage activist and member of the AÖFV Olga Misař<sup>6</sup> questioned this frequently stressed narrative of female duty:

We women quest for equal rights as citizens . . . But, is it so clear that the best proof of the maturity of citizens is to solve conflicts as men do or, more correctly, a better part of men can solely imagine to do? . . . As women, we must accept that, in this moment when the most important interests of humanity are at stake, it would be the lesser evil if one accused us wrongly of lacking civic understanding than correctly of lacking human emotion. It is the main argument, on which we base our demand for equal rights in the state, to attribute higher importance to the natural human emotion. (Misař 1915a)

Based on ideas of gender difference she argued with human emotions ascribed to women and turned around the point, using this as a reason for the necessary political intervention of women.

In the same volume of the journal *Neues Frauenleben* and at the same time in the *Arbeiterinnen-Zeitung*, the German suffrage activist Lida Gustava Heymann (1868-1943) published “Eine Frage” (A Question) and asked “Frauen Europas, wann erschallt euer Ruf?” (Women of Europe, when do you let your call sound?). There she emphasized the duties of women to work for peace:

Meet in the north or south of Europe, protest powerful against the genocidic war and prepare peace, return home into your fatherland and repeat the call, carry out your duty as women and mothers as keeper of true culture and humanness. (Heymann 1915a, 1915b)

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<sup>6</sup> Olga Misař (1876, Vienna – 1950, London), journalist, writer, translator, peace activist was from 1923 onwards active in the Austrian group of the war resisters and the War Resisters International. She worked in the Austrian group of the Women’s International for Peace and Freedom as translator and lecturer and writer. In 1939 she emigrated to London, and later on lived in Huddersfield. She was married to the freemason, mathematician and peace activist Wladimir Misař (1872-1963). The author is currently writing her biography.

In the *Neues Frauenleben* of April 1915, 21 women signed a call for the organisation of a conference against war to be held in The Hague (see Oesch 2014, 167-168). The journal collected about one thousand further signatures for peace as well as for the material support to send Leopoldine Kulka (1872-1920) and Olga Misaf, “the driving force in this matter” (Gerber and Kulka 1918), to the Hague Conference.

Leopoldine Kulka was a leading figure in the AÖFV and published plenty of articles about women’s issues. She had known Bertha von Suttner since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when she started to engage in the peace topic (Cohen 2005).<sup>7</sup> In 1914, she translated part of the book *Women and Labour* dealing with woman and war, by the South African socialist and suffragist Olive Schreiner, into German. The text emphasises the important role of women in a particular way:

It is not because women are too timid or unable, not because their moral is a higher one that she will end war as soon as her voice can generally, decisively and clearly be heard by the governments – but because in this point and nearly only in this point the knowledge of woman, simply as woman, is superior to the one of man. She knows the story of human flesh, she knows what it costs, he does not. (Schreiner 1914, 718)

### **The First International Congress of Women, The Hague, 1915**

The importance of this convention is widely discussed in Women’s and Gender history,<sup>8</sup> but has not found its way into general studies of World War I. In Vienna, the congress was discussed in a number of publications. The socialist journalist Lotte Pohl (1873-1941) wrote critically in the *Arbeiterinnen-Zeitung*:

Among so many intrinsically good, in their tendency and their radical impetus and frankness creditable speeches was nearly none, which broke the predominantly emotional concept and tied up to the determining economic facts or traced the political driving powers of war. (Pohl 1915a)<sup>9</sup>

However, on the other hand, she complimented the courage in talking about taboo topics like rape in wartime: “Also the particular dangers and

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<sup>7</sup> On Leopoldine Kulka, see Elisabeth Malleier, 2001, 48-59, and Cohen 2005, 82f.

<sup>8</sup> Regina Braker 1995; Leila J. Rupp 1997; Maria Grazia Suriano 2015.

<sup>9</sup> On (Char)Lotte Pohl-Glas see Geber 2013, 53-54; Hauch 2009, passim.

suffering of women in wartime, as it is represented in rape, were frankly debated” (Pohl 1915b).

After the Congress, a meeting was organised in Vienna on 18<sup>th</sup> May 1915. The *Arbeiterinnen-Zeitung* stated appreciatively: The AÖFV had the merit, faithful to its tradition since the foundation, of keeping up the banner of internationality and peace in this time of hatred between peoples.<sup>10</sup> Around thirty women attended this meeting in which the National Committee for Permanent Peace (Nationale Ausschuß für dauernden Frieden) was founded (Wilmers 2008, 60), which was converted after the war into the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom. The reports by Leopoldine Kulka and Olga Misař about the Hague congress and the speech of the well-known philosopher, author and suffrage activist Rosa Mayreder (1858-1938),<sup>11</sup> who for personal reasons could not attend the congress, were published in *Neues Frauenleben*.

Leopoline Kulka first addressed the difficulties that some women had in attending the congress, either because their passport requests were denied or they were refused travel between England and The Netherlands (Kulka 1915). She then stressed the unity and friendship between women of belligerent countries, for instance, between German and Belgian women – a unity which new research has exposed as a myth (Wilmers 2005). Kulka thereafter summarized the speeches of Aletta Jacobs, Rosika Schwimmer from Hungary, Dr. Zofia Daszyńska-Golińska from Poland, Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence from England, Dr. Augspurg from Germany, and Jane Addams from the U.S. Kulka also mentioned and welcomed the greetings by the Socialist Women’s International, which were submitted in the name of Clara Zetkin (the Socialist women had had their own peace congress in Bern, Switzerland from 26<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> March 1915; no Austrian women could attend this conference). Olga Misař talked about the results of the congress: the need for suffrage, peace education, a court of arbitration for international conflicts, disarmament, free trade and freedom of the seas. In her speech she also stressed the topic of motherhood, a well-known topos at this time:

Although now a large number of organised women in all countries act too rational and listen, in their pride of newly awakened national consciousness, more to political considerations than to purely human ones, it is still certain that the elementary power of motherliness will penetrate again and that the majority of women will be under its spell and act under

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<sup>10</sup> *Arbeiterinnen-Zeitung* 1915, 24(11), 1.

<sup>11</sup> Much research has been done on Rosa Mayreder: see Edith Prost 1983; Anderson 1988; Witzmann (ed.) 1989.

its influence. Therefore, it appears as one of the most important preconditions for securing peace in the future to provide proper influence for female way of thinking in interior and exterior politics. (Misař 1915b, 108)

Mrs. Wolf-Cirian informed about “Continuous Mediation” and the creation of a permanent mediation office between belligerent countries (Misař 1915b, 111).

The *Arbeiterinnen-Zeitung* also reported on the meeting:

The wife of a Hofrat (a high rank state official), Mrs. Lecher, never paid attention to politics, she never attended assemblies, but she works in a hospital and therefore sees on her patients how horrible war is. As she read the invitation of the peace congress in The Hague, she immediately decided to go there. Her speech should have been very impressive. The meeting (in Vienna) was the second she ever attended.<sup>12</sup>

Women engaged in peace politics had close ties to the peace movement in Austria. Olga Misař wrote about the First International Congress of Women in The Hague for *Friedens-Warte*, the journal that was published by Alfred Hermann Fried, stating that the main goal of the meeting was international solidarity (Misař 1915c). In a letter of 5<sup>th</sup> May to Aletta Jacobs, she tried to include the greetings of the Austrian Society of the Friends of Peace (Österreichische Gesellschaft der Friedensfreunde) to the publication of the Hague Congress.<sup>13</sup>

The organizers of the Hague Congress started a tour across Europe to visit statesmen in charge to discuss peace politics with them and attract publicity for the discourse. On 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1915, Aletta Jacobs and Jane Addams reached Vienna. They were able to talk to the minister of foreign affairs, Count von Stürgkh, and of internal affairs, Baron Burian. In her memoirs, Jacobs wrote about the meeting with Stürgkh:

We told him our little story, and he said nothing. I never have a great deal of self-confidence – I am never so dead sure I am doing the right thing, and I said to him: ‘It perhaps seems to you very foolish that women should go about in this way; but after all, the world itself is so strange in this war situation that our mission may be no more strange nor foolish than the rest.’ He banged his fist on the table. ‘Foolish?’ he said. ‘Not at all. These are the first sensible words that have been uttered in this room for ten months.’ He continued: ‘That door opens from time to time, and people come in to say, “Mr. Minister, we must have more ammunition, we must

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<sup>12</sup> *Arbeiterinnen-Zeitung* 1915, 24(11), 1-2.

<sup>13</sup> UNOG, WILPF papers, Reel 55, 19.

have more money or we cannot go on with this war.” At last the door opens and two people walk in and say: “Mr. Minister, why not substitute negotiations for fighting?” They are the sensible ones.’ He thanked us for our visit and said this is the first time in eight months that someone’s talked sense in this office. (Jacobs 1996, 87)<sup>14</sup>

The following day they met the foreign minister:

May 27th. Graf Burian, the Foreign Minister, said that he thought that a conference as proposed should be brought together as soon as possible. He did not think that America should begin because America did not know enough about European interests. He thought that America should send a representative to the Conference but that it ought to be someone who understood European interests. Mr. Wilson’s way of offering mediation was impossible because it was only offered, if the belligerent wanted it. Both parties were obliged to say no. He did not consider that the right way to offer mediation. He thought that definite propositions should be made to both parties. The neutrals can come again with proposals, if the first are not accepted. (Degen 1939, 98)

After giving a talk in the Vienna Frauenklub in the Tuchlauben 11 in the first district, in which Yella Hertzka was active, Jacobs travelled to Bern while Addams went to Budapest. The National Committee for Permanent Peace went on with its activities and tried to get a public for a peace discourse, which was not easy in a time of censorship. But they could only act on a small scale, collecting addresses of women who were interested in peace, organising small lectures in a small scale, while they continued their communication with women in Amsterdam. However, the possibilities for public peace politics were narrow, an experience, which also the German peace activist Lida Gustava Heymann described in her memoirs, written 1941 in her Zurich exile (Heymann 1972, 152-54). How difficult it was to organize political meetings concerning peace also becomes obvious in the publication of *Para Pacem* in April 1917:

Because the holding of speeches and rallies were not possible for the society until lately, the executive committee arranged convivial gatherings, which enable the members on the one side, to express their wishes about the efforts that should be pursued by the society on the other side to inform themselves about the recent status of “Völkerverständigung,” about new prints of literature.” (=Da die Abhaltung von Vorträgen und Versammlungen

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<sup>14</sup> See also Mineke Bosch 2005, 554; Marie Louise Degen 1939, 98. Stürgkh was shot in October 1916 by Friedrich Adler, son of the Socialist Party leader Viktor Adler.

dem Verbands bis in die letzte Zeit nicht möglich war, veranstaltete der Vorstand gesellige Zusammenkünfte, welche es den Mitgliedern einerseits ermöglichen, ihren Wünschen über die zu verfolgenden Bestrebungen des Verbandes Ausdruck zu geben, andererseits (sic!) sich über den gegenwärtigen Stand der Völkerverständigungsbewegung, über Erscheinungen der Literatur etc. zu informieren.)<sup>15</sup>

The above-mentioned Miss Helene Lecher-Rosthorn published in the periodical of the society Para Pacem Österreichischer Verband für Völkerverständigung on the occasion of the “Jahreskriegsjubiläum”:

What do men want from us? . . . Should we go on doing our little healing-and poor services? Should we go on weeping and moaning in secrecy, break down in our weakness? Should we build an alliance giving the world no more kids? (=Was wollen die Männer von uns? . . . Sollen wir weiter die kleinen Wund- und Armenpflegedienste leisten? Sollen wir weiter verborgen weinen und klagen, in unserer Schwäche zusammenbrechen? Sollen wir uns verbünden, der Welt keine Kinder mehr zu geben?)<sup>16</sup>

Adolf Müller, a former member of the Österreichische Gesellschaft der Friedensfreunde had founded the society Para Pacem in 1913, which stood for the solving of conflicts by arbitration. The lawyer and well-known pacifist Heinrich Lammasch, also active in the Österreichische Gesellschaft der Friedensfreunde, was honorary president; the other members of the society were mainly academics and public officers. The *Verbands-Mitteilungen*, about 40 pages in length, was published from 1915-1917. It contained information about Kundgebungen für die Völkerverständigung, as well as about important literature, from Tolstoy to Romain Rolland or Helene Stöcker.

Private records, which show the attitude to war of the great bulk of political not organized people, has until now not been sufficiently analysed. However, an extensive discourse and longing for peace can be found in army postal letters. Even though heavy censorship existed, peace demands were frequently raised. After only two months of war, we find the claims: “As we understand, peace negotiations should have been started by America! If it is true? Who is further for war is no human at all;” and in September 1916: “For months one does not get any letters on

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<sup>15</sup> Gesellige Zusammenkünfte der Mitglieder, *Para Pacem*, Heft 5/6, April 1917, 26.

<sup>16</sup> Zum Jahres-Kriegsjubiläum, *Para Pacem*, Heft 1/2, September 1915, 15.

active service, in which it is not lamented for peace” (Ulrich and Ziemann 2008, 41, 43 and here 47).<sup>17</sup>

As early as August 1914, and in opposition to party and union, the socialist women opted determinedly against war in their *Arbeiterinnen-Zeitung*. Their goal had always been the understanding and friendship between the peoples and in this spirit they tried to influence working women and wives of workers. In a correspondence between the Frauenreichskomitee and the British female comrades both sides underlined not to have wanted the war, “neither this nor another war. ... We think with sympathy of the English, but also of the French and Russian working women” (Augeneder 1987, 181-82).

In autumn 1914 the supply of food got worse in Vienna, meaning an increase in prices and later on the well-known queueing up for food rations for whole nights. But not only was food lacking as war went on, but also cloth and fuel went short. This meant increased work for women, who had to work and organize households at the so-called “home front.”

From 1916 to 1917 the winter was very grim and the difficult material situation in Austria increased. Malnourishment, hunger and frost kept the population occupied. Margarete Grandner and Maureen Healy have described the situation in detail.<sup>18</sup>

## Peace activities in 1916

In 1916, only a few articles dealing with the topic of peace appeared in the *Arbeiterinnen-Zeitung*. On the occasion of Women’s Day, many regional groups organised meetings and suffrage and peace were discussed in this newspaper.

At a meeting of the Socialist Party in November 1916, Therese Schlesinger introduced a resolution to support all male and female comrades who were prosecuted because of their peace engagement.<sup>19</sup> This verbal support was presumably meant for Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. In December 1916, the women of the AÖFV opened a library for literature on peace, and in the *Neues Frauenleben* articles For Peace and Agreements between Peoples (Für Frieden und Völkerverständigung) were published continuously (Wilmers 2008, 62).

Women of belligerent nations frequently exchanged greetings, which was an essential part of international (women’s) peace-culture. In December

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<sup>17</sup> In Ebert 2014, it is stated that from spring 1917 onwards the longing for peace was mentioned in many letters.

<sup>18</sup> Margarete Grandner, 2013, 558-565; Maureen Healy, 2013, 150-161.

<sup>19</sup> *Arbeiterinnen-Zeitung*, 14 November 1916, 26(23): 2.

1915, a three-page Christmas greeting of English women to the women in Germany and Austria (*Weihnachtsgruss englischer Frauen an die Frauen in Deutschland und Österreich*) appeared in the *Neues Frauenleben*, which was heavily censored.<sup>20</sup> Especially at Christmas time the peace discourse grew stronger, a development that also can be found in the years that followed.

In August 1916, the German women answered a salutation of the French women, which was published in the *Arbeiterinnen-Zeitung* as well as in the *Neues Frauenleben*:

With kind emotions of warm thankfulness German women have received your greetings and greet you back in the same sense. We think like you! We feel like you! We suffer like you!<sup>21</sup>

Intentionally they used instruments of rhetoric to strengthen the impression of their writing. In April 1917, they sent the message “Salutations and the request to transmit warmest congratulations for the full victory of freedom in their fatherlands to the heroic female fighters in Russia and Finland. Through freedom to peace!”<sup>22</sup> One month later the *Arbeiterinnen-Zeitung* informed readers about peace activities in France, Italy, England, and Russia.<sup>23</sup>

On 21<sup>st</sup> January 1917, the socialist women started again with intensified peace activities. They called for a big meeting that Gabriele Proft (1879-1971)<sup>24</sup> and Amalie Pölzer (1871-1924) led and which was well attended by nearly 1,000 people (Keller 2014, 34). The talk given by Adelheid Popp was printed word for word in the *Arbeiterinnen-Zeitung*. She reminded the audience that as early as November 1912, peace assemblies were held against the Baltic wars, and that the then estimated numbers of dead, wounded and crippled in a next war had by now already been exceeded for each country. In spring 1917 German as well as Austrian workers started to strike, influenced by the February revolution in Russia, but also due to worsening working and living conditions.

It seems to have been very courageous that some women of the AÖFV founded a “peace party” in December 1917. They were probably influenced

<sup>20</sup> *Neues Frauenleben* 17(2) (1915), 2.

<sup>21</sup> *Arbeiterinnen-Zeitung* 26(16) (1916), 7.

<sup>22</sup> *Neues Frauenleben* 19(4) (1917), 88.

<sup>23</sup> *Arbeiterinnen-Zeitung*, 5. Dezember 1916, Nr. 24, 1.

<sup>24</sup> Gabriele Proft was elected member for the Vienna City Council in 1918; from 1919 onwards she served in the National Assembly for the Social Democratic Party. Amalie Pölzer served in the town council for the same party.

by the American Women's Peace Party, which was formed in January 1915, with Jane Addams as chairwoman. Austrian women were at least already well informed about the American party by the *Neues Frauenleben* in March 1915.<sup>25</sup>

The Austrian Peace Party published leaflets called Peace pamphlets (*Friedenshefte*), and organised many lectures, meetings, and speeches. They built a pedagogical group that worked together with teachers on a reform of history education.<sup>26</sup> Else Beer-Angerer<sup>27</sup> took over the leadership of this organisation, which formulated working for a negotiated peace (*Verständigungsfrieden*) as its main goal. Altogether, their aim was not a small one:

to strive for peace for the world by changing the order of our society based on the right of existence for individuals as well as for peoples, based on common organisation and mutual help.<sup>28</sup>

In 1916, Leopoldine Kulka had published the following statement in *Jus Suffragii*, the journal of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance:

Those who uphold war are always telling us that struggle is a law of nature. But as certain as this law of struggle, discovered by the great Englishman Darwin, there exists a second law, that of mutual help. The great Russian Kropotkin, in his investigation has discovered and proved what a tremendous part this law plays in the whole animal world and in the case of primitive man, and also in our existence which is so apparently full of strife. To bring it to its fullest development is the task of our civilisation. And to whom should this law appeal more, who could feel more at once with it, than woman?<sup>29</sup>

Kropotkin's book *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* had already been published in 1902, was translated into German in 1904 by Gustav Landauer, and seems to have been widely read.

On Sunday, 28<sup>th</sup> January 1917, a meeting with the topic "The peace proposals and women" (*Die Friedensvorschläge und die Frauen*) was organised. Else Beer-Angerer, Leopoldine Kulka and Rosika Schwimmer spoke. The meeting was also attended by members of other societies, such as the New Women's Club (*Neuer Frauenklub*), in which Yella Hertzka

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<sup>25</sup> *Neues Frauenleben* 17(3) (1915), 65.

<sup>26</sup> *Neues Frauenleben* 20(1-2) (1918), 21f.

<sup>27</sup> Her birth and death dates are unclear.

<sup>28</sup> *Neues Frauenleben* 20(4-5) (1918), 88.

<sup>29</sup> *Jus Suffragii*, 1 April 1916, 95.

was active, Para Pacem, the Association of Abstinent Women (Vereinigung abstinenter Frauen), the women's group of the Ethical Society, and the Women's Suffrage Committee (Frauenstimmrechtskomitee).<sup>30</sup> The convention took place in Vienna's first district and was attended by around 500 persons, mostly women, but also officers of the War Surveillance Office (Kriegsüberwachungsamt=KÜA) and police officers. A police officer also wrote down Kulka's speech, which offered the following statements:

Is it the government on the conference table, who makes war or the sons of the populace? In Russia, in France, in England, yes even in England, the hearts of the mothers are bleeding. If every man had to go to the trench, peace would be here in one week! . . . It is of great satisfaction for the women that their "utopian" demands of the The Hague Conference, peace without victors and vanquished, freedom of the seas and disarmament, are today the requirements of Wilson.<sup>31</sup>

The same police officer wrote about Rosika Schwimmer's speech:

. . . she rose accusations against all men, who had the right to vote and did not advocate for the organisation between the states and accused also women to have sinned on their children. One should have eradicated militarism as an institution (because of that statement she was interrupted by this author).<sup>32</sup>

An official of the War Surveillance Office gave also a vivid description of the speech of Rosika Schwimmer, persistently addressing her by her German name "Rosa":

In the second part of her speech . . . Rosa Schwimmer . . . explained that the intentions of Wilson, whom she knows better than the European diplomats know him, are interpreted wrongly and with bad intentions by the circles here. As a proof, she said that Wilson, as she knows from personal talks with him, by no means thinks about tearing off the nations from Austria, which want to stay with her.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> This society was founded in 1906. One of its leading activists was Ernestine von Fürth (1877-1946), but Olga Misař was also active in this group, showing how tightly the distinct networks were interwoven.

<sup>31</sup> Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv, KÜA, 1917, 5760.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv, KÜA, 1917, 6116.

Schwimmer had been to the United States in 1914 and was also present when the American Women's Peace Party had been founded; thus it was probably she who influenced the women of the AÖFV (Schott 1997, 39).

The gathering was also attended by another police officer, who wrote in his statement:

They welcome the peace rallies of the organised workers and demand particularly from the bourgeoisie and their press also to confirm their desire for peace incessantly, not to raise the suspicion that they possibly themselves were accomplices or instruments of those circles, who, in shameful greed, have an interest to prolong the war. They address the demand to the women and men of the hostile countries to tell the world that they also want peace and that it is against their will if their governments lay the curse of war upon mankind any longer.<sup>34</sup>

In May 1917 widespread strikes of working women and men started in Vienna. The next cycle of gatherings of the AÖFV women began at the end of November 1917. Between 19<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> November seven meetings were organised, each of them attended by about 400 people. An officer of the War Surveillance Office noted:

After the gathering of November 22 had ended at about a quarter past nine in the evening, some 200 women, shouting "We want the peace!" marched in the Ringstrasse and tried to get to the office of the war minister, but were pushed aside at the Wollzeile. One woman was arrested, because she did not obey the police.<sup>35</sup>

The meeting of 24<sup>th</sup> November, held in the Hotel Bayrischer Hof in which the district head (*Bezirksvorsteher*) Dr. Leopold Blasel, the editor of *Der Abend*, Axel Goldberg, as well as the women Olga Misař and Anitta Müller (Hecht 2008) gave speeches, was attended by about a thousand people and, in general, proceeded quietly, as the KÜA stated. It was the main interest of the police that the meetings were held calmly. They explicitly did not want any public demonstrations on the streets:

At the end of the meeting about a quarter past nine in the evening 400 participants formed a demonstration, but were pushed aside by the police. As soon as they wanted to cross the Aspernbrücke to come to the 1<sup>st</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv, KÜA, 1917, Z 3439.

<sup>35</sup> Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv, KÜA 6116.

district they were dispersed. Likewise, their attempt to cross the Ferdinandsbrücke to reach the 1<sup>st</sup> district was thwarted.<sup>36</sup>

Ernestine von Fürth,<sup>37</sup> an activist of the Suffrage Committee (Stimmrechtskommittee), wrote about a peace assembly in December 1917:

This longing of the Austrian women for a negotiated peace was expressed by a considerable number of rallies, which the *Allgemeine Österreichische Frauenverein* convened in the course of the last weeks. These gatherings took place in different districts of Vienna and everywhere they were so crowded that hundreds of persons who wanted to get in had to be refused. (Fürth 1917, 1)

The meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> December held in the Kolosseum was also packed and the speakers, Leopoldine Kulka, Dr. Touaillon<sup>38</sup> and Max Adler,<sup>39</sup> caused frantic acclamation with their statements. In the other meetings, the women Elsa Beer-Angerer, Yella Hertzka, Anita Müller, Olga Misař, Berta Pauli<sup>40</sup> and Dr. Laura Stricker<sup>41</sup> and the gentlemen Colbert, Herbst, RA. Dr. Ofner and RA. Zenker spoke.

At the same time, and as a matter of course, in all these meetings the demand of democratisation of political life and the adjudication of the active and passive suffrage for women was also raised (Fürth 1917, 1).

These activities demonstrate how close the interlinkings between women working for suffrage and the peace movement were. Women and men working together, a frequent constellation in the bourgeois women's movement, is also observed in this gathering. Julius Ofner, the lawyer and member of the Reichsrat, supported many petitions of the AÖFV and advocated for a reform of the law for domestic servants (Misař 1915d, 4). Another member of the Reichsrat, the journalist, writer and activist of the Marriage Reform Association (Eherechtsreformverein), Ernst Viktor

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<sup>36</sup> Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv, KÜA, 6391.

<sup>37</sup> Ernestine von Fürth (1877, Prague – 1946, Washington, D.C.). Founder of the Stimmrechtskommittee. On her, see Malleier 2001, 59-65.

<sup>38</sup> Dr. Christiane Touaillon (1878–1928), German philologist and member of the AÖFV.

<sup>39</sup> Max Adler (1873–1937), jurist and social philosopher.

<sup>40</sup> Berta Pauli (1878–1927), journalist.

<sup>41</sup> Dr. Laura Stricker-Polányi, educationalist and feminist; see Judith Szapor 2005. Stricker moved with her husband from Budapest to Vienna in 1913.

Zenker<sup>42</sup>, founded in 1919 the German Middle-Class Party (Deutsche Mittelstandspartei), in which Olga Misar stood for election.

The AÖFV women did not have any family networks and access as the well-known salonière Berta Zuckerkandl (1864, Vienna – 1945, Paris) had. Her father Moritz Szeps was a friend of Crown Prince Rudolf and publisher of a newspaper. Berta herself was the sister-in-law of the French politician Georges Clemenceau; her sister Sophie had married Paul Clemenceau, the brother of Georges in 1886. With her salon, frequented mostly by artists and writers, she had access to influential political circles. In 1916, Olga Misar transmitted her address to the women of the International Committee for Permanent Peace in Amsterdam. Zuckerkandl used her kinship connection for peace negotiations with France (Meysels 1984). This is not the place to deal with her activities extensively, but it seems remarkable that a woman tried to intervene in foreign policy personally, even though her efforts remained ineffective.

At a party convention of the Socialist Party in autumn 1917 Anna Kaff read a resolution:

The social democratic party should immediately insist that the government in parliament explains in clear and unequivocal words that it is ready for peace based on the Russian formula, without any annexation and with an approval of the right of self-determination of the peoples . . . This project should be supported by the social democratic party with organising mass demonstrations for peace all over the country. (Augeneder 1987, 207-208)

During the big January strike in 1918, in which around 700,000 workers participated, the peace assemblies continued. On 23<sup>rd</sup> January, the AÖFV and the Peace Party were invited to the Konzerthausaal for a meeting on the topic “Peace in danger,” where the German-National school director August M. Kemetter, Else Beer-Angerer and the deputy to the national assembly, Ernst Viktor Zenker declared their solidarity with the working class and demanded that parliament create a committee for foreign policy.<sup>43</sup> From 20<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> March the Peace Party held three assemblies. In their statements, the three above-mentioned speakers demanded in particular that returning prisoners of war should not be sent back to the front again. In April 1918, however, the Austrian women who intended to participate at the International Women’s Conference on

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<sup>42</sup> Ernst Viktor Zenker, journalist and writer, and active in many liberal societies, for example the Ehrechtsreformverein, published a history of Viennese journalism until 1848 in 1893.

<sup>43</sup> *Neues Frauenleben* 20(1-2) (1918) 20.

International Understanding (Internationalen Frauenkonferenz für Völkerverständigung) in Bern were refused passports.<sup>44</sup>

## Conclusion

The women who worked for peace during the war were only a small group, who had been politically active earlier. Even when they raised their voices, they had to transcend many difficulties to get heard. This meant they had few opportunities to reach the public, get their articles published or organize meetings.

During the war they went on using their international networks, worked together with men, and transgressed their previous engagements in politics that had dealt mainly with women's issues. Against all odds of surveillance and censorship they were able to form a different discourse from warmongering during wartime.

Some of them continued their engagement for peace in the post-war period on a regional as well as on a transnational level. Thus, they also contributed to "paving the way for a new pacifism in the post-war period," as Bruna Bianchi stated recently in a transnational context (Bianchi, 2014, 176-194).

When Leopoldine Kulka died very shortly after the war in 1920, women's movement publications all over Europe published obituaries. Jane Addams described her appearance at the Zurich Conference in 1919:

She was so shrunken and changed that I had much difficulty in identifying her with the beautiful woman I had seen three years before. She was not only emaciated as by a wasting illness, looking as if she needed immediate hospital care . . . (Addams 1945, 158-59)

Olga Misař took her peace engagement forward on a national and international level, especially with the War Resisters and in the WILPF (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom). She organized international conferences, spoke at anti-war demonstrations, published and translated, delivered a lot of papers also on anarchism, until she had to leave Austria to flee into exile in London in 1939.

Yella Hertzka continued activities in the WILPF and organized its Third Vienna Congress. Together with Olga Misař she formed the "political group" of the Austrian branch of the WILPF. Moreover, she was active in the gardening school that she had founded, until she was forced to leave Austria, also going into exile in England. Anitta Müller carried on

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<sup>44</sup> *Neues Frauenleben* 20/4-5 (1918), 88; see also C[lara] R[ose] 2008, 60.

her care work, especially for Jewish children, and emigrated to Palestine in 1936.

And these were just a few.

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**PART THREE:**  
**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**  
**TOWARD FUTURE WORLD PEACE**

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

# WAR, PEACE, AND SUFFRAGE: THE FIRST ITALIAN SECTION OF THE WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM

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### **Introduction**

Following a thirty-year period of relative peace, the assassination in Sarajevo, and the spread of war in Europe, brought about a comprehensive overhaul of international relations and foreign policy. Such a change affected not only the leading players involved but also the entire world of international organizations, whose work had been consolidated throughout the nineteenth century.

The life and activities of associative movements came to a sudden standstill. All projects of an international solidarity nature, as well as the utopic construction of the "United States of Europe," disappeared from domestic debate, now wholly concentrated on questions such as national identity, loyalty to the nation-state and, obviously, war and its political use in the resolution of international disputes. The pacifist organizations with links to the International Peace Bureau on the whole supported their nation's political choices. This decision led to the breakup of European brotherhood within the national peace societies and the resulting break in relations with their German partners (Cooper 1991; Grossi 1996). While at policy level the idea to make use of international arbitration in order to deal with the ongoing crisis was abandoned, determined support was instead given to the call for U.S. military intervention in Europe (La Fontaine 1917, 1-11).

The reaction of the major women's organizations was no different although the resulting national loyalty in this case was driven by specific

emancipatory aspirations (Pieroni Bortolotti 1985; Cooper 1987, 52-75). The International Council of Women (ICW) and the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA) opted to suspend international activities and start up initiatives aimed at supporting the war effort since in the imminent context new opportunities would open up for women in terms of their self-assertion (Rupp 1997). The war enabled their access to jobs hitherto carried out by the male workforce and, in virtue of these openings, even the conviction that their support of government policy would speed up the process towards recognition of the right to vote became increasingly widespread (Thébaud 1992, 26-42). In the late summer of 1914, precisely the issue of the vote and the line to pursue to take in order to obtain it, led to yet another split within the women's movement.

A small minority, the more forward-thinking in the movement, realized that the suffrage cause could not be pursued effectively if it were detached from the peace cause. A militarized society would not be a desirable place for women, even if they were to obtain the vote. The bringing together of the two *isms* – feminism and pacifism – was to be the recurring theme of Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence and Rosika Schwimmer's American tour. The aim was to sensitize women in a neutral state like the United States on two questions: the need to tie the issue of suffrage in with that of peace; and the organization of an international campaign calling for a conference of neutral nations with the aim of bringing an end to the conflict in progress. The response was immediate. Jane Addams and Carrie Chapman Catt assembled over 3,000 women in Washington in January 1915, giving rise to the Women's Peace Party (WPP). The new organization gave voice to a combination of feminist, pacifist and progressive demands, as demonstrated by the eleven-point platform drawn up by WPP in order to redefine the basis of its foreign policy, and reach a mediated solution to the conflict. From that moment, women's opposition to the war became a real option in Europe, too. An example of this was the convocation of the International Congress of Women, which opened in The Hague on 28<sup>th</sup> April 1915, and was achieved in an extremely short time, approximately eight weeks (Vellacott 1987, 114-129; Rupp 1997, 13-48).

The bringing together of 1,136 women from both neutral and warring nations is in itself proof of the extraordinary nature and success of that assembly. It was also a just cause of pride for the participants and the organizers who, in the years to come, would indicate that gathering as the symbol of the radicalness of their initiative and of their distancing from ICW and IWSA, which would only return to pacifism in the post-war years. The Congress approved twenty resolutions, guidelines on theory and policy for the new organization's plans of action, as well as the

creation of a transitory body – the International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace (ICWPP). The activities of ICWPP were animated by the tireless enthusiasm of Aletta Jacobs and Rosa Manus, who, during the war years, ensured that the International Office in Amsterdam worked on the one hand to sensitize public opinion to the possibility that a mediated solution to the conflict could be reached, and give women a voice in overseas policy decision-making; on the other, to promote the creation of national committees. ICWPP had fulfilled its purpose with the end of the war when the second International Congress of Women, gathering in Zurich in 1919, decided to adopt a constitution, to establish its headquarters in the city which would host the League of Nations, and to change the name of the organization to WILPF. The change in outlook from a transitory phase of opposition to the war to a more moderate and stable phase of reflection on the causes of conflicts and their possible resolutions was a crucial passage for WILPF, bringing a definitive distancing from what had been the nineteenth-century model of an international women's organization (Macmillan 1915; Addams *et al.* 2003; Suriano 2012). In this context, the first Italian Section of WILPF was also created. The shortage of available documentation – mainly letters preserved in the archives of the League – allows only an initial reconstruction of events concerning this small group of pacifists who, from the late summer of 1914, either for their socialist leanings or previous adhesion to international suffragist groups, decided to demonstrate their opposition to the war and continued to adhere to their ideas even when Italy entered the war after its initial neutrality.

### **The Italian Section of WILPF**

Created as a national committee of the International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace, during the war years the Italian Section maintained contact with Amsterdam and later with the Geneva Office. Documents consulted paint a picture of a Section that, notwithstanding its precocious origins, remained rather peripheral with respect to the WILPF initiative capabilities. The Italian representatives were unable to actively participate at international meetings because of economic reasons and police controls, and did not take part in debates involving the other European Sections. Their initiatives were confined to the national/local arena.

The Section, established in 1915, comprised two Branches located in Milan and Rome. The original group was located in Lombardy and headed by Rosa Genoni, the only Italian present at the Congress held in The

Hague, while the capital's Branch was coordinated by Anita Dobelli-Zampetti. The latter was chosen by the International Secretariat as the Italian contact because of her knowledge of English. In fact, the Italian members had an excellent knowledge of French but not of English, and Rosa Genoni persisted in sending handwritten letters in pencil, which were often impossible to read.

Although there were two Branches, there was a single National Executive Committee comprising Enrichetta Chiaraviglio-Giolitti, Elisa Lollini-Agnini and Anita Dobelli-Zampetti, who represented the Rome Branch, while Rosa Genoni represented Milan. These were women who belonged to the world of women's associative and socialist movements. In particular, Dobelli, Genoni and Lollini wrote and signed articles appearing in *La difesa delle lavoratrici* and *Uguaglianza*, journals close to the Italian Socialist Party. Immediately after its foundation, this exiguous group of pacifists was considered a supporter of the enemy by the authorities, and as a result was subjected to the same controls reserved for the socialists opposed to Italy's entering the war (Dobelli-Zampetti 1919a).

The "subversive" activities, which could be linked to these women between 1915 and 1918, may appear of little significance if compared to the initiatives taken up by ICWPP in the same years, such as the diplomatic mission of peace envoys that lobbied European and the American governments (Addams *et al.* 2003, 82-84). Their value, however, has to be set against the reality of the country where persecution in the shape of surveillance and imprisonment affected more or less equally all those expressing opposition to the war (Bianchi 2013, 81-100).

Upon her return from the International Congress at The Hague, Rosa Genoni set up an ICWPP Branch in Milan; Anita Dobelli, for her part, was involved with arranging the Rome visit by the pacifist delegation – comprising Jane Addams, Anita Augspurg, Kathleen Courteney and Aletta Jacobs – without success. In response to a letter by Rosika Schwimmer of 11<sup>th</sup> May 1915, Anita Dobelli wrote that due to Italy's imminent entry into war (24<sup>th</sup> May) against Austria, the King and the ministers Antonio Salandra and Sidney Sonnino had refused to receive the ICWPP delegates. It was impossible for the Italian members to continue with the initiative, but – Dobelli suggested – the delegates themselves would be able to contact the American embassy in Rome to meet with the Italian authorities through the diplomatic channel (Dobelli-Zampetti 1915).

In spite of such difficulties and state control, the activities carried out by the two Italian Branches continued. In 1916 the police in Milan had prevented the wives of soldiers imprisoned in Austria from demonstrating against the Red Cross. The humanitarian organization was held

responsible for not delivering parcels to the prisoners, who were dying of illness and hunger in the Austrian prisons. This episode gave rise to the first official initiative by the Italian Section: a campaign collecting signatures for the release of all prisoners of war. At the same time, Rosa Genoni began holding weekly meetings dedicated to the work of ICWPP at the Università Popolare in Milan. The propaganda campaign attracted police attention and more than once her home was searched and registers containing the names of supporters of the Milan committee were confiscated (Dobelli-Zampetti 1919a, 3).

During the two-year period from 1917 to 1918, another initiative of a humanitarian nature was promoted and led to a fight much felt by Italian women: legal recognition of illegitimate children (Buttafuoco 1988; Buttafuoco 1995). The Rome Branch pushed for state aid provided to families of war victims to be recognized also for children born out of wedlock. Participation in this campaign, which ended on a positive note in 1918 thanks to the support of Italian socialists in Parliament, led to members being subjected to repeated police controls. Anita Dobelli's correspondence, above all that bearing a foreign postmark, was inspected, and she had to report to the central police headquarters numerous times. During her "conversations" with the chief-of-police, she was invited to supply information on persons with whom she was in contact. Unable to confirm anything other than her membership of the same international pacifist organization, the investigations into her activities led to long delays in her receiving correspondence: each telegram would take approximately twenty days to be delivered.

Once the war was over, and despite public opinion viewing the Italian pacifists as pro-German, the women managed to organize their first national public meeting that took place in Rome on 1<sup>st</sup> March 1919. In the view of the Zurich Congress, the meeting aimed to raise awareness among Italian women of ICWPP activities, those of its leaders and, in particular, of its president, the American social worker Jane Addams. The Rome meeting was reasonably well attended and its participants were made up of a good number of women from the professional and working classes, despite defamatory articles appearing in the nationalist press to the detriment of the organizers (Dobelli-Zampetti 1919a).

Having become representatives in the meantime of the Italian Section of WILPF, and despite not having participated at the Congress due to their not being issued passports (Dobelli-Zampetti 1919b), on 19<sup>th</sup> June 1919, the Italian WILPFers marched side by side with socialist women through the streets of Rome in protest against the peace treaties. The concluding committee meeting appeared to follow the line of the resolution adopted at

the Zurich Congress. The decisions taken at the Versailles Conference were contested: they denounced the trade restrictions which were driving central Europe to hunger; they appealed for the release of all prisoners of war, as well as the immediate cessation of armed intervention against soviet Russia (Dobelli-Zampetti 1919a). The initiative was important for the Italian WILPFers because it was carried out together with the socialists. Dobelli argued that the Party, by agreeing to a joint demonstration, had wanted to fulfil an important act of public recognition towards a bourgeois middle-class organization that, unlike others, had remained firm in its anti-war stance. Despite being close to socialist milieus and collaborating on Party publications, Dobelli saw this clarification of the bourgeois nature of the Section as necessary. The collaboration in June provided the Italian WILPFers with the opportunity to form relations useful for a successful suffrage campaign that would force the women to attend frequent meetings with political representatives (Dobelli-Zampetti 1919c). Indeed, in July 1919, the Italian Parliament approved the law on women's legal rights and the process towards electoral reform was set in motion (Dobelli-Zampetti 1919a, 6). In August, the Chamber passed reform introducing proportional representation and, on 8<sup>th</sup> September, the bill on women's suffrage, which would not become law due to the fall of the legislature.

Information surrounding relations with the Socialist Party aroused the interest of the International Secretary, the American Emily Greene Balch, who requested further details. In her long letter of reply, Dobelli wrote that the Party had always been opposed to war and had expressed its support for a progressive reduction of armaments, as Balch herself could verify from the political manifesto enclosed with the letter. She pointed out, furthermore, that the ruling body of the Party had been opposed to the founding of an Italian Section of WILPF, arguing that the Party's commitment to peace would suffice in furthering the cause (Dobelli 1919d). Dobelli, however, did not think the proposals at all sufficient and instead desired an independent commitment on the part of the women: "I think we women have many things to say and to do also out of every – even the most progressive and democratic – party" (Dobelli 1919d).

### **Working for peace in the 1920s**

Throughout 1919 and 1920, communication between Genoni and Dobelli did not mention strikes, violent suppression or, above all, the formation of armed gangs spreading terror. The International Office and the Secretary Emily Balch were not completely in the dark regarding the

Italian political situation, otherwise it would not be possible to explain the request made by Balch herself to the English writer Violet Paget [alias Vernon Lee], then resident in Fiesole, to draw up a report on the effective potential for the development of WILPF in Italy.

Vernon Lee's long letter, dated 25<sup>th</sup> March 1921, informed the International Secretary that the continuing violence and anger of landowners, not seeing their property protected by the government, had led to the organization of Fascist gangs. These bands of mercenaries were tarnished by bloody murders and crimes against property. More specifically, the destruction of property concerned the Community Centres for workers (Case del Popolo) and the Trade Union offices (Camere del Lavoro). Vernon Lee did not appear to understand the seriousness of the situation, although she did underline the fact that the general climate did not appear the most favourable in which to strengthen the Italian Section. It was her opinion, moreover, that things would change with the forthcoming political elections, and the return of Giovanni Giolitti to government would contribute to bringing the situation back to normal. The repressive policies of the old statesman, according to Vernon Lee, would calm the landowners and cleanse socialism of its worst elements, meaning that even Italian women would be able to join the pacifist movement (Paget 1921).

At this stage it was already possible to notice a certain lack of understanding on the part of the League's ruling body of the fact that the Italian WILPFers, because of their close ties with the Socialist Party, participated more or less directly in that two-year period of conflict known as the Biennio Rosso.

What is certain is that communication between the International Office and the leaders Dobelli and Genoni soon came to an end. Documents relating to the Italian Section show no record of contact between the headquarters and Anita Dobelli after 1921. As for Rosa Genoni, intermittent communication continued until the spring of 1922 when Genoni informed Emily Balch that for security reasons, following certain actions carried out by Fascists, it would no longer be possible to organize the International Summer School in Varese (Suriano 2007). This episode, which forced the International Secretariat to review arrangements for the School when the programme had already been printed, led to a widening of the gap between Geneva and Italy, although relations with the Section were never completely severed.

In December 1922, the Geneva Office began receiving letters from Ida Vassalini [alias Nali di Vassas], the new coordinator of the Milan Branch. A high-school teacher of philosophy at the Liceo Ginnasio Calchi-Taeggi

in Milan, and author of a pedagogic book entitled *Ascoltiamo i bambini* (Let's Listen to the Children), Vassalini collaborated with various journals, among which *Coenobium*, the journal edited by the socialist pacifist Enrico Bignami, *Giornale della donna* and *Luci e Ombra* (Vassalini 1920-1921; Zampini 2013). Her contacts with WILPF headquarters lasted almost five years. Her letters do not provide information regarding political activities carried out by the Section in those years and refer neither to obstacles nor controls carried out by the authorities. Vassalini, moreover, appeared to be a woman so frightened by the Italian political situation that she repeatedly asked the International Secretaries, first Vilma Glücklich and later Madeleine Z. Doty, to help her find work abroad as an Italian teacher. No concrete help whatsoever came from the International Secretariat (Italian Section, reel 147).

Her last letters date back to August 1927 when consecutively on 5<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> August, she wrote to Madeleine Z. Doty requesting that WILPF promote a public initiative against the executions of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti and begin an international campaign against the death penalty. The reply from the Secretariat was not encouraging. Doty pointed out that the meeting of the Executive Committee scheduled for 9<sup>th</sup> September already had a full agenda and new items could not be added (Vassalini 1927).

It is not known whether the dismay and bitterness expressed by Vassalini as a result of the stance taken by Doty influenced in any way the later decision by the Executive Committee, which during the September meeting approved the following resolution:

Le Comité Exécutif de la L.I.F.P.L. réuni à Genève demande aux Sections nationales d'agir énergiquement dans leurs pays respectifs en faveur de la suppression de la peine de mort fin que des assassinats officiels, déshonorants pour la civilisation moderne comme l'exécution de Sacco e Vanzetti ne puissent pas renouveler (*Resolution on Death Penalty*, 1927).

The pacifist experience of the Italian women concluded with the rapprochement headed by Virginia Piatti-Tango [alias Agar] towards the League. A writer and journalist, known by the pseudonym of Agar, she was brought in by Rosa Genoni to organize the 1922 Summer School and later invited as Italian representative to the Fourth International Women's Congress for Peace and Freedom in Washington in 1924. The correspondence analysed illustrates a rather friendly relationship between Agar and Madeleine Z. Doty. The Secretary invited her to Geneva in 1926 for the summer holidays and then nominated her as WILPF representative on the Bourneville Works Council. Agar was unable to travel in both cases

due to her not being issued a visa (Piatti-Tango 1926). Towards the end of the 1920s, Virginia Piatti-Tango was put on file at the Casellario politico centrale (police bureau) for subversive propaganda. In that same period, she came to the decision to emigrate to France where, together with her son Rori, she lent her support to the antifascist group “Giustizia e Libertà.” Her apartment in Paris was one of Carlo Rosselli’s undercover addresses (Tallone 2010).

## Conclusion

The marginality of the first Italian Section depended on various factors, retraceable to both the structure and the objectives of the Section itself, and political choices made by the International Executive Committee (IEC) of WILPF.

The National Committee of the Italian Section was composed of middle-aged women whose pacifist militancy, although driven by sincere enthusiasm, lacked the necessary political preparation that would have enabled them to participate more effectively in WILPF initiatives. Dobelli and Genoni were both socialists, but only Dobelli could boast a suffragist past, being an activist on the pro-suffrage National Council. They moved towards the new feminist pacifism when it had become clear that the Party, in which they were activists, and despite its support for the peace cause, did not recognize the women’s aspirations for an independent voice in political debate. Elisa Lollini-Agnini and Enrichetta Chiaraviglio-Giolitti represented instead the liberal wing (Pieron Bortolotti 1974, 105-123). Both suffragettes, they never had direct contact with the new organization. Although in Lollini it was possible to identify, before her move towards socialism, a militant past among the ranks of liberal pacifism, the same cannot be said for Chiaraviglio-Giolitti. Daughter of the statesman, she started to campaign publically for the peace cause and WILPF’s agenda only in 1919 when, together with Dobelli, she was involved in the redaction of *Il Cimento*. Throughout its publication, the Italian suffragist magazine maintained a column devoted to WILPF whose articles were written and signed by Chiaraviglio-Giolitti and Dobelli (*Il Cimento* 1919-1920). As for the political aims of the Italian members, from the outset these appeared distant from those of the IEC. In Italy the campaign for the women’s vote represented the high point of the initiatives carried out by the Section, when for the Geneva Office the suffrage issue was by now no longer a theme on the agenda. Among the resolutions adopted at The Hague in 1915 was that relating to the women’s right to vote, a theme that was proposed again in the WILPF Constitution

voted in Zurich in 1919. After the war, however, in the countries represented on the IEC, with the exception of France and Italy, the vote was granted. Thus the fight for suffrage was one not fought for directly by WILPF, which delegated the question to the League of Nations in order that all member states would grant it (WILPF 1919).

The Italian Section, therefore, ended up taking on the shape of a nineteenth-century associative movement, a far cry from the transnational non-governmental organization that WILPF already was. On the other hand, the reasons that the IEC distanced itself from the Section can be traced to its failure to analyse the political situation in Italy.

Although communication arriving from Italy never contained information on what was happening in the country, news concerning certain disturbing events did reach the Geneva Office. In 1922, the violence perpetrated by Fascist gangs forced WILPF to repeatedly change the venue of the International Summer School that was supposed to have been held in Varese. The IEC did not formulate any official comment on this episode despite its being directly affected (Suriano 2007). Similarly, in 1924, the murder of the socialist deputy Giacomo Matteotti did not even stir any interest, even though Rosa Genoni sent the Geneva headquarters a copy in English of the appeal issued by the widow addressing the Italian people on the day of her husband's funeral, in which she denounced the political hallmark of the crime. The news was neither commented upon during the course of IEC meetings, nor in the pages of the *Pax International* (Appeal to the Italian People 1924). And then came 1928.

That year the International Summer School, organized in Selly Oak (UK) by the British Branch and dedicated to *New Theories of Government and their Relation to International Peace* had Professor Gaetano Salvemini as its main speaker. The news of his presence at the WILPF Summer School triggered an immediate reaction from the Fascist regime. Salvemini, in exile in London, was in theory "free" to hold public conferences, but when his series of lectures on fascism was announced, the Italian government, through its London Office for Propaganda, imposed a lecture by Luigi Villari on the organizers in order to counterbalance the antifascist speaker. Moreover, during Salvemini's lectures, an agent of the Fascist political police was in attendance to ensure that no statements regarding the current state of the regime would be made. Despite such serious interference, the stance adopted by WILPF remained neutral in the face of Villari's exultant tones during his lecture. Even Salvemini's denouncements contained in his lectures illustrating the evils of fascism, beginning from his personal story, and inviting WILPFers to study fascism

in order to defeat it, were received with silence from an audience showing no reaction (Suriano 2007).

Such a detached attitude in an organization that identified freedom as the necessary condition for a lasting peace becomes comprehensible only if one considers the transnational and non-governmental nature of the League, in virtue of which certain specific political choices were made. The Zurich Congress chose the emergent League of Nations as privileged interlocutor, despite already realizing its limitations in 1919 and desiring various reforms. From that moment on, all proposals put forward by WILPF, from the revision of the peace treaties to the reform of the economic system, from disarmament to education, had as their sole reference point the League itself. Since throughout the 1920s, the League of Nations faced no such threats that would bring its existence into question, even fascism remained outside WILPF interests. Furthermore, what was at issue was a national administration and, as long as Italy honoured international agreements, its government was not considered a problem. WILPF would only start to take a closer look at fascism at the beginning of the 1930s.

In 1932, following five years of silence, a letter from Virginia Piatti-Tango reached Camille Drevet the new International Secretary. Piatti-Tango asked Drevet if she still considered her the representative of the Italian Section and, if so, whether her presence would be welcomed at the International Congress in Grenoble (Piatti-Tango 1932). The letter received no reply. In Grenoble, a group of Italian women resident abroad were officially received as representatives of the new Italian Section. The spokeswoman Maria Rossetti pointed out in her speech that the new Section had had no relations with its predecessor (Rossetti 1932).

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## CHAPTER TWELVE

# “WAR AS THE BEGINNING OF A NEW ERA”: POLISH FEMINISTS’ THOUGHTS AND REFLECTIONS ON PEACE AND THEIR VISIONS ABOUT THE POST-WAR ERA (1914-1921)

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It is remarkable . . . that the Polish women did not perceive this war [First World War – author] as a misfortune or disaster for their own country, but rather as the beginning of a new era and as the only opportunity to build a Polish State . . . In the Kingdom of Poland, in Galicia, and in the Cieszyn Silesian District organised Polish women are standing beside the Polish Legion and follow the same purposes. These women unite themselves in the so-called Polish Women’s League . . . Despite its character as a war organization, the Polish Women’s League takes part at international efforts to establish a lasting peace with the help of its delegates. (Zofia Daszyńska-Golińska 1916)

This quote belongs to the Polish feminist, socialist and economist Zofia Daszyńska-Golińska. With these words, written in German, the Polish feminist describes the work and aims of Polish feminists in her speech “Polish Women and the War” at the annual meeting of the Women’s League in Krakow on 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> June 1916.<sup>1</sup>

Daszyńska-Golińska’s manuscript highlights both how Polish feminists argued in favour of peace and war work, and how they defined their social and international commitment as being their primary task. Why is she

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<sup>1</sup> Biblioteka Jagiellońska (BJ), Fragment Archiwum NZ LK NKN, sygn. 8836/IV, W kwestii międzynarodowego trwałego pokoju (The question of international permanent peace), n.d., k. 18-65. The manuscript is written in German and Polish.

arguing for lasting peace when she perceives the role of the so-called Polish Women’s League as a war organization?

In this article I would like to examine the commitment of Polish feminists for peace. On the one hand, I will show generally the involvement of the Polish women’s movement in the international women’s peace movement. On the other hand, I will analyze speeches and writings of Polish feminists to explore their concrete arguments and visions of a future peace system. I would like to raise two central questions, which are of particular interest: Can we state a specific peace discourse of Polish feminists? How did they imagine a future female peace policy?

In order to answer these questions I will first present two of the most important Polish protagonists who were mainly involved in the international women’s peace movement: Zofia Daszyńska-Golińska and Justyna Budzińska-Tylicka. Secondly, I will explore their individual contributions to peace congresses, focusing more closely on two important peace events: the First International Congress of Women in The Hague in 1915 and the Peace Conference in Vienna in 1921. Thirdly, I will highlight the arguments and visions especially of those Polish women mentioned above.

At this point, I would like to stress that both congresses had a considerable positive influence on the intervention of Polish feminists in politics and their commitment on a national and international level. Hence the dedication of Polish women can be perceived as a new form of “national presence” in an international movement and context. Furthermore, the engagement of Polish feminists shows clearly their hope for further female peace politics consisting of new views, ideas and the political activity of women.

In addition I would like to support the thesis of “two discourse traces” (Stegman 2000, 216) by exploring the ambivalent arguments in the writings of Polish feminists, which is also mirrored by the quote at the beginning of this article. But for now, before I introduce two of the main (and internationally present) female Polish protagonists of the era, I would like briefly to contextualize the Polish women’s movement and history of Poland before and after 1918.

The Polish women’s movement with its individuals and organized groups grew constantly in size and significance during the last decades of the nineteenth century. In the eighteenth century, the Polish state had been deleted from the European map and the land divided among the Russian Empire, the Habsburg Monarchy, and Prussia. At this particular time Polish society functioned as a “nation without a state,” as it used to

describe itself.<sup>2</sup> So during the nineteenth century and until the end of World War I, the Polish women's movement had to work under unfavourable conditions and development slowed down under the social-political circumstances. However, despite the partition of the Polish land into three different political systems, the women's movement worked across these geographical and political borders and defined itself as a united and all-Polish movement. Importantly, the protagonists of the Polish women's movement were mainly members of the intelligentsia, a heterogeneous group with different origins, but common cultural and intellectual roots (Lorence-Kot and Winiarz 2004). They also belonged to the social-democratic/socialist and to the liberal wing of the women's movement. Hence, there was no clear ideological division between these groups. Generally, the first wave of the Polish feminism can be identified from 1905 to World War I, during which time the main themes were postulated by Polish activists (Sierakowska and Grzebalska 2013).

Moreover, Polish women's rights activists were intensively involved in the networks of the European Women's movement and established transnational links to formal and informal networks. They were not only interested in the activities of the women's movement in the "West," they also participated actively in international and European women's congresses. Polish women were internationally visible and already present at the genesis of the women's suffrage movement. For example, they were active in the Galician Suffrage Committee (but not as a fully entitled member and with voting powers) which joined the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA) in 1912. Furthermore, in 1915 Polish representatives attended the first international women's peace congress in The Hague.

World War I represents a harsh caesura for the Polish women's movement: during that time the Polish women's movement approached clearly the national movement. So most of the Polish feminists perceived World War I as a chance for the independent movement and rebuilding of the Polish state.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the shift also changed the structure of the women's movement and politicised the women's organization. Nonetheless, although Polish feminists supported the national cause and strived for a future Polish state (the majority of women's organizations supported Polish troops with materials or – to a lesser extent – individuals fought as combatants), they also campaigned for peace. However, I would argue that their position did not differ from other feminists of European countries

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<sup>2</sup> On the history of Poland, see Zamojski 2009.

<sup>3</sup> On the subject of WWI and Poland, see Lukowski and Zawadzki 2006, 217 f. For more details, see Szlanta 2014.

during World War I. But the independence of Poland, which was gained in 1918 with the recreation of the Republic of Poland or Second Polish Republic, had priority to achieve peace in the future. However, although Polish feminists were represented and were very active on the international stage even after 1918, they were still faced with the policy of *imperial feminism* and *civilising mission*, as the example of the WILPF shows.<sup>4</sup>

## Polish Feminists, Socialists and Peace-activists

Zofia (Emilia) Daszyńska-Golińska (1860-1934) was one of the most famous Polish feminists of the first Polish Women’s Movement of the early twentieth century. A contemporary described her as a “well-known speaker” and “one of the first women attracted by the flag of Paulina Kuczalska-Schmit.”<sup>5</sup> It is also worth looking at her international activities as she was the only delegate to represent the Polish Women’s Associations at the First International Congress of Women in The Hague in 1915, besides (Agnes) Emily Napieralski (?-1943), a delegate of the Association of Polish Women of the United States of America and the North American Women’s movement.

Daszyńska-Golińska’s work is connected predominantly with the women’s organizations in the cities of Krakow and Warsaw. A cosmopolitan, she first studied in Warsaw and then moved for further studies – economics, philosophy, history and political sciences – to Switzerland. In 1891 she finished her doctoral studies in trade economy at the University of Zurich. In Zurich Daszyńska-Golińska met her first husband Feliks Daszyński (1863-1890), one of the most famous Polish socialists. His social and political views had a significant impact on the young woman. After their return to Poland and the city of Warsaw, the women’s rights activist was arrested by the Tsarist police. Like many other Polish socialists she was threatened with expulsion from the Russian Kingdom of Poland to the Polish parts of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire.

Before Daszyńska-Golińska settled in Krakow, she lived in Vienna and Berlin to work on her scientific and academic career, which she had deliberately decided to continue. She confessed that in Congress Poland there were “little favourable conditions for scientific work in the field of

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<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of these terms, see Midgley 1998; Hall 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Walewska 1927, 3. Paulina Kuczalska-Reinschmit, called the *hetmanka* (leader) of the Polish Women’s movement by Polish women’s rights activists, was a scientist, (co)founder of the women’s libraries, a participant at the feminist salon in Warsaw, and co-editor of the women’s magazine *Ster*. She founded the first Polish Women’s Congress in Zakopane in 1899. For more details, see Krzywiec 2006.

political economy.”<sup>6</sup> In 1894 she worked as a lecturer at the Humboldt Academy in Berlin and stayed there for another two years. After that she settled in Krakow because she was not allowed to return to her hometown Warsaw.

In Krokow Daszyńska-Golińska met her second husband, the botanist Stanisław Goliński (1868-1931). The couple was both scientifically and socially very active. Moreover, she held numerous lectures in public: until 1914 she taught in the People’s Adam Mickiewicz University Association (Towarzystwo Uniwersytetu Ludowego im. Adam Mickiewicz), amongst others, and in the Baraniecki Courses (higher education courses for women aged 16 founded by Adrian Baraniecki). In 1915 she became an active member and co-founder of the Women’s League of Galicia and Silesia (Liga Kobiet Galicji i Śląsk) and the Women’s League of War Alert (Liga Kobiet Pogotowia Wojennego). Until 1918 Daszyńska-Golińska was active in the most important women’s associations in Krakow. At that time the city was one of the centres of the Polish women’s movement, besides Lemberg/Lwow and Warsaw. She was the leader of the Kraszewski-Society supporting Scientific Work of Polish Women (Towarzystwo Pomocy Naukowej dla Polek im. J. I. Kraszewskiego). In addition, she organized lectures and meetings in the Reading Room for Women (Czytelnia dla Kobiet), and advised the club on economic matters as a supervisory board member (Migalska 2010, 181). Her particular interest was the fight for equal rights for women, their growing political influence and the fight against alcoholism. She also attended the Polish women’s congresses in Zakopane (1899), Krakow (1905), and Warsaw (1907/1917).

After World War I, Daszyńska-Golińska became a professor at the Free Polish University in Warsaw. She continued to be a politically active member during the Second Polish Republic. Thus she was an employee in the ministry of work and social affairs in the Department of Women and Youth Work. Moreover, she continued to take an active part in the Warsaw women’s movement. However, her attendance as a representative of Polish women’s associations at the Hague Congress in 1915 was very significant. Furthermore she took part as vice-president of the Polish League section at the Third International Congress of Women in Vienna in 1921, together with her colleague and the president of the Polish section, Justyna Budzińska-Tylicka.

Justyna Budzińska-Tylicka (1867-1936) was, like her colleague Daszyńska-Golińska, a very active member of the Polish women’s

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<sup>6</sup> Rathausbibliothek Wien, estate of Auguste Fickert, H.I.N. 70016, letter from Daszyńska-Golińskas, 4.1.1893, 4 pages. All letters are written in German.

movement and an activist in the women's peace movement. She was a well-known Polish feminist, socialist, and doctor of medicine. She did her medical training in Paris where she graduated in 1898. Budzińska-Tylicka was also involved in social activities and supported Polish immigrants in France, where she became acquainted with socialist ideas. In Paris she met her husband Stanisław Tylicki. The couple finally returned to Poland after the Russian Revolution in 1905 and settled in Krakow (Sierakowska 2006, 80). Here Budzińska-Tylicka contacted other Polish women fighting for women's equality. She was active in the Society of Elementary Schools (Towarzystwo Szkół Ludowych) and the Society for Child Welfare (Towarzystwo Opieki nad Dziećmi).

In 1907 Budzińska-Tylicka moved together with her family to Warsaw, where she worked as an assistant in a hospital for about eight years. Budzińska-Tylicka was also an active member in different societies promoting modern principles of hygiene and new pedagogical methods in education for girls. She was a member of the Union of Equal Rights for Polish Women (Związek Równouprawnienia Kobiet Polskich, ZRKP), founded by Paulina Kuczalska-Reinschmit and legalized in 1907. Before and during World War I she was active in the Society of Oarswomen (Wiosłarek) and the Women's League for War Alert (Liga Kobiet Pogotowia Wojennego).

In 1918 Budzińska-Tylicka eventually became Vice-President of the Women's Department of the Polish Socialist Party that was established as a branch of the International Socialist Women's Committee at the congress of the Second International in Brussels (Sierakowska 2006, 81).

One year later she was one of the founders and leaders of the Political Club of Progressive Women (Klub Polityczny Kobiet Postępowych, KPKP), whose aim was to increase the proportion of women's involvement in politics. Within the framework of this club she and other women extended the cooperation with the International Women's Organisation after World War I. The club cooperated with the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA) and as a representative of the club Budzińska-Tylicka attended the IWSA congresses in the interwar period. At the IWSA congress in Rome in 1923, together with a Romanian feminist, she initiated the founding of the organisation Little Entente of Women of which she became chairwoman in 1927.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, it is worth

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<sup>7</sup> On the background of the Petite Entente des Femmes conference in Belgrade in 1924, see Oesch 2014, 146 f. Interestingly, she shows an exchange and close collaboration between Budzińska-Tylicka and Yella Hertzka on this subject. It needs further research to reflect these personal contacts, not only to focus on a possible two-way influence. Moreover, the engagement of Budzińska-Tylicka and

stressing that in 1921, thanks to Budzińska-Tylicka's initiative, the Polish Women's League for Peace and Freedom (Polska Liga Kobiet na Rzecz Pokoju i Wolności) was founded within the KPKP as a section of the Women's International League of Peace and Freedom (WILPF).

It is evident that both Budzińska-Tylicka and Daszyńska-Golińska played an important role in the women's movement both on a national and international level. Despite this, it seems that their impact is little known especially amongst other feminists and contemporaries from Western women's movements. Thus, it would be useful here to examine the results of the above-mentioned conferences to highlight this point.

### **Polish representatives at the International Congress of Women in The Hague, 1915**

Daszyńska-Golińska attended the First International Congress of Women in The Hague in 1915. Like other feminists in the world, she considered the congress to be significant and states:

Rather than remaining purely theoretical, the congress can become a real contemporary factor. This transformation is of utmost interest and importance for the future peace work.<sup>8</sup>

At this Congress she was the conveyer of a Polish manifesto that had been prepared beforehand by the Krakow Women's Associations. Her speech and the manifesto she presented can be understood as a plea for "peace through freedom." It was intended to mobilise the public opinion of women in favour of the Polish cause. At the same time, the re-establishment of an independent Polish state was proclaimed a priority in Polish society (including women). The expressions of peace and peace-solutions were announced in the manifesto under a legal guise of a struggle for national liberation and patriotism. Daszyńska-Golińska implicitly demanded from the participants of the Congress to take a position on wars of liberation. She certainly considered violence to be a legitimate tool in fighting against a greater illegitimacy and injustice.<sup>9</sup>

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other activists from Eastern and South-eastern Europe in the international organization seems little explored.

<sup>8</sup> Biblioteka Jagiellońska (BJ), Fragment Archiwum NZ LK NKN, sygn. 8836/IV, W kwestii międzynarodowego trwałego pokoju (The question of international permanent peace), n.d., k. 18-65. The manuscript is written in German and Polish.

<sup>9</sup> For more discussion of Daszyńska-Golińska's involvement in The Hague, see Leszczawski-Schwerk 2014.

Interestingly, the Second International Congress of Women in 1919 had chosen the same plea as its main theme. The congress also put into place what had been decided during the congress in The Hague in 1915: to convene an international congress in Zurich. At this congress, the – now re-named – Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) proclaimed that a lasting peace could only come through freedom. This aim for peace through freedom caused (and still does today) discrepancies in the discussions of the women of the League, because there was a great uncertainty about how they should respond to oppression and social injustice. Female pacifists, who considered freedom just as important as peace, had to ask themselves whether they wanted to seek peace at any cost.

The most important results of the Women’s Peace Congress were also that the women participating founded the International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace (ICWPP) based in The Hague in order to continue their international work, and they set up the National Women’s Committees for Lasting Peace. Daszyńska-Golińska was actively involved in founding the two committees.<sup>10</sup> Moreover she tried to implement the results of the International Women’s Peace Conference in the Polish territories. During 1915, like many other feminists, Daszyńska-Golińska was active in the Women’s League of Galicia and Silesia.<sup>11</sup> This organisation supported the Polish Legions fighting in the Austro-Hungarian army.

Although Daszyńska-Golińska was active in this organisation she also participated in the International Women’s movement. Hence not surprisingly

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<sup>10</sup> She eventually initiated the Committees for Lasting Peace in Poland, which were based in Krakow and Lemberg (Lwow). The committee in Krakow was led by Maria Siedlecka; for Lemberg only Maria Dulębianka is mentioned. BJ, Fragment Archiwum NZ LK NKN, sygn. 8836/IV, k. 18-65 (undated one-sided document). The formation of the Committee in Krakow is reported briefly in the journal *Internationaal*, Vol. 1, 1, 1916, 10.

<sup>11</sup> The Women’s League of Galicia and Silesia was founded in 1915. In 1916 Zofia Moraczewska was the leader of the organisation, which was based in Krakow. Together with the Women’s League of War Alert (Liga Kobiet Pogotowia Wojennego) in the Polish Kingdom (part of the Russian Empire) it belonged to the Polish Women’s League (Liga Kobiet Polskich). It was the first independent women’s mass-organisation. In 1916 about 16,000 members belonged to the Polish Women’s League fighting for the independence of the Polish state and for women’s rights. It boosted the political activity of women during World War I, and also their demands for political rights after gaining independence. On Moraczewska, see Dufurat 2006. On the genesis of the Women’s League of War Alert (Liga Kobiet Pogotowia Wojennego), see Pająk 1999.

she described in one of her manuscripts the attitude of the association towards the International Peace Movement in a very pragmatic way:

The Polish woman has no power to speed up the peace moment. On the other hand, she has to convince women of other countries of the importance of finding a solution to the Polish question in accord with the wishes and aspirations of the Polish people in the name of a future permanent peace.<sup>12</sup>

### **A future peace culture within an independent Polish state and the question of the “citizen-women”**

Like other Polish feminists, Daszyńska-Golińska had very specific ideas of a peace policy and a future peace culture within a free and independent Polish state. Hence, in a letter to the Polish Sejm in 1917, the Krakow Women’s League for Permanent Peace and other women’s associations stressed the recognition of a Polish state by emphasizing that “the Polish cause was a European cause itself” and that the Polish women “had spoken for that cause in the peace meetings in The Hague in 1915 and before organizations of permanent peace in Amsterdam and The Hague.”<sup>13</sup> The goal of the Polish women who participated in the Hague Congress in 1915 and those who were involved with the organisations of permanent peace was primarily the Polish cause, which was freedom for Poland and the restoration of the state. So the Congress in The Hague was essential for the Polish cause.

Moreover, Daszyńska-Golińska later focused on the formation of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom in 1915 in her lecture “The Woman’s Question and Marriage” (*Kwestia kobieca a małżeństwo*) published in 1925. At that time she had already gained experience in politics as an assistant in the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Second Polish Republic between the years 1918 and 1921. She highlights the important role of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom within the peace movement:

The League was still founded in The Hague in 1915, even then it united at the international congress women of both fighting camps and neutral states.

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<sup>12</sup> BJ, Fragment archiwum NZ LK NKN, sygn. 8836/IV, Die Polinnen und der Krieg, Aus Anlass der Jahresversammlung der Frauenliga in Krakau am 11. und 12. Juni (The Polish women and war, On the annual meeting of the Women’s League), n.d., k. 25-31. The manuscript is written in German.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

Today, it has relations with the League of Nations and has a certain influence on its work, currently belonging to it 38 ethnic groups and women from different political camps, united under the common slogan of lasting peace. The women’s policy was even a policy of peace during raging war thunderstorm, and the future civilization, (depending on) the degree women are involved permanently to it, the elements of the humanitarianism need to stand by . . . The new values that carry those women already into political life speak clearly for this direction of policy. (Daszyńska-Golińska 1925)

The women’s rights activist Justyna Budzińska-Tylicka also expressed similar ideas related to the point of a future peace culture within a free and independent Polish state in 1917 before Poland became an independent and restored state. She raised the matter at the Polish Women’s Congress in 1917 in Warsaw, which was attended by delegates of various social organizations. In her opening words, she emphasized the significance of “becoming a citizen-woman in an independent and united Polish State” (*uobywatelnienia kobiety w Niepodległym Zjednoczonym Państwie Polskim*) (Bujak-Boguska 1930, 22 [emphasis in original]). This evaluation was shared by the majority of feminists who emphasized the struggle for independence as the basis for gaining political rights. Hence, the military service of women in World War I was seen to be a legitimization for women to claim their rights as citizens.

The recognition of the political rights of women was the ultimate goal of the conference in Warsaw. Furthermore a commission was established which developed the statute for the successor organization of the Women’s League, the so-called Central Political Committee for the Equality of Polish Women (*Centralny Komitet Politycznego Równouprawienia Kobiet Polskich*), which was constituted on 5<sup>th</sup> January 1918. Justyna Budzińska-Tylicka belonged not only to the Board of the Committee, but also to the group of instigators whose work manifested in a declaration (14th January 1918), which was delivered to the Polish women and granted them the right to vote by the government because of their patriotic activities during the First World War. In their self-understanding, the Polish women gave emphasis to the female contribution to the Polish liberation struggle. The Polish Constitution of 1921 (17.3.1921) finally confirmed the political rights of women in particular in articles 12, 13 and 96. So article 12 of the constitution stated that “each Polish citizen has the right to vote, without difference of sex, who finished age 21 on the day of the announcement of elections, uses full civil rights...” (Bujak-Boguska 1930, 26).

## **Polish feminists and their political activity and international peace work after 1918**

Even before the foundation of the second Polish Republic, Polish feminists founded the new organization Political Club of Progressive Women (Klub Polityczny Kobiet Postępowych, KPKP)<sup>14</sup> on 30<sup>th</sup> May 1919, which emerged from the former Central Political Committee of the Equality of Polish Women (Bujak-Boguska 1930, 27). Zofia Daszyńska-Golińska, Teodora Męczkowska (1870-1954) and Justyna Budzińska-Tylicka were the founders of this political organisation, and their aim was to increase the proportion of women's involvement in politics. After ten years of service the members reviewed their work with the words:

We created the fire of female ideology, worked on political and social aspects, and nurtured close relationships between women in this country and around the world. (Bujak-Boguska 1930, foreword, 4)

It becomes clear that the political organisation's aim was to strengthen political activity and influence of women on the one hand; while on the other, it launched exchange, networking and global cooperation with other feminists worldwide. Finally, with the leadership held by the Polish feminists Budzińska-Tylicka and Daszyńska-Golińska, the Political Club of Progressive Women continued the international peace work. As early as 1920, the organisation established relations with the Women's International League of Peace and Freedom, provided by the Polish scientist Maria (Antonina) Czaplicka (1886-1921), professor of Anthropology at Bristol University. The association eventually got to join the international organisation soon after an invitation by the president of the WILPF, Jane Addams (Bujak-Boguska 1930, 34).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The association was elitist and had around 100 members belonging to the Polish women's movement; all were also politically active. The club was based in Warsaw, but had also a branch office in Lwow. In 1921 the steering committee was made up of Justyna Budzińska-Tylicka (President), Eugenia Waśniewska (Vice-president), Aniela Kulwieciowa (Treasurer). See Bujak-Boguska 1930, 35.

<sup>15</sup> See also Report of the Third International Congress of Women, 26-27. Czaplicka left Poland in 1910; she continued her studies at the Faculty of Anthropology of the London School of Economics and completed her studies at Oxford University. She was the only female lecturer/professor at Oxford University in 1915 and was one of the first people to acquire a doctorate in anthropology. In 1918 Czaplicka was the first woman to become a member of the Royal Geographical Society. She had to give up her professorship at Oxford University after the former chair holder returned from war. Soon after Czaplicka

However, pleased about the invitation, together with the Women’s League and the female executive board of the Polish Socialist Party (Polska Partia Socialistyczna, PPS), the association wrote a cable back. They replied:

We are deeply grateful to you . . . that the Polish section of WILPF will be molded. In principle, we are willing to create such a section, but at the moment all powers of our people have to focus on to the defense of our country against the invasion of the enemy the Soviet Union, which forces the very peaceful elements in Poland to participate in war Polish-Russian War 1921 – author. At this moment, this is a civil war for/to gain independence . . . Thank you for telegraphing it further . . . to all national sections of the League.<sup>16</sup>

One year later, by inviting the Polish delegates Budzińska-Tylicka and Daszyńska-Golińska to the Congress in Vienna, the Political Club of Progressive Women finally initiated the establishment of the Polish Women’s League for Peace and Freedom (Polska Liga Kobiet na Rzecz Pokoju i Wolności), which joined the Women’s International League of Peace and Freedom.

### **WILPF Vienna Congress, 1921 – sisterhood above all?**

The year 1921 was therefore an important one for the Polish Women’s Movement and its protagonists in two ways. Firstly, all Polish women were granted full citizenship rights based on the Polish constitution of 1921. Secondly, Polish feminists represented their country in Vienna for the first time as a democratic and independent state on an international stage. In this way, the Polish League did not just want to “stabilize” its relationships with other people and nations, but also committed itself “to a stable world peace.”<sup>17</sup>

One of the proposed resolutions of the committee at the Third International Congress, which took place in Vienna from 10<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> July 1921,<sup>18</sup> was the resolution on self-determination and rights of minorities.

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became head of the Institute of Anatomy of Bristol University in 1920, but was let go after a year due to financial difficulties. She committed suicide. Accessed June 19 2015. [http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maria\\_Antonina\\_Czaplicka](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maria_Antonina_Czaplicka). See also Kubica, 2007, Skowron Markowska 2012.

<sup>16</sup> Bujak-Boguska 1930, 34-35.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>18</sup> For more details related to the organization of the international congress in Vienna and the role of the Austrian Women’s League, see Oesch 2014, 113-122.

Political and social freedom were perceived as the basis of prosperity. However, Poland was a reference point at this congress. In the report it was declared that Poland, as a newly founded republic, guaranteed national and political freedom. In addition within this discussion a Polish delegate – although the name was not mentioned, but probably Budzińska-Tylicka and/or Daszyńska-Golińska – proposed the following resolution:

As the rights of national minorities are guaranteed by the principle of international justice, this third Congress expresses the wish that the Constitution of every country should give the same civil and political rights to all its citizens without discriminations of sex, religion, language, or race. (Report of the Third International Congress of Women 1921, 127)

Political conflicts were also debated in the discussion at the second WILPF Congress in relation to the point of national minorities. In particular the German-Polish border dispute in Upper Silesia was an urgent matter for Polish and German delegates, who met to discuss the issue at this congress. Budzińska-Tylicka spoke to the Polish delegate and on behalf of the German delegation. In her speech she stressed that the situation in Upper Silesia was so difficult because the conflict was closely linked to economic interests.<sup>19</sup> In particular, she criticized the partisan press coverage of both sides. Therefore she launched a fortiori “a way of solving these questions by peaceable means.” In her plea Budzińska-Tylicka confirms “to try to understand the truth about it and to act in a pacifist spirit (Report of the Third International Congress of Women 1921, 128).” Thus, she urged the congress and the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom to send a telegraph to convey the matter of the Upper-Silesia to the Supreme Council through the British Ambassador, Lord Hardinge, in order to decide this question.

The discussion ended in a call to all governments “to give to all minorities inhabiting their country the equality of rights . . . safed to them in the laws and peace-treaties, without distinction of nationality, religion, or political party” (Report of the Third International Congress of Women 1921, 128-129). Finally a vote on the resolution was held.<sup>20</sup>

Interestingly, the report of the congress also includes a declaration that was already sent by the Polish Section dated June 1921 and signed by

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<sup>19</sup> See Street 1924 and Kaeckenbeeck 1942. On the violent conflict in Upper Silesia compared with Ulster/Ireland, see Wilson 2010.

<sup>20</sup> In 1921 the Executive Committee of the Women’s League founded its own committee on minority questions. But the League created temporary committees on both minority questions and an East European Commission committee. See Oesch, 144 f.

Justyna Budzińska-Tylicka and Eugenia Waśniewska.<sup>21</sup> The declaration again highlights the significance of the participation in the international peace movement from the point of the Polish feminists involved in this section. On the one hand, they stressed the independent activity of Polish organisations at a national and international level since Poland had become a state in 1918, and on the other, the opportunity for the female societies acting independently and not being part of an Empire (umbrella) organisation. So they declared in French:

Ce n'est qu'en Galicie, c'est-a-dire dans la partie de la Pologne appartenant a l'Autriche, qu'il etait possible de nouer des relations avec l' Europe Occidentale. (Report of the Third International Congress of Women 1921, 241)

Moreover Polish feminists demonstrated the continuity of their involvement to confirm their relation:

Ainsi, en 1915, les femmes de Galicie purent envoyer au congres . . . .  
Depuis cette date, tout en restant en contact avec la Ligue, il fut impossible aux femmes polonaises d'etablir des relations plus stables et plus suivies. (Report of the Third International Congress of Women 1921, 241)<sup>22</sup>

The report also shows that as early as May 1920 the Polish section, organized by the Political Club of Progressive Polish Women (with its special commission and office),<sup>23</sup> sent two political memoranda to the General Secretary of the WILPF in the case of the so-called Lithuanian and Ukrainian (in the original paper Ruthene) question. Although Poland became an independent state in 1918, the Second Polish Republic fought a series of wars until 1922 to secure its boundaries in the east: the Polish-Lithuanian and Polish-Russian war.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Eugenia Waśniewska (1880-?) was a deputy of the party Independent Group in Cooperation with the Government (Bezpartyjny Blok Współpracy z Rządem, BBWR) in the Polish Parliament (Sejm) from 1928 to 1935. See Kto był kim w II RP 1994, 465.

<sup>22</sup> Parts of this declaration are also quoted in Boguska 1930, foreword.

<sup>23</sup> The Polish section was represented by the Political Club of Progressive Women that consisted of a commission of the following associations: Congress Office of Women's Work, Women's Section of the Polish Socialist Party, Polish Women's League, Syndicate of Female Employees, and the Association for improving Women's Profession. The section was headed by Budzińska-Tylicka (President), Daszyńska-Golińska (Vice-President), and Eugenia Waśniewska (Secretary). Report of the Third International Congress of Women 1921, 242.

<sup>24</sup> For more discussion, see Davis 2003 and Januszewska-Jurkiewicz 2013.

Thus, the Polish section called on the General Secretary to intervene against the resolution of the League of Nations and to protest against the decision of not taking women into account when voting in the plebiscite of Wilna. Finally they declared the key aspects that should be focused on at the congress in Vienna and stressed proclaiming a declaration related to disarming and the role of women towards war (Report of the Third International Congress of Women 1921, 241-242).<sup>25</sup>

The fact that Polish women's rights and peace activists took part at the Vienna Congress, and it seems that they were quite visible, is undoubtedly not only the result of their active involvement. It is remarkable to note that the organizers of the congress launched the internationalization of their own organization. This becomes clear because "ad-hoc-delegates" and visitors from unrepresented European countries and non-European countries were admitted. The choice of Vienna as a venue was not accidental, because the WILPF was interested in the establishment of new branches in the Eastern and South-eastern European countries and as well in attracting new members (Oesch 2014, 115; 117). This agenda played an important role within the international organization in the 1920s and beyond. Moreover, the expansion of the international organization and the networks of the members of the WILPF were closely related. One of the important networking strategies was hospitality (Oesch 2014, 38). It is worth mentioning that the Austrian women's rights activist Yella Hertzka, co-organizer of the second WILPF Congress in Vienna in 1921 and one of the leading members of the WILPF had a good relationship with the Polish WILPF activist Budzińska-Tylicka (Oesch 2014, 40).<sup>26</sup>

Hence, in addition to the official agenda of the international organization, personal relationships were essential to influence or launch subjects. But had Eastern and South-eastern European members within the organization actually equal participation rights? Or can we identify an "unbalance of lobbying"? These and other questions still need to be clarified.

## Conclusion

Summarizing, I would like to emphasize once more that Polish women perceived World War I as the beginning of a new era in which they saw an opportunity to establish the Polish State. For them, the restoration of a

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<sup>25</sup> For more details on the plebiscite, see Boguska 1930, 34 f. For more discussion, see Yarwood 2009, 185 f.

<sup>26</sup> Corinna Oesch highlights that Hertzka had a good personal relationship with the Polish activist and furthermore she launched the founding of a Serbian League group supported by Budzińska-Tylicka and a colleague.

Polish State with the help of a Polish liberation struggle was the foundation of a permanent peace, thereby preventing further wars in Europe.

Polish women primarily took the motivation for their actions and commitment for world peace from a credo Daszyńska-Golińska had proclaimed in 1915 at the Hague Congress: the affiliation of the Polish women to the Polish community, and to humanity and human rights based on peace. Both discourses were closely intertwined and influenced the work of Polish feminists even after 1921.

Based on these intertwined discourses I would argue that Polish feminists therefore saw no contradiction in being politically active citizens and popularizing military service – as the quote at the beginning of this chapter clearly illustrates – or the idea of women’s war-related work even after World War I. Thus, neither did the terms war and peace in the arguments of Polish feminists nor (national) “identity and sisterhood”<sup>27</sup> contradict each other. In any case, Polish women involved in the peace movement were very conscious of the growing political influence and the service of their own nation.

The contribution of Polish representatives towards concrete resolutions of the WILPF congresses, which pushed the work of the international peace organisation forward, should also be highlighted. Moreover, Polish women remained internationally present after 1921 as they continued their activity in the international peace movement. Generally I would say, that we cannot speak of a specific peace discourse of Polish feminists after World War I. Although Polish feminists and members of the WILPF had a clear picture and fundamentals ideas of a (future) female peace policy, they were arguing for peace in the name of and as (future) members of the Polish nation and not merely either for their sex nor international sisterhood. Furthermore, exploration of the role of Polish activists and members of other Eastern and Central European countries represented in the WILPF and their lobbying seems worthwhile in further research.

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<sup>27</sup> Quote of the book-title from Sandell 2015.

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## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

# HELPING THE GERMAN CHILDREN: FRENCH HUMANITARIAN AID AND FRANCO-GERMAN RECONCILIATION AFTER THE GREAT WAR (1919-1925)

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### Introduction

“It is mainly in our work towards helping the children that we were the most useful,”<sup>1</sup> writes the French Section of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) in its activity report for the year 1920-1921. Denied the right to vote until the 1940s and therefore excluded from political life in a traditional sense, French pacifist women often used humanitarian aid as a way to enter political life on the national and international levels (Cohen 2011, 83). In the immediate post-war years up until the mid-1920s, this was done mainly through the help provided to German and Austrian children. The creation of the Comité français de secours aux enfants (CFSE) in 1919 and the Action fraternelle pour les enfants de la Ruhr (AFPER) in 1923 offers an opportunity for pacifist women in France to work actively towards helping the children of central Europe. Historiography has often dismissed women’s humanitarian action describing it as “moral” rather than “political.” However, gender studies have emphasized the importance of reviewing the concept of political action to include types of actions that go beyond traditional frameworks (West and Blumberg 1990, 11).

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<sup>1</sup> “Extraits du rapport sur l’action de la Section française au cours du dernier exercice, 1920-1921. Adresse au Comité Central de la Ligue,” May 1921, BDIC, Fonds Gabrielle Duchêne, F delta res 208.

For French pacifist women, it is clear that peace can only be obtained through Franco-German reconciliation. However, historians who have studied French pacifists' efforts towards this reconciliation rarely address the participation of women. However, it would be misleading to minimize the work done by women on this issue and to assume that it only reflects the work done by men. During the 1920s, most of the work of pacifist women is centered on moral disarmament or, more precisely, on the disarmament of hatred against Germany. However, the task is far from easy. For a large majority of the population in France, animosity towards Germany does not end with the Armistice on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918. Reconciliation with the "hereditary enemy" that is Germany is therefore considered as either dangerous or even completely impossible. The advocates of a "rapprochement" are constantly faced with an anti-German discourse widely present in the political sphere and among the general population. "Listen to the people of Paris talk," writes Madeleine Vernet in *La Mère Éducatrice*, a pacifist journal addressed to mothers and educators, in 1918. "What scares me," she says, "is the rise of hatred."<sup>2</sup>

Relying on feminine qualities such as compassion and mothering, humanitarian aid appears to be a gendered cause – "a motherhood cause" (Vellacott 2001, 385) – and provides women with the means to work towards moral disarmament and to participate in the debates on reconciliation. However, they will face strong opposition from the French population. Many wonder why they should help German children whose "boche" fathers killed the fathers of French children. Supporters of the reconciliation efforts are thus faced with an anti-German discourse widely present in the public sphere. In this context, the humanitarian work undertaken by French pacifists must be seen as radical and political.

In recent years, we have seen a growing interest in the study of relief work in the aftermath of the First World War. Annette Becker (1998) has stressed the important role played by the Great War in the redefinition of humanitarian aid. More recently, Bruno Cabanes (2014) has looked at what he calls the "new humanitarian narrative" of the post-war period. For his part, Yves Denéchère has shed light on the "sponsoring" of foreign children in Europe in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (2013; 2015). Contributing to this new historiography, I will argue in this paper that the humanitarian work of French pacifist women after the war must be understood not as charity, but as a political stance in favour of Franco-German reconciliation, and as a way of establishing new international relations. To do so, I will use the private archives of Gabrielle Duchêne, President of the WILPF's French Section, in which we find many documents regarding the CFSE and the

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<sup>2</sup> Madeleine Vernet, "Noël," *La Mère Éducatrice*, 2, No. 3, December 1918.

AFPER. To these first sources, I will also add various women's journals, such as *La Mère Éducatrice* and *La Française*, in which the issue of humanitarian aid provided to the children of Germany is frequently discussed. By helping the German children, providing them with food, clothes and money, French women were able not only to do concrete work towards the "rapprochement," but also to take part in the political debates from which they were normally excluded because of their gender.

### **Helping the suffering children of Europe**

At the end of the war, the large majority of Europeans still suffer from the consequences of the conflict. In some regions, especially in Central Europe where the impacts of the Allied blockade against Germany, which occurred from 1914 to 1919, are still visible, hunger and malnutrition are real and urgent problems. "The situation of a large part of the population of Vienna is extremely precarious," writes Edith Pye, a British Quaker and very active member of the WILPF, in December 1919, "Food supplies in Austria no longer exist."<sup>3</sup> A similar observation is made about Germany by the Fight the Famine Council in 1919: "It would seem that Germany stands face to face with a catastrophe which may involve the death of millions by famine and disease unless she can obtain sufficient food by importation to make up her deficit."<sup>4</sup> Faced with these facts, the French pacifist women feel that they cannot remain indifferent.

During the Zurich Congress of the WILPF in May 1919, the delegates recognize that no "rapprochement" will be possible as long as all the nations of Europe are not fed properly.<sup>5</sup> Members of the WILPF not only see the immediate humanitarian effects of starvation, but they also think of the long-term political consequences that such a problem could create. However, some members of the British Section are opposed to the direct involvement of the League in relief work, insisting instead on its educational work. "The WIL had made it a rule not to branch off from its educative work into relief," explains Helena Swanwick, a British delegate at the Congress:

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<sup>3</sup> *Rapport de Miss Pye du mois de décembre 1919*. BDIC, Fonds Gabrielle Duchêne, F delta res 229/1919.

<sup>4</sup> Prof. Starling, "Report on food conditions in Germany," *Conditions on the Continent. Facts from official reports*, 1919. BDIC, Fonds Gabrielle Duchêne, F delta res 227/1919.

<sup>5</sup> *Report of the International Congress of Women*, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Zurich, May 12 to 17, 1919.

There was only our one women's organization trying to do educative pacifist work, and I thought that, if we abandoned that, we should indeed be surrendering to the age-old notion that women had no concern in public life except to wipe up the mess made by men. (quoted by Vellacott 2001, 385)

Nonetheless, this did not prevent some members of the British Section from participating in the work of the Save the Children Fund in 1919, nor from sending bottles of sterilized milk to German mothers in 1920 (Baughan 2013, 117). In the end, the WILPF's delegates present at the Zurich Congress agreed that the best way to stop famine in Europe was to put pressure on political leaders in their own countries rather than providing their own assistance to countries in need.<sup>6</sup> When it did take part in relief efforts, it was at a political level rather than as a fundraiser or as provider of direct services (Vellacott 1993, 41).

For the French pacifists, however, their exclusion from the political sphere complicates this type of action. In its activity report of June 1922, the French Section points out that it "uses political action whenever it is possible," but that "this action pursued with zeal everywhere women have a political role, reduced itself in France, alas, to a few platonic demonstrations."<sup>7</sup> Faced with the impossibility to act effectively on politics, French pacifists must look for other types of actions. "The French Section, in 1919, when it was paralyzed as regards to political action, created the Help for the Children of Europe Committee (Comité de secours aux enfants),"<sup>8</sup> explains Andrée Jouve at the Fourth International Women's Congress for Peace and Freedom in Washington in 1924. Created in 1919 by Marguerite de Saint-Prix, Gabrielle Duchêne, Séverine and Andrée Jouve, four prominent French pacifists, the Comité français de secours aux enfants (CFSE), affiliated with the Save the Children Fund, had the goal of raising money, food and clothing for children in countries struggling with famine and serious economic problems. The CFSE encouraged French citizens to "adopt" (or sponsor) a child in need: "With 5 francs, you feed a child for more than a week. With 12 francs, you feed a

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Section française de la Ligue internationale des femmes pour la paix et la liberté*, June 1922. BHVP, Fonds M.-L. Bouglé, Fonds Jeanne Mélin, Box 38.

<sup>8</sup> Andrée Jouve, "Cooperation for Relief of Children," *Report of the Fourth Congress of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom*, Washington, May 1 to 7, 1924.

child for a month. With 100 francs, you can save his life,”<sup>9</sup> says the CFSE’s pamphlet.

The Comité français de secours aux enfants will remain active until 1924, when it will dissolve into the International Save the Children Union (SCIU) located in Geneva, losing its national specificity in the process. However, the occupation of the Ruhr by the French troops in 1923 offers a new opportunity for pacifist women to take action in favour of Franco-German reconciliation. Article 231 of the Treaty of Versailles stated that Germany was responsible for “all the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated Government and their nationals have been subjected as a consequence of the war” and therefore needed to repay those damages. In 1923, convinced of Germany’s “ill will” to pay the reparations imposed by the Treaty, on 11<sup>th</sup> January Raymond Poincaré, France’s Prime Minister, sends French troops to occupy the industrial heart of Germany: the Ruhr.

Created that same year in response to the “Sacrifice of Reconciliation” established by German women,<sup>10</sup> the Action fraternelle des enfants de la Ruhr (AFPER) was seen as a way to fraternize with German people while working to ease the suffering caused by the wrongful occupation of the Ruhr. Speaking about the German women’s “Sacrifice” at the Washington Congress in May 1924, Andrée Jouve explains: “We cannot refuse this gesture of reconciliation, but neither can we accept it without doing anything on our side.”<sup>11</sup> As the CFSE had done, the AFPER opted for a fundraiser based on the “adoption” of children. In a recent article, Yves Denéchère shows that children sponsorship (or “adoption”) was a method frequently used by groups doing humanitarian actions in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Denéchère 2015). For the AFPER, it was important to “let the innocent children know that they are not doomed to death [...] that French women [were] aware of their distress and want[ed] to help them.”<sup>12</sup> But, how does the French population feel about helping the children of the enemy?

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<sup>9</sup> “Au secours des enfants Russes ! ...” BDIC, Fonds Gabrielle Duchêne, F delta res 227.

<sup>10</sup> German women had wanted to build a “House of Reconciliation” in northern France, a project that never came to be, due to the inflation of the mark.

<sup>11</sup> Andrée Jouve, “Cooperation for the Relief of Children,” *Report of the Fourth Congress of Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom*, Washington, May 1-7, 1924.

<sup>12</sup> “Au secours des enfants allemands!,” Action fraternelle des enfants de la Ruhr, Section française de la LIFPL. BHVP, Fonds M.-L. Bouglé, Fonds Jeanne Mélin, Box 36.

**“Sauvez les petits Boches?”<sup>13</sup>**

Two of the first countries affected by the work of the CFSE were Germany and Austria. During the Zurich Congress, French pacifists had seen first-hand the effects of malnutrition not only on their German and Austrian colleagues, but also on the hundreds of children transported from Vienna to Zurich by train to get medical treatment in Switzerland (Vellacott 2001, 385). But, if they were ready to help German and Austrian children, the same cannot be said for the majority of the French population. In post-war France, the actions of the “*boche*” soldiers between 1914 and 1918 are still very much engraved in the collective memory. The idea of helping the German children – of saving the “little *boches*” – is not well received among the French population. Why should they help children of the enemy when so many French children are still suffering? In January 1919, the newspaper *Le Matin* writes: “This misery is . . . not greater in Germany than in Belgium or in our devastated and systematically plundered, ruined and bloodied France.”<sup>14</sup> The Quaker’s Société des amis working in France after the war must defend itself against accusation stating that they are only concerned with the suffering of Germans: “When we try to raise awareness to the current distress in Germany,” writes the Société in 1919, “we are often told: Do you forget about the suffering in the devastated areas of France? Do you only have sympathy for the Germans?”<sup>15</sup> In this context, the first task for the French pacifists is to present the German children, not as the enemies of France, but as worthy of French charity.

They need to show the French population, especially the mothers, that the German children are also victims of the war and that it is unfair to hold them accountable for crimes committed by adults. In June 1920, Madeleine Vernet, creator and editor of the pacifist and educative journal *La Mère Éducatrice*, explains to French mothers who refuse to help German children on the grounds that they are “little Germans” whose “fathers killed” the fathers of French children: “Don’t these women know that the crime was mutual, and that if German fathers killed French dads,

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<sup>13</sup> Madeleine Vernet, “Vers la réconciliation,” *La Mère Éducatrice*, 6, No. 12, December 1923.

<sup>14</sup> *Le Matin*, No. 12746, Monday, January 20, 1919. BDIC, Fonds Gabrielle Duchêne, F delta res 230/1919.

<sup>15</sup> *Les régions dévastées de la France*, Société des Amis. BDIC, Fonds Gabrielle Duchêne, F delta res 227/1.

French bullets also orphaned little children from Germany?”<sup>16</sup> A few years later, Vernet calls on the maternal sensitivity of her readers to incite them to take part in the relief work in the Ruhr:

I appeal to you, the mothers who cradle in their arms the darling child; to you, the mothers who have suffered in the last war; to you, the mothers who still mourn the son who died during the deadly battles. . . . *La Mère Éducatrice* asks all its readers to help the children of Germany.<sup>17</sup>

However, to change the mind of the French population is a daunting task, especially as internationalists and pacifists themselves are struggling to take the path of reconciliation. In May 1920, the French pacifist Théodore Ruysen writes in the journal *La Paix par le Droit* that he pitied the German children suffering from famine “even if their fathers are guilty, because it is a double misery to be hungry and also the son of an assassin or thief”.<sup>18</sup>

The same can be said of the French feminist movement. At that time, it was widely believed that because they were mothers, women were “naturally” and “biologically,” pacifists. Women peace activists also believed that mothers would be more likely to work for the Franco-German “rapprochement” than men. But the war had proved that not all women were so “naturally” pacifists. In fact, the large majority of women had participated actively in war efforts. Even the feminist movement, who had pleaded for peace before the war, had stopped all activism during the conflict and had turned their attention towards the new Union sacrée (Bard 1995, 47-48). In the immediate post-war years, most feminists are not ready to forgive or to forget the actions of the Germans. Many historians have shown the importance of distinguishing the discourse of the “pro-war feminist” from that of the “feminist-pacifist” (Vellacott 2007). Asked if they would intervene in favour of the German population to stop the Allied blockade in November 1918, the feminist journal *La Française*, the weekly newspaper of the Conseil national des femmes françaises (CNFF), writes:

No, we will not interfere with our Government to soften the terms of the Armistice that are only too justified by how Germany led the war. During

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<sup>16</sup> Madeleine Vernet, “La grande misère des enfants d’Europe,” *La Mère Éducatrice*, 3, No. 9, June 1920.

<sup>17</sup> “Une conséquence inattendue de l’Occupation de la Ruhr,” *La Mère Éducatrice*, 6, No. 2, February 1923.

<sup>18</sup> Théodore Ruysen, “Réponse à quelques objections,” *Paix par le droit*, May 1920.

those tragic years, German women, sure of victory, fell silent before the crimes of their government, their army, and their navy . . . Why should we intervene today against conditions that are indented to make the return of war impossible? Our compassion goes first and foremost to the innocent victims of the war . . . German women must remember that, and they will understand our silence.<sup>19</sup>

A month later, in December 1918, adopting the same accusatory tone towards German women, *La Française* reasserts its views on humanitarian aid to Germany: “It must be remembered,” writes the editor, “that the scarcity of food in the world has been aggravated by the submarine war, which caused no disapproval from the German women. The needs of the Allied and neutral countries must be considered first.”<sup>20</sup> The position taken by *La Française* and the CNFF after the war differs widely from that taken by the members of the French Section of the WILPF during the same period.

A few years later, in January 1924, CFSE’s own honorary committee members, Professors Léon Bernard, one of the founders of the Health Organisation of the League of Nations, and Albert Calmette, a biologist and doctor who developed the first successful vaccine against tuberculosis, expressed their opposition to the relief work done in Germany. In a letter addressed to Mrs. René Dubost, President of the Committee, on 3<sup>rd</sup> January, Léon Bernard writes:

Consider me as having resigned from the *Comité français de secours aux enfants*. I could not, without betraying my conscience, continue to bring my moral support to your cause. I refuse to approve the spending of French money to help feed children who are taught to hate the French population and who seeks revenge. I cannot be associated with an action that put our own children at risk.<sup>21</sup>

Following Bernard’s example, Albert Calmette notes, in a letter dated from 12<sup>th</sup> January, that:

The propaganda made by the Committee to collect funds in France to help German children no longer allows me to give my moral support to this cause and forces me to send you my resignation. I have seen too many

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<sup>19</sup> “Les Françaises refusent d’intervenir en faveur des Allemands,” *La Française*, November 30, 1918.

<sup>20</sup> “Les Anglaises refusent d’intervenir en faveur des Allemands,” *La Française*, December 21, 1918.

<sup>21</sup> *Dix lettres du dossier du Comité français de secours aux enfants*, 1924. BDIC. O pièce 45100.

horrible things during the four years that I lived in Lille, under the enemy's military occupation . . . to forget and forgive a nation whose leaders only seek revenge and hatred.<sup>22</sup>

Such harsh words against Germany are common at that time. The victory of 1918 and the peace treaties of 1919 did nothing to help bring a sense of security in France. As noted by Jean-Jacques Becker, for the French people, 1914-18 is first and foremost a Franco-German war, and sooner or later Germany would seek to take revenge (Becker 2008, 9). But hearing members of the Honorary Committee of the CFSE speaking in such a way can be surprising. Was it not precisely the Comité's goal to fight against this type of anti-German discourse? Replying to Bernard and Calmette, Mrs. Dubost asks: "Don't you think that this generous gesture from our group will serve the cause of reconciliation and help remove the spirit of hatred of which you speak?" The internal conflicts that arise within the CFSE show the delicate and controversial nature of the work done by French pacifists in the early 1920s.

The AFPER is faced with similar problems, but its work is made even more difficult by the fact that the large majority of the population in France supports the occupation of the Ruhr. In June 1923, Marceline Hecquet, writing in *La Mère Éducatrice*, notes: "In the cinemas, people applaud each time the screen shows scenes of the occupation of the Ruhr... Mothers applaud, children applaud too . . ." <sup>23</sup> Even pacifist circles, especially those in favour of the League of Nations, take a very moderate stance on the subject declaring that even if the use of violence is reprehensible, the occupation is legitimate (Guieu 2008, 132). In early 1923, when Gabrielle Duchêne tries to summon French feminist associations to a meeting in order to draft a statement against the occupation to be sent to the President of the Republic, the League of Nations and the press, she is faced mostly with refusals: only two groups respond positively to the call. The Union française pour le suffrage des femmes (UFSF) even go so far as to qualify the WILPF's initiative as "unpatriotic." Other pacifist associations, like the Association française pour la Société des Nations (AFSDN) and La Paix par le droit, who had initially supported the initiative, ultimately withdrew their support to what they described, rightfully so, as an essentially political action. Others, like this schoolteacher, flatly refused to help the children of the enemy whose suffering was "only too fair":

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Marceline Hecquet, "Nous...qui avons laissé faire," *La Mère Éducatrice*, 6, No. 6, June 1923.

For four and a half years, French children of northern France and Belgium have suffered horribly under German domination. It is now the turn of German children. This must serve as a lesson to these people. The majority of French people share this opinion. It is cruel, it is barbaric, it is hateful, but alas, it is human.<sup>24</sup>

According to historian Ilde Gorguet, the concrete action undertaken in the Ruhr region shows the originality of the women pacifists' position against the occupation (Gorguet 1999, 65). The efforts undertaken by the French pacifists thus appear marginal and radical in this political and social context. Nonetheless, they feel that their work is of crucial importance for the Franco-German reconciliation and the establishment of new international relations.

### **Working for the reconciliation**

Reflecting on the work done by the CFSE and the AFPER in regard to German children, Madeleine Vernet explains in *La Mère Éducatrice* in December 1923 that the humanitarian aid must be understood “as a gesture of reconciliation and healing”<sup>25</sup> between the two countries. During the WILPF’s Washington Congress in 1924, Andrée Jouve, explains that the aid for the children of Germany “was undertaken, not from philanthropic but from political motive, both as a protest and a gesture of reconciliation and humanity.”<sup>26</sup> A few months later, on 9<sup>th</sup> December, she makes similar remarks: this action must be “considered mainly as a protest against the politics of hatred and as a symbolic gesture of reconciliation.”<sup>27</sup> But if the French pacifists see humanitarian work as a political and symbolic stance in favour of the “rapprochement,” what are the motivations for the rest of the contributors? To what extent is the act of sponsorship seen as a way to help a child in need or rather as a way to work towards the more general cause of peace?

The majority of CSFE and AFPER contributors are members of the French Section of the WILPF or activists from other pacifists associations of women such as the *Ligue des femmes contre la guerre* created by

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<sup>24</sup> BDIC, Fonds Gabrielle Duchêne, F delta res 245.

<sup>25</sup> “Un geste de réconciliation et d’apaisement.” “Vers la réconciliation,” *La Mère Éducatrice*, 6, No. 12, December 1923.

<sup>26</sup> “Cooperation for the Relief of Children,” *Report of the Fourth Congress of Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom*, Washington, May 1 to 7, 1924.

<sup>27</sup> Andrée Jouve, “Ligue internationale des femmes pour la paix et la liberté,” December 9, 1924. BDIC, Fonds Gabrielle Duchêne, F delta res 208.

Madeleine Vernet in 1921. Teachers are also overrepresented among the sponsors, which is not surprising given the relationship between French *institutrices* and the peace movement (Siegel 2004). However, it is interesting to note that many of the donations come from the lower classes. At the Vienna Congress in July 1921, the French Section of the WILPF explains that “donations come almost exclusively from those with less fortunate backgrounds [and] are generally very modest, often below 1 franc . . . so these 113 000 fr. represent a number equal to that of the donors. Large donations were extremely rare.”<sup>28</sup> A donation of 30 francs per month represented about 6.5 percent of the average wage of a worker in 1923-1924 (480 francs) (Denéchère 2013, 116). It is therefore not surprising that the large majority of donors opted to give small sums of money. In a letter accompanying her donation, a worker writes: “I am ashamed of such a small donation for such a great misery.”<sup>29</sup> Historian Dominique Marshall explains that humanitarian aid to children “offers an object especially suited to rallying the generosity to the poorer members of society” (Marshall 2002, 190).

However, the desire to help a child in need does not seem to be the only reason why donors become sponsors. Letters written by patrons of the AFPER in 1924 show that for some, the desire for peace and reconciliation constitute the reason for the donation. Workers of the Vaugirard train station in Paris indicate in their letter, that with their donation, they want to “express [their] desire for peace and [their] commitment to the fight against this terrible thing called war.”<sup>30</sup> Others express their direct opposition to the French occupation: “This is our way to protest against the occupation of the Ruhr,”<sup>31</sup> writes a woman who wishes to “adopt” two German children. Unfortunately, such letters do not seem to exist, or at least have not survived the years, in regard to the work done by the CFSE. Nevertheless, it is possible to assume that their motivations for helping German children were similar to those evoked in 1924.

If the organizers and the donors are convinced of the importance of the Franco-German reconciliation and that their work is helping with the “rapprochement,” it is hard to know whether the action of the French

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<sup>28</sup> *Report of the Third International Congress of Women*, Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, Vienne, July 10-17 1921.

<sup>29</sup> BDIC, Fonds Gabrielle Duchêne, F delta res 208.

<sup>30</sup> Letters from sponsors, January 1924. BDIC, Fonds Gabrielle Duchêne, F delta res 245.

<sup>31</sup> “Cooperation for the Relief of Children,” *Report of the Fourth Congress of Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom*, Washington, May 1 to 7, 1924.

pacifists had any real impact on the governments and on the population in both France and Germany. Historian Yves Denéchère argues that it would be unrealistic to think that humanitarian aid could be a channel for dialogue between France and Germany at a State level (Denéchère 2013, 210). This seems particularly true in the context of the Ruhr Occupation. On 14<sup>th</sup> September 1923, unable to meet with Raymond Poincaré, France's Prime Minister, Andrée Jouve and Gertrud Baer (member of the German Section of the WILPF) receive an audience with the Deputy Chief to the Cabinet for Foreign Affairs, M. Maugrat. If Maugrat seems "touched"<sup>32</sup> by the suffering in the Ruhr region, he insists that these difficult conditions are the result of the "German government's inability to fulfill its commitments."<sup>33</sup> Their second request for a meeting with Poincaré remains unanswered. Pacifists see this silence as evidence that the Prime Minister "believes that we do not have anything else important to say and is afraid of being pushed outside of his reserves."<sup>34</sup>

Nevertheless, we do know that the French pacifists were convinced that they played a key role in the disarmament of hatred and in bringing people together after the difficult years of the war. At the end of 1923, the French Section of the WILPF insists on the positive effect of their works in Germany:

We have received many touching letters testifying to the joy of the starving children and loving mothers of Germany . . . Our German friends tell us of the effectiveness of our action in stopping the rise of hatred that threatens to destroy everything.<sup>35</sup>

It is clear, however, that the scope of this humanitarian work is limited to a few donors and recipients. In the immediate post-war years, and throughout the inter-war period, the discourse on Franco-German reconciliation put forward by the pacifist women belongs to a minority of the French population. In the early 1920s, it is difficult to convince the French population to help German children. After the Great War,

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<sup>32</sup> Délégation du Comité Exécutif de la L.I.F.P.L. à Berlin et à Paris, September 1923. *The WILPF Papers*, Reel 62, Series III.

<sup>33</sup> Appendix XV: Audience du vendredi 14 septembre 1923 accordée par M. Maugrat, chef adjoint au cabinet des affaires étrangères de Paris à Andrée Jouve et Gertrud Baer. *The WILPF Papers*, Reel 62, Series III.

<sup>34</sup> Délégation du Comité Exécutif de la L.I.F.P.L. à Berlin et à Paris, September 1923. *The WILPF Papers*, Reel 62, Series III.

<sup>35</sup> "L'activité de la Ligue pendant l'hiver 1923-1924," French Section of the WILPF, March 1, 1924. BHVP, Fonds M.-L. Bouglé, Fonds Jeanne Mélin, Box 38.

memories of the conflict are still fresh and many refuse to rescue the little “*boches*.” This does not mean that the work of the French pacifist women is not important. On the contrary, it is possible to believe that, at an individual level at least, the humanitarian effort did help with the disarmament of hatred, particularly in regard to the people touched by the relief work. As the German Gerda Stoffel writes in December 1923: “We look at [the humanitarian work] as an action that will allow peace, reconciliation and that will help change the hatred against France.”<sup>36</sup>

## Conclusion

Despite all of its effort, the Comité français de secours aux enfants was never able to raise more than 100,000 francs for the children of Germany between 1919 and 1924.<sup>37</sup> For its part, the Action fraternelle des enfants de la Ruhr raised approximately 10,000 francs between 1923 and 1925. If these totals are not necessarily small, when we compare them to the amount raised by the CFSE for the Russian children in 1922, we realize that the work undertaken on behalf of the little German children was not an easy task. In seven months, from February to August 1922, the CFSE was able to raise more than 1,800,000 francs for the children of Russia suffering from the great famine of the early 1920s. The affinity of several members of the Comité, especially Gabrielle Duchêne, with Russia and communism certainly had a big impact on those results (Carle 2004). A quick glance at Duchêne’s private archives, kept at the Bibliothèque de documentation internationale contemporaine (BDIC) in Paris, shows the importance of the relief work undertaken by the CFSE in Russia, which is far larger than that done for Germany. Certainly, the action taken in the name of Russian children had also sparked some criticism – at that time, the word “Russia” had a negative connotation linked to the notion of violence and fear of the consequences of the Bolshevik revolution – but never to the same extent as for Germany. Despite the withdrawal of Russian forces from the war in 1917, the Russian people appeared to be the “victims” of their government, rather than “enemies” of France, which facilitated the humanitarian sentiment towards them (Blanchard 2011). Even the CNFF asks repeatedly that its members “Save the Russian

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<sup>36</sup> Letter by Gerda Stoffel, December 13, 1923. BDIC, Fonds Gabrielle Duchêne, F delta res 245.

<sup>37</sup> “L’activité de la Ligue pendant l’hiver 1923-1924,” French Section of the WILPF, March 1, 1924. BHVP, Fonds M.-L. Boulgé, Fonds Jeanne Mélin, Box 38.

children.”<sup>38</sup> “Having seen the scenes of desolation, suffering and death, it is impossible to remain indifferent,” writes Avril de Saint-Croix in *La Française* in February 1922:

Nobody has the right, regardless of political, social or religious opinions to refuse his aid . . . The women of France will not remain deaf to their call. The *Conseil national des femmes de France*, eager to participate in the relief of such misery, sends a donation of 1,000 francs to the *Comité de secours aux enfants* and regrets not being able to do more.<sup>39</sup>

This statement differs widely from the categorical refusal to help German children given by the CNFF in 1918. This contrast is particularly interesting because it shows that the French population was ready to participate in relief work after the war, but its animosity towards Germany prevented a greater success of the work done by the CFSE and the APER in that country.

In the case of the relief work for the children of Germany, it is clear that humanitarian aid helped these women to provide direct assistance to those suffering from the war, but also to work actively toward moral disarmament. As the prominent French pacifist Romain Rolland explains in a letter sent to the French Section of the WILPF in 1924: “The value of humanitarian aid is not only in material aid . . . it is also in the moral support it provides.”<sup>40</sup> For these women, it is also a way to make their voices heard in the political sphere and to take a stand on important national and international issues, while respecting the role and place associated with their gender. Indeed, humanitarian aid is considered as an extension of domestic and maternal duties. It is thus “natural” for women peace activists to help the suffering children of Germany. Historian Norman Ingram has stressed that, at a time when political leaders and French people seemed to be interested only in making Germany pay for the war, the work of the French pacifist women towards the Franco-German reconciliation in the early 1920s is both brave and radical (Ingram 2007, 274). Radical, yes, because in the immediate post-war years up to the mid-1920s, there was reluctance, even in the pacifist circles, to restore any form of relationship with Germany. It was also quite brave, because, convinced that women also had their say in the establishment of a lasting peace, to which the Franco-

<sup>38</sup> “Sauvez les Enfants Russes,” *La Française*, March 13, 1922; G. Avril de Saint-Croix; “Sauvez les Enfants Russes,” *La Française*, March 13, 1922.

<sup>39</sup> G. Avril de Saint-Croix, “Pour ceux que la faim tue,” *La Française*, February 25, 1922.

<sup>40</sup> Letter from Romain Rolland to the meeting of the French Section of the WILPF January 15, 1924. BHVP, Fonds M.-L. Bouglé, Fonds Jeanne Mélin. Box 38.

German reconciliation was of crucial importance, the French pacifist women were able to make their voices heard despite their exclusion from the political sphere.

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## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

# PEACE WITHOUT FREEDOM IS NOT AN OPTION: RACE AND THE WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM 1914-1930

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### Introduction

After dining with her travelling companions, African-American peace activist Mary Church Terrell returned to her cabin on the ship so that she could finish her resolution for the International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace (ICWPP) Conference in Zurich, Switzerland. She sat at her desk and began to write, "We believe no human being should be deprived of an education, prevented from earning a living, debarred from any legitimate pursuit in which he wishes to engage, or be subjected to humiliations of various kinds on account of race, color or creed."<sup>1</sup> As the night faded into day, Terrell continued to craft a document that revealed her basic philosophical beliefs about world peace and racial justice.

It was late 1919, less than a year after World War I had ended, when Terrell and fourteen other American delegates en route to the global conference agreed to draft resolutions that would ensure post-war peace and justice. They further agreed that the resolutions would be presented at the conference. However, before arriving in Zurich, the women decided to share what they had written. Terrell was the only American delegate to link world peace with racial justice. Needless to say, she was surprised when her colleagues, who were all white Americans, suggested that she delete some of her references to America's alleged racial prejudice. She was even more shocked that they thought their recommendations would only "improve" the resolution (Report on Zurich Conference, 1919).

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<sup>1</sup> Report on Zurich Conference, 1919, WILPF Papers, Swarthmore College Peace Collection (hereafter referred to as SCPC), series C1, box 31.

Terrell believed that America's race problem was a peace issue and, for that reason, needed to be addressed. Therefore, she adamantly opposed any suggestions that her white colleagues offered. Terrell's peace activist friends continued to pressure her to change the text, but she refused. Her friends, who included prominent peace activists Emily Greene Balch and Jane Addams, were equally determined to prevent Terrell from discussing America's race problem. Consequently, they ignored Terrell and changed the text without her approval.

Just before their riverboat docked in Zurich, Balch informed Terrell that the text of her resolution against racism had been altered. Terrell was angry and told Balch, without mincing words, she disapproved of such arbitrary actions. Terrell was deeply offended by her colleagues' actions which, she felt, amounted to a lack of respect for her and any of her opinions. She was determined, however, not to be ignored or disrespected so easily. Besides, she really did not understand what was so problematic with her resolution. After all, the Woman's Peace Party<sup>2</sup> was rapidly earning the reputation of being linked to the protection of life, liberty, and property of all human beings. Terrell learned for the first time the truth about the WPP's position on racial justice. She was disappointed that some WPP members were not as concerned about racial and social justice as they had so publicly proclaimed. Terrell would become the first of many African American peace activists to point to this gap between rhetoric and reality within WPP-turned-WILPF.

Terrell exposed this contradiction to the world when supporters outside America invited her, at the eleventh hour, to represent the United States delegation by delivering the keynote address at the main conference of the ICWPP. Although her colleagues had improperly changed the text of her resolution, they had no control over what Terrell talked about a few days later at the opening session. Her text was a well-organized oratory, which kept the crowd on its feet.

Terrell's first sentences, spoken fluently in German, expressed her belief that the "race problem" was inextricably linked to world peace. In her speech, Terrell emphasized the progress blacks had "made as a race along all lines of human endeavour in spite of almost insurmountable obstacles" and appealed "for justice and fair play to all the dark races of

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<sup>2</sup> The Woman's Peace Party (WPP) was an American pacifist organization formally established in January 1915 in response to World War I. WPP became the American section of an international organization known as the International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace later in 1915, a group which changed its name to the U.S. Section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) at the ICWPP Conference in 1919.

the earth.” She also emphasized that “white people [possibly would] talk about permanent peace until doomsday, but they could never have it till the dark races were treated fair and square” (Report on Zurich Conference, 1919). When she left the stage, Terrell felt better than she had in a while, and rightly so. She had managed to launch her indictment of the status quo and demonstrate how racial injustice made a mockery of the logic on which WPP’s specific brand of peace activism was based without suffering public criticism or ridicule from the listening audience outside America (Terrell 1996, 333).

A decade and a half later, Terrell eagerly recalled the audience’s response to her speech. She proudly noted, “There was such an outburst of approbation as I had not heard since I addressed the International Congress of Women which had met in Berlin fifteen years previously” (Foster 1995, 159).

Not all of her listening audience felt the same way. The American delegation in particular was critical of Terrell for addressing the race problem after they had advised her against doing so. They privately condemned her speech as non-pacifist because they believed that Terrell had “glorified the Civil War as a means of liberating her people.”<sup>3</sup> The American delegates failed to realize that Terrell did not care about how they felt about her speech or her denunciation of racial injustice. She had already made her point. She deemed that her white colleagues would never fully understand her position. After all, they only had to look around to see the racial disparity in the room where they were all seated. Although there were millions of coloured people in the world, Terrell was the only black delegate at the conference. Because of that, Terrell believed that she was “representing the women of all the non-white countries in the world” (Terrell 1996, 328-335; Foster 1995, 158). Many of her white colleagues did not realize that her unfortunate experience with racism had shaped her peace politics and subsequently highlighted a major difference between her and them over its definition. These differences of opinion often led to conflict, which was quite evident at Zurich.

Terrell’s life stood in stark contrast to those of the twentieth-century white women who assembled in Zurich that year. Race had been the absolute determinant of privilege and opportunity in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century America. To be of colour was a mark of degradation. In other words, being black in America between the late 1880s and the 1930s was difficult regardless of one’s socioeconomic status or educational level. Terrell knew that better than anyone in the room. She

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<sup>3</sup> Emily Green Balch to Mildred Scott Olmsted, January 11, 1929, WILPF *Papers*, SCPC, series c1, box 6.

was a member of the black elite and had the benefit of a college education, yet racism was as much a part of her life as the air she breathed. Regardless of where she travelled or with whom she came in contact, Terrell knew that she would experience racism on some level. She had no idea, however, that she would encounter racist behaviour within WPP (later WILPF) – an organization that initially appealed to her because of its pro-racial justice stance. Terrell also thought that many women in the organization knew first-hand what it was like to experience discrimination and other acts of injustice; therefore, she could not imagine any of her white colleagues in WPP practicing or supporting racism or any of the other many -isms. After all, it had only been a few years since a significant number of her peace colleagues had fought for the right to hold previously denied positions of leadership in the peace movement – positions in which they would have decision-making authority.

Americans engaged in peace efforts as early as 1815, but the movement remained virtually unknown until 1905 when they became increasingly involved both economically and politically in international affairs. The Spanish-American War of 1898 was the international activity that forced America onto the global stage. After the war, America held possessions in the Caribbean and the Pacific that ensured America's involvement in Latin America, which many female peace activists opposed. They saw America's acquisition of Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Guam as an expression of the linkage among commercialism, colonialism, and militarism (Alonso 1993, 51).

Once America occupied the Philippines in 1898, women peace activists became increasingly opposed to America's newfound imperialist power. Consequently, this action by the United States compelled women peace critics to protest more aggressively within non-peace organizations because they saw America's behaviour as a "clear-cut case of imposing one nation's will upon another" (Alonso 1993, 8).

At the end of the Spanish-American War, the peace movement grew tremendously, with forty-five new peace organizations appearing between 1901 and 1914. Men led and controlled most of these groups, which forced women members to leave and form organizations that would give them some sense of independence and power. As all-female peace organizations sprung up, mainly in the north-eastern region of the United States, a subtle shift in white women's peace rhetoric occurred. They argued that men were more concerned about "their own achievements than in caring for human life" (Alonso 1993, 86). Once these women received the right to vote, they saw it as their duty to "effect legislation and cause changes in government policy" that would ultimately improve the economic and

social conditions of men, women and children (Alonso 1993, 86). Operating on this premise, many female peace activists actively waged a war for peace and freedom in exclusively female organizations.

One of the largest and most significant American peace groups was the Woman's Peace Party (WPP), founded on 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> January 1915, in Washington, D.C., a year after World War I began. Some three thousand white women from all across the country assembled in the nation's capital to demand that America's leadership unequivocally oppose the war. Their platform consisted of eleven planks, which ranged from war issues to international relations issues (see Degen 1939, 38, and Foster 1995, 11).

It was during the ICWPP meeting in Zurich, in 1919, that peace activists decided to become the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom with national and local branches in countries with representatives at the meeting. Consequently, the WPP reorganized as the United States section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). As they had done since 1915, the women advocated for non-resistance. Not only did the women commit to condone violence, even in self-defence, they also committed to eradicating the underlying causes of violence – political, economic – and social inequalities of all kinds. This broad definition reflected the board's effort to become more inclusive. It also gained the attention of minority groups who were often victims of racist oppression. Specifically, WPP's initial position of non-resistance and its adoption of non-violent resistance a few years later appealed to black women interested in ending racial injustice. This increased interest by black women came at a time when WPP's national executive board decided to open its doors to them.

WPP's national executive board, chaired by Jane Addams, first reached out to African Americans in late 1915, as a way of making the peace organization more racially diverse. According to peace historian Carrie Foster, Addams and her colleagues wanted to open WPP's doors to non-white groups to address racism internally and to broaden the group's constituency (Foster 1995, 158-160). Two issues seemed to have motivated this significant move. For one, WPP allegedly had always been concerned about equality for all human beings and therefore was impatient with every policy that discriminated against any persons because of their race, gender, religion, or ethnicity. According to scholars writing on the subject, WPP promoted the belief that such injustices were morally and legally wrong (Foster 1995, 157). Therefore, in an effort to end such practices wherever they existed, WPP adopted as part of its peace initiative a policy against racial injustice. It seemed as though WPP's charter

members wanted the world to know that they would not tolerate racism or discrimination of any kind.

Second, charter members evidently realized that the mere adoption of such a racial justice clause would seem hypocritical if they excluded blacks from the very organization that promoted such ideology. Therefore, they invited African-American women to join. Unfortunately, many members were reluctant to accept, and an equal number adamantly opposed the acceptance of, black members. But the decision had been made.

As black women became more involved in WPP, they learned that its membership faced a dilemma. How could the organization continue to present itself as a peace-loving group who detested injustices of any kind while privately it was engaged in a struggle to come to terms with the racist feelings of many of its own members? The members did not want to feel hypocritical. So what could they do? How could they conceal the racial prejudice that existed among its members? Surprisingly, charter members first unknowingly revealed their race prejudice when they began their search for black women who would adopt the peace cause.

White leaders of WPP established the criteria for black peace activists. They began their search for the “perfect” African-American woman for membership in the organization. They searched for black women who possessed the same qualities as white peace activists.

White peace activists like Jane Addams, Emily Greene Balch and Carrie Chapman Catt wanted only those African Americans who were “cultivated, preferably professional” women because they believed that such ladies “set the pattern for the others.”<sup>4</sup> As far as they were concerned, only certain black women were intellectually and culturally prepared for membership in WPP.

While these women did not find their criteria for black women appalling, many African-American women thought that their selection process was classist and arrogant. Nevertheless, the founders of WPP initially believed that club women possessed the qualities they were looking for; therefore, they aggressively recruited such black women. White members who supported the campaign to recruit black women either directly approached such women wherever they might have been or urged fellow peace activists to identify and actively pursue them.

The first African Americans to join WILPF, therefore, were virtually mirror images of white peace activists. The groups shared similar interests, vocations, educational levels, forms of activism, and socioeconomic status. In other words, they wanted black women like them—black women that were college-educated, articulate, middle- or upper- class and members of

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<sup>4</sup> Caroline Singer to Hommel, n.d., WILPF Papers, series C1, box 1.

social clubs and/ or other organizations within their communities. But despite their shared characteristics and experiences, white peace activists wanted African-American women who also understood “their place” in America.

In late 1915, Jane Addams and some of the earliest members of WPP eagerly welcomed their first recruits, Mary Church Terrell, Mary B. Talbert, Charlotte Atwood, Dr. Mary Waring, and Addie Hunton (Alonso 1993, 102). For the next decade, various women’s clubs were the main recruiting grounds for white members of WPP. By 1928 WPP began searching for “representative Negro women” in places other than women’s clubs. All black organizations and sororities, the Young Women Christian Association (YWCA), public school systems and universities, and various civil rights organizations became major recruiting grounds for WPP members. During this period, prominent black women in the organization included, among others, Vera Chandler Foster, Vivian Carter, Helen Curtis, Marian Anderson, Thelma Carter, Thelma Edwards Marshall, Dr. Flemma Kittrell, Alice Dunbar-Nelson, Sadie Daniels St. Claire, Lucy Diggs Slowe, Mayme Williams, Addie Dickerson, and Bertha McNeill. White WPP members considered these women to be much more culturally advanced than the black masses.

For example, Terrell was the most respected of all black peace activists during the World War I era. She was also the most economically secure. Terrell’s father, Robert Church, who was born a slave in 1839 in Holly Springs, Mississippi, eventually amassed considerable wealth after the Civil War. He used money inherited from his white father to purchase a hotel. The income received from the hotel business was used to build institutions that provided “entertainment, cultural enrichment, and improved living conditions for African Americans” (Miller 1925, 4). By 1900, Robert Church was considered the richest black man in Memphis and was frequently described as the first African American millionaire in the South (Terrell 1996, 1-17; Jones 1990, 8; Church and Church 1974, 23).

The Churches’ family lifestyle was exemplary of their financial status. The family lived in a two-story house with servants in the suburbs of Memphis. The two children, Mary and Thomas, attended private schools, and Mary spent her leisure time reading, participating in community benevolence and reform, and studying music, Latin and German, all symbols of financial achievement.

Unlike most African-American women, Mary Church’s mother, Louisa, devoted much of her life to social causes without the daily worries of providing for her family. Furthermore, she hosted African-American

friends, who made regular visits to her home to socialize and discuss race uplift work. With so many reform-minded friends in their midst, the Church children received an early education in social and political activism, an experience shared by most of her white peace activist contemporaries (Terrell 1996, 20-28).

In 1884, Mary Church received a bachelor's degree from Oberlin College and, a few years later, she received a master's degree from the same institution. After teaching for a while at Wilberforce University, Church met and married a Harvard University graduate, Robert Heberton Terrell. The Church-Terrell marriage allied two prominent families.

Robert Terrell's father took him from Virginia, his birthplace, to Washington, D.C., when he was ten years old. He attended the public schools of the District of Columbia. Terrell was popular, and black people often spoke with pride of the "first colored boy who had graduated from the high school in Washington" and subsequently "taken a degree at Harvard University" (Terrell 1996, 65). In Washington, Terrell eventually became well known as a lawyer and judge. Presidents Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, Wilson, and Warren Harding appointed him to a judgeship in the Municipal Court of the District of Columbia. Each time the appointment was for four years and required confirmation by the U.S. Senate. (Terrell 1996, 260).

While her husband served as judge, Mary Church Terrell was appointed by the commissioners of the District of Columbia to two terms on the board of education as the only black and the only woman. She was considered to be well qualified by education and training to represent "the coloured people of the District of Columbia" (Terrell 1996, 157). The Terrells met many prominent black and white people in their respective positions. Many of these people were guests in their home over the years.

Mary Church Terrell's socioeconomic status prepared her for WPP and certainly made her an excellent choice for peace work. Long engaged in social justice work, Terrell had no difficulty engaging in conversation or working daily with people outside her race. Hence her background was similar to that of most white peace activists during World War I. She had been reared in a household of activists and had grown up observing the comings and goings of whites in her house. Even more important, Terrell was wealthy. WPP's work required its members to be able to attend conventions and other important meetings both in America and abroad at the member's expense. Like most of the more active white peace activists, Terrell could afford to travel. Furthermore, she had gained the respect of most of her white colleagues in the peace organization. Each of these

factors, her white colleagues reasoned, would help Terrell function in the predominantly white WPP at the turn of the twentieth century.

Other African-Americans recruited by white peace activists also came from respected families. They were not, however, as well off as the Churches and Terrells. In spite of their relative lack of wealth, these families were prosperous compared with most African Americans of the period.

While their criteria invited educated, middle-class black women into the traditionally exclusive WPP, white peace activists did not truly understand their black colleagues' dedication to racial justice and the influence that strong commitment had on their definition of peace and freedom. For black women, peace would not and could not be possible without freedom, and freedom was unattainable without peace. Therefore, several questions loomed large for many black women who were asked to join WPP during World War I. Would fighting for world peace conflict with their race work? In a world with so much violence and conflict, how could black women work for both peace and racial justice? Many black peace activists who eventually joined WPP did so because they believed that peace issues and race issues were inextricably linked. Therefore, they often defined peace in the context of race, reasoning that they could not work for one without the other.

Often when approached by white peace activists to join WPP, many prospective African-American peace reformers responded that there were too many important domestic issues to address before they could become involved in a conflict thousands of miles away. Yet, when war came in 1914, Hunton, Terrell and other African-American peace activists who finally decided to join WPP could not, with good conscience, stand on the sidelines and watch the world plunge itself into the madness and insanity of battle. Nor could black men resist the call to fight for their country.

Consequently, as soon as World War I began, black men positioned themselves to help their country fight for freedom and democracy. Yet, they encountered resistance. The passage of the Selective Service Act on 18<sup>th</sup> May 1914, provided for the enlistment of all able-bodied Americans between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-one. Although more than seven hundred thousand black men registered, most were not accepted. Before the end of the Selective Service enlistments, however, approximately 31 percent of all blacks that registered were accepted, while 26 percent of whites that registered were accepted (Terrell 1996, 326). This discrepancy was due to some draft boards discriminating against blacks in the matter of exemptions. African Americans, who comprised less than 10 percent of the American population, were being accepted into the American armed forces at a much higher rate than whites, who comprised more than 65

percent of the nation's population. Yet, this blatant discrimination did not prevent blacks from participating in World War I. Even those who opposed the war because they felt that it was an imperialistic conflict answered the call of their draft boards.

A few months after America declared war, the War Department began to deploy troops to Europe. Black combat troops were among the first to arrive in France, and many others were later sent to Germany and other parts of Europe where life was, for the most part, no better than it had been in America. Black men were confined to segregated units and subjected to the racist behaviour of their white colleagues.

Some civilian African Americans, who understood better than anyone else what black soldiers were experiencing, decided to assist the black troops once they heard about their treatment. Among this first group of black citizens were three WPP activists: Addie Hunton, Mary Talbert, and Helen Curtis. When these three women decided to travel to Europe to engage in war work, they became involved in a major controversy that dominated WPP's-turned-WILPF's agenda for a long time. While black peace activists felt that it was appropriate for them to engage in war work as part of their race work agenda, white peace activists regarded their behaviour as contrary to their definition of pacifism and the WPP planks that they had adopted.

Specifically, as early as 1915, WPP had gone on record as opposing American involvement in war of any kind. When America entered World War I, the peace organization asked its members not to engage in any activities that would either aid or give the impression that they were aiding the war cause. Several scholars of peace history suggest that WPP had several reasons for taking this position (for example, see Schott 1997, 68-72; and Davis 1973, Chapter 13).

First, and fundamentally, WPP, and later WILPF, was opposed to "aiding war, any war, by either direct or indirect service." Second, it believed that any energy spent on war work was energy no longer available for the positive work of fostering mediation and internationalism. Third, WPP suspected that as international affairs became more pressing, the government would give less attention to domestic problems. Therefore, to ensure that the government would maintain its focus, WPP believed the peace group should do all it could to help the government alleviate these problems. Finally, many WPP members had worked to organize labour and refused to engage in volunteer work that they believed would lessen the amount of work available to paid workers.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> "On War Work," report at executive and state chair meeting, November 19-20, 1915, Woman's Peace Party (hereafter referred to as WPP), Swarthmore College

Black peace activists Hunton, Mary Talbert and Helen Curtis were deeply troubled by the notion that war work directly contradicted the concept of peace, as well as WPP's mission. They wondered how the two might be different. When they rooted peace soundly in race and racial justice, it made going to Europe to assist black troops all the more necessary; that is, an essential part of their peace work. Therefore Hunton and a few other African-American activists decided to go against opponents of war work, redefining peace work in the process. They became welfare workers under the auspices of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA). Hunton, Talbert, and Curtis were among the twenty-two African-American women who travelled to Europe with other YWCA members to conduct war work. As previously stated, their action caused controversy within WPP.

When WPP's national leadership admonished Hunton and her colleagues for assisting American troops, the women responded that they were "crusaders on a quest for Democracy" who were "answering the call." As black women, they felt a responsibility to represent in France the womanhood of their race in America – those fine mothers, wives, sisters and friends who so courageously gave their young men to face the ravages of war. They noted that African-American men needed comfort and relief from those who understood their pain since "there were prejudices and discrimination often shown [exclusively] to the colored race" (Hunton and Johnson 1920, 8-9). Although black female war workers were to provide relief to all soldiers, Hunton maintained that African-American men had different and, in many ways, greater needs. She and other black peace activists often spoke of the racism that black troops endured while serving the United States and the lack of assistance provided by the U.S. War Department.

Hunton, Talbert and Curtis vividly recalled how Col. Allen J. Greer, chief of staff of the Ninety-Second Division of the United States Army, for instance, was alleged to have "systematically and unfairly attacked the courage, competence, and character of the troops, particular their black junior officers." They witnessed how high officials in the War Department condoned this kind of behaviour in their responses to complaints made by black soldiers (Kornweibel 1998, 56). Therefore, many people, especially black peace activists like Hunton, Talbert and Curtis, were not surprised to witness low morale among black troops. For African-American peace activists, in particular, this kind of behaviour by white officers and troops confirmed that black soldiers needed a support group. Consequently,

Hunton and other black peace reformers who engaged in “nurturing” as war work refused to apologize for their decision to go to France. When the YWCA called on women to serve as war workers, Hunton, Talbert and Curtis immediately packed their personal belongings and joined nineteen other black women of the American Expeditionary Forces en route to Paris.

On arrival in France, Hunton noticed that while the official heads of the YWCA at Paris “were in every way considerate and courteous to [their] colored constituency,” the attitudes of many of the white secretaries in the field were to be deplored. Hunton observed

They came from all parts of America and brought their native prejudices with them. Our soldiers often told us of signs on YWCA huts which read, ‘No Negroes Allowed’ and, sometimes other signs would designate the hours when colored men could be served; we remember seeing such instructions written in crayon on a bulletin board at one of the huts at Camp 1, St. Nazaire; signs prohibiting the entrance of colored men were frequently seen during the beginning of the work in that section . . . sometimes, even when there were no such signs, services to colored soldiers would be refused. (Hunton and Johnson 1920, 26)

The racist behaviour encountered by both African-American soldiers and welfare workers further convinced Hunton, Talbert, and Curtis that, despite the WPP’s policy on war work, their services were greatly needed. Hunton once remarked, “The number of colored women was so small, few, if any, of the white YWCA gave any attention to the colored group [soldiers] notwithstanding they were Americans just like the others” (Hunton and Johnson 1920, 32). In all, only twenty-two black women served with the American Expeditionary Forces in Europe during World War I. Of that number peace activist Hunton and her close friend, Kathryn Johnson, rendered the longest period of active service overseas (Hunton and Johnson 1920, 32). They worked hard, visiting wounded soldiers in hospitals, teaching illiterates to read and write, listening to those soldiers who wanted to tell their stories of joy or sorrow, serving them food and refreshments, and cleaning their huts and leave areas. Black women who engaged in war work were performing duties for which, as Hunton once said, they were “peculiarly fitted” (Hunton and Johnson 1920, 39).

This last reason for war work offered by Hunton was part of the prevailing thought of most of her contemporaries in the peace movement. Women were “nurturers, life givers” and therefore it was natural for them to nurture the physically and emotionally wounded soldiers. Whatever the

reason, Hunton, Talbert, Curtis and other advocates of such war work believed that they were obligated to assist the men of their race.

Conversely, a minority of African Americans who joined WPP did not support Hunton, Talbert, Curtis and the other black women who engaged in war work during World War I. Terrell, Charlotte Atwood and Dr. Mary Waring as well as other black opponents of war work felt it was best to remain in the United States and channel their energy into ensuring that the rights of African Americans were not being violated. More specifically, they believed that they were needed to fight for racial justice and freedom in America while the men of their race fought equally hard for the same lofty goals in Europe. In addressing the issue of war work in her autobiography, Terrell exclaimed,

We verily believe that adherence to the teachings of peace is the rock upon which the colored people of America must build the superstructure of their civilization for all their future. It offers the only sure solution for their many difficulties, although it must be accompanied by righteous and indignant protest against injustice. The colored soldier has in some measure removed the fetters from his soul. Approximately 150,000 soldiers, officers and men went to France to represent the colored race in America. Many of them were brigaded with the French, while other thousands had contact and association with their people, which resulted in bringing for the entire number a broader view of life; they caught the vision of a freedom that gave them new hope and a new inspiration. (Terrell 1996, 253)

Black soldiers, Terrell thought, were experiencing freedom, albeit limited, and therefore did not need WPP's help. Regardless of the reason given by black and white proponents and opponents of war work, it was an unpopular and controversial issue among all pacifists in the early days of the Great War.

Eventually most WPP members and leaders followed proponents of war work like Hunton, Talbert, and Curtis. By the time World War I ended, war work was no longer a major WPP issue. Two factors gave rise to this change.

First, during the intense debates engaged by WPP members on this controversial issue, peace activists Lucia Ames Mead, representing the national WPP, recommended that each state branch perform some sort of public service so that their critics could witness their willingness to serve their country.<sup>6</sup> Such a policy should have been established long before

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<sup>6</sup> Lucia Ames Mead to State chairs, April 6, 1917, WPP, SCPC, box 1.

then, since most of WPP's members would have performed relief work anyway.

Second, some peace activists, like so many other social reformers, had performed volunteer work and nurturing work for years in an effort to improve society. Therefore, when the national WPP asked them to give up this kind of activity, peace historian Linda Schott maintains, it placed them in an ethical quandary. They had become involved in WPP because they believed, like Hunton and others, that women valued human life and therefore had a special responsibility to prevent war. Thus they were surprised that WPP's leadership expected them to abandon their nurturing function at a time when America seemed to be in the greatest need. Women who did comply with WPP's request often were accused of being inhumane because of their unwillingness to help America's soldiers.<sup>7</sup> Regardless of what some peace activists generally believed, the majority of black peace activists, in particular, could not refrain from war work during World War I.

During and immediately following the Great War, peace activists also concentrated on other issues. Black peace reformers, in particular, focused on the problems faced by African Americans. They often blatantly linked WPP's goals of peace and freedom. In 1904, for instance, Mary Church Terrell, while serving as president of the National Association of Colored Women, published an article in the influential magazine, *North American Review*, to respond to Southerner Thomas Nelson Page who had written an article on lynching. Page acquitted lynch mobs from any guilt, holding instead the supposedly debased blacks responsible for their own violent executions. In his book, *The Negro: The Southerner's Problem*, Page claimed,

Lynching does not end ravishing, and that is the primary necessity . . . The charge that is often made, that the innocent are sometimes lynched, has little foundation. The rage of the mob is not directed against the innocent, but against the guilty; and its fury would not be satisfied with any other sacrifices than the death of the real criminal. Nor does the criminal merit any consideration, however terrible the punishment . . . The crime of lynching is not likely to cease until the crime of ravishing and murdering women and children is less frequent than it has been of late. And this crime, which is well-nigh wholly confined to the Negro race, will not greatly diminish until the Negroes themselves take it in hand and stamp it out . . . (Page 1904, 108, 109, 111-113)

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<sup>7</sup> For minutes on this last point, see minutes of session 3 of the annual meeting, 1916, WPP, SCPC, box 1.

For the next ten years, Terrell analyzed and refuted with data Page's attempted justification of lynching as a response to assaults by black men on white women. She also showed how apologists like Page had tried to rationalize what were violent mob actions that were seldom based on assaults (Davis 1973, 193). Hence, Terrell became a major participant in the anti-lynching crusade. However, she was not the only black peace activist who aggressively took action against lynching: extra-legal violence that threatened the freedom of blacks.

Addie Hunton, for example, first became involved in the anti-lynching crusade while a member of the civil rights organization, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Congressman Leonidas C. Dyer (R-Missouri), in April 1918, invited the NAACP to support a federal anti-lynching bill that was based on a bill drafted by the organization's founder, Albert E. Pillsbury, in 1901. The bill called for the prosecution of lynchers in federal court. State officials who failed to protect lynching victims or prosecute lynchers could face five years in prison and a \$5,000 fine. Hunton was one of the NAACP and WILPF members who served as a consultant to Pillsbury when he drafted the bill.

Both Terrell and Hunton continued their fight against lynching as members of the WPP. As soon as Hunton joined WPP, she put her colleagues in the peace organization on notice that the anti-lynching crusade would dominate her time. She noted, "The recrudescence of the lynching habit due to economic problems . . . [had] brought colored people to a state of strong feeling and agitation and [was] again commanding their first attention."<sup>8</sup> She hoped that they would support her in this important endeavour, given the League's goal of racial justice. And WILPF's black and white members did so. Although the peace organization had supported for years anti-lynching bills, its membership began to lobby more forcefully and more aggressively for such legislation as a consequence of efforts made by Hunton. Despite their efforts, Congress never passed an anti-lynching bill.

While fighting for domestic peace and freedom, members of WILPF also focused on America's economic imperialism in other parts of the world. They continued to express concern about American imperialism after World War I.

African-American peace activists were particularly interested in America's economic imperialism in Haiti. The sovereign nation experienced numerous periods of intense political and economic disorder. Consequently, within a year after the beginning of World War I, America and Haiti ratified a treaty that permitted the United States to exercise control over

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<sup>8</sup> Addie Hunton to Dorothy Detzer, 1934, WILPF Papers, SCPC, series C1, box 3.

Haiti's finances and police force for a period of ten years.<sup>9</sup> This power gave America a justification to dominate every phase of life in Haiti. In 1917, America placed the country under complete military rule and forced extension of the treaty of 1915 for another ten years. The nature of the intervention was clearly demonstrated in a telegram that an American sent to the secretary of the navy: "Next Thursday . . . unless otherwise directed, I will permit Congress to elect a president" (Logan 1941, 48). Almost from the beginning, the Haitians resented American occupation of their country, and it was necessary for the marines to kill more than two thousand inhabitants to restore peace and order (Franklin and Moss 2000, 326-332).

Haitians elicited widespread sympathy, especially from African Americans. Black peace activists watched events in Haiti with growing concern. They were among the first and most energetic critics of America's presence there. But they were not alone in their fight against American policies. They joined with several prominent white peace activists to rid the small country of America's influence. Hunton, Charlotte Atwood, Mary Waring, and others began by persuading WILPF's national leaders to take a stand on America's involvement in Haiti (Logan 1941, 53). In 1920, two years after the Great War ended, national WILPF leader Emily Greene Balch, responding to pressure from Hunton, Atwood, and others, suggested to her colleagues on the executive board that they appoint a commission to investigate the situation there. It took the board six years to agree to her request. In 1926, the team leader, Balch, African Americans Addie Hunton and Charlotte Atwood, and three others, including one man, were appointed to an unofficial investigatory commission that proved to be one of the most effective undertakings of WILPF.

The group spent three weeks in the country. Balch was struck most strongly, she wrote, by the "complete hiatus between the sense of what [was] important in life in the eyes of the Haitians" and what Americans thought was significant to the Haitians. The Americans emphasized the good they had done by overseeing the building of roads, bridges, and health care facilities; the Haitians emphasized that American occupation had broken down self-government and left a whole generation to grow up without any sense of political responsibility or experience of it. Even worse, in the view of the Haitians, was that the American occupation had created "a situation between the races powerfully influenced by that which had developed in the former slave states of the United States" and

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<sup>9</sup> Logan 1941, 48. The relations of the United States and Haiti also receive attention in Brown, 1923, 48-62.

produced within the Haitians a sense of “racial self-consciousness” from which they had been free (Balch 1972, 145).

Balch later clarified these remarks with examples of racism and condescension she had witnessed. “Among American officials in Haiti, even those who pass for the most friendly,” she noted, “there is a good deal of joking about Haitians having just stopped living in trees, and that sort of thing” (Balch 1972, 150). Balch believed that it was impossible for Americans to hide their contempt for the Haitians, and this failure doomed any attempts at mutual cooperation: “If black men, however cultivated, strike our men in Haiti as sort of nigger minstrels masquerading in Paris clothes and aping real men like ourselves, there can never be effective cooperation” (Bussey and Tims 1980, 58).

Dorothy Detzer, the U.S. section’s secretary, and Emily Greene Balch, began to put political pressure on the secretary of Latin American Affairs in the State Department in Washington, D.C. Their goal was to persuade the secretary to withdraw all U.S. troops from Haiti. Balch even visited President Calvin Coolidge and provided him with a copy of *Occupied Haiti*, which chronicled the group’s findings from their visit to Haiti. She later submitted that same report to Coolidge’s successor, Herbert Hoover. After reviewing the report, President Hoover formed an official committee to investigate the situation in Haiti. Once the investigation was over, Hoover issued a report with his administration’s findings. Interestingly, Hoover’s report echoed many of the recommendations in *Occupied Haiti*, proposals that were implemented in 1934 when American troops were finally withdrawn from the island (Sundiata 1980, 38). Despite the withdrawal, however, Haiti remained a part of America’s empire of darker people.

America also continued to occupy Germany once World War I was over. More specifically, both white and black troops were deployed by the United States War Department to occupy Nazi Germany. While Germans did not want any American troops in their presence, their encounters with black troops were much more challenging and problematic for United States military leaders and America’s War Department. Black soldiers were often wrongfully accused of committing crimes. Eventually, Germans and even some American soldiers petitioned to have black troops removed from occupied Germany. WILPF’s national board was first made aware of the problem that the United States military was allegedly having with black troops in March 1921, less than three years after the Great War had ended.

When the issue regarding the interaction between black troops and German citizens was sent to WILPF’s national leadership to address, Mary

Church Terrell, a member of the board, refused to do so. In other words, in 1921, WILPF's national board was asked to sign a petition, whose origin was questionable, that requested the removal of black troops from occupied Germany. Because the other women were willing to sign it, Terrell's signature was important for unanimity, especially since she was the only black member of the board. Terrell refused to sign the petition. When she learned of the alleged "horrible crimes" committed against German women by black troops, she questioned the truthfulness of such stories and concluded, "I belong to a race whose women have been the victims of assaults committed upon them by men of all races." But, she continued, "I am certain that the black troops are committing no more assaults upon the German women than the German men committed upon the French women or that any race of soldiers would probably commit upon women in occupied territory" (Terrell 1996, 360-364; Foster 1995, 160).

Terrell was also told by a reliable source that the black soldiers were not guilty of such offenses and therefore decided that such allegations were "simply another violent and plausible appeal to race prejudice" (Bussey and Tims 1980, 38-42), to which she had become accustomed in America. For that reason, she refused to sign the petition. Instead she pointed to a 1918 incident in which black soldiers had been wrongfully accused of a crime.

Terrell reminded her white colleagues that American whites stationed in France wanted to continue to perpetuate racism with false and inflammatory literature. She charged that the more recent accusation was just another ploy by whites to promote segregation and hatred of black troops in Europe. Terrell said that she would be willing to offer proof that the more recent charges against African-American troops in Germany were also false. Proof was not necessary, though, for national board member Carrie Chapman Catt had already investigated the matter and found the 1921 report to be erroneous.

Terrell was not surprised by Catt's findings. But, she knew that her colleagues were not happy with her. Therefore, she then offered to resign but Jane Addams refused to accept her resignation. Instead Addams agreed that WILPF's board should take action against the occupation of enemy territory, "not against any special troops" (Terrell 1996, 360-364).

Terrell was relieved by Addams's response. "I was glad not to be forced to resign," she wrote; "I enjoyed working for peace, and the contacts with the fine women who were members were an education to me" (Terrell 1980, 363-364). Terrell's actions on this particular issue

illustrated the extent of her commitment to the African-American community while working for peace and freedom.

Terrell was not, however, re-elected to WILPF's national board after 1921, and WILPF's records are silent on the reasons for her departure. White WILPF members Mildred Scott Olmsted and Emily Greene Balch later claimed that Terrell was not re-elected to the board because she had failed to attend board meetings on a regular basis (Foster 1995, 15).<sup>10</sup> The national board, consequently, was left with no prominent black member, a matter of some concern to those WILPF members trying to achieve racial diversity.

Therefore, the black troops' incident inspired WILPF to pass its first thorough condemnation of racism. In 1922, WILPF resolved that because "race prejudice [was] based on ignorance, [was] without reason or justice," and create[d] distrust, suspicion, antagonism, and hatred towards the people of other nations, WILPF would condemn "race prejudice as un-American and unworthy of civilized human beings." Furthermore, the peace group would do all it could to "uproot and eradicate it from the minds of the people."<sup>11</sup>

The action of WILPF on this issue gave its African-American members the impression that the organization was interested in achieving racial justice. After this incident, black women felt a little more comfortable linking race with peace and freedom issues and increasingly took the lead in doing so on other international issues.

Records show, for instance, that U.S. involvement on the African continent, which began during World War I and escalated in the years immediately following the end of the war, caused concern among both black and white members of WILPF. They were particularly interested, for example, in America's economic and political imperialism in Liberia.

From the outset, concerned black peace activists believed that America's involvement in Liberia during the pre-and post-World War I era was motivated by racism. They thought that the Americo-Liberian elite<sup>12</sup> was crudely exploiting native Liberian workers, ironically creating a system akin to American slavery. Furthermore, they felt that the inability of Liberian officials to reimburse several European countries for money that they borrowed coupled with America's desire to provide resources for

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<sup>10</sup> See Belle LaFollette to Lucy Biddle Lewis, March 27, 1922, LaFollette Papers, Library of Congress, box 2; Mildred Scott Olmsted to Emily Greene Balch, January 7, 1929, Balch Papers, SCPC, box 1.

<sup>11</sup> Resolution on Race Prejudice, 1922, WILPF Papers, SCPC, series E4, box 1.

<sup>12</sup> The American Liberian elite were free black Americans who were forced to resettle in Liberia by congressional legislative act in December 1816.

its growing automobile industry threatened the country's independence. Moreover, they became increasingly concerned just as Liberians did when Europeans who had loaned Liberia money began demanding repayment if the country wanted to retain its independence. Consequently, many black peace activists joined their white peace activist colleagues as well as blacks in the larger community in a full-scale attack against imperialists and advocates of forced labour in Liberia. They did so primarily through their affiliation with various all-black or predominantly black organizations interested in the Liberian situation.

African Americans in general and black peace activists in particular were not willing to see a European mandate over Liberia. They were also angry that America had refused to intervene to protect Liberia from European imperialist threats.

African American members of WILPF and the NAACP publicly alleged that racism influenced America's lack of interest in Liberia or unwillingness to protect the country's independence. The State Department denied such allegations. However, allegations made by African Americans were further confirmed when Charles S. Johnson, an African American college professor who represented the United States on the Cristy Commission,<sup>13</sup> and an active member of the NAACP, implied that at least one of his colleagues on the Commission was influenced by racial considerations. He referred to Cuthbert Christy, an architect of the Commission, as having felt that "Africans were standing still and [were] 100 years behind England . . . and France . . . that U.S. Negroes were 100 years behind whites."<sup>14</sup> Johnson said that Christy wanted an administration by white men, while Johnson believed that black self-rule would remain, even if African Americans could assume a more significant role in Liberia.

After hearing of the Christy Commission findings and Johnson's allegations, black peace activists in WILPF as well as members of the NAACP began to more publicly advocate for Liberian independence. They

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<sup>13</sup> The Christy Commission was established by the League of Nations on 8<sup>th</sup> April 1930 to investigate claims that Liberian officials were using soldiers to gather tribal people who were shipped to the island of Fernando Po as forced labourers. The Liberian government denied the charges and invited a League of Nations inquiry. Cuthbert Christy headed the commission. The results of the inquiry in September 1930 found that the labourers had been recruited under condition of criminal compulsion scarcely distinguishable from slave raiding and slave trading. As a result of the Christy Commission report, Liberia's President and Vice President resigned.

<sup>14</sup> Ibrahim K. Sundiata, *Black Scandal: America and the Liberian Labor Class, 1929-1936* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1980), 83.

felt that all American and European companies in the black republic needed to be removed.

WILPF and the NAACP, who shared some of the same female members, were two of the main supporters of Liberian independence. Many of these same women who had joined WILPF – Dr. Flemma Kittrell, Addie Hunton, Dr. Mary Waring, Mary Talbert, and Lucy Diggs Slowe – linked America’s race problem during the years of the Great Depression to Liberia’s race problem and linked the economic and political exploitation of Liberia by imperialist nations to the twin goals of peace and freedom for which WILPF was fighting both in the United States and abroad.

On 31<sup>st</sup> July 1933, for instance, a group of prominent African Americans, representing various black organizations and WILPF, and who had expressed opposition to events in Liberia for over a decade, met Undersecretary of State William Phillips to discuss the Liberian situation. The group included Dr. Flemma Kittrell, Addie Hunton, and Dorothy Detzer of WILPF; W.E.B. DuBois of the NAACP; President Mordecai Johnson of Howard University; Rayford Logan of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History; Addie Dickerson, a member of WILPF and the president of the International Council of Women of the Darker Races (to which black peace activists Mary Church Terrell, Addie Hunton, Lucy Diggs Slowe, Mary Talbert, and Dr. Mary Waring also belonged; Mrs. Daniel Partridge, Jr., the secretary of the Washington, DC branch of WILPF; and Charles Hamilton Houston of the National Bar Association. Dorothy Detzer was the lone white member of the delegation.

The group convened before their meeting with the State Department to draft a statement about Liberia. They called for a supervisory commission to include both a Liberian and an American black, rejected the notion that education in Liberia be turned over completely to missionary societies, and emphasized that African Americans were solidly behind the maintenance of Liberian sovereignty.<sup>15</sup>

Once the delegation met with Undersecretary of State Phillips, they couched their criticism of America’s policy toward Liberia in terms of racial solidarity. W.E.B. DuBois, speaking on behalf of the delegation, read a statement in which he maintained that “the darker world had become convinced that it [was] being used and exploited by Europe and America for the benefit, power and luxury of white folk and at the expense

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<sup>15</sup> Mordecai Johnson to Walter White, July 27, 1933, NAACP Papers, Library of Congress. There was a difference of opinion on some issues. Some members of the delegation wanted an American as chief adviser, while others wanted a European (preferably a Scandinavian).

of poverty, and slavery for yellow, brown, and black” (Forderhase 1971). DuBois further criticized Washington, claiming that it was not interested in a “New Deal” of black states and compared Haiti to Liberia. He then asked that the League of Nations’ plan of assistance not be forced on Liberians and urged that the proposed Liberian budget under the plan be amended to include funds for education: “We have too often seen missionary enterprises as the hand-maiden of capitalistic and imperialistic designs and we are sure that the Christian people of America will not wish to supplant Government education by Church education in Liberia any more than in the United States” (Forderhase 1971). DuBois also asked that America support the appointment of a chief adviser acceptable to Liberia, that no ultimatum regarding Liberia’s acceptance of the plan be sent, and that America officially recognize [Liberia’s] administration.<sup>16</sup>

Shortly after DuBois shared the delegation’s position on Liberia with Phillips, the State Department told the press: “Mr. Phillips states . . . that he would be glad to give careful consideration to the views of so large a group of friends of Liberia and that he would transmit them to Major General Blanton Winship, the present American representative on the League Committee, for his consideration and such suggestions to the Committee for alterations as might seem feasible.”<sup>17</sup> In the end, both parties had accomplished little. African Americans believed that Winship did not like blacks, and that he would simply ignore their recommendations.

WILPF’s black membership led by its national president Dorothy Detzer, as well as the NAACP and other all-black organizations, continued to lobby the State Department. This time, the group called for the government to appoint a black adviser to Liberia. Members of both WILPF and the NAACP believed that they would have to press the U.S. State Department harder for a black adviser if they were to be successful. Dorothy Detzer, acting on this belief, stepped up WILPF’s lobbying efforts in Washington and called on black peace activists in particular to

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<sup>16</sup> Statement of W.E.B. DuBois at State Department, July 31, 1933, NAACP Papers, Library of Congress. African Americans supported the Barclay Administration, which had denounced forced labor trafficking of native Africans. The administration also had rejected a recommendation by diplomatic representatives from America, Great Britain, and Germany to impose international governmental control on Liberia to “enable it to crystallize the recommendations and suggestions of the International Commission. This action by the Barclay administration had caused the League of Nations to withdraw its offer in April 1930, since it had suggested some type of international government control of the black republic. See Azikwe 1935, 252.

<sup>17</sup> State Department Press Release, July 31, 1933, NAACP Papers, Library of Congress.

solicit support from members of the black community. Addie Hunton was the first to respond to Detzer's request. In a letter to Detzer, Hunton wrote, "I have read with considerable concern the report on the matter of the Liberian advisor. If you desire further protest from colored groups I would advise use of sororities and fraternities, and the conference of youth. For the sororities and fraternities, a list is to be found in the *Negro Year Book*, College Women's Association, Miss Vivian Cook, President, Colored High School, Baltimore."<sup>18</sup>

Before the Liberian crisis ended, many of these groups had organized in protest of the government's position. By late 1933, the U.S. State Department had changed its position on an adviser and asked members of both WILPF and the NAACP for recommendations. WILPF peace activist Detzer recommended W.E.B. DuBois "or some other outstanding Negro in the United States," suggesting that such a person would not be "easily swayed by . . . the State Department."<sup>19</sup> Meanwhile, black peace activist Hunton wrote a separate letter to NAACP President Walter White and recommended W. E. B. DuBois.<sup>20</sup> White agreed and then wrote Detzer a letter in which he endorsed DuBois as chief adviser. Detzer then made the recommendation to the State Department, which was subsequently approved.<sup>21</sup> Shortly after DuBois became chief adviser, in May 1935, America extended diplomatic recognition to Liberia.

Many scholars, especially those writing about the role of peace activists, speciously maintain that while the Liberian crisis dominated the agendas of WILPF and numerous black organizations from the years leading to World War I to the 1930s, African Americans had little influence on shaping American foreign policy toward Liberia. African-American peace activists, such as Addie Hunton, Addie Dickerson, Mary Talbert, Dr. Mary Waring, Dr. Flemmie Kittrell, and Lucy Diggs Slowe, joined countless other African Americans in condemning America's handling of the crisis in Liberia.

Black peace activists not only protested domestic injustices and America's controversial involvement in Haiti and Liberia both during World War I and the years following the end of the Great War, they were equally critical of America's involvement in other countries in which human rights were being violated. Their efforts in human rights and social

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<sup>18</sup> Addie Hunton to Dorothy Detzer, June 14, 1933, SCPC, microfilm, reel 130.50.

<sup>19</sup> Dorothy Detzer to Walter White, October 25, 1933, WILPF Papers, SCPC, microfilm, reel 130.53; Foster, *Women and the Warriors*, 176.

<sup>20</sup> Addie Hunton to Walter White, October 28, 1933, WILPF Papers, SCPC, box 1.

<sup>21</sup> Walter White to Dorothy Detzer, October 29, 1933, WILPF Papers, SCPC, microfilm, reel 130.53.

justice issues both domestically and internationally, were not, like in Liberia, often masked by the leadership in WILPF or in other organizations that took a public position on events. Regardless of whether their role was public or behind-the-scenes, African-American peace activists fought for peace and, in the process, often linked the twin goals of peace and freedom with racial justice and racial solidarity.

For black peace activists, the limitations and obligations of being both African American and female shaped their participation in the movement. Their sense of responsibility to the black race and to people of African descent and their experiences as black women helped determine their goals, motivations, and activities.

Peace and freedom, therefore, had a different meaning for black women in WILPF. To them, the twin goals of WILPF meant not only an end to colonialism and a peaceful resolution of international conflicts but also an end to racial and human oppression and the beginning of racial liberation. Black women well understood that “race-ing” peace was the only way to keep their white peace activist colleagues focused on racial justice issues in an organization that prided itself on such under the exceptionally large banners emblazoned with peace and freedom. They also realized that it would be the only way that they could devote precious energy and time to the American peace movement. Black women activists well understood that there could be no peace without freedom. Having one without the other was not possible; it was not an option. These words guided and shaped their peace activism.

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