

“Bread and Roses” – Voices against War
Commemorating the Centenary of the
Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom

Opening, 8 November 2019, Anti-War Museum (Peace Gallery), 18 hrs

Christian Bartolf and Dominique Miething

Our new peace history exhibition – the 21st exhibition since 2008 in a series on the conceptual history of non-violent resistance – documents public voices of women against war from 1907 until 1935 and recalls the founding years of the *Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom*: after the death of Bertha von Suttner on 21 June 1914, after the beginning of the First World War on 28 July 1914, and after the murder of Jean Jaurès on 31 July 1914.

The *Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom* seems to us particularly notable because of its resolutions and proposals from the year 1919, exactly one hundred years ago, for this foundational text contains, aside from far-reaching social demands for the rights of women and children, the following political ideas for a new League of Nations, which are interesting to us, above all:

- Democratically elected League of Nations Assembly.
- A permanent International Court of Justice should be established to settle differences of a justiciable character, such as arise on the interpretation of treaty rights or of the law of nations.
- International differences arising from economic competition, expanding commerce, increase of population and changes in social and political standards, should be settled either by this International Assembly or by some body appointed by it.
- The decisions of this Assembly should under no circumstances be enforced by military means, or by cutting off a population from the necessities of life.
- Women should be eligible to every position in the League of Nations.
- The right of self-determination and of self-government should be conceded to all nations.
- Representation and protection of the rights of minorities within each nation, with regard to such questions as language, religion and education should be assured.
- Nationalities and dependencies within any government should have the right to present directly to the League their desires as to self-determination and representation.
- Provision should be made for adjusting questions of territory and nationality, in accordance with the principle of self-determination.
- Abolition of Government censorship
- The suffrage and all legal, political economic rights should be long equally to men and women.

- The right to declare war should be abolished (*ius ad bellum*)
- Immediate reduction of armaments on the same terms for all states, and the abolition of private manufacture of and traffic in munitions of war, should be undertaken, as steps towards total international disarmament.
- Military conscription should be abolished.
- Free trade should be established; trade routes on land, sea and air should be opened to all nations on equal terms.
- The right to protect investments of capitalists of one country in the resources of another should be abolished.
- A universal system of coinage and the same weights and measures in all countries should be adopted.
- Complete freedom of travel and communication.
- Child labour should be abolished.

From 28 April until 1 May 1915 an International Congress of Women was held at The Hague with 1.136 delegates from neutral and belligerent states. The Dutch physician and women's rights advocate *Aletta Jacobs* had requested the German lawyer *Anita Augspurg* to organize this congress. The pacifist *Jane Addams*, president of the *American Women's Peace Party*, was elected as the congress' chairperson. The delegates established the *International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace* and published the journal "*Internationaal*".

From 12 May until 17 May 1919 the Second International Congress of Women for Peace and Freedom took place in Zurich. The Committee decided to make their work permanent and to give themselves a new name: *Women's International League for Peace and Freedom* (WILPF as acronym).

Our exhibition honours and highlights women committed to peace, who were active in the context of the *Women's International League for Peace and Freedom*, among the two future Nobel Peace Prize laureates *Jane Addams* (1931) and *Emily Greene Balch* (1946). *Jane Addams*, then, as an eligible person to propose candidates for the Nobel Peace Prize, was the first person in public life to nominate the imprisoned political journalist and pacifist Carl von Ossietzky.

Our exhibition gives back those *Voices against War* a space and place, who in the history and conceptual history of nonviolence and pacifism have either been forgotten or neglected or were less visible in the shadow of other contemporary pacifists or have been made invisible.

At the same time, our exhibition reveals the interconnections to more well-known thinkers and makes clear that the women represented here acted not in isolation from, but – on the contrary – conscious of the tradition of active nonviolent resistance.

This can be inferred from, for example,

- the explicit reference by *Jane Addams* to John Ruskin, Leo Tolstoy, and to the Russian Doukhobors, those opponents of any arms, whom Tolstoy had nominated for the first Nobel Peace Prize;
- the emphasis on Henry David Thoreau by the anarchist, anti-militarist, feminist, peace activist and social critic *Emma Goldman*;
- the great personal appreciation that *Anita Augspurg* and *Lida Gustava Heymann* showed towards Kurt Eisner, especially under the impression of his speech given at the Conference of Workers and Socialists at Bern on 4 February 1919, and towards Gustav Landauer during their cooperation in the context of the first Munich Council Republic from early until mid-April 1919 – *Clara Meijer-Wichmann* also highly appreciated Landauer;
- the Austrian pacifist *Olga Misař*, who in 1931 praised Gandhi as the embodiment of the ideal of nonviolence, and thus as role model for the work of the *Women's International League for Peace and Freedom*, which, represented by its French representative Camille Drevet, welcomed the Indian pacifist Mahatma Gandhi in the same year on 10 December 1931 in the presence of two thousand attendees at Victoria Hall in Geneva.

Voices against War

Through the display of quotations of current relevance, our exhibition brings back to memory important voices against war from WILPF's history. Belonging to this tradition is the voice of social reformer and civil rights activist *Mary Church Terrell*. Early on she pointed out the necessary self-criticism of her own organisation: you can only credibly demand world peace if you, at the same time, condemn colonialism and racism.

One of WILPF's founding members was the British feminist and pacifist *Helena Swanwick*, who firmly denounced the enormous co-responsibility of women in the facilitation of war – just as the historian and pacifist *Caroline Elizabeth Playne* did in the early 1930s: both of their statements can be read in our exhibition. Writing under the impression of Bertha von Suttner and Sigmund Freud's critique of culture, Playne impressively criticised militarism and nationalism.

Our exhibition goes beyond the narrow circle of the *Women's International League for Peace and Freedom*. We highlight additional persons and organisations, which have committed themselves to the organized prevention of war.

Namely ...

- the two organizations founded in New York in 1917
 - the Anti-Enlistment League (*Jessie Wallace Hughan* and *Tracy D. Mygatt*) and
 - the No-Conscription League (*Emma Goldman*);

- the British No Conscription Fellowship (whose centenary conference “Beyond Remembrance: Pacifism in the aftermath of war 1919” we will attend in November 2019);
- the British Women's Peace Crusade (associated with *Ethel Snowden*) and the No More War Movement, which was inspired by a lecture tour of the educator *Martha Steinitz*, organized by the Quakers;
- the Fellowship of Reconciliation with the suffragette *Agnes Maude Royden*;
- the Nie-wieder-Krieg-Bewegung (No More War Movement) in Germany (*Maud von Ossietzky* and *Elsa Einstein*);
- the Bund der Kriegsdienstgegner (Union of War Resisters) with *Martha Steinitz* and *Helene Stöcker*.

The history of women’s emancipation, the struggle for basic individual and social rights for women and for the protection of life is both related to a clear rejection of any war and to the protection of human dignity and the cultural autonomy of any individual human being, irrespective of gender.

In order to prevent the First World War and all other future wars and civil wars, women and men alike would had had to organize a campaign of non-cooperation as Tolstoy and Gandhi propagated it. This was the intention of the countless active international women for freedom and peace and solidarity. For this purpose, the struggle for the active and passive right to vote alone was not enough, but it was about the cessation of collaborating with the tyranny of war, which, in the words of the Charta of the United Nations, has remained a “scourge” of humanity. This cessation is only possible through the critique of fallacious concepts of the self and the collective “super-ego” (Sigmund Freud: “Über-Ich”), for instance the critique of the destructive patriotism and nationalism.

“Bread and Roses”

This political slogan was coined in the year 1910 by the American labour union activist *Helen Todd*, who introduced it in a speech for the vote and made clear in her corresponding essay that “bread” refers to the basic needs of life, that is, food, home, shelter and security. But the emancipation of humanity could only be completed if all could enjoy life, music, education, nature and books – and if the women have achieved true cultural, economic, political and social equality. This world shall know no more prisons, death penalty, child labour or prostitution.

The slogan “Bread and Roses” is tied to independent-socialist goals. Helen Todd hints to as much in her aforementioned speech through a reference to “Mother Jones”. *Mary Harris Jones*, as her real name was, was a teacher, seamstress and co-founder of the union *Industrial Workers of the World*, better known as the “Wobblies”.

It was these “Wobblies” who carried out a successful strike from January until March 1912 in Lawrence, Massachusetts for fair pay and dignified working conditions. This labour struggle went down in history as the “Bread and Roses”-strike. 20.000 textile workers, mainly from migrant families, went on strike: on some of the banners at their demonstrations the slogan could be read: “We want bread, but we want roses, too!”

“Bread and Roses” became the title of poem by James Oppenheim in late 1911. It appeared in *The American Magazine*, the same journal that had published Helen Todd’s essay before. This poem is the only text in our exhibition that is not written by a woman. James Oppenheim’s magnificent poem was finally turned into a famous song with different melodies. This song inspired a significant cultural movement, founded by Mimi Fariña in 1974, aiming at bringing free music and entertainment into otherwise closed institutions (hospitals, retirement homes and care facilities, and above all, prisons). Especially famous are the two versions by Mimi Fariña and her sister Joan Baez performed at the legendary “Bread and Roses” festivals in Berkeley, California, and by Judy Collins with a choir in a New York church.

To conclude, we would like to express thanks for the support during the creation of this exhibition:

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