

Wilmers, Annika: *Pazifismus in der internationalen Frauenbewegung (1914-1920). Handlungsspielräume, politische Konzeptionen und gesellschaftliche Auseinandersetzungen*. Essen: Klartext Verlag 2008. ISBN: 978-3-89861-907-3; 348 S.

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At end of April 1915, a group of women from neutral countries and those at war or under occupation realized a plan to meet at The Hague. For four days these non-party affiliated yet organized women, which included members of the International Women's Suffrage Association (IWSA), the International Council of Women (ICW), and others – a handful compared to the international women's movement as a whole – convened formal sessions devoted to ideas on how to bring World War I to an end, how to build a lasting peace, and how to promote women's enfranchisement. They called themselves the International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace (ICWPP). In May 1919, ICWPP delegations reconvened in Zurich in order to demonstrate reconciliation, to offer assistance for civilians and veterans of the battle-scarred states, and to influence the Paris peace proceedings. The feminist women's peace organization they crafted, thereafter named Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) still exists. A critical analysis of this 1915-1919 undertaking for universal peace and its effects on the larger transatlantic women's movement is the object of Annika Wilmers's carefully researched and multifaceted study.

Wilmers's book, based on her dissertation at the University of Tübingen, is divided into five main sections: a solid introduction; a four-country case-study investigation of the ICWPP, enriched by group photographs; an exposé on controversies and compromises concerning pacifism and internationalism developing in the national and international women's movement; a public opinion analysis of these pioneering congresses as reflected in daily newspapers; and a succinct examination of their post-1919 commemorations. Each section may be read independently.¹

The author makes excellent use of a wide range of (auto)biographical materials and archival data: correspondence, organizational work, congress and police reports. Many contentions are supported by appropriate secondary literature.² Contemporary media accounts – feminist and mainstream – are also extensively employed.

Wilmers aspires, and quite rightly, to shift the scholarly feminist focus of the origins of the WILPF away from the dominating Anglo-Saxon perspectives to the much less researched Austrian, Belgian, French, and German contexts and positionings. Indeed, Wilmers is quite successful with her comparative analytical approach of these largely marginalized players, of both „allied and belligerent countries, as occupiers and in fully or partially occupied countries, two offensive, two defensive states, and victors and losers of the war“ (p. 14).³ Wilmers also confronts controversies in the historiographical record. For instance, she ably points out lapses in the printed reminiscences of each congress' „success,“ not least by disclosing across-the-board internal personal and structural conflicts and irreconcilable differences that were consciously evaded.

More broadly, Wilmers aims to explain, inter alia: „how the women's movement related and reacted to pacifism, nationalism and internationalism“ (p. 9); „how the national and international attitude towards war influenced relationships within the women's movement“ (p. 10); and to which extent feminists trans-

¹ Compare Wilmers' three recently published essays: „Jene feinen inneren Werte ...“. Zur Kultur der internationalen Frauenfriedensbewegung während der Kriegs- und Nachkriegszeit 1915-1919, in: Eva Schöck-Quinteros u. a. (eds.), *Politische Netzwerkerinnen. Internationale Zusammenarbeit von Frauen 1830 – 1960*, Berlin 2007, pp. 249-266; *Des relations difficiles. Pacifistes belges et allemandes pendant et après la Première Guerre mondiale*, Sextant 23-24 (2007), pp. 71-95; and „Ein Köstlicher Schatz“. Das Gedenken der Internationalen Frauenliga für Frieden und Freiheit an ihre Gründungsphase, *Ariadne* 50 (Dezember 2006), pp. 24-31.

² Unfortunately, Wilmers could not include any equally important studies that have appeared since early 2006 (see p. 348).

³ As Wilmers acknowledges, the comparison remains unbalanced, due to the quantity and quality of sources, particularly for the Belgian but also for the Austrian material.

mitted and dismissed national ideas and reasons for the war vis-à-vis their transnational exchanges (p. 14). Thus Wilmers investigates how the international feminist community evolved during the war – between embracing international solidarity (ICWPP) or national solidarity (ICW, IWSA) – and how pacifism was discussed or displayed by both attendees and opponents of the congresses. With her four-country case study, she provides multiple layers of information and analysis on individuals, countries, organizations, and issues. At her best, she uncovers a number of paradoxes in wartime national and international positioning on pacifism: for example, the counter-intuitive sympathy by the League of German Women (BDF) for the absolute pacifist French women's rejection to participate in the Hague Congress; or the playing of both sides of the fence by the Austrian women's movement, which tended to support the BDF position but refused to alienate fellow Austrians participating at The Hague.

I have three main desiderata regarding Wilmers' study. First, her objectives would have been strengthened had she broadened her sights to include the mainstream peace movement. That is, Wilmer's key concern seems to be the effect of nations at war on the women's movement, and not pacifism per se or even „women pacifists,“ a term she regularly uses without qualification or regard to these pacifists' fluctuating positionings. Likewise, there is too little notice of the shared cooperation between male pacifist-feminists and female feminist-pacifists: i.e., Ludwig Quidde's support of the German feminist „radicals“ to attend The Hague congress, and likewise Theodore Ruysens's and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Baron Paul Henri d'Estournelles de Constant's support of French women pacifists' refusal to attend it; or Helene Stöcker's long-term association with Quidde, whom she recommended for the Nobel Peace Prize, and he her. More generally, it seems to this reader that Wilmers tends to reduce the many identities of these organized women who, apart from belonging to the women's movement, may also have been social workers, wives, Quakers or, as Olga Misař, anarchists, etc.

Second, although the choice of countries as

case studies contributes a very valuable – if still western – European dimension, this is not the international study (think postcolonial studies or the socialist women's international peace movement) promised in the title. Her selection of countries to study also leads Wilmers de facto to minimize the significant role played by the location of the international movements' headquarters (all located outside the study) in her discussion of tensions between nationalism and internationalism. Moreover, by assigning (one) citizenship to her protagonists, Wilmers excludes discussion of bi-(or multi)national organized women pacifists, such as the genuinely transatlantic Rosika Schwimmer.

Third, by strictly focusing on the years 1915 to 1919, Wilmer tends to avoid examining especially pre-war (but also postwar) pacifist-feminist continuities. Thus in her scrutiny of conflicts of loyalty and identity, relevant initiatives and individuals are missing: Bertha von Suttner, for example, superficially treated on p.18. Suttner was an Austrian ICW member, feminist, internationalist, and Nobel Peace Prize laureate (1905). Tributes to Suttner by Leopoldine Kulka (1913), or in *Jus Suffragii* (1914), or at the 3rd WILPF Congress in Vienna in 1921 intimately relate to her influence on the pacifist women's movement, especially in Austria(-Hungary) and Germany.

Two particular technical weaknesses include the lack of at least a name index and an abundance of extensive and pertinent footnotes that deserve to be part of the main text.

These desiderata notwithstanding, Wilmers has delivered a sophisticated, groundbreaking, and thrilling study on an essential period in the life of the transatlantic women's movement(s). Without unduly heroizing either of the congress's participants or their female opponents, she points out the choices that these women had and the complexities of sustaining women's organized movements between the demands of nationhood and the spirit of internationalism in times of war and its often difficult immediate aftermath („peace“).

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