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- replacing temporarily Pax International -

WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM

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Editor's Note

It seems hardly necessary to explain why the present form of Pax International has been so much delayed nor to mention the reasons for which, in spite of present difficulties, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom is publishing it again -- though temporarily in another form -- and hopes to continue.

We now see our way, for the time being at least, to reach WILPF members and subscribers to Pax. We are very glad to be able to keep in touch with WILPF National Sections and to be thus in a position not merely to review the international situation in the light of WILPF principles and experience, but to acquaint readers with information and proposals coming from co-workers in many lands.

From what is reported by different Sections none has so far wavered in its faith in the work embodied by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Owing to present circumstances, work has, of course, become infinitely more difficult in many European countries. It is also obvious that topics which have been controversial ever since the foundation of the W.I.L.P.F., have been rendered more conspicuous by the outbreak of war. We cannot boast, that war has brought the different views to one level. Now as before, there are in the W.I.L.P.F. passionate advocates of the principle of neutrality and equally passionate defenders of the solidarity of all peoples; there are friends and foes of economic sanctions, and there is divergence of opinion with regard to violence and non-violence -- insofar as non-military coercion is implied in the conception of "violence". We all agree, however, that the fundamental principles for the construction of permanent peace laid down by women in the Hague in 1915 are still standing as the leading principles of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

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This was expressed by the British Section, in the introduction to their pronouncement in which the principles of the first International Congress held at the Hague in 1915 are reiterated as a profession of faith. This pronouncement was sent out after the outbreak of hostilities and published in the October issue 1939 of the British Section's News Sheet.

OUR POSITION AND OUR TASK IN 1915 AND NOW.

When we look back on the first Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom in 1915, we realise how very much simpler the situation appeared in those days than it does now. Then there were two groups of Powers facing each other in open warfare. The women who met at the Hague in 1915 did not first of all enquire into the question of the war-guilt; they felt - and rightly too - that the blame must be shared by all those who for the settlement of disputes had put their trust in armament and warlike measures. It was enough for them to draw up a programme by which war might be avoided and international order based on law and mutual understanding among nations be established. The essential points of this programme, i.e. courts of arbitration, democratic control of foreign policy, self determination of peoples, civic equality of men and women --, even the demand for disarmament were actually incorporated in the Covenant of the League of Nations.

But just because an institution, founded on the above principles was then established, and because it proved a failure, it may be argued to-day that "The attempt was made and it failed. Are the nations likely to put their trust in these principles again?" To which the appropriate answer may be: Where do they get their faith in war from? Has it not failed them hundreds of times? The problem now, however, is not merely whether we should settle international disputes by peaceful methods or by war. To-day we have to ask instead: "What is this new war about?" We are told, indeed, that the Third Reich is fighting to secure the necessary "Lebensraum" for her people and that the Western Powers are defending the freedom of their peoples, of all nations, in fact. There is no doubt, however, that the real aims and purposes of this war, which the official slogans are meant to hide from the people are not nearly so clear and unambiguous as they appear. Add to this that the participation of Russia opens up new perspectives both as to the aims of the belligerents and to the final result of the war. We are quite in the dark as to whether Hitler's alliance with Stalin is a war pact at all; thus it is impossible to foresee how this alliance - even though it may not be lasting - is going to affect the situation.

Must not this state of uncertainty where we never know what to expect, bring home to all the fact that conditions nothing short of chaotic are bound to recur so long as the lives of the peoples are founded on might instead of on right? Must we not, inspite of everything press all the more for the principles of law and order on which international relations must be based in future. Better still: Is it not up to us to work out

the fundamental claims the people of all nations must make for a lasting peace? Since the people do not know what their governments are fighting for, should they not make it clear to their rulers what they are prepared to fight for?

The idea that the peace aims should be stated led formerly to the plan for "Continuous Mediation", that is the demand that proposals for settlement should be made to belligerents again and again either by individual neutral states or by a conference of the neutral countries. If proposals and the attitude adopted by the belligerents towards them were published, it was argued, the people would learn what the fight was really for. Suggestions for such a conference of Neutrals, or of Belligerents and Neutrals, with President Roosevelt as chairman have recently been made by members of different national branches of the Women's International League. The question is, may we count on such proposals for mediation being brought to the notice of the people in the totalitarian states? Is it advisable to call a conference of this kind while those very people who started the war would be the only plenipotentiaries to act for their countries in a peace settlement?

This doubt as to the feasibility of continuous mediation under present circumstances must make us lay all the more stress on the conditions indispensable to any lasting peace, a peace which is to be more than a mere breathing-space between two wars. They may be stated as follows:

- a. We must secure or safeguard for the people the fundamental rights of democracy and their full share and collaboration in the shaping of international relations after the war.
- b. We must reestablish and strengthen law as a basis of international relationships, which implies for states destroyed by war or annexation, restitution of sovereignty on a scale determined by the nations concerned.
- c. A system of federation will have to be worked out among the different ethnic groups within a state, as well as among the different states in Europe.
- d. We must return to the idea of the solidarity of nations as it was expressed in the Covenant of the League of Nations.
- e. War, as a means of settling international disputes must be outlawed, arbitration on an international scale must be further developed, and international agreements for the reduction of armaments with a view to complete disarmament must be entered into.

For these principles the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom has been fighting ever since 1915, and for these principles we must go on fighting, inspite of or rather because of the present unfavourable circumstances. Only by putting them into practice shall we ever enjoy what all the nations of the world are longing for : Peace and Freedom.

Geneva Headquarters is very grateful to have many interesting reports on Activities of National Sections showing initiative everywhere and energetic activity. Letters are now coming again from all the corners of the world and those from oversea are sometimes much quicker than the ones from next door neighbours.

News from the U.S.A. Section report much increased activities due to the political situation and the Embargo Legislation. Members show a marvellous spirit of cooperation with European W.I.L.P.F. Sections, planning for a European Settlement and, though fully engaged in political action, give the whole time of a very active Committee to Immigrants.

The pronouncement of the British Section mentioned above and which has been spread far and wide may be obtained from their Office: 55, Gower Street, London W.C. 1. Readers will also be interested in their resolutions on a Conference of Neutral Countries, on Peace Terms and on India which, they urge, ought to be brought "into free and equal partnership in the family of nations".

The Dutch and Swiss Sections have just held their very good Annual Meetings showing a marvellous spirit of cooperation and resolve to continue. The Dutch Section has among other letters sent one to President Roosevelt asking him to call a Permanent Conference of Neutral States.

The Scandinavian countries held a "Northern" Meeting attended by the Presidents and many active members to schedule common tasks. Besides, the Norwegian Section sent a letter to the Governments of the Oslo States asking them to persuade the belligerent powers to engage in negotiations for peace under certain conditions. This appeal was endorsed by the National Council of Women in Norway. The Swedish Section wired an appeal to their King when the representatives of the Scandinavian countries were in session. The winter programme for WILPF Groups all over Sweden comprises 37 lectures on such subjects as, e.g. Peace work in times of war, Democracy, Refugees Problem, Modern China, Education for Peace etc. etc. by well-known specialists. The Danish Section welcomed 300 Jewish Children from Berlin, Prague and Vienna to 300 individual homes of farmer members. The children are being trained for agricultural work in Palestine whence they will go after having reached their 17th year. Friends in Finland are well.

The Canadian Section held a series of six Study Meetings all through October reviewing current events. "Another way must be tried, the way of a World Conference which we must attend prepared to sacrifice our own good things rather than those of the others ..." they write.

The New Zealand Section writes on August 31st from Auckland: "We are, like everyone else, hoping there will not be war; not that we want to see Poland let down as other countries have been, but if all the other nations would inaugurate a rigorous boycott of everything coming from an aggressor nation there would be no question of war." And on September 3rd they add: "The blow has fallen, then, and it is war ... We can only hope that the aggressors will be unsuccessful. There is no

doubt who they are ... "

Like the British and many other Sections the Australian Branch has given much thought to the Refugee question. Individual members have been able to help emigrants to come to the country.

International Headquarters is very eager to keep Sections in contact with each other and continue the international work in the spirit and on the lines expressed in the leading article wherever opportunities offer themselves. There are many new tasks, too, similar to those many of us have known during the world war.

The following letter was sent by the Joint International Chairmen to the Conference on Refugees called by President Roosevelt:

" In view of the catastrophe which has overwhelmed countries in which many thousands of non-nationals had taken refuge from political, religious or racial persecution, we turn to the United States and its President Mr. Roosevelt and beg him to uphold the standards of civilization.

1) By opening to these victims the doors to freedom in his country as widely as possible;

2) By urging upon Governments
a. The adoption of the principles incorporated in the 1933 and 1938 conventions of the League of Nations, namely the granting of legal protection and the right to live and work in countries of refuge;

b. The recognition of the value of the refugees to the communities in which they find themselves, through financial grants which will make possible their training and ultimate settlement. "

WORK IN THE AMERICAS

Heloise Brainerd
Chairman, WILPF Committee on the Americas.

I was in South America visiting six countries, with a brief call also at Haiti and Panama. In Chile I worked with the "Peace Circle" of Valparaiso, which has completed six successful years, and we were able to set up two other Peace Circles.

In Bolivia steps were taken to form a Peace League having as its special purpose reconciliation with Paraguay, but it did not survive. However, a new woman's movement is starting, with peace as one of its objectives.

In Peru I met many splendid women who are interested in peace and spoke before several groups, but it was not possible to form any organization because of the political situation. While in Lima I attended the Pan American Conference as an observer, and felt it a privilege to see the delegates working together, in a strong common purpose of unity and cooperation.

In Ecuador my mission was given government recognition and support was promised for peace education, but it did not seem wise to attempt any organization at this time because the boundary dispute with Peru causes great unrest and tension in Ecuador, the weaker of the two countries.

In Colombia, where women do not take any part in public affairs, we could not interest enough people to start anything now, but a small group of progressive women gives hope for the future. In Venezuela I found several active women's organizations, and there are some devoted pacifists among both women and men, so that it was possible to organize a "Venezuelan Peace League".

Although the tangible results are small, there are many imponderables such as planting seed in young minds on visits to schools, linking up women's groups with the more influential men's societies like the Rotary Club, and bringing stimulus and encouragement to peace workers and to women in general. Many women lead a secluded life, but there are some splendid social workers and intelligent pacifists of deep conviction. Among such are our new delegates on the "Committee on the Americas" from the Dominican Republic and Bolivia.

To-day the Americas are at peace, but there are still five unsettled boundaries which are potential sources of trouble, the most serious one now being that between Ecuador and Peru. During the past year when acute situations arose a good many letters urging moderation were written to the countries concerned, but it seems to me the time has come to launch a campaign for SETTLING ALL OUR BOUNDARIES once and for all. The United States Section in May passed a resolution asking President Roosevelt to initiate such a movement, and in the Spanish Circular letter which I mailed in July I urged our correspondents to do the same in their countries. Another, more remote source of trouble is Bolivia's need of a port on the Pacific. She lost 13 in the War of the Pacific and has none now, only the use of a Chilean port. I have drawn attention to this matter whenever possible.

Upon Latin American peace workers and upon the W.I.L.P.F. membership in the United States I am trying to impress the great opportunity and responsibility that the peoples of the Americas have for maintaining peace in this Hemisphere and for developing international relations based on justice, friendship and cooperation. The means suggested are to make known and back up the system of inter-American peace treaties; to cultivate inter-American friendship and cooperative effort; and actively to hasten the settlement of boundary questions.

W.I.L.P.F. Publication in Spanish: "UNA TENTATIVA DE INTERNACIONALISMO" -

a translation of the history of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom drawn up by Emily G. Balch ("A Venture in Internationalism" 1915 - 1938) was published by International Headquarters in August 1939 and circulated among Women's and Peace Organizations as well as among individual women in Latin America, where it has been warmly received. Copies from Geneva Headquarters at 50 S.cts, or \$ -.20.