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A MESSAGE TO THE W.I.L.P.F.

DEAR FRIENDS,

LONDON, 10th February, 1939.

The development of international politics since the Munich Conference has shown that peace was not saved.

In every country preparations for war are being feverishly and systematically increased. Hand in hand with this, even in the democratic states, are ever stricter limitations of civil liberties and an ever-growing, though silent, and therefore often unperceived heightening of state control; e.g., supervision of Press and Radio, prohibition of the printing and import of certain papers and reviews, closing of frontiers, withholding of privileges from members of certain races and nationality, denial of right of asylum, refusal of admission to all destitute foreigners, suppression of legal political opposition, etc., etc.

Democracy is not being destroyed from below, but by the State authorities themselves, partly yielding to pressure from without, partly as a result of a Foreign Policy without aim or direction, and of international economic chaos.

They feel that the structure of the State is in danger to its core, and they try to remedy the disorder of the organism through ineffective treatment of the symptoms, instead of boldly laying bare and healing the roots of the disease. For the State system, which is called democracy, is diseased to the marrow of its being. This disease must be recognised and admitted.

The undersigned Chairmen ask the Sections of the W.I.L.P.F. not to close their ears to the progress of events. They urge them earnestly to oppose the authoritarian tendencies in their own lands, and to keep intact their members' moral powers of resistance.

The undersigned Chairmen have observed for some time, an ever-increasing though certainly not always conscious tendency in national sections, where work for peace and freedom is still possible, to restrict themselves to their *National* work. This tendency may result from an embarrassed feeling, and from the desire, which under other circumstances would be comprehensible, not to reveal to outside anything about the crumbling of democratic liberties in their own country.

The undersigned appreciate the moral attitude, which underlies this desire. Economic and political events in Europe, Asia, America, etc., have, however, proved afresh, that the interrelatedness of States and peoples is so narrow, that deprivations, limitations and violation of civil liberties in one country automatically result in deprivations, limitations, and violation of civil liberties in other countries.

It has always been one of the tasks of the W.I.L.P.F. to spread the truth about international affairs. In the present phase of what is as yet in many cases not admitted to be war, it should be one of its special tasks to serve the truth, by receiving and forwarding reliable news on events in different countries. International Headquarters, as well as the International League as a whole, will be able to take a stand at the right moment, for a country in danger, only if they are in the position to follow the whole course of events in such a country, because they have been provided regularly and continuously with detailed economic and political information. You have all realised this fact in connection with Czecho-Slovakia; the international centre in Geneva was for months kept minutely informed, in an exemplary way, of all the phases of development, by the Section there. Hence it was possible for the Executive meeting in September, 1938, when the small Czecho-Slovak Republic was betrayed by the Western Great Powers, to raise its voice and at least stand for the truth to the end. Moral motives and moral force count for little in the world to-day. They ought to keep their former full weight in the Women's International League, till the last day of its existence.

Therefore the undersigned, conscious of what may befall in the next few months, beg the members of the Women's International League to consider, more than hitherto, their State, their country and their people to be a part of the great whole, and to enable the League as a whole to act internationally in the light of the very fullest possible information.

The undersigned do not in any way overestimate the possibilities within W.I.L. control to-day. But those who daily follow the international work in Geneva and in the sections, know surely that possibilities of work have not been and are not to-day, fully exploited.

More readiness in the Sections to consider themselves and their country as part and parcel of a great International body, more understanding of the fact that the fate of Europe is the common fate of all which does not allow anyone to stand deliberately aside, will enable Sections to intensify their international work, at this moment of most serious dangers.

The situation in Spain is coming to a head. Are we all aware of the far-reaching repercussions which the fall of Republican Spain must entail? What will become of France? We ought from now on to receive weekly information from our French Section on domestic and foreign policy in France.

What will become of Italy's noisy claims? We ought to have regular news from our Section in Tunis in the light of our principles. Occasional articles in "Pax" are important but cannot suffice as a background for the international work.

What is going on on the Aaland Islands? We ought to have news from the two Sections concerned.

Was the Lima Conference a step towards the stabilisation of peace in the interpretation of W.I.L.P.F. principles? We hope to have interesting sidelights from the American Secretariat.

What is now the position of the autonomist movement, seen on the background of the W.I.L.P.F. work done in the Ukraine?

What does our Polish Section think of the Memel problem, the Lithuanian problem, the Ukrainian problem?

These are only some of the questions concerning the international aspect of the work, which illustrate the meaning of the preceding paragraphs.

The undersigned would convey a warning that in the carrying out of relief work, the work in the political and economic spheres, which since the foundations of the W.I.L.P.F. has been the aim and concern of Sections and individual members, must not be neglected.

In the years 1914-18, the claims on Sections and members for relief work of all kinds were as insistent as they are to-day. Nevertheless the W.I.L.P.F. was founded just in these years, with political and economic, cultural and educational aims and purposes. What was its principle then is its principle now: the women, united in the W.I.L.P.F., take persecution of all kinds, and from every possible motive, and civil and international wars, as symptoms of the present international system, based as is said in the W.I.L.P.F. aims on "exploitation, privilege and profits," thus making impossible a lasting and just peace and true freedom.

It is their duty, to-day as it was then, to fight the causes of these symptoms, and to reveal and destroy the political, economic, social and psychological roots.

It is needless, in a circular letter to Sections and Members, to speak of the serious developments before us. The spectre of war stalks in all lands. Perhaps the state of uncertainty and of tension in which we are all living is a phase of modern warfare. Perhaps the political and economic imperialist interests of the Great Powers, in their present phase, are, as a result of Monopolies, Trusts and Combines, and the interrelatedness and ramifications of State and private interests, so equalised and identified, that a *World* war will only break out if two rival Great Powers come into conflict over the demarcation of their spheres of influence.

In any case our tasks are to-day as clear, and our aims as "realistic" as they have ever been.

With best wishes and kind regards,

(Signed) CLARA RAGAZ, GERTRUD BAER, K. E. INNES, *Co-Chairmen.*

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY—WORLD CITIZENSHIP

I think it is no exaggeration to state that for the last hundred years the world has never been so far from the spirit of international community as to-day, twenty years after the World War and the foundation of the League of Nations.

There is no doubt that, by the development of technique during the last hundred years, the peoples have got—as it is commonly expressed—dangerously near to each other. Does not this word "dangerously" indicate the whole decay of true international community? To-day, as a hundred years ago, there is no lack of international relations and international organisations in the domains of Art, Science, intellectual and social activity and of many professions: among both intellectual and manual workers; their number has, certainly, increased since a hundred years ago. Every year, now as before, many international congresses are being held. But, to an attentive observer, who is in a position to compare these congresses with those of twenty to thirty years ago, which were animated by a spirit of international "preparedness," it is obvious that the international relations of to-day are void and hollow, everything being degraded to the service of egotistic national interests and—as in the League of Nations—

shallow talk replacing action. These international gatherings have no significance whatsoever, they do not contribute towards the bringing about of a real international community. Why not? The answer is that to-day there exist only very few persons who hold true international convictions and who consider themselves citizens of the world.

All statesmen, politicians, economists, are without exception, serving exclusively their national interests—may the international phantom perish, if only the profits of their own countries are furthered.

Forgive my frankness in stating that I feel in the W.I.L.P.F. things are not very different as far as national work is concerned. This does not apply to all leading persons, but to the mass of members of National Sections, who do not, I think, hold the conviction that in all economic, social and political questions the interest of the world, i.e., the welfare and progress of all peoples is the primary factor and not the profit of their own nation. Also within the W.I.L.P.F. the majority do not understand that men and women may be so sincerely permeated by the international idea that they do not mind where they live as long as they have the possibility of doing political work.

Jane Addams used to explain the difference between the W.I.L.P.F. and other international organisations by saying:

"We came together in 1915 as international beings who created an international organisation; then we strove to establish national branches in our own countries. Other international organisations did the contrary; there first existed national societies which then united into an international organisation."* This shows clearly that in the W.I.L.P.F. the international spirit was the primary, the national branches the secondary thing. To-day, this—let us call it—international spirit to whom the Earth, the parts of the world, the peoples, humanity are One, does no longer prevail, otherwise it could not have happened as it did at one of our Executive Meetings that the quite obvious conception that every member may, when changing its residence, become a member of the respective W.I.L.P.F. Section in that country, not only met with the astonishment of many delegates, but was refuted by them. The explanations which were then given showed me how far many members of the W.I.L.P.F. are from the international spirit. Among others the following objection was raised: "How can we, if we admit foreigners as members of our Sections, approach our Government in the name of the National Section?" When I heard this it took my breath away and I kept silent, because this could not be put right in a few words, it would have needed a longer debate to make clear the conception of world citizenship. There was no time for it at that moment. Many Sections consciously want to keep their membership strictly national, whereas they ought to be proud, within their circle to make no discrimination between human beings belonging to different nations, and to strive for world citizenship.

As far as I know, it was only the German Section which accepted foreign women living in Germany, and it is now only the United States Section which admits foreigners, Stateless—i.e., international beings in the spirit of Jane Addams—as fully equal members. Other Sections admit them as members, allow them also to work in the League as, for instance, the Swiss Section, but their membership rights are subject to certain restrictions. Thus, they remain members with minor rights, the same thing happening to them in this small circle as happens to them in all States ruled by men: co-operation offered gladly and readily is rejected or only admitted with degrading limitations.

It is obvious that this question ought to be discussed in the W.I.L.P.F. in the interest of the cultivation of an international spirit. It ought to be taken up by the next Executive and then dealt with by the next Congress according to its great significance and importance. Perhaps such a discussion would be instrumental to bring again to the whole W.I.L.P.F. something of the spirit of an international community which directed the women who founded it.

L. G. H.

L'ACTIVITE SOCIALE A LA SOCIETE DES NATIONS

(This article throws light upon one aspect of the changes going on in the League of Nations, of which W.I.L.P.F. members should be aware.—ED.)

La nouvelle qui a paru dans toute la grande presse que, pour réaliser des économies sur le budget de la S.d.N., d'importantes compressions allaient être opérées, notamment par la fusion de plusieurs sections en une seule et la

* *Translated.*

suppression d'un certain nombre de postes, n'a pas manqué de susciter un certain émoi parmi les organisations internationales privées et tout particulièrement parmi les organisations féminines.

En effet, en apprenant que dorénavant les Sections actuelles de l'Opium, des Questions Sociales et de l'Hygiène, ne formeraient plus qu'un seul groupe sous une direction unique, tous ceux des membres de ces organisations qui ont été étroitement en relations avec la Section des Questions Sociales, ont éprouvé la vive inquiétude que ne fût de la sorte fâcheusement limitée l'activité de cette Section, alors que le désir unanime de l'opinion publique est au contraire de la voir augmenter. Il ne faut pas oublier que la S.d.N. est basée sur des principes démocratiques et humanitaires, et si la fusion prévue a essentiellement, comme on l'a assuré, une portée d'ordre administratif, il serait déplorable qu'elle nuisît au développement de chacune de ces trois Sections considérée comme telle. C'est pourquoi il est nécessaire que le futur administrateur de ce groupement sache tenir la balance égale entre ces trois ordres d'activité, et que chacun d'eux soit confié à un spécialiste; nécessaire aussi, et même indispensable, que la personne à qui seront confiées les questions sociales soit, comme c'est le cas actuellement, abolitionniste convaincue, si elle veut avoir l'appui de toute une opinion publique.

Ceci d'autant plus que l'activité sociale, notamment, avait pris au cours de ces dernières années un grand essor, qui ne pouvait qu'encourager tous les partisans de la S.d.N. Protection de l'enfance, aussi bien normale qu'en danger moral: faut-il rappeler ici les études intéressantes sur la situation de l'enfant illégitime, sur l'influence du cinéma récréatif ou éducatif, sur la situation des enfants de chômeurs, la propagande en faveur des tribunaux pour enfants qu'ont constituée les enquêtes menées dans plusieurs pays? Moralité publique: n'a-t-on pas pu dire avec raison que si la S.d.N. n'avait de toute son existence réalisé que ce qu'elle a fait contre le vice commercialisé, il aurait valu pour cela seulement la peine de la créer? Et qui a pu oublier ses enquêtes, en Europe et en Amérique d'abord, en Extrême-Orient ensuite, sur la traite des femmes et des enfants? Ses conférences spécialisées comme celle de Bandoeng (Ile de Java)? Ses décisions qui pourront donner un grand essor à la lutte contre l'abominable fléau? Son autre enquête objective sur les maisons de tolérance qui a exercé une influence directe sur la législation de certains pays? Et les conventions longuement préparées, après de minutieuses études de spécialistes, qui viennent d'entrer en vigueur ou vont précisément être signées cette année, telle celle sur la traite des femmes majeures ou sur les sanctions à prendre contre les souteneurs? Et tant de recommandations encore ou de suggestions placées devant les gouvernements, qu'il s'agisse de réforme du système pénitentiaire, de l'assistance aux étrangers indigents, ou de tant d'autres questions d'un intérêt vital pour notre humanité souffrante?

Que cette activité de la S.d.N. a rencontré l'appui et l'intérêt qu'elle méritait, c'est ce que prouve le nombre toujours plus grand des gouvernements qui la suivent de près et y participent. 15 gouvernements faisaient partie de l'ancienne Commission Consultative des Questions Sociales; 8 nouveaux y sont entrés lors de sa réorganisation en 1936 et d'autres demandes de collaboration directe sont parvenues encore de plusieurs autres ces derniers temps au Secrétariat. Parmi ces gouvernements — et cela est important à relever — figurent des Etats qui ne font pas ou

plus partie de la S.d.N. au point de vue politique, tels que les Etats-Unis ou ces Etats de l'Amérique du Sud qui, lors de la récente visite du directeur de la Section, ont manifesté un si vif intérêt pour ce travail. Tout ceci pour la Section Sociale seulement.

On pourrait en dire autant, soit pour la Section de l'Opium et ses conventions contre le fléau des stupéfiants, soit pour la Section de l'Hygiène soit encore pour d'autres Sections du Secrétariat à l'activité desquelles l'opinion publique n'a cessé de s'intéresser.

L'opinion publique n'est-elle pas en droit d'attendre des décisions définitives que ni les forces, ni le temps, ni l'argent nécessaires à chacune d'elles ne soient minimisés par ces prochaines fusions? Ceci d'autant plus que si la nécessité de faire des économies à la S.d.N. s'impose, on peut se demander, en face des fortes indemnités à payer aux fonctionnaires obligés de quitter leurs postes avant le terme de leurs contrats, si l'on a véritablement choisi le bon moyen?

C'est pourquoi, durant la période que nous vivons, et pendant laquelle l'activité politique de la S.d.N. se heurte à tant de difficultés, il est doublement nécessaire que continue une activité dans laquelle l'institution de Genève peut trouver le point de départ pour un nouvel et puissant essor.

ACTION DES FEMMES POUR LA RECONSTRUCTION ÉCONOMIQUE DE LA TCHÉCO-SLOVAQUIE

Nous ne voulons pas diminuer l'importance du désastre et des pertes que nous avons dû subir et dont les suites ne se manifesteront que dans l'avenir. Mais le peuple tchécoslovaque possède des racines solides et de grandes forces productives.

L'agriculture et les industries

L'agriculture tchéco-slovaque n'a pas subi de si grandes pertes que l'industrie. Au contraire nous attendons un élargissement de l'exportation de la bière, du sucre, de l'alcool, des produits de lait, surtout du fromage et du beurre. Nous pouvons toujours exporter de la volaille, du gibier, du jambon, des conserves de fruits et de viande etc.

L'acier, le fer, les machines

Cette partie importante de l'industrie resta presque entièrement épargnée. L'acier et les produits d'acier tchéco-slovaque seront exportés en même quantité qu'auparavant. Ce qui est la base de l'industrie métallurgique c'est la fabrication des machines, des instruments, des constructions en fer. La Tchéco-slovaquie pourra livrer à l'avenir des machines électrotechniques, des cables en fils de fer, des machines, des meubles d'acier, d'automobiles et des wagons sans difficulté.

Cuir, peaux tannées, chaussures, gants

La production de cuir et de produits de cuir reste intacte. Ce qui est important, c'est l'exportation de cuirs de peaux tannées, de courroies et d'autres appareils techniques.

Le verre

de Bohême est resté en grande partie en Tchéco-Slovaquie. Les pertes que cette industrie a souffertes doivent être bientôt réparées grâce au fait que nous possédons un certain nombre de verreries qui ne travaillaient pas pendant

les dernières années par suite des conventions de syndicats. Nous avons assez d'ouvrier et de techniciens avec une qualification spéciale.

L'industrie de textile

fut partiellement atteinte par la perte du territoire cédé à l'Allemagne. Mais malgré tout on peut compter avec l'exportation des marchandises de coton, de laine, d'étoffes d'habits, de toile pour la fabrication de linge de corps, de lit et de table, fameux dans les pays européens et en Amérique. ... L'industrie de vêtements est très bien placée.

Nous avons la possibilité d'exportation de très belles dentelles. ... Egalement nous pouvons exporter du linge de table, etc.

En chapellerie nous pouvons librer des feutres souples et dressés, des chapeaux de paille pour hommes et femmes de toutes espèces. ...

La céramique

Surtout la céramique de construction peut livrer sans difficulté tous les produits malgré la perte d'un nombre de mines de caolin et d'usines.

Le caoutchouc

La capacité de production dans certaines industries de caoutchouc est si forte qu'on peut continuer l'exportation sans interruption.

Sénateur F. F. Plamínková,
Présidente.

Olga Hillová,
Secrétaire honoraire.

(In suggesting that individuals can help Czecho-Slovakia by asking for Czecho-Slovak goods, we have in view the fact that such help should enable the democrats to carry on their work for the maintenance of the remnants of democracy in Czecho-Slovakia.—Ed.)

OUR SECTION IN EGYPT

« La branche du Caire a inauguré la saison d'hiver par une conférence faite par une de ses membres Mlle Adèle Misan (l'Evolution de la femme à travers les siècles).

Le 7 décembre le R.U.P. a organisé une soirée cinématographique au Caire, au profit de l'Office International pour l'Enfance. Nos membres ont participé très activement à la réussite de la fête. Après la représentation ciném. quelques-unes de nos membres ont créé en Egypte une section de l'Office International pour l'Enfance. Au Caire nous avons fait une exposition sur les colonies d'enfants en Espagne. Nous avons inauguré cette exposition par un thé. L'argent collecté au cours de cette inauguration a été versé à l'Office International pour l'Enfance (Section d'Egypte). Jusqu'aujourd'hui s'était la L.I.F.P.L. qui collectait des vêtements, de l'argent, du savon, des jouets, etc. ... pour envoyer aux enfants de notre « home » à Ribarroja près de Valence. Vous savez que ce « home » a été créé avec l'argent que nous avons collecté il y a un an, au nom du Comité d'assistance aux femmes et enfants d'Espagne. Ce Comité de l'O.I.E. se chargera dorénavant d'envoyer à Paris tout ce que nous collecterons en Egypte pour l'Espagne.

Pendant l'automne nous avons eu la visite de Mme Gutman qui habite la Palestine. Elle a été très surprise en voyant l'activité déployée par notre Section. Nous avons décidé de correspondre régulièrement avec elle et essayer d'établir un contact avec le Proche-Orient ».