

PAX INTERNATIONAL

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THE PRESENT SITUATION

Action by the Chairmen

March 28th, 1939.

The Chairmen of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom addressed the following urgent appeal to several Governments to-day:

"In order to prevent the collapse of the world into war and anarchy the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom makes solemn appeal to the Governments which are willing to discuss world organisation for Peace on the basis of the recognition of justice, freedom and human rights for their peoples, to meet together in Conference without delay."

Les Vice-Présidentes de la Ligue Internationale de Femmes pour la Paix et la Liberté viennent d'adresser un appel urgent à plusieurs Gouvernements:

"Afin d'empêcher que le monde s'écroule en guerre et anarchie, la Ligue Internationale de Femmes pour la Paix et la Liberté adresse un appel solennel aux gouvernements disposés à discuter l'organisation internationale de la Paix en se basant sur la reconnaissance de la justice, de la liberté et des droits humains pour leurs peuples, de se réunir immédiatement en conférence."

Die Vorsitzenden der Internationalen Frauenliga für Frieden und Freiheit richteten heute an eine Reihe von Regierungen folgenden dringenden Appell:

"Um die Welt vor dem Untergang in Krieg und Anarchie zu bewahren, richtet die Internationale Frauenliga für Frieden und Freiheit an die Regierungen, die bereit sind, die internationale Organisation des Friedens auf Grund des Bekenntnisses zu Gerechtigkeit, Freiheit und Menschenrechten für ihre Völker zu erörtern, den dringenden Appell, unverzüglich zu einer Konferenz zusammen zu treten."

EMERGENCY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

In view of the political situation in Europe, it has been decided to call an Emergency Meeting of the Executive Committee in place of the regular Spring Meeting. The Sessions will be held in Paris from April 22 to 26 and will be devoted mainly to consideration of the W.I.L.P.F. position and action in the light of recent political events.

CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

As the W.I.L.P.F. foresaw since Munich, and even long before, Hitler's pledges have proved worthless, and the forcible annexation of Czecho-Slovakia has taken place. The pretext given, that the truncated remnant left after Munich was a threat to peace and a danger to Germany, is so ludicrous that it can hardly take in even a people deprived of truth under a press and wireless censorship. It happened, no doubt, for strategic reasons and for the wealth Czecho-Slovakia would bring to a Germany getting into greater and greater difficulties; but it happened also because a Dictator cannot stop, and a megalomaniac must childishly seek more and more to magnify his importance—till the point of breaking comes.

The bravery and dignity of the Czech people in the face of terrible provocation is something that will go down to history as a revelation of what can be achieved by an adult, responsible, democratic people. "Temporary" was the word used by an American Statesman for their eclipse as a self-governing nation. In all humility, knowing our share in the tragedy, we salute the Czech people now, and acclaim the temporarily eclipsed Czecho-Slovakia.

And for the immediate future, what must we in the W.I.L.P.F. be seeking to achieve?

First, we must continue to seek for non-violent means of checking aggression, while governments are thinking only of stopping war by making war, and by military pacts and alliances.

At this moment, Germany is getting from the British Empire, U.S.A. and Soviet Russia, minerals essential to her war industry. (Are men mad? As regards war they at any rate seem bewitched, when they plan no ways of checking the crime, save by assisting in its preparation up to the last moment, and then committing it.)

Secondly, those nations ready to do so should meet in conference and sketch out, with the widest publicity, *plans for the organisation of a world at peace*. This would give hope and courage, and a fresh orientation.

Thirdly, a Pact open to all willing to accept its terms, should be drawn up, to implement at once such peace developments as could be implemented immediately by any nations agreeing.

Along these lines, things might move with increasing impetus in the right direction, instead of more and more rapidly to war and destruction.

Where is the Statesman with enough drive and imagination to initiate such action?

(Since the above was written comes the news of Italy's cowardly annexation of Albania. One day these lands, annexed in defiance of all pledges, will, we are convinced, be a weakness, and not a strength, to their task-masters.)

WORKERS IN U.S.A. AND THE REFUGEES

"The New York joint board of the Amalgamated Clothing workers of America, at a meeting of 100 members of the board at 31 West Fifteenth Street late yesterday, voted unanimously a day's pay to be contributed by 40,000 members on behalf of non-sectarian refugee aid. It was estimated that the contribution would amount to \$250,000."

FROM A GERMAN PAPER

"... Amongst those who weep to-day in Prague, there are also the *emigrants*, who had swarmed there. They have nearly all been caught. Amongst them are those who left Berlin in time and who escaped from us once more in Vienna. At last they have suffered the fate reserved for them. At seven in the morning when the radio announced the agreement between the President Hacha and the Führer, the police headquarters were already occupied, the frontiers were closed and even the air was forbidden. Thus the criminal Jews have had to support their fate."

SLAVERY IN EUROPE

In Germany the mobilisation of the civil population continues

Amongst the decrees for the mobilisation of the civil population the compulsory labour decree takes one of the first places. Already Goering's decree from June, 1938, enabled the German Government to force civilians to work at the fortifications in the west and south of Germany or to send them to the coast. The number of people sent there has increased considerably since the Munich agreement and—according to German papers—is at least 500,000. Among them are merchants, artisans, skilled as well as unskilled workers who, in answer to a communication from the labour-exchange, have to give up their occupation and leave, mostly with a few hours' notice.

The woman is indispensable to the scheme of the German war-preparations

To what an extent women have to do compulsory labour and are drawn into the mobilisation to-day in Germany—that is after "Munich"—is shown by a proclamation addressed to the population of Berlin by Goebbels in his capacity as a "Gau" leader of Berlin and other officials of the Berlin Authority. It says amongst other things:

There are many strong men with straight limbs who are doing work that could be done by invalids. There are also many men who do work that could be done by women just as well, i.e., telephone-exchange. Men and women of Berlin, that must be stopped. . . . We trust that every decent man in Berlin will fulfil in this hour what the "Volksgemeinschaft" asks from him. (*Frankfurter Zeitung*, 11th December, 1938.)

To fill the vacancies which occurred in the industry and armament works through the compulsory transport of workers, a number of further decrees have been issued

in the meantime which force women, pensioners and invalids to work in the place of those who have been sent to build the fortifications. According to this decree (October, 1938) any state-authority can compel all the population to carry out their order "in case of need."

A large number of women were forced to accept work. How this was done is shown by the following reports, whose origin we do not state for obvious reasons:—

North-West Germany

During the critical September days women received orders to report to work and in some places were already employed in trams, in government offices and booking-offices. Other women received orders to report at a certain time at the various defence district authorities. During that time they were not allowed to leave their houses without leaving a message to say where they had gone to and where one could reach them.

Silesia

Lately the defence-department has issued orders for women to report on the fifth day of the mobilisation to do political work. Women living on their old-age pensions, specially if they were childless, were trained to be ticket-collectors and post office employees.

* * *

The number of women workers and of female salaried employees rose according to the figures given by the "Stätistische Jahrbuch fuer das deutsche Reich." from 4,500,000 at the beginning of 1933 to 6,600,000 in 1938

Recently the National-Socialist Government made plans to force women on a larger scale into armament industries,

e.g., they made special plans for the western German miners' districts, where most married women up to now have been exempt from industry.

The *Westfaelische Landeszeitung* (7th January, 1939) writes:

"The great attempt—already started—to bring the idle hands of women into industry (mines and steel-works. The Editor) of the Ruhr district will lead to striking changes in the social structure and the conditions of labour in the districts."

Even mothers of large families are to be conscripted for labour. They are told that in future they must so arrange their household that they can spare half the day for the "Fatherland".

"half-day work for housewives and also the question of transferring of industries and placing of orders for home industry into districts where the men are working in the mines."—*Angriff*.

By decrees of January, 1939, one year of compulsory labour (*weibliches Pflichtjahr*)

which so far only applied to girls working in the textile and clothing industry, was made compulsory for all German girls up to the age of 25. They have to do one year's work either in a household or on a farm. It is hoped by means of this to train more women than the female labour service and the "Landjahr" could train for agricultural labour in wartime.

WHITHER THE CHILDREN OF PALESTINE?

The Palestine Conference is over without having achieved a basis of settlement acceptable to the two main parties in the dispute—or indeed to either of them. Probably the British Government, the third party to the dispute, did not expect any finality as the result of the Conference, since, after all, this was no arbitration by a disinterested party but a belated attempt to apply a drastic remedy to an open wound—and that at a moment of unsettlement and acute anxiety in a world whose misguided belief in the old theory of balance of power is bolstered up by huge schemes of rearmament. Not a propitious moment for generous give and take!

The Conference has dissolved; the government at home delays publication of its policy; but the danger in Palestine remains, and the tide of poverty and despair consequent on the destruction of homes and property, with death and imprisonment of fathers and sons, continues to rise. Whether the number of Arab children rendered fatherless amounts to 10,000 or to 20,000 nobody knows, but the military machine continues to destroy homes, and anyone who has seen the low standard of living of the specifically Arab villages can picture the prevailing destitution and the growing tale of misery and malnutrition. Meanwhile thousands have crossed into Syria and, destitute, crowd into Beirut to find what shelter they can.

And this has befallen Moslems to whom home, kin and locality are sacred.

The Jewish Community have suffered heavy damage to property and a set-back in the hard struggle, which they wage with stubborn land, and though their losses by death have been fewer, each life is valued and each death brings bitterness and sorrow. The relief of distress, towards which small beginnings are being made by the various missionary bodies in Palestine, will demand large sums of money from Christians as well as from Jews.

But concern for these more obvious sores inevitable in the ruthlessness of war—for such it is—should not deflect attention from some of the causes underlying the deep dissatisfaction that prevails. Some of these grievances are capable of mitigation without waiting for more settled times. One of these, and the only one which there is space to deal with here, concerns the unequal opportunities of the Jewish and Arab peoples in the matter of education.

During the fifty-odd years of Jewish settlement in Palestine, and more particularly during the last twenty years, the Jewish National Fund (Keren Kayemeth Leisrael) has built up a fine educational system for their immigrants. Nearly a hundred per cent. Jewish children get some schooling, and the average period covers eight years. There are some 67,000 pupils in approximately 580 schools. It is possible for a pupil to go through kindergarten, primary and secondary schools and finally to go on to the Hebrew University at Jerusalem learning all the time through the medium of the Hebrew language and not necessarily make any effort to learn Arabic. The young Jew has his own sports club, his own theatre, his newspapers. There has been State Aid, and the Jews feel that it should be increased, but the greater part of the expenditure has been provided by Central Jewish Funds

and by the benefaction of private individuals outside Palestine.

The fact that 70 per cent. of the Jewish population live in the four towns of Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa and Jaffa, and 35 per cent. in the one town of Tel Aviv, has made the task of providing educational facilities easier. Outside the towns there are the specialised schools like the agricultural school for girls at Nahalal, with students at the moment from twelve different countries, or the Ben Shemen School and village, where 300 children are being prepared for a life on the land. During the five years of its existence the Youth "Aliya" has brought a total of 3,347 children into the country.

Excellent work is being done, but the chance of Arab and Jewish children learning to bear and forbear in a common school life throughout the country has been lost, and the Mandatory Power's recognition of Hebrew as one of the official languages of the country, while giving a great impetus to linguistic research and making for an enhanced nationalism, has undoubtedly also raised a new barrier between Jew and Arab.

The position with regard to educational facilities for Arab children is very different. Seventy per cent. of the Arab population live in villages, and 85 per cent. of the Arab population are illiterate. There are over 500 villages—necessarily very small in a country only the size of Wales—where there are neither boys' nor girls' schools. Only 27 per cent. of children of school age get any schooling at all at present, of whom 11 per cent. are in private, i.e., Mission schools, and 15 per cent. in State-aided Government schools where on an average they get less than five years' schooling. It is calculated that of the village dwellers only 40 per cent. of boys and 1 per cent. of girls are in school.

That the Arabs are realising the handicap of illiteracy is proved by the steadily growing number who make application for their children to get into school. Surely in a mandated country there should not have been such a lack of vision that in 1936 62 per cent. of Arab children in towns and 48 per cent. in villages should have been excluded because there were no school places available, and that in 1938 among 100 students in the Government Training College for Arabs in Jerusalem, only eleven should be training for the teaching profession. The extension of the franchise and the development of municipal government are both urgent, and but emphasise the need for wide extension and improvement of educational facilities. One or two experienced local government officers appointed to the particular task of promoting and developing existing local government institutions, and a Central Consultative body to plan and co-ordinate an educational programme over a given number of years might do much to mitigate the sense of injustice under which the Arab population suffers. Restriction of the Jews to an agreed proportion, regulation of land-holding, the regulation of markets, are not insoluble problems; but there is no reason that the children should be starved of their right to education until the conflicting claims of two civilisations have been adjusted. Can we hear these voices of the children, and as a Mandatory Power have we the right to refuse to listen?

LETTICE JOWITT.

THE ANSWER TO THE CHALLENGE OF FASCISM

A problem important to all of us was discussed at the Annual Council Meetings of the British Section last month; "What answer have we to the challenge of Fascism?" The discussion was introduced by Charles Roden Buxton in a speech of which we reproduce the main lines, as although the problem was examined mainly from the British standpoint the line taken is of general interest, and *mutatis mutandis*, may be taken to heart by others also.

1. What is the Challenge?

(a) It is a challenge to show that,—in the things characteristic of the democratic States,—we can do something better than the achievements of the Fascist States,—in reasonableness; in readiness for discussion; in reverence for law; in humanity and justice to subject races; in social justice. When we say we are believers in a liberal policy towards the foreigner we must implement this by a readiness to receive him in his dire distress. We ourselves must show less belief in force, less desire for dominion over others.

(b) It is specifically the challenge of the appalling events of the last fortnight (i.e., the annexation of Czecho-Slovakia).

Even about this challenge we must exercise caution and try to realise its extent. Is it a definite economic calculation? If so, what does it include? Do not let us merely *assume* that war is inevitable. Let us not lose contact with the German people, and if war comes let us strive to avoid a repetition of the Treaty of Versailles.

2. Remember the broad historical background of the Challenge

(i) The so-called "have-not" Powers have a case which cannot be met by mere defiance. The mal-distribution of "possessions" and the attempt to maintain the *status quo* are a main cause of the present League failure.

(ii) There has lately been an appalling change, a progressive, moral deterioration. It is, at present, not possible to continue making offers to Germany. But although it is no use for the moment to pursue conciliation or peaceful change, this programme must not be dropped. It is a valuable and necessary programme for the world at large.

3. And there are many reasons for putting forward proposals other than the need of meeting Germany

(a) The British Empire ought to be brought into harmony with present views of the international order.

Its exclusive, widespread Empire is a menace to world peace.

(b) The time is ripe, with regard to Colonies, to move towards internationalisation on the lines of the Mandate system, and the Congo basin administration.

(c) with regard to trade, it is time to take many steps towards the removing of barriers and the increase of international intercourse. There should be a definite Convention on raw materials, to ensure complete equality of access for all purposes of peace. There should be equal economic opportunity for all nations in British dependencies, and Britain should declare her readiness to abolish the whole system of imperial preference, and to organise a lower tariff group open to all nations.

INDIAN WOMEN AND PEACE

The All India Women's Conference, held at Delhi recently, passed this resolution against war:

"Conscious of the gravity of the situation to-day in the world and believing that the new order is an imperative need, we wish to stress once more our abhorrence of war as a solution of any problem. We declare ourselves in utter and eternal opposition to all oppression and exploitation. We have been pained and horrified at the abetment from outside and continuance of internal strife in Spain, at the betrayal of Austria and Czecho-Slovakia, at the merciless persecution of the Jews, at the deplorable interference and cruelties in Palestine and at the unjustifiable aggression in China. The inability of the so-called great powers of the world to put an end to all this woe and misery is a proof enough of the futility of their methods of approach.

We are convinced that it is only through the banishing of all greed for the possession that the shadow of war and armed conflict itself can be removed.

We therefore appeal to the women of the world to unite on the platform of non-violence and actively demonstrate that by this Power alone can the forces of hatred and desire for possession be brought under control and a real and lasting peace established."

THE W.I.L. IN CANADA

On February 23rd a Women's International League House was opened in Toronto. This enterprise makes cheering news in a time of depression, and we congratulate our Toronto Branch and wish it every success. Meetings, discussions, use of rooms by other groups, a lending library, are in full swing, and a courageous little Monthly Bulletin keeps members in touch with all activities, in the faith of a motto on its front page: "We must some day, at last and forever, cross the line between nonsense and common sense . . . from War and Despotism, in any form, to Peace and Liberty."

FROM SCANDINAVIA

Delegates from the four Northern Groups of W.I.L.P.F. assembled at Vettakollen early this year declared:—

1. Re the Refugee Problem:

Many are expecting an act of good-will from the Northern countries which have, so far, been spared the distressing consequences of the events that cause sufferings in great parts of the world. These sufferings demand that everyone of us as well as the governments display understanding as well as good-will when they are asked to help the unhappy men, women and children that in these days full of tragedy are driven out from their native countries. We recommend a broadly based co-operation among the four Northern countries in co-ordination with the High Commissioner in London.

2. Re the Air Raid Precautions:

We entreat the authorities to see that the work for A.R.P. is not used to spread the war-psychosis and that the population is not given false information as to the effectiveness of the precautions.