

Women as "Permanent Peacemakers"

An Account by One of Them of the International Gathering in Switzerland Which Denounced the Allies' Treaty Terms

The writer of this article is one of the women who attended the International Conference for Permanent Peace held in Zurich, Switzerland, in May. It was a gathering of people whose ardor for peace, according to the general impression in this country, carried them very far toward sympathy with conquered Germany. They went on record as disapproving vehemently the "severity" of the Allies' terms set forth in the draft of the Peace Treaty and sent a telegram of appeal to President Wilson in the name of the Fourteen Points.

WHITE slavery, prohibition, laws for women and children, and caring for the sick should be the subjects taken up by the Women's Congress now meeting in Switzerland. The women guided by the English, American, and Swiss must be practical and let international political questions alone. Their work today is to heal the wounds of a war-torn world.

Thus ran an editorial article in the Swiss Journal de Genève, welcoming the 200 women of the International Conference for Permanent Peace in Zurich on May 12.

But the editor had forgotten these were not club women of a few years ago. During the war many of them had become voters plunged sometimes against their will into the turbulent political life of their countries. Since their first congress at The Hague in 1915 they had daily eaten and drunk of international politics. They had come firmly to believe that today not only diplomats but ordinary men and even women could have a say on world questions. With a total disregard for the well-meaning, kindly editor's warning, they traveled together for a whole week through the mazes of the peace terms just presented to the Germans, the covenant of the League of Nations and the international blockade plans.

Even though the Governments of the world looked worried and frowned, even though passport difficulties were many and the journey at best tedious and hazardous, these women came together from fifteen different countries. Japan alone of the five great allied powers was unrepresented, and the Oriental point of view was entirely lacking in the various discussions. Each of the twenty-six Englishwomen received their passports after promising "to indulge in no Socialist propaganda." France refused passports to her women, but three finally arrived after combining personal business in Switzerland with the conference. One Italian delegate was allowed to come "to study the costumes of tout le monde." Belgium had no delegate, for her threat to expatriate any woman attending proved so effective that only Mlle. la Fontaine sat as a silent onlooker.

For weeks the Munich women, too, were refused passports, but for quite a different reason. "There is no such country as Switzerland," said the Communist Government which held the power after Kurt Eisner's assassination. "I will telegraph as proof," said Frau Hallgarten, one of the delegates. But the Communists' creed recognizing no national boundaries was not to be swayed by telegraphed evidence. So the women waited until the counter-revolution took place and passports were in vogue again. Twenty-seven women finally arrived from Germany, four from Austria, and two from Hungary.

The neutral countries of Holland, Norway, Sweden, and Denmark sent twenty-five women. Russia was missing, as the International Committee has never had an active organization there. "The Irish Republic" sent three women, who sat, not with Great Britain, as did Australia,

but safely on the other side of the room with the Americans.

Headed by Jane Addams, who presided over the conference and had previously conferred with Secretary Lansing and Colonel House in Paris, the women of the United States were there twenty-six strong. The State Department allowed twelve to go from this country; the remaining fourteen were already in Europe in various capacities.

Whatever any one may think about woman's having her finger in the international pie, a little thing like a four months' voyage on the sea will never prove a deterrent. It took the three Australian women just one-sixth of a year to reach Zurich by way of India, Egypt, and England. They started in March, spent one week conferring with their sisters from many lands, and in July, if they hurry, they will be able to report back to those who sent them.

It was necessary for the Scandinavian women to cross through Germany. It was an eight instead of the usual three day journey, and the delegates took their luncheons with them—also their dinners and breakfasts. Sometimes they cooked their meals over their little spirit lamps on station platforms while waiting for trains which ran without time tables. Dr. Aletta Jacobs, the Dutch suffragist who in 1912 traveled around the world with Mrs. Catt organizing women for suffrage, headed the delegation from Holland.

These women who met at Zurich were not women of great wealth or social position; neither were they, with one or two exceptions, workingwomen. Jane Addams termed them "just an ordinary group of citizens." They were, however, a little out of the ordinary in that they were typically "doers." Most of them were professional women—doctors, lawyers, teachers, professors, social and civic workers, writers. Nationally and sometimes internationally their names might be found linked with the suffrage movement, with work of all kinds for both women and children. Many of them hold public office in their communities. Jane Addams and Lillian Wald are the heads of our two greatest American settlements, Hull House of Chicago and Henry Street of New York. Florence Kelley, as Secretary of the National Consumers' League, has been instrumental in much of the labor legislation for women passed in the United States. Dr. Alice Hamilton of Harvard

University is the first woman to receive a professorship in a man's college. In addition were unofficial representatives from the Y. W. C. A., the Society of Friends, and the National Catholic War Council.

The list of England's delegates read like the roster of her various suffrage societies during the struggle for the vote. Among them were Mrs. Despard, General French's sister and veteran suffragist, still speaking with her old fire in spite of her seventy-odd years; Mrs. Philip Snowden, opponent of the Militant Suffragists, who has lectured in America often, and Mrs. Pethick Lawrence, who more than once broke into jail with Mrs. Pankhurst. Margaret Ashton, member of the Manchester City Council, and Miss Rayds, Secretary to the Scottish Women's Hospital and active in relief work in Saloniki and Serbia, were two other prominent Englishwomen there.

Lida Heymann and Anita Augsborg of Munich have been for years leaders in the German suffrage movement. Dr. Helene Stöcher of Berlin, another delegate, is the founder of the German League for the Protection of Mothers, and has under her control 400 homes for illegitimate children and their mothers. Frau Kuka, from Austria, is a well known child welfare expert, and the two delegates from Hungary, former active suffragists and feminists, are officials in the Communist Hungarian Government—one, Vilma Gluehlich, at the head of a bureau established to look into matters concerning women; the other, Paula Pogani, the editor of Woman, the Government newspaper devoted to women's interests. Rosika Schwimmer of Hungary, prominent in the 1915 Congress at The Hague, instigator of the Ford Peace Party, and Hungarian Minister to Switzerland under the Karolyi régime, was among the missing. "Was she perchance in prison?" it was whispered. Oh! no—only not in favor with the Soviet Republic of Bela Kun, and therefore keeping very much in the background and asking for no passport, waiting perhaps for the return of Karolyi into power.

Back in 1915 the International Congress at The Hague had voted to meet whenever the official Peace Conference should be "summoned." Not even a long and bitter war had deterred them. It was the same group, yet it was quite different. Then, the Socialists among them could be counted on one hand; now, they

were not quite a majority. Then, the Socialists represented the extreme radical point of view; now, at least in Central Europe, they were the counter-revolutionists crushing Bolshevism. Then a communist was unheard of among their ranks; now, women who belonged to the communist party were there from both Hungary and Germany. Then, to look at their faces the effects of the war were hardly discernible; now, many of the Scandinavians and Central Europeans showed in their pinched, unhealthy looking faces the lack of food.

It was a coincidence that the women's first session found the ink on the peace terms hardly dry. The German women had received their copies while on the way, and arrived in a hopeless frame of mind. They said that "even President Wilson," whom they looked to for "a peace that would temper justice with mercy," had "apparently failed them." They had expected to give up Alsace and Lorraine, to restore the devastated territory, to pay indemnities, but they said they "could not sign the peace that was handed them." To sign would be fatal, yet not to sign they realized would be equally fatal.

If the Germans were submerged in hopelessness, the rest of the congress also voiced dissent from "the severity of the Allies." It hurled by wire at the Paris Conference a set of resolutions denouncing the treaty as a provoker of future wars and urging amendments in harmony with President Wilson's Fourteen Points. The women particularly assailed the blockade proposal, recalling that England had been holding meetings of protest backed by many persons of rank, clergymen and people of prominence, whose influence had been absolutely for the war, and that America and Herbert Hoover seemed ready to send all possible aid. From every part of the Balkans and Central Europe, enemy or allied, came stories of starvation and under-nourishment of women and children. Train loads of little boys and girls kept coming into Switzerland for a two weeks' "feed," then to be sent back perhaps to starve again. The women at the congress continuously criticised the Big Five at Paris for favoring a blockade as a last weapon against the enemy.

A second resolution signed by Jane Addams and wired to Paris asked "that the Governments take immediate action

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AMERICAN DELEGATION AT THE WOMEN'S GATHERING IN SWITZERLAND.

Left to Right, Bottom Row: Miss Elisabeth Sweeney, Miss Grace Drake, Miss Alice Hunt, Miss Jeannette Rankin, Mrs. Louis F. Post, Miss Jane Addams, Mrs. Lucia Ames Mead, and Miss Emily Balch.

Top Row: Miss Rose Nichols, Mrs. Stokes-Miller, Miss Caroline Wood, Miss Constance Drexel, Mrs. John Rickman, Miss Marion Burritt, Mrs. Rose Morgan French, Mrs. Marcy Church Tenell, Miss Lillian Wald, Mrs. Lucy Biddle Lewis, Mrs. John Jay White, Dr. Alice Hamilton, Miss Clara Savage, and Miss Florence Holbrook.

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to lift the blockade and to organize the resources of the world for the relief of the people from famine and pestilence." In reply, President Wilson telegraphed Miss Addams: "Your message appeals both to my head and heart, and I hope most surely that means may be found, though the present outlook is exceedingly unpromising because of unfortunate practical difficulties."

Then the conference set for itself the task of working out a constructive piece of criticism of the League of Nations covenant. There was gradually developing a radical and a conservative wing whose views had to be compromised if the covenant was not to be denounced entirely. Most of the Dutch, the Scandinavians, the Swiss, and the Americans were conservatives. Many of the English and naturally the women from Central Europe occupied the extreme Socialist, if not Communist, left. The Americans, headed by Jane Addams,

possibly influenced by President Wilson's position, saw defects in the League's constitution, but wished it preserved and amended as a basis for world democracy. As finally passed and taken to Paris by Miss Addams and Mme. Duchesne of France, the League resolution indorsed the principle underlying a society of nations, but asked for certain amendments, including the admission of all nations on equal terms, worldwide reduction of armaments, and easy amendment to the covenant. Finally, last but not least, the congress provided for a permanent women's bureau to be established at Geneva, the seat of the League of Nations, with Emily Balch of the United States as permanent Secretary.

Probably the resolutions passed will prove but "scraps of paper." Yet American women return home with the knowledge that women the world over are becoming politically minded both nationally and internationally.