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The Meaning of a Woman's Work: Refugees, Statelessness, Nationality, and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 1918-1931

Monica Burney

Eastern Illinois University

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The Meaning of a Woman's Work: Refugees, Statelessness, Nationality,
and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 1918-1931

(TITLE)

BY

Monica Burney

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The Meaning of a Woman's Work: Refugees, Statelessness, Nationality, and the
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Monica Burney

Masters' Thesis

Advisor: Dr. Sace Elder

April 28, 2018

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Abstract

This work analyzes how the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) sought to influence how the League of Nations approached questions of nationality and statelessness between 1918 and 1931. Especially important were the WILPF's efforts to aid women and children who remained in Turkey following the Armenian genocide, as well as the organization's efforts to address the statelessness crisis that arose following the dissolution of Austria-Hungary. Their activism helped to pressure the League of Nations into creating the Commission of Enquiry on Deported Women and Children in Turkey and Asia Minor. Their efforts to end statelessness culminated in the creation of a 1930 Convention on Statelessness, which brought together members from a number of international organizations. Though the WILPF's efforts met with limited success, their activism shows that women viewed their voices as necessary in debates over nationality. Additionally, their activism suggests early continuity between the collective right of national self-determination and later twentieth-century conceptions of individual rights. The thesis thus demonstrates that the WILPF's expansive understanding of peacemaking blurred the distinction between social reform and international politics. It furthermore argues that the WILPF should be properly understood as an early human rights organization.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	5
Introduction	6
Chapter 1: Early 20th Century Internationalism.....	19
Chapter 2: Crises of Nationality.....	34
Chapter 3: The WILPF and Statelessness	47
Conclusion.....	65
Bibliography	71

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Introduction

Women have suffered even more than men by this appalling, senseless strife. Solders must be fed, but solders' wives do not have to be. If they live in a ravaged country, dishonor and show death by starvation is their fate. Is it not time that, hearing the bitter cry of our outraged sisters, we turned our attention to the cause of war and the condition necessary to attain that justice which can alone insure permanent peace? - Lucia Ames Mead , 1915.¹

While much of Europe was being shaken by the horrors of what would quickly become one of the most expansive military conflicts of world history, women from throughout Europe and North America gathered at the Hague in April of 1915. The task these women had chosen to undertake was formidable: to unite across borders in search of a way to bring the fighting to a close. In order to tackle this task, the women formed the International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace, whose aim was to lobby governments to put an end to the war. This group would outlive the war, becoming a permanent organization aimed at promoting international peace. With these goals in mind the group would take on a new name, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF).²

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom was one of several international women's groups to influence the international stage in the early 20th century. Especially prominent were the International Council of Women, founded in 1888, and the International Women's Suffrage Alliance (later to be renamed the

¹ Statement by a Lucia Ames Mead at the 1915 Hague Conference; Mead, Lucia Ames. "A GREAT MORAL VENTURE: That is the Meaning of the Woman's Peace Congress." *New York Times*. 23 April 1915.

² Leila J. Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 26-29.

International Alliance of Women) founded in 1904. Shared amongst these groups was a belief in a form of maternal feminism and a belief in the importance of women on the international stage. The WILPF was the youngest and most radical of the three groups. Through its reputation for especially progressive actions, often prioritizing internationalism over national interests, as well as its ability to work with other international groups, the WILPF serves as an interesting case study in how women mobilized in attempts to improve the lives of women around the world, often through appeals to national and international governing bodies.³ Under the leadership of Jane Addams the WILPF took a vested interest, in campaigns for peace and the improvement of the status of one, an intent shared by their fellow international women's groups.⁴

Though these international women's groups are often associated with campaigning for the prevention of war, especially through disarmament, they found that their aims of peace called for extensive activism which spanned beyond traditional peacekeeping activities with women from a number of organizations working with the League of Nations to redefine women's nationality.⁵ The WILPF itself maintained an extensive list of activities during the interwar period. Among their work was the creation of a summer school for boys and girls across the world. This school was meant to foster a sense of internationalism amongst young people as well as to stress the need for peace, hopefully to prevent future wars.⁶ Furthermore, their work for peace motivated them to take action to ensure the protection of national minorities, urging the League of Nations

³ Lelia J. Rupp, *World of Women*, 4-14.

⁴ Catherine Foster, *Women for All Seasons: The Story of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989), Preface, 13-14.

⁵ Lelia J. Rupp, *World of Women*, 34--41.

⁶ No Author, "Women's International League for Peace and Freedom: International Summer School At Varese," 1922, Reel 9, WILPF Papers, 1-2.

to create a Standing Committee on National Minorities in 1925.⁷ Among the national minorities they sought to support, the WILPF was especially concerned for Ukrainians facing brutal police repression in Poland. Their concern for the Ukrainian minority increased with the arrest, and subsequent death in custody, of a Ukrainian feminist leader, Olga Bassarb.⁸ The WILPF, in essence, did not simply move their focus straight to the prevention of another war once the armistice was signed. Instead, they took a vested interest in the human impacts of war.

Though historians such as Catherine Foster have argued that the 1920's and 1930's were a generally uneventful time for the WILPF, the group actually stayed extremely active in the interwar period.⁹ They were often relentless in lobbying the League of Nations, as well as individual national governments, to address the social and economic fallout of the war. As Lucia Ames Mead had asserted at the 1915 Hague Conference, women recognized themselves as having a unique relationship with war and its consequences. The women who engaged in interwar internationalist activism often felt an affinity for women uprooted by wars, recognizing the uncertainty of their own safety in times of war. They then viewed it as their responsibility to aid their "sisters" to the best of their abilities.¹⁰ Speaking about the 1915 Congress, one reporter noted that

A thrill seemed to stir the audience as the women of the various nations uttered sympathetic references to the sorrows the hardships of their sisters. Dr. Anita Augspurg aroused the enthusiasm of the delegates when she declared that womanly feelings were above all race hatreds...¹¹

⁷ No Author, "Resolutions of the Executive Meeting, July 10-15, 1925, Reel 2, WILPF Papers, 1-2.

⁸ No Author, "Foreign Committee on the Ukrainian Women," undated, Reel 2, WILPF Papers, 1-2; No Author, "National Sections," 1924, Reel 2, WILPF Papers, 1-5

⁹ Catherine Foster, *Women for All Seasons*, 17-18

¹⁰ Mead, Lucia Ames. "A GREAT MORAL VENTURE".

¹¹ No Author, "Peace Delegate Reaches the Hague: American Women Arrive in Time for Opening Session of the International Congress. German Delegate Speaks, Says War Which Has Caused So Much Suffering Must End -- Mrs. Andrews Gives American View.," *New York Times*, (New York, NY), April 28, 1915.

That Augspurg was a German woman was especially interesting. Her position as speaker, and indeed one of the main organizers, of the Congress helps to show the true desire for internationalism present at the meeting. Though many delegates likely resented Germany as the cause of the war, her speeches and activities were readily welcomed by the WILPF.¹² Indeed Augspurg herself would be among the German WILPF members who advocated for German aid to be donated to repairing the battlefields of northern France.¹³

Their interest in lessening the effects of wars was a natural outcome of the WILPF's peacekeeping mission as well as its approach to feminism. Just as they did not wish to see further bloodshed on the battlefield, they also did not wish to see their "sisters" suffering. Their approach to lessening the effects of war was shaped heavily by their commitment to internationalism. While the WILPF readily encouraged its members to work with relief organizations, the group rooted its activism primarily in advocating for political action. While raising money and goods to aid those in need was indeed necessary, these measures were only temporary solutions. Instead, the WILPF saw political change as the only real and lasting solution. Though this was not explicitly stated, it seems likely that the WILPF saw themselves as getting at the root of the causes of war. Additionally, the organization was readily willing to invoke the devastation caused by war in recruiting people into the cause of international peace. Especially interesting was a 1920 campaign to place large signs around destroyed buildings and

¹² No Author, "WILPF Germany Organizes the Anita Augspurg Award Ceremony in Verdun," *Women's International League for Peace and Freedom*, accessed April 13, 2018, <https://wilpf.org/wilpf-germany-organises-the-anita-augspurg-award-ceremony-in-verden/>.

¹³ No Author, "German Women Urge Rebuilding France: It Is a Debt of Honor, Declare Members of International Peace League.," *New York Times* (New York: NY), May 13, 1923.

homes, urging women to join the WILPF in order to prevent such atrocities from accruing again. It was through working with governments to change their laws and showing the public the human consequences of violence that the WILPF hoped to advocate for a new and lasting peace.¹⁴

During the 1920's the WILPF's interest in women, war, and international activism combined in contemporary debates over nationality, statelessness, and deportation. With the end of World War I, an estimated 1 million refugees were scattered across Europe. The victims of political turmoil following the Russian Revolution, Armenian Genocide, and the dissolution of the Austrian-Hungarian empire, they were left without a nation to protect them during this tremulous time.¹⁵ The question of who, if anyone, was responsible for ensuring their well-being helped bring debates on nationality onto center stage. The debate over who holds nationality had broader implications beyond the million refugees as these debates merged with the question of married woman's nationality. Married women, throughout much of Europe, were often assigned the nationality of their husbands, regardless of the woman's thoughts and beliefs on the matter.¹⁶ The WILPF was unafraid to enter into these debates, working relentlessly to push the League of Nations, as well as national governments, into addressing the needs of stateless people around the world. In the processes, the WILPF sought to compel the international community to reexamine and redefine what nationality meant and who was entitled to it. It was through this fight over nationality that the WILPF positioned itself as

¹⁴No Author, "Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom", June 1920, Reel 9, WILPF Papers, 5.

¹⁵Claudena M. Skran, *Refugees in Inter-War Europe: The Emergence of a Regime* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 14, 1931

¹⁶Maureen Healy, "Becoming Austrian: Women, the State, and Citizenship in World War I," *Central European History* 35, no. 1 (2002): 4-6, 14.

a major voice of advocacy, pushing the League of Nations to take up some of the most contentious questions of the day.

In this thesis I will explain how the WILPF approached statelessness through their advocacy within the League of Nations and the creation of a Statelessness Conference. Integral in this analysis are sources from the American edition of the WILPF's Official Papers on microfilm. This microfilm collection of about 160 reels holds official memos, resolutions, letters (both official and personal), and planning documents from various sections, including the executive branch. In order to most accurately represent the WILPF's stance on statelessness, I have relied primarily on documents from the executive branch, including meeting minutes and official resolutions. In regards to personal letters, I only included documents in which the author was acting officially in their capacity as a member of the WILPF. In the cases where the origin of a document could not be established, I chose to exclude the documents from this work, wanting to clearly and accurately represent the WILPF's stances.

Historiography

Historians have become increasingly interested in the effects of the League of Nations. While it is clear that the League of Nations failed in its ultimate goal of preventing the outbreak of World War II, recent historical studies have found that the League's legacy wasn't completely bleak. Many of these works focus primarily on the League's Social Section as well as the League's effects on international diplomacy at large. With this new focus has come a greater emphasis on the importance of the League's legacy. In her 2015 book *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire*, Susan Pedersen makes the case that the League's Mandate Commission had a

lasting impact on internationalism. Under this commission colonies, particularly those under German control, were converted into mandated territories. They were then, ideally, trained for independence by one of the allied powers. While Pedersen acknowledges that the Mandate System was largely a rebranded colonialism, the existence of the commission forced nations to justify their actions to the larger international community. The progress of the story can be found in the League's use of the language of internationalism. International scrutiny forced the colonial powers to act in ways that could be justified through the lens of internationalism, effectively bringing the treatment of territories into international attention. As such, they were forced to slowly curb their actions to align with internationalist language.¹⁷

The League of Nations was also integral in formulating a system to address international crime, according to Paul Knepper in his 2011 book *International Crime in the 20th Century*. Throughout the period, people became increasingly concerned that criminals would take advantage of technological advances, spreading crime across the world and making laws harder to enforce. The League, then, was expected to add the prevention of international crime, through helping coordinate national efforts, to its expansive list of responsibilities. As a result, the League was able to decree the meaning of international crime. Especially important to international women's groups was the League's work on the, alleged, trafficking epidemic where it was feared that women were being illegally transported across borders to work as prostitutes. These acts were said to be especially prevalent in music halls.¹⁸

¹⁷ Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 4, 77, 295.

¹⁸ Paul Knepper, *International Crime in the 20th Century the League of Nations Era, 1919-1939* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 70-73.

Another recent work on the League of Nations is Carole Fink's 2006 book *Defending the Rights of Others* which deals with the League's work to address questions relating to minority populations. Fink especially highlights the influence played by Jewish groups in bringing the importance of protecting these minority populations, Jews included, to the League's attention. Though minority protection was taken up by the League, it was unable to prevent the rise of Nazism, and its anti-Semitic actions, in Germany. While international women's group's activism for minority protection was briefly mentioned, these groups play only a minor role in Fink's narrative.¹⁹

Works that have dealt with the role of women and international women's groups in the League of Nations are often focused on the League's anti-prostitution work. Jessica R. Pliley's 2010 work "Claims to Protection: The Rise and Fall of Feminist Abolitionism in the League of Nations' Committee on the Traffic in Women and Children, 1919-1936", examines how the League approached illegal trafficking. Pliley highlights the importance of women in the League of Nations' Social Questions Section, arguing that it was the spot in the League where women's voices were heard the loudest. This is especially true in regards to the Committee on the Trafficking in Women and Children (CTW) where abolitionist feminists were able to successfully examine the issue. This progress continued until the success of the CTW garnered international attention, leading to more males being appointed, gradually drowning out the abolitionist's voices. While the article does briefly touch on larger questions of women's nationality, both in relation

¹⁹ Carole Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others: The Great Powers, the Jews, and International Minority Protection, 1878-1938* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 148.

to married women and those working as sex workers, it doesn't delve deeply into how international women's groups sought to help define the topic at large.²⁰

Works on international women's groups often pay only minimal attention to their work in addressing issues of statelessness and nationality. Lelia Rupp's 1997 book *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement*, deals with the creation of the three major international women's groups of the time period, the Women's Suffrage Alliance, the International Council of Women, and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Questions of citizenship are highlighted by Rupp as being among the most controversial issues these women addressed. Nevertheless, the conference on statelessness held by the WILPF in late 1930 is not mentioned.²¹

Nationality questions proved to be evolving during the early 20th century. With World War I came the shifting of the status of women's positions as citizens. These shifting conditions are discussed in Maureen Healy's 2002 article "Becoming Austrian: Women, the State, and Citizenship in World War I." With Austria's entry into the war, many women were largely left to cope with tightening economic and social conditions in the absence of their husbands. Due to their increasingly important role in maintaining the homefront, women were able to increasingly gain citizenship status during the war. The effects on women's nationality were not completely positive, however. A woman's nationality was often defined by that of their male relatives, making foreign women who married Austria men come under suspicion of working for foreign powers. This work

²⁰ Jessica R. Pliley, "Claims to Protection: The Rise and Fall of Feminist Abolitionism in the League of Nations' Committee on the Traffic in Women and Children, 1919-1936," *Journal of Women's History* 22 (2010): 98.

²¹ Leila J Rupp, *World of Women*, 4, 146-150.

provides an important insight into how women's role in society was structured in the period.²²

Another, more recent, work on international women's movements is Marie Sandell's *The Rise of Women's Transnational Activism: Identity and Sisterhood Between the World Wars*. In her book, Sandell looks at how members of international women's groups including but not limited to the three major groups understood and experienced "sisterhood" across national and cultural boundaries. Especially interesting to Sandell are organizations that welcomed non-Western members and the tensions this diverse membership created within organizations.²³

Indeed, issues of nationality were largely contentious in the time period. In his 2008 article "From the Vienna to the Paris System: International Politics and the Entangled Histories of Human Rights, Forced Deportations, and Civilizing Missions," Eric Weitz argues that there was a fundamental shift in the framing of nationality that emerged in the 20th century. This new conceptualization of nationhood and nationality was largely predicated on the idea that a nation should be homogeneous. Consequentially, states seized on this idea of homogeneity and worked quickly to rid themselves of minority populations who were deemed too burdensome to maintain, often through practices of deportations and expulsion. These impulses were congruent with another reaction to the new ideas of nationality with an increase in humanitarianism, prompting people to advocate for the protection of minority populations.²⁴

²² Maureen Healy, "Becoming Austrian," 13-14, 34.

²³ Marie Sandell, *The Rise of Women's Transnational Activism: Identity and Sisterhood Between the World Wars* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015). 3, 14.

²⁴ Eric D. Weitz, "From the Vienna to the Paris System: International Politics and the Entangled Histories of Human Rights, Forced Deportations, and Civilizing Missions," *The American Historical Review* 113 (2008): 1313-1315.

Issues of deportation and humanitarianism converge in Keith David

Watenpaugh's article "The League of Nations' Rescue of Armenian Genocide Survivors and the Making of Modern Humanitarianism, 1920-1927." This article deals with the League of Nations' approach to aiding women and children effected by the Armenian Genocide through the creation of the Commission of Enquiry on the Deportation of Women and Children in Turkey, Asia Minor, and the Neighboring Territories. The article delves further into Turkish reactions to this commission. Watenpaugh's view of the League's humanitarianism is rather bleak, arguing that they were largely, though not solely, concerned with justifying their involvement in the region rather than truly aiding those in need. While the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom is mentioned once in the article, it does not analyze how the WILPF worked to advocate for the creation and maintenance of the committee as well as tie it back to their other concerns over citizenship and nationality.²⁵

There is one work that directly deals with the intersection between women's groups and international relief to refugees is Katherine Storr's book *Excluded from the Record*. This work deals primarily with the role that European, especially British, women played in addressing the refugee crisis that occurred during World War I. She argues, in part, that women tended to frame their refugee work in highly gendered terms, using this as an outlet to gain further agency in the public sphere. Storr incorporates women's activism, especially at the national level, into the narrative of wartime refugee aid. Especially important in Storr's analysis is the activism carried out by English and Quaker women. There is, unsurprisingly, some overlap between women involved in national

²⁵ Keith David Watenpaugh, "The League of Nations' Rescue of Armenian Genocide Survivors and the Making of Modern Humanitarianism, 1920—1927," *The American Historical Review* 115 (2010): 1318, 1322-1323, 1337.

refugee efforts and the WILPF. Most notable among them are Edith Pye and Mary Sheepshanks.²⁶ Pye, along with German WILPF member Gertrude Baer, were essential in bringing attention to the post-war refugee crisis. Therefore, this thesis extends on Storr's analysis, drawing out the focus onto the international level.

Just as the WILPF itself aspired to be an amalgamation of women from around the world, their story in the interwar period is one of infinitely entwining threads. One interest led into another, with each woman believing that their voices could help create a more peaceful world. Their interests in peace and approach to feminism lead them to tackle questions of nationality. Under the topic of nationality, the WILPF took upon itself advocacy for the stateless, whether this status occurred as the result of deportation, marriage, or prostitution. The ambition of WILPF member was matched only by their faith in the potential of a united international community. It was through the League of Nations that they hoped to achieve this community, often with mixed results.

In what follows, I will demonstrate that the WILPF worked to influence the League of Nation's approaches to statelessness and nationality by analyzing the steps they took to advocate for stateless people. This thesis will show that the WILPF was extremely active during the interwar period and took an active part in debates over nationality, believing that women's voices were necessary in these debates. Chapter one will examine how members of the WILPF framed their international activism. Chapter two will examine how nationality became such a pressing question in the interwar period, focusing on the Armenian Genocide and changes in the conceptualization of nationality.

²⁶ Katherine Storr, *Excluded from the Record: Women, Refugees and Relief 1914-1929* (New York: Peter Lang AG, 2009), 3, 5, 14, 83.

Chapter three, then, will look at the WILPF's specific efforts to address statelessness, namely through their advocacy for genocide survivors and the statelessness conference.

Chapter 1: Early 20th Century Internationalism

At this time, when the great ones of the earth are met together in earnest thought and honest discussion – when each mind and conscience is attuned to the highest motive – how apropos that women, whose labor, wealth, and brain have cemented the stones in every monument that man has raised to himself – that women, the oppressed...the hater of wars, the patient...watching while others slept, working while others murdered and plundered...who has died in prison and by the guillotine for liberty – should here and now have her hearing and her advocates.¹

-Unnamed Woman on the 1878 International Women's Congress in Paris

Women collaborating across borders was not an invention of the 20th century.

Throughout the late 19th century women became progressively more involved in national social movements, stepping into the public sphere to advocate for the causes they believed in. Most famously women were major advocates in the push to abolish slavery. Recognizing similar women's advocacy movements springing up in a number of nations, activist women began to expand their dialogues outward, creating transnational connections. Women, many of whom would later become important figures in the international women's movements of the 20th century, often had their start in these national and transnational dialogues. Especially prominent in the late 19th century transnational feminist movement was Jane Addams. Founder of the Hull House in Chicago, Addams remains one of the most well-known feminist activists in United States' history. She too took her activism to the world's stage, initially working with

¹ No Author, "Women's Rights in Paris: A Chicago Lady's Address Before the International Congress of Women," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (Chicago, IL), August 12, 1878.

German feminists on matters of suffrage and eventually going on to serve as the President of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.²

That these connections would begin to develop in earnest during the 19th and 20th centuries should not be surprising. This was a time of great technological innovation, with travel and communication across long distances becoming faster and increasingly accessible. As a result of these changes, contemporaries saw the world as growing gradually smaller. This perceived closeness, the imagined breaking down of time and space, both enabled and motivated people to reach across borders at a time that increasingly stressed cultural homogeneity within nations. Along with this hope and desire for camaraderie came fears that undesirable travelers and immigrants would move into nations and corrupt their cultures. While technological innovations brought about their own challenges and fears, such as concerns over the possible internationalizing of crime, people largely maintained optimism, envisioning the positive changes that international connections could bring. People now felt that they could, and possibly had to, reach out to the people of other nations', working together to solve the problems that plagued all of their lives.³

Women took advantage of this expanding world, working to improve their lives by connecting with each other. These cross-cultural contacts came to a head in 1878⁴ with the creation of the "first international women's congress, the Congress' international de droit des femmes...All of this activity laid the groundwork for the founding of international women's organizations, which institutionalized and perpetuated the impulse

² Kathryn Kish Sklar, Anja Schüler, and Susan Strasser, eds., *Social Justice Feminists in the United States and Germany: A Dialogue in Documents, 1885-1933* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998) 1, 3-7, 67.

³ Paul Knepper, *The Invention of International Crime: A Global Issue in the Making, 1881-1914* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 12; Eric Weitz, "From the Vienna to the Paris System," 1313-1314.

⁴ Rupp, Lelia J. *World of Women*, 14.

to work on behalf of women on the international stage.”⁵ The conference held sessions on a number of subjects including eugenic policies and the education of women though suffrage does not appear to have played a major role. Their goal was clear, to work toward improving the lives of women around the world.⁶ This movement of women organizing at an international level would expand in the years that followed. Just a year after the conference, the International Council of Women would be established. It was quickly followed by a number of similar groups, including the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom. Each group attracted women with their own unique political beliefs.⁷

Despite their differences, many of these women’s organizations, the WILPF included, subscribed to a form of maternalist feminism. This belief promoted the idea that men and women were, by their very natures, fundamentally different. Both genders, and indeed the belief was predicated upon a gender binary, possessed their own unique set of traits. Women, for example, were believed to be biologically predisposed to be more caring and better suited for work with children. Men, on the other hand, were expected to be more aggressive and prone to selfish action, making them especially likely to engage in acts of violence including warfare.⁸ The WILPF readily promoted this rhetoric, with members including these ideas in speeches and papers with one 1924 *New York Times* article recounting that

“It is far easier for a woman to become a pacifist than for a man, Jane Addams yesterday afternoon told several hundred members of the

⁵ Rupp, Leila J. *World of Women*, 34-35.

⁶ No Author, “Woman’s Rights in Paris,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (Chicago, IL), July 21, 1878.

⁷ Leila J. Rupp, *World of Women*, 14-18.

⁸ Leila J. Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, 82-88.

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom... Women, she said, were also less afraid of failure than men."⁹

This appeal to women as being naturally inclined to be pacifists was also present in the WILPF's recruitment efforts around the world, with one letter, from the organization, to the woman of Japan stating,

You, - women, mothers! – guard the coming generation from the frightfulness of war. Men's wisdom has conquered the demons of the natural world, - mothers' love must overcome the demons of passions in the human race. Unite together in this one sacred cause and fulfil the one great duty of the mothers of the world: overcome war!¹⁰

The natural outgrowth of this belief in gendered traits was an expectation that all women would share a set experiences including childbirth and motherhood. These experiences, international activists believed, created a sort of international sisterhood, giving every woman the ability to relate to each other regardless of race, religion, or country of origin.¹¹ It was through this belief that women framed their national and international activism. Women in power, the argument went, were necessary precisely because women were innately different from men. Upper class women, then, were much more suited than their male counterparts to speak to the struggles of working women. While they may have operated under drastically different economic conditions, they were still guaranteed to share set experiences. Gender, in essence, was seen by international women's groups to be the most important aspect of a person's identity, taking precedence over all else.¹² This prioritizing of gender further served to reinforce the existence of

⁹ No Author, "Jane Addams Spurs Hopes of War's End: Tells Audience It's Easier for Women to Become Pacifists Than for Men. World Congress Next May Says Women's League for Peace and Freedom Intends to Lead Way to International Life.," *New York Times* (New York, NY), May 24, 1924.

¹⁰ No Author, "Message of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom to the women of Japan", undated, Reel 2, WILPF Papers, 17, 18, page 1, 3

¹¹ Leila J. Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, 82-88.

¹² Kathryn Kish Sklar, ed., *Social Justice Feminists*, 10-11; 1. Maureen Healy, "Becoming Austrian," 9.

female only organizations as activists often worried that their important voices would be drowned out if men were always present in their meetings and discussions.¹³

These justifications were especially important to recognize in the face of criticisms that women's organizations were comprised only of a small number of elite women. In response, these women often presented themselves as speaking for their silent sisters, stepping up where others could not.¹⁴ Nevertheless, these concerns continued and were by no means unfounded. The sheer cost, in terms of time and material resources, required by national and international activism largely made it the arena of the elite. Those with both the funds and time to partake in international conferences were, more often than not, wealthy white women. This also led the average membership age to skew older, with younger women often being tied up with competing obligations including work and raising small children.¹⁵ Similar issues in the accessibility of activism were also present, it should be noted, on the national level.¹⁶ The intensity of international travel merely served to proliferate this divide, ensuring that only a few voices would be directly heard at international meetings.¹⁷

The composition of these groups, unsurprisingly, had an effect on how they approached their activism. Especially important is the tendency toward colonialist mindsets. The universal experience of womanhood, it was assumed, was white. These white women, then, often believed they knew what was best for women of color. Focusing primarily on the effects of gender instead of race and ethnicity, leaders often missed the complexity of women's identities. Furthermore, many of the women from

¹³ No Author, "Questions as to a Separate Women's Organization." Undated, Reel 1, WILPF Papers, 1-2.

¹⁴ Maureen Healy, "Becoming Austrian," 4.

¹⁵ Rupp, Leila J. *World of Women*, 51-53; Cathrine Foster, *Women for All Seasons*, 3.

¹⁶ Maureen Healy, "Becoming Austrian," 8.

¹⁷ Leila J. Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, 12, 14.

colonial powers were not immune colonialist mentalities, often causing them to view non-western countries and religions as backwards and repressive.¹⁸ While these women acknowledged that relations between genders in their own countries were far from ideal, they saw the west as the progressive standard.¹⁹ Despite such attitudes, there was a generally sincere attempt from within the organizations to recruit members from around the globe. Their notion of the solidarity of sisterhood encouraged women to speak out for all women especially those faced with, what they saw as uniquely female threats, such as a prevalent fear of rape during wartime.²⁰

The belief in threats and issues that specifically effected women motivated members of the WILPF, as well as other international groups, to speak out and become actively involved in the international scene.²¹ Coinciding with the WILPF's interest in peace was a deeply rooted concern for women, and by extension children, effected by war. They further used the particular impact war had on women to support the existence of women in political debates as well as their activism on national and international levels.²²

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

The formation of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom during the chaos of the Great War was not unprecedented. Instead it was one of many players on the international stage, joining the ranks of numerous international groups, each with their own unique motivations and goals. Women's groups themselves often

¹⁸ Lelia J. Rupp, *World of Women*, 73-86; Lora Wildenthal, *German Women for Empire, 1884-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 1-2, 131, 135.

¹⁹ Lora Wildenthal, *German Women for Empire*, 1-2, 131, 135.

²⁰ Lelia J. Rupp, *World of Women*, 83-86.

²¹ Lelia J. Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, 83-86, 88.

²² No Author, "Questions as to a Separate Women's Organization." Undated, Reel 1, WILPF Papers, 1-2.

took drastically different political stances from group to group. This had the expected effect of creating some disharmony in the international community with conservative leaning groups, such as the International Council of Women, often ran into trouble with more radical socialist organizations. The WILPF, according to historian Lelia Rupp, leaned left, often being considered the most radical of the three major women's international organizations. The League, and the women within it, took pride in their risky stances, readily making statements of political dissent when they saw fit, often prioritizing internationalism over taking positions that were backed by their nations. Their more liberal positions on topics like minority protection often set it apart from groups like the International Council of Women and International Suffrage Association.²³ This isn't to say, of course, that national disputes did not affect the WILPF, as national branches would on occasion feud with each other.²⁴

The activities of the WILPF were diverse. They took on a wide array of projects in order to further their struggle for peace. In the more traditional sense of peace work, in 1920 the WILPF lobbied the League of Nations to intervene, and de-escalate tensions, in Russian-Polish relations.²⁵ Following the end of World War I the WILPF also took an active and vested interest in the repatriation of prisoners of war.²⁶ By the end of the 1920's members of the WILPF continued to expand their areas of interest and began

²³ Rupp, Lelia J. *World of Women*, 30.-31

²⁴ This fact became especially clear to members of the WILPF executive branch who were sometimes expected to mediate in conflicts between national branches. In the 1930's, for example, disputes between the German and Czechoslovakian branches erupted after ethnic Germans in Czechoslovakia wished to create a second national branch, separate from the Czechoslovakian one, a move that the German branch backed. This created roadblocks for the executive committee who attempted to avoid taking sides in inter-organizational conflicts. Unsigned to Fraulein Heymann and Madame Duchene, February 14, 1929, Reel 44, WILPF Papers.

²⁵ No Author, "Bulletin of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom" December 1, 1920, Reel 1, WILPF Papers, 6.

²⁶ Emily Balch to Bainbridge Colby, March 18, 1920, Reel 1, WILPF Papers.

organizing international advocacy on behalf of conscientious objectors imprisoned in Jugo-Slavia.²⁷ Among their less traditional peace work was their advocacy for international action that would ban child labor for those under 14 years of age.²⁸ There was also their requests in 1926 that companies stop making toy soldiers, worrying that these toys would serve normalize war to millions of children.²⁹ Then there were Peace Pageants, possibly held as fundraisers, ran by the WILPF in Chicago, with tickets going for \$5 each in 1926.³⁰ All of this is to say, in essence, that the WILPF, while a pacifist organization, had a dynamic and multifaceted approach to peacekeeping.

In order to achieve their goals, the WILPF utilized a number of different tactics. One was calling for their various branches to lobby various national governments to enact changes in policy or law that would further the WILPF's call for peace.³¹ These women saw drastic changes taking place in the world around them and were not simply content to stand aside and watch others do the work. As one, unnamed, WILPF member wrote to an American Ambassador to Copenhagen, a Dr. Egan,

..I would like to beg you to emphasize with the President that he should give us a chance to put before him that intimate information that was our privilege to gather. We want to be of real use and not merely carriers of a formal message.³²

²⁷ Mary Sheepshanks to National Sections, November 5, 1928, Reel 2, WILPF Papers.

²⁸ No Author, "Agenda for the Executive Committee", July 10-15, 1925, Reel 2, WILPF Papers, 1-3.

²⁹ No Author, "War Toy Makers Deny Women's Plea: Threats to Boycott Sale of Tin Soldiers Fail to Move Head of Fair Exhibition. League to Declare Ban Manufacturer Ends Interview When Delegation Quotes Coolidge on Armament.," *New York Times* (New York, NY), March 2, 1926.

³⁰ No Author, "Display Ad 150 -- No Title," *New York Times* (New York, NY), April 16, 1929.

³¹ No Author, "Minutes of the Executive Committee", June 1920, Reel 9, WILPF Papers, 1-6.

³² Unnamed to Dr. Mr. Egan, August 22, 1915, Reel 1, WILPF Papers, 1-3.

Of paramount importance to the WILPF's activism, however, was the newly formed League of Nations.³³

The League of Nations

Established in the wake of World War I, the League of Nations was an international organization aimed at mediating between major world powers, with the hopes of creating a more peaceful world. Through international diplomacy it was hoped that the world would never experience another major war. In regards to their general goal of preventing another world war, the League of Nations failed. The reason, or reasons, for this failure are exceedingly complex. One theory, backed by historians such as Carole Fink, have pointed heavily toward the absence of the United States in the League of Nations. Despite the League being a dream of U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, the country opted against becoming a member. Without the enthusiastic leadership of Wilson, the League was left under the control of many nations who didn't quite share Wilson's idealistic view of internationalism to head the organization. According to Carole Fink, the United States' absence helped to prioritize concerns over national sovereignty over taking action, choosing to leave nations to deal with their own affairs instead of promoting effective international intervention.³⁴ It must be noted, however, that Wilson's commitment to true internationalism has been called into question. Historians like Erez Manela have argued convincingly that Wilson's ideas of self-determination were primarily limited to the west and former German and Ottoman territories, failing to include colonized areas in Asia in particular.³⁵

³³ Catherine Foster, *Women for All Seasons*, 17-18; Leila J. Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, 41, 213-214.

³⁴ Carole Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others*, 133-148, 160, 193.

³⁵ Erez Manela, "Imagining Woodrow Wilson in Asia: Dreams of East-West Harmony and the Revolt against Empire in 1919," *The American Historical Review* 111 (2006): 1333.

While the League of Nations indisputably failed in its primary objective of maintaining a lasting peace, the organization wasn't a complete failure. Branches of the League were able to enact some meaningful change. The League's Social Questions Section has been highlighted by historians as a light in an otherwise rather dim legacy.³⁶ The only section to be headed by a woman, Dame Rachel Crowdy of the United Kingdom, it dealt effectively with a wide variety of issues.³⁷ Among the topics tackled by the Social Questions Section was the repatriation of prisoners of war, ending opium smuggling, and addressing the trafficking of women and children.³⁸ The success of these missions, the trafficking of women and children in particular, has been seen by historians, including Paul Knepper, as being the result of a lack of governmental attention. While each topic was considered highly pressing and important by activists around Europe, nations themselves tended to place their focus elsewhere. Countries often placed the weight of their focus on sections that dealt with more traditionally political questions, carefully monitoring and weighing in on each and every action, often worrying over national sovereignty. This heavy concentration made actions on political questions exceedingly difficult. Due to this prioritization, the Social Questions Section possessed a helpful degree of autonomy in which to carry out their work.³⁹

This relative lack of attention from national bodies had an additional effect. When compared with other sections of the League, women played an especially vital role in the Social Questions Section with women occupying a larger number of seats in this sections

³⁶ Katherine Storr, *Excluded from the Record*, 266.

³⁷ Paul Knepper, *International Crime in the 20th Century*, 70, 73

³⁸ Rachel Crowdy, "The League of Nations: Its Social and Humanitarian Work," *The American Journal of Nursing* 28 (1928): 350.

³⁹ Paul Knepper, *International Crime in the 20th Century*, 70, 73.

than elsewhere.⁴⁰ Women's representation in the section was also, likely, an outgrowth of the prevalent maternalist feminism at the time. If women were believed to be innately inclined toward compassion and nurturing then their presence in a section that dealt heavily with questions of morality is largely unsurprising. Their belief in an international sisterhood would likely only serve to fuel their interest and involvement in the section as many of these questions likely dealt with the lives of women from around the world.⁴¹

In this regard it should also be of little surprise that the section held a special position to ensure that the voices of international women's organizations were heard. By 1938 there were no less than 22 international women's organizations, including the WILPF, working with the Advisory Committee on Social Questions.⁴² This was likely an extension on a September 1931 decision of the Council of the League of Nations, which affirmed the League's commitment to working with international women's groups. Among the groups approached by the League to aid in peace work was the Disarmament Committee of the Women's International Organizations of which the WILPF was a member.⁴³ In order to best handle the opinions of these international organizations, a special position was created inside the Social Questions Section, that of the assessor for international organizations. This position was most notably held by Avril de Sainte-

⁴⁰ Katherine Storr, *Excluded from the Record*, 266.

⁴¹ Lelia J. Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, 130, 147, 152, 154

⁴² No Author, "Committees of the League of Nations. Note by the Secretary-General," January 7, 1938, League of Nations Online Archive, 12-13.

⁴³ No Author, "Sixty-Sixth Session of the Council: Cooperation of Women In the Organization of Peace," January 22, 1932, League of Nations Online Archive, 1-2.

Croix.⁴⁴ Her appointment this position was brought on by the urging of the WILPF, International Council of Women, and International Woman Suffrage Alliance.⁴⁵

That so many women were involved in the Social Questions Section does not mean that the members were solely female. Photographs from meetings of these groups show both men and women intermixed in almost equal numbers.⁴⁶ Still, this stands in contrast to photos of other League organs, such as the Committee on Legal Questions and the Committee on Economic Questions, the subjects of which were overwhelmingly, if not solely, male.⁴⁷ The presence of men from various nations in the CTW helps to show that, though the committee might not have been the major focus of the League of Nations, it wasn't completely written off by member nations. This fact is made even more apparent when one takes into account Crowdy's sudden and unexpected removal as head of the Social Section despite her widely respected performance in that role. This removal stood in contrast to other sections where the, all male, heads were allowed to stay in their positions. In her stead, two men were given the position, each being paid more than Crowdy had been.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ No Author, "Traffic in Women and Children Committee, Minutes of the Tenth Session," May 29, 1931, League of Nations Archive, 5.

⁴⁵ Jessica R. Pliley, "Claims to Protection: The Rise and Fall of Feminist Abolitionism in the League of Nations' Committee on the Traffic in Women and Children, 1919–1936," *Journal of Women's History* 22 (2010): 95.

⁴⁶ "Advisory Committee on the Traffic in Women and Children, 1921", photograph, *League of Nations Online Archive: Indiana University Bloomington*; "Advisory Commission for Social Questions," photograph, *League of Nations Online Archive: Indiana University Bloomington*.

⁴⁷ "Committee on Legal Questions," photograph, *League of Nations Online Archive: Indiana University Bloomington*; "Committee on Economic Questions," photograph, *League of Nations Online Archive: Indiana University Bloomington*.

⁴⁸ Jessica R. Pliley, "Claims to Protection," 100, 105.



Figure 1: "Advisory Commission on Social Questions" League of Nations Online Archive: Indiana University Bloomington. http://www.indiana.edu/~libresd/nt/db.cgi?db=ig&do=search_results&details=2&ID=193&ID-opt==.

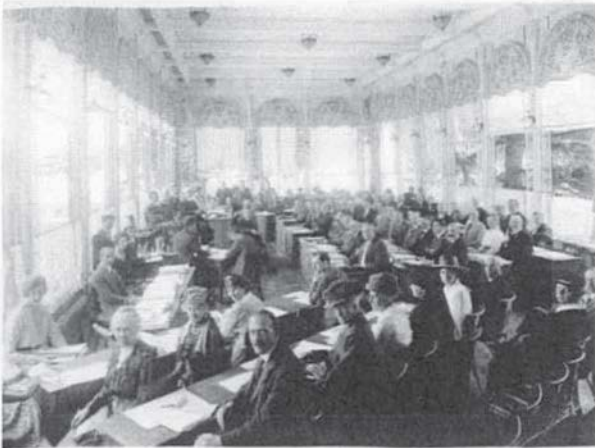


Figure 2: Advisory Committee on the Traffic in Women and Children, 1921, League of Nations Online Archive: Indiana University Bloomington. http://www.indiana.edu/~libresd/nt/db.cgi?db=ig&do=search_results&details=2&ID=299&ID-opt==.

Established in 1919, the Committee on the Traffic in Women and Children, was aimed at creating a sort of central hub for centralizing anti-trafficking efforts.⁴⁹ This trend was especially noticeably in the aforementioned Committee on the Trafficking of Women and Children. There were some debates on what exactly the term trafficking entails with a 1938 League document declaring that

Many attempts have been made to define 'traffic in women and children'... The League of Nations, however, did not deal originally with the traffic in women in this wide sense but with one of its aspects-the

⁴⁹ Jessica R. Pliley, "Claims to Protection," 93.

international traffic. This has been defined in one of the League's reports as 'meaning primarily the direct or indirect procurement and transportation for gain to a foreign country of women and girls for the sexual gratification of one or more persons.'...The League could therefore not always avoid dealing with national traffic in women and children, but great care was always taken to do so only with the approval of the authorities concerned.⁵⁰

Women who worked with the CTW performed their work in the context of larger questions on women's nationality; in order to most effectively address the issue of trafficking they had to first acknowledge and address the role that nationality, or a lack therefore of, played in women's lives. Nationality stood as an important factor in much of their work with many worrying about the fates of foreign women who were forcibly deported for serving as sex workers. As a woman's nationality, in many countries, was determined by the nationality of their husband, sex workers, who were often single, created an interesting dilemma. How could these women be repatriated when their nationality was not immediately clear.⁵¹ The concern over prostitution also bled into the League's refugee work.⁵²

Female refugees, activists feared, were especially susceptible to being forced into prostitution. Forcibly removed from their homelands and separated from their community and familial support structures, these women had to quickly adapt to life in totally new environments. Their situations were made even more difficult by a distinct lack of government assistance or potential employment opportunities. Prostitution, then, was something that women had to take up as a last resort for survival. Of special concern,

⁵⁰ League of Nations, "Traffic in Women and Children: The Work of the Bandoeng Conference", 1938, League of Nations Online Archive, 12; This 1938 source was consulted because it was the only one available that readily defined how the League conceptualized trafficking in the 1930's.

⁵¹ Jessica R. Pliley, "Claims to Protection," 91, 98.

⁵² "League of Nations: Advisory Committee on the Traffic in Women and Children: Minutes of the Second Session," March 31, 1923, League of Nations Online Archive, 28.

even into the late 1930's, to the League and its allies were Russian refugees living in the China. These women, often from poor backgrounds, found themselves living in a new country that had a completely different culture and language. Assimilation, then was extremely difficult, making employment opportunities especially scarce.⁵³

Conclusion

For affluent women around the world, the dawn of the 20th century brought with it the increased ability to make their voices heard. Technological innovations enabled women to bond together, forming massive international groups. These groups were often predicated on a belief that women's voices were both valid and necessary. Though only a select number of women could easily participate in international organizing, these groups maintained that they spoke for women around the world. Of special importance to all women, the WILPF in particular argued, was the need for peace. Like many across Europe, the WILPF saw the League of Nations as a beacon of opportunity, where the problems of the world could be solved through the combined good will of the international community. Together with their sisters from around the world, the WILPF and women of the League of Nations worked together to address the pressing moral questions and topics of the day, especially important were debates over prostitution and nationality. Indeed, debates over nationality would prove to be one of the most definitive and complicated topics of the interwar period. Undeterred, and possibly even spurred, by the contentious nature of nationality questions, the women of the WILPF dived headfirst into fray, determined that the voices of women would be heard in these debates.

⁵³ League of Nations, *Traffic in Women and Children: The Work of the Bandoeng Conference, 1938*, League of Nations Online Archive, 63-67.

Chapter 2: Crises of Nationality

The panic in the city was terrible. The people felt that the Government was determined to exterminate the Armenian race, and they were powerless to resist. The people were sure that the men were being killed and the women kidnapped... The women believed that they were going to worse than death, and many carried poison in their pockets to use if necessary. Some carried picks and shovels to bury those they knew would die by the wayside. During this reign of terror, notice was given that escape was easy – that anyone who accepted Islam would be allowed to remain and stay at home... This deportation continued... Even those who offered to accept Islam were sent away.¹ – *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire 1915-16*

Nationality proved to be one of the most contentious issues of the early 20th century. The end of World War I marked the beginning of a virtually unprecedented crisis of nationality as floods of refugees moved across Europe. The Armenian Genocide led to the deaths of around a million people, with thousands more scattering across Europe. They were joined by approximately 1 million Russian refugees fleeing the country after the Russian Revolution. Then there was dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, following their loss in World War I, which left many without a clear nationality to claim. Further complicating matters were the population exchanges between Greece and Turkey that left over a million people displaced.² Left without a nation to take care of them, these people became the focus of international attention as people around the world debated on who was responsible for their aid.³ The questions that arose from these debates combined with other nationality debates taking place

¹ Arnold Joseph Toynbee, *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire 1915-16* (London: T.F. Uwin, 1916), 334, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89100063627>.

² Claudena M. Skarn, *Refugees in Inter-War Europe*, 1, 29, 31, 41-44.

³ Claudena M. Skarn, *Refugees in Inter-War Europe*, 65-71.

around the world, linking the discussions of statelessness with questions of how to define women's nationality. Due in part to the horrors of World War I and its aftermath, the early 20th century then marks a seismic shift in how ideas of citizenship and national belonging were framed by nations and people.

Inherent in debates on statelessness was the idea of protection; if citizens could rely on their state to aid them in times of crisis, where were those without nationality to turn? This question became all the more pressing as nations began to gradually redefine who they considered to be citizens. Over the course of the late 18th and early 19th century nations, or rather national governments, became increasingly concerned with creating and maintaining a homogeneous population. With the increasing belief that a group should be able to rule over itself, an idea eventually articulated as national self-determination, being able to prove a sort of homogeneity between rulers and the ruled became a necessity for maintaining legitimacy of rule. Due to this focus, nations began to attempt to define themselves through a shared ethnicity. Those who did not fit into this mold, deemed minority populations, began to be seen as a threat to the legitimacy of the national government. To compensate for these perceived threats nations tended toward one of two options in addressing minority groups: removal, forcible or voluntarily, of specific groups from national borders or enacting specific regulations that would ensure their rights would be maintained and protected by governing forces.⁴

Minority Protection

Attempts to ensure the safety of national minorities predate the First World War. The topic was addressed in a number of international treaties during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The 1878 Treaty of Berlin, for example placed an emphasis

⁴ Eric D. Weitz, "From the Vienna to the Paris System," 1315, 1321-1322.

on the protection of the freedom of religion. Furthermore, the treaty required newly formed states to address and ensure the protection of national minorities living in their borders.⁵ This requirement ran counter to the belief that states should be largely left to their own to govern as they saw fit and further perpetuated the idea that national minorities were a threat to the existence of the state as their protection was essentially being forced on these nations.⁶ The decision to require minority protection, rather unsurprisingly, was not received well by the citizens of these nations who viewed the mandate over how to deal with their own citizens as an unnecessary imposition on their national sovereignty.⁷

Similar concerns over balancing national sovereignty and minority protection were present in the 1919 Paris Peace Conference. These concerns were further compounded by increasing public pressure for national self-determination. Pushed forward by both Vladimir Lenin and Woodrow Wilson, this term became a major rallying cry during the interwar period. For Lenin, who initially introduced the term in 1917, national self-determination meant that local populations should be allowed to choose their own governments, ideally through a socialist revolution. In his framing, the liberation of colonies was of utmost importance. Wilson, however, was not willing to take quite as radical of a stance, believing instead national sovereignty applied solely to the people of Europe working within their national systems. Nevertheless, according to historian Erez Manela, Wilson's words were seized upon by populations around the world who used them to frame their movements for independence.⁸

⁵ Carole Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others*, 28, 37-38.

⁶ Eric D. Weitz, "From the Vienna to the Paris System," 1315, 1326

⁷ Carole Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others*, 28, 37-38.

⁸ Erez Manela, "Imagining Woodrow Wilson in Asia": 1330-1333.

The ideas of national self-determination and minority protection were especially important in the creation of new states following the dissolution of Austria-Hungary. There was a great deal of concern that, no matter how their borders were drawn, each new nation would have significant minority populations within them. Realizing the potential danger these states could pose to these populations, Jewish leaders advocated for minority protection to be given close consideration during the Paris Peace Conference. In order to gain support for this measure, they enlisted a number of international organizations, the WILPF included, to raise public awareness of the need for international protection of Jewish minorities. To no one's surprise, the minority question proved to be extremely contentious, pitting ideas of minority protection against that of national sovereignty, with international groups and nations rooting themselves on opposite sides of the issue. International groups actively advocated for a commitment to internationalism through assurances that minority protection would be enforced while independent nations preferred the topic be left up to independent states, arguing against intervention in private affairs of each nation.⁹

Which side won out on this debate is not immediately clear. In a bid to address the topic of minority protection, the League of Nations established the Minority Section. The task given to the section was massive, with people from roughly 50 different minority groups around the world looking to them to ensure the League of Nations' protection. The members of these groups, totaling around 30 million people, would be left largely disappointed, however. Despite a sincere effort on the part of the section head, the Minority Section would largely give precedence to the belief in national sovereignty over minority protection. These priorities manifested in the belief that

⁹ Carole Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others*, 158-160.

national minorities had no right to appeal directly to the League of Nations. Europe's most powerful nations proved to be especially ambivalent to the topic, placing stress on minority protection only when discussing Eastern European Nations, refusing to implement international guarantees for minority protection within their own borders. This indifference to the treatment of minorities only worsened as the years ticked by, opening the door for Germany to become, or at least claim to be, the nation most interested in minority protection during the 1920's and 1930's.¹⁰

The League's lack of action in relation to the protection of minorities did not go unnoticed by international groups. The WILPF, for their part, grew increasingly concerned by what they saw as an uptick in violence against minorities around the world. Among the cases that specifically caught the WILPF's attention was the Japanese repression of Koreans and massacres of Jews in Poland during the late 1910's into 1920. Fearing that violence would only continue if left unchecked, the WILPF attempted to pressure the League of Nations into taking action. In December 1920 Emily Balch, then International Secretary of the WILPF, wrote members of the League of Nations' Council and Assembly, urging them to investigate claims of the mistreatment of minorities, especially in areas not under the control of League members. If the claims were found credible, she then called for the enforcement of minority treaties, which should ensure the protection of these groups. For those nations who were not members of the League, such as the Ukraine, which was alleged to be carrying out massacres against Jews, Balch

¹⁰ Eric D. Weitz, "From the Vienna to the Paris System," 1332; Carole Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others*, 279-283, 295.

suggested that minority protection be a strict requirement for those applying for membership within the League.¹¹

Especially noteworthy in the 1920 letter was Balch's repeated appeal to protecting women. Twice, she specifically cited the horrific treatment of women, especially in cases of rape and torture, as being evidence of the immediate need for League action. Balch's invocation of women possibly had several different purposes. Chief among them could be the expansion of the WILPF's maternalist sisterhood, with the women of the WILPF viewing it as their duty to end abuses against their sisters as quickly as possible. Additionally, the invocation of violated womanhood may have been an appeal to sympathy in order to spur League representatives to action. That the inclusion of specific crimes against women was used solely for the purpose of garnering sympathy is rather unlikely, as crimes against children, which would arguably inspire a good deal more sympathy, were not specifically mentioned in this letter.¹²

The WILPF's commitment to minority protection was further reiterated in a 1925 resolution, passed by their Executive Committee, demanding that the League of Nations take two specific actions. The first was to create a Standing Committee on National Minorities. The second was to formulate an international code clearly outlining and defining minority rights.¹³ The WILPF's work for minority protection will be further outlined in their advocacy for Armenian women and children in a later chapter.

The Armenian Genocide

¹¹ Emily G. Balch to Representatives of Members of the League of Nations on the Council and Assembly, December 15, 1920, Reel 1, WILPF Papers, 1-2.

¹² Emily G. Balch to Representatives of Members of the League of Nations on the Council and Assembly, December 15, 1920, Reel 1, WILPF Papers, 1-2.

¹³ No Author, "Resolutions of the Executive Meeting" July 10-15, 1925, Reel 2, WILPF Papers, 1-2.

Another tactic deployed in the quest for national homogeneity is best exemplified by the Armenian Genocide that occurred during World War I.¹⁴ Throughout the 1910's the Ottoman government deliberately carried out mass violence against the country's Armenian Christian community. This action was in essence a continuation of the Ottoman government's long running policy of oppression and violence against Armenians, either refusing to act when they were violently attacked by the country's Muslim majority or actively carrying out attacks massacres themselves, as was the case in the mid-1890's.¹⁵ [SE3]

Before continuing with a brief chronology of the genocide, a clarification of terms is necessary. Using the word genocide to describe the massacres against Armenians during World War I has long been a contentious issue. The most notable opponent to use of the term genocide is the Turkish government, which actively works to prevent the words usage by the international community. As justification for this genocide denial the Turkish government points to contemporary accusations that Armenians were working to subvert Turkish authority. Instead of deliberate ethnic cleansing, they argue, the massacres were a result of self-defense. This denial is considered a priority by the Turkish government because several of the nation's founders were directly involved. Recognizing the genocide, then, could pose a threat to the government's legitimacy. As a result, they have made moves to criminalize the use of the word genocide in relation to the massacres. Nevertheless, the prevailing academic consensus, as well as an overwhelming amount of evidence, has shown that the Ottoman government deliberately

¹⁴ Eric D. Weitz, "From the Vienna to the Paris System," 1321.

¹⁵ Vahakn N. Dadrian, *The History of the Armenian Genocide: Ethnic Conflict from the Balkans to Anatolia to the Caucasus* (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1997), xviii, xxi, 45.

worked to exterminate the Armenian population. Therefore, the term Armenian Genocide will be used throughout this thesis.¹⁶

With their ascension to power in 1908, the Young Turks persistently continued the Ottoman policy of violence against and oppression of Armenian Christians. The year after the Young Turks came to power, 1909, would see Muslim Turks carrying out the Adana massacre which claimed the lives of around 25,000 Armenians. Violence reached a new level with the Ottoman Empire's entry into World War I. In that time the Armenian population became subject to a policy of forced deportations. As with previous actions against Armenians, the government framed their action in terms of protection of the majority population and national security. In reality these deportations were likely a means to cover up the newest wave of massacres directed at Armenians with government forces taking them to remote areas where many mass executions took place. Through uprooting them from their homes, the government hoped to fracture and isolate the Armenian population.¹⁷

Throughout the course of the genocide it is estimated that over a million Armenians died. Despite being aware of the ongoing violence, foreign governments largely stayed on the sidelines, declining to intervene on behalf of the Armenians. Germany, in particular, was keenly aware of the bloodshed but those in power prioritized maintaining their wartime alliance with the Ottoman Empire over intervening or questioning the Ottoman's actions.¹⁸

¹⁶ Belinda Cooper and Taner Akcam, "Turks, Armenians, and the 'G-Word,'" *World Policy Journal* 22 (2005): 81, 84-86

¹⁷ Vahakn N. Dadrian, *The History of the Armenian Genocide*, 181, 219, 225.

¹⁸ Vahakn N. Dadrian, *The History of the Armenian Genocide*, xviii, xxi, 14, 201.

This response, or perhaps more accurately lack thereof, demonstrates how issues of national self-interest could come to exceed any impulse toward internationalism. Germany's interest in maintaining an alliance heavily outweighed any internationalist impulse that may have been present in the government. Knowing that the German population may not have agreed with this prioritization, the government also took steps to conceal information of the atrocities.¹⁹

Germany was not alone in failing to follow internationalist impulses. Following the war, there were calls from the British public for the British government to ensure that those responsible for the genocide were punished through holding trials of accused Ottoman officials. These demands sometimes originated in media portrayals of Armenian women as white Christian women. Despite public pressure, and being the country in arguably the best position to hold these trials, Britain shrank from these requests. Instead, it was left to the Ottoman government itself to punish those responsible. Perhaps unsurprisingly, only four people were executed for their involvement in the killing of over a million innocent people.²⁰

Population Transfers and Wars

Further complicating debates on nationality was the Lausanne Convention between Greece and Turkey. Signed on January 30, 1923, this convention called for the transfer of people on a truly massive scale. Under this convention, Christians were forced to leave their homes in Turkey while Muslims were sent to Greece. The true number of those dislocated is not immediately clear, with estimates ranging 700,000 and

¹⁹ Vahakan N. Dadrian, *The History of the Armenian Genocide*, xviii, 126, 280.

²⁰ Michelle Tusan, "Crimes against Humanity": Human Rights, the British Empire, and the Origins of the Response to the Armenian Genocide," *American Historical Review* 119 (2014): 66-67, 74, 76.

1,350,000.²¹ Contemporary accounts estimated that around 250,000 Greek Muslims were sent to Turkey while 400,000 Turkish Christians were sent to Greece. This population transfer was overseen by a Mixed Commission from the League of Nations.²² The convention was largely an effort on the part of Greece and Turkey to homogenize their national populations, justifying their actions through the idea of self-determination.²³ Adding to the chaos of the region was an additional one million individuals who had become refugees following the 1912-1913 Balkan Wars.²⁴

These refugees were joined by over a million Russians, most of them former members of the White Army and their families, fleeing the country after their civil war. Others were civilians fleeing the battlefields as well as Jews attempting to escape persecution by both sides of the conflict. The refugees fled throughout Europe, with 240,000 Russians travelling to Germany alone.²⁵

These substantial floods of refugees presented pressing problems throughout Europe. Uprooted from their homelands, and often separated from their families and friends, these refugees faced tremendous challenges. Often without access to jobs or government aid, starvation was an ever-present possibility. Furthermore, a lack of national papers prevented many from traveling to seek better opportunities, grounding them where they had settled.²⁶ Additionally, their presence was not always welcomed by their new neighbors, many of whom distrusted the new arrivals, fearing the political

²¹ Agnes Czajka, "Migration in the Age of the Nation-State: Migrants, Refugees, and the National Order of Things," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 39 (2014): 45; Eric D. Weitz, "From the Vienna to the Paris System," 1334.

²² No Author, "Exchange of Population Between Greece and Turkey," *Advocate of Peace through Justice* 88 (1926): 276.

²³ Eric D. Weitz, "From the Vienna to the Paris System," 1334.

²⁴ Agnes Czajka, "Migration in the Age of the Nation-State," 45-46.

²⁵ Claudena M. Skarn, *Refugees in Inter-War Europe*, 32-36.

²⁶ Claudena M. Skarn, *Refugees in Inter-War Europe*, 38

impact they may have on their new nation.²⁷ Jewish refugees in particular were treated with hostility throughout Europe, making settlement especially difficult.²⁸

The Question of Women's Nationality

Concerns of nationality were not solely tied to the fallout of atrocities and civil wars, with the nationality of women becoming an especially important topic throughout the period. The topic of women's nationality underwent a number of shifts during the early 20th century. As an extension of their status as members of the private sphere rather than the public sphere, women often were legally required to take on the citizenship of their husbands. This meant that a woman marrying a foreigner would be forced to surrender her nationality in order to acquire that of her husband. This system, perhaps unsurprisingly, caused confusion during World War I. In Austria, for example, this legally-enforced change in citizenship caused many to question the loyalty of foreign-born women as wartime paranoia began to rise. Could one truly trust someone who was, more or less, forcibly brought in as part of the nation? Then there was the question of Austrian-born women whose nationality changed upon marriage. To contemporaries it seemed logical to believe that those women who were born and raised in Austria would be the ones who would truly want what was best for the country.²⁹

Even in times of peace the question of married women's nationality was front and center in the minds of women's activists. These issues were also not limited to the European continent. An August 1925 issue of *Equal Rights*, the official magazine of the American National Woman's Party, tells the story of Mary K. Das, an American woman

²⁷ Agnes Czajka, "Migration in the Age of the Nation-State," 48; Claudena M. Skarn, *Refugees in Inter-War Europe*, 38-39.

²⁸ Claudena M. Skarn, *Refugees in Inter-War Europe*, 40

²⁹ Maureen Healy, "Becoming Austrian," 1-14.

who married an Indian-born scholar, Dr. Taraknath Das, who was a naturalized U.S. citizen. Dr. Das, however, had his American citizenship stripped from him following a 1923 U.S. Supreme Court decision in the *United States vs. Thind*.³⁰ In this case the Supreme Court ruled that Indians were ineligible for receiving U.S. citizenship, citing that Indians did not count as white people under the law.³¹ As a result of this decision, Indian-born U.S. citizens were stripped of their nationality. As such, Mrs. Das, along with her husband, became regarded as stateless people. Mr. and Mrs. Das were then unable to obtain passports for travel and unable to provide legal documents in order to obtain work. To the women's rights activists, both national and international, of the 20th century, there was a great danger to be found in such laws. Without a nationality to claim of their own, the women would be without a national protector.³²

Questions of women's nationality also bled into the work of the CTW. As part of their research, the committee would disperse questionnaires to member countries. One question included asked members what nationality of women working as prostitutes within their nation's boundaries were.³³ As stated previously, abolitionist feminists held a prevalent concern that women in foreign nations, lacking the support of her family and home culture were especially susceptible to becoming prostitutes.³⁴ Answers to these questionnaires may have done little to ease the fears of women's activists. As late as 1929, for example, member states reported a number of foreign women being punished

³⁰ Emma Wold "A Woman Bereft of country" *Equal Rights*, August 15, 1925, Gerritsen Collection, 217; No Author, "Equal Rights Magazine," *National Woman's Party*, accessed April 14, 2018, <http://nationalwomansparty.org/equal-rights-magazine/>.

³¹ No Author, "Constitutional Law. Naturalization. Hindu Excluded from Citizenship," *The Yale Law Journal* 32 (1923): 625-625.

³² Emma Wold "A Woman Bereft of country" *Equal Rights*, August 15, 1925, Gerritsen Collection, 217.

³³ No Author, "Traffic in Women and Children Committee: Report on the Work of the Tenth Session," April 21, 1931, League of Nations Online Archive, 3.

³⁴ Jessica R. Pliley, "Claims to Protection," 91.

for prostitution. For many nations it seems that crimes related to prostitution were punishable with deportation, with nations sending women back to their nation of birth. Interestingly, by this time France has passed a law prohibiting foreign born women from working in brothels. Those who attempted to were subject to arrest and repatriation.³⁵ Such measures were not without their dissenters, however.³⁶ In 1931, for example, a number of international groups, the WILPF included, spoke out against deportation, and forced repatriation, as punishments.³⁷

Conclusion

Nationality and citizenship were the topics that dominated the day. With the much anticipated return to peace came the reckoning of the effects of war. Millions of individuals were faced with the necessity to rebuild their lives, many of whom were the survivors of horrific circumstances. While many wished to help these refugees, the scale of the problem was overwhelming. Nevertheless, international groups, the WILPF included, moved quickly to tackle the problem and help those in need.

³⁵ No Author, "Advisory commission for the Protections and Welfare of Children and Young People: Traffic in Women and Children Committee, August 1, 1929, League of Nations Online Archive, 15-16, 89-90.

³⁶ No Author, "Traffic in Women and Children Committee: Report on the Work of the Tenth Session," May 8, 1931, League of Nations Online Archive, 6.

³⁷ No Author, "Traffic in Women and Children Committee: Minutes of the Tenth Session," May 29, 1931, League of Nations Online Archive, 74.

Chapter 3: The WILPF and Statelessness

That as war, disease and famine are these great irrational checks on population and tend to lower rather than raise the types of the survivors, this council of women declares that it is the duty of humanity to strive for the elimination of these checks which involved waste and needless suffering, and to consider the whole problem of populations in the light of reason, knowledge and self-control, rather than in a Spirit of blind submission to catastrophic forces. It asserts that upon women lies a special responsibility in regard to the birth-rate and urges them to study the connection (a) between militarism and the overstrain and enslavement of women for purposes of reproduction in order to make good this waste, (b) between the pressure of population upon the means of substance and war. I.C.W.P.P. Council, November 1917¹

With the virtually unprecedented chaos of the interwar period, the international community was left with the question of how to best help the world on the road to recovery. International groups, the WILPF included, readily embraced the challenge. Among the first causes taken up by the WILPF was the fates of Armenian Genocide survivors in Turkey.

Forcibly stripped of their homes and separated from their families, the fate of Armenian women and children internally deported during the genocide was a cause for concern for the international community. In the years surrounding the genocide, horrific reports began to surface from Turkey over their fates. Women and children were said to have been sold to the highest bidders to serve as slaves in Turkish households. Those Armenians that weren't being held captive in Turkish homes often lived on the streets deplorable conditions across the country. Large numbers of children were left without parents to protect them.² Often, the women and girls bought by Turks were forced to marry their captors.³

¹ No Author, "Population in Relations to War (As Amended by Council)," undated, Reel 1, WILPF Papers, 1.

² No Author, *Hand book: Near East Relief* (New York: Near East Relief, 1920), 6, 11, 22, 30, 40, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/101790557>

³ Keith David Watenpugh, "The League of Nations' Rescue of Armenian Genocide Survivors," 1324.

It was the plight of women and children that especially caught the attention of the international community, serving as justification for foreign intervention in Turkey.⁴ The scale of the problem was reportedly massive, with one contemporary report estimating around 200,000 people in captivity.⁵ Further capturing international attention were reports of these atrocities with one group recounting that during the genocide

...the men led off into the mountains and killed, and the women herded together in long deportation lines. The younger and more attractive girls, many of them trained in American schools, and possessing much of the refinement and beauty of American young womanhood, were the first to be carried off to suffer worse torture than death in Turkish harems, or to be sold in the marketplace of Kurdish chiefs and Bedouin sheiks.⁶

It would be remiss not to note the emphasis put on “westernness” in this quote from the Near East Relief. An American organization, this group focused heavily on aiding the survivors of the Armenian Genocide. Several times in their writings this group highlights the Christian, and by extension western, qualities of those in need, which serves as a motivation for action. This was further enforced by framing Turkish Muslims as “others,” asserting that the Christian Armenians were being forced to adopt Muslim characteristics and religious beliefs. Then there was their use of the word harem as opposed to home which was likely an attempt by Near East Relief to invoke an image of otherness.⁷ They worried that Armenians, as well as Greeks and Syrians, were being captured and sold to Turkish Muslims.⁸ Distrust of Islam, as well as its followers, was also present in the League of Nations’ later work in addressing the issue.⁹

This sort of “othering” does not seem to have been quite as present in the writings of the WILPF. Instead of focusing on captive Armenian women and children as an east versus west problem the WILPF highlighted their activities in terms of gender and minority protection. Just as Christians should be protected under non-Christian governments, they highlighted the need for

⁴ No Author, *Hand book: Near East Relief*, 6, 11, 22, 30, 40.

⁵ Mrs. Rssayan “Report, read at the Lyeeum of Parte,” January 25, 1920”, Reel 1, WILPF Papers, 1-6.

⁶ No Author, *Hand book: Near East Relief*, 39.

⁷ No Author, *Hand book: Near East Relief*, 4, 6, 39-40.

⁸ Mrs. Rssayan “Report, read at the Lyeeum of Parte, January 25, 1920”, Reel 1, WILPF Papers, 1-6.

⁹ Keith David Watenpugh, “The League of Nations’ Rescue of Armenian Genocide Survivors,” 1327, 1334.

Turkish people to be protected when under non-Turkish governments.¹⁰ The WILPF appears to have recognized that the response to this crisis was not the same as it would have been had the deportations and kidnapping had happened in Europe with one WILPF member asserting that:

...I cannot possibly doubt that there are women in a situation which should appeal to women everywhere to see that can possibly be done to relieve them, is done. Of course there must be many who will wish to remain with their Turkish masters or husbands and with their children, but we are bound, it seems to be, to give the opportunity of choice and to release those that are held against their will. When I think how the whole civilized world felt about the French women deported to Belgium, it is hard to understand how it has been so careless about those who have suffered so much more.¹¹

The WILPF took special interest into the women and children affected by the tragedy.¹² One WILPF member, writing on the subject of Armenian women, closed with a declaration “Have women no stake in foreign questions, no duty to be active in public affairs?”¹³ While not explicitly stated, this declaration was likely an allusion to their view of feminism, in which all women were in essence sisters and could intrinsically relate to each other.¹⁴

Determined to bring the plight of these women to the international spotlight, the WILPF proposed several ways to aid Armenian women. The first was to push for the expansion of the Armenian state, which was then under Soviet control. This nation, the WILPF argued, did not have the land or resources to cope with the number of Armenian refugees who would be resettled there. Balch, then Secretary – Treasurer of the WILPF, admitted that her knowledge of the region would not permit her to purpose many specifics of how this state would be established or where the boundary lines would be held. Therefore, the WILPF was attempting to find a way to get nations on board with this suggestion. This idea appears to have been abandoned by the WILPF as it was present in only one document.¹⁵

¹⁰ Emily G. Balch, “Circular letter,” May 1922, Reel 104, WILPF Papers, 1-4.

¹¹ Unsigned to Dearddr Patrick, March 16, 1921, Reel 1, WILPF Papers, 2

¹² Unsigned to Dr. Nansen, November 19, 1920, Reel 1, WILPF Papers.

¹³ No Author, “Bulletin of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom”, December 1, 1920, Reel 1, WILPF Papers, 1, 11

¹⁴ Leila J. Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, 82-88.

¹⁵ Emily G. Balch, “Circular letter,” Reel 104, 4-6.

Chief among the WILPF's ideas to aid Armenian women was convincing the League of Nations to appoint a special commission to investigate the issue and return the women and children to their families. They appear to have begun their calls in 1920 with a letter to Fridtjof Nansen asking for advice on advancing their plan.¹⁶

The WILPF, it must be noted, was not alone in lobbying the League of Nations to take up this issue. Instead, they worked with members of the League's Social Section in order to push the League to intervene.¹⁷ Especially important was the advocacy of, WILPF, ICW, and CTW member, Henni Forchammer.¹⁸ Their advocacy paid off with the 1921 establishment of the Commission of Enquiry on the Deportation of Women and Children in Turkey and Neighboring Countries.¹⁹ While the WILPF was certainly not alone in advocating for this commission's creation, the WILPF considered the commission a source of pride, touting it as a sign of their success.²⁰ They also appear to have felt a degree of ownership over the commission, readily reminding the League of Nations of the WILPF's role in getting the commission established when the League took actions that displeased them.²¹

Unable, and possibly unwilling, to invest a large amount of resources into the commission of enquiry, the League of Nations chose to appoint only three people who were already in the region to take up this question.²² The three people chosen were Dr. Kennedy, Emma Cushman, and Madame Gaulis.²³ The choice to create a commission of enquiry as well as

¹⁶ Unsigned to Dr. Nansen, November 25, 1920, Reel 1, WILPF Papers; Watenpaugh, "The League of Nations' Rescue of Armenian Genocide Survivors," 1323.

¹⁷ No Author, "League of Nations: Deported Women and Children in Turkey, Letter from the Greek Government", July 6, 1922, League of Nations Online Archive, 1.

¹⁸ Unsigned to Patrick Dearddr, March 16, 1921, Reel 1, 1-2; Katherine Storr, *Excluded from the Record*, 271

¹⁹ No Author, "Appointment of the Commission of Enquiry on the Deportation of Women and Children in Turkey and Neighboring Countries," *League of Nations Official Journal* 2, (1921): 118-119; Keith David Watenpaugh, "The League of Nations' Rescue of Armenian Genocide Survivors," 1323.

²⁰ No Author, "Report of the Secretary-Treasurer", June 1921, Reel 9, WILPF Papers, 5.

²¹ Unsigned to Sir Eric Drummond, September 21, 1923, Reel 1, WILPF Papers.

²² No Author, "Appointment of the Commission of Enquiry," 118-119.

²³ No Author, "Deportation of Women and Children in Turkey and Neighboring Countries," *League of Nations Official Journal* 2 (1921): 294.

the appointment of Madam Gaulis was swiftly met with criticism from the WILPF. They worried that a commission of enquiry dedicated to investigating the scope of the issue, as opposed to a standard commission which would be dedicated to making a direct change, would lack the authority to take meaningful action. The WILPF further stressed the need for neutrality in the membership of the commission. Someone notably hostile to Turkey could result in issues with the government. Gaulis, the WILPF worried, had the opposite problem. Members of the organization worried that Gaulis was inclined to favor the Turkish government and that some of her political support was tied to a pro-Turkey position making her less likely to act when necessary than those without such a tie-up.²⁴ The later concern was quickly alleviated with the announcement that Gaulis had decided against taking part in the commission. Instead Miss Karen Jeppe, whose name had been submitted by a number of organizations, was chosen to take part.²⁵ It is not clear from the sources examined if the WILPF played a role in Jeppe's appointment.

The work of the commission of enquiry did not begin smoothly. To further familiarize themselves with the situation, they turned to various organizations already present in the region.²⁶ This decision was quickly criticized by Turkey, which, perhaps unsurprisingly, resisted the very existence of the commission of enquiry. The commission's sources, Turkey alleged, were much too narrow and would not give an accurate representation of the reality on the ground.²⁷ Indeed, the international fear for the safety and wellbeing of Armenian children in Turkish homes was a result of those on the outside misreading the situation in Turkey.²⁸ Opinions within the country also showed a marked distrust of the League's work in the region, occasionally sighting the fear

²⁴ Unsinged to Patrick Dearddr, March 16, 1921, Recd 1, WILPF Papers, 1-2.

²⁵ No Author, "Commission of Enquiry on Deported Women and Children: Note by the Secretary-General," *League of Nations Official Journal* 2 (1921): 606.

²⁶ No Author, "Work of the Commission of Enquiry With Regard to the Deportation of Women and Children in Turkey and Adjacent Countries," August 25, 1921, League of Nations Online Archive, 1-3.

²⁷ No Author, "Deported Women and Children in Turkey, Letter from the Greek Government", July 6, 1922, League of Nations Online Archive, 1-5.

²⁸ No Author, "League of Nations: Deportation of Women and Children in Turkey and Neighboring Countries: Letter from the Turkish Minister at Berne", March 16, 1922, League of Nations Online Archive, 1-3.

that, in their mission to remove Armenian children from Turkish homes, League officials may remove from their homes.²⁹

Despite the rough start, the work commission of enquiry appears to have earned them a degree of trust from the League of Nations. Between 1921 and 1923 the commission's budget was gradually increased.³⁰ Tides changed in 1923 when the League of Nations attempted to cut the commission's budget. This decision was met with criticism from the WILPF which, in addition to pointing to their role in getting the commission established, demanded that the budget be maintained. If the commission's work suffered, the WILPF warned in their classic style, the League of Nations' prestige would be badly damaged.³¹ This letter, it must be noted, did not play a role in the League's eventual decision to maintain the budget as the letter arrived too late to be taken into consideration.³² Nevertheless, the WILPF's letter in itself is important as it speaks to the organization's commitment to, and sense of ownership over, the commission of enquiry.³³

Additionally, in 1922 the commission took control of existing League homes and made moves to establish a new one in Constantinople.³⁴ It was at these homes that children, who were believed to be Armenian, were held until relatives could be located.³⁵ This was, in essence, a continuation of work already in effect at orphanages headed by foreigners. The conditions at these orphanages, it must be noted, were often far from ideal, suffering from a distinct lack of food and resources.³⁶ In this way the work of the Commission of Enquiry appears to have been in

²⁹ Keith David Watenpaugh, "The League of Nations' Rescue of Armenian Genocide Survivors," 1328.

³⁰ No Author, "Special Organizations of the League," *League of Nations Official Journal* 4 (1923): 7; No Author, "Commission of Enquiry Regarding Deportation of Women and Children in Armenian," *League of Nations Official Journal* 4 (1923): 33.

³¹ Unsinged to Sir Eric Drummond, September 21, 1923, Reel 1, WILPF Papers.

³² Rachel Crowdy to Unaddressed, October 2, 1923, Reel 1, WILPF Papers.

³³ Unsinged to Sir Eric Drummond, September 21, 1923, Reel 1, WILPF Papers.

³⁴ No Author, "Special Organizations of the League," 7; No Author, "Commission of Enquiry," 33.

³⁵ Keith David Watenpaugh, "The League of Nations' Rescue of Armenian Genocide Survivors," 1329-1330.

³⁶ Donald E. Miller, *Survivors: An Oral History of the Armenian Genocide* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 122-125.

some ways a major aspect of the League of Nations' Rescue Mission dedicated to the survivors of the Armenian Genocide.³⁷

Especially important to this commission's efforts was Constantinople. Their early findings were grim, estimating that around 60,000 Armenians were being held in Muslim homes. In their time operating in the region, the commission estimated that Armenian children constituted around half on the orphans in the city. In order to approach this problem it was decided that those children whose origin was unclear would be taken into the Neutral House, or other League houses, until a decision on the child's origins was made. This process seems to have been regarded as a success by members of the commission with Jeppe declaring that around 75% of those in the Syrian Rescue Home were reunited with their relatives. There was, of course, an untold number who were never removed from Muslim homes.³⁸ Though the numbers of those recovered by the commission is not immediately clear, they claimed to have saved 250 women in 1925 alone.³⁹

The WILPF considered the establishment of this commission of inquiry as one of their main successes of the period, stating,

We were struck with the interest which our various proposals met with and were of course pleased with our two bits of visible success – the appointment by the League of Nations of a Commission on behalf of Greek, Armenian and other women and children still captive in harems...⁴⁰

While the WILPF was far from alone in calling for the commission to begin, they were a part of an international choir pushing for the League to intervene and save the lives of thousands of women and children. Not simply content with passing this responsibility onto others, the WILPF maintained an active interest in the League's work, viewing it as part of their

³⁷ Keith David Watenpaugh, "The League of Nations' Rescue of Armenian Genocide," 1318.

³⁸ Keith David Watenpaugh, "The League of Nations' Rescue of Armenian Genocide Survivors," 1329-1330, 1337, 1339.

³⁹ No Author, "Report of the Commission for the Protection of Women and Children in the Near East," August 24, 1925, League of Nations Online Archives 1, 3-4.

⁴⁰ No Author, "Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Reports," 1921, Reel 9, WILPF Papers, 5.

responsibility to ensure it was as effective as possible. The case of the Commission of Enquiry on the Deportation of Women and Children in Turkey and Asia Minor serves as a concrete impact of the WILPF's views of feminism and their multifaceted view of peace work.

Statelessness

Before diving into the WILPF's work on statelessness it is first important to clarify what it meant to be stateless. The term appears to have been used, by the WILPF, as a sort of catch all term to categorize people that, for almost any reason, were left without a nationality. This could apply to residents of the former Austria-Hungary whose citizenship was denied by successor states.⁴¹ It could further apply to men or women who found their citizenship revoked for political reasons, such as the case of Mrs. Das which was discussed in chapter 2.⁴² Refugees were often included under the banner of stateless, though they appear to have been seen as holding a unique position within the category of statelessness.⁴³ While this difference was not clearly stated, it seems likely that the difference originated in their flee from violence as refugees from the former Austria-Hungary were considered to be their own category as well.⁴⁴ However, stateless people and refugees were easily talked about in the same documents with very little distinction being drawn between them.⁴⁵

Statelessness was perceived by members of the WILPF to be one of the most urgent issues of the post-war world. In an interesting case, those who couldn't prove their nationality could be considered stateless. This was the case with a Russian woman who, despite having residence in Austria for a number of years, found herself in a state of legal limbo after fighting

⁴¹ Anna Askanazy to Mrs. Havas, October 1929, Reel 106, WILPF Papers.

⁴² Emma Wold "A Woman Bereft of country", 213.

⁴³ Anna Aszkanazy to Madam Rosika Schwimmer, February 1930, Reel 106, WILPF Papers.

⁴⁴ Anna Askanazy to Mrs. Havas, October 1929, Reel 106, WILPF Papers.

⁴⁵ Anna Askanazy to Mrs. Havas, October 1929, Reel 106, WILPF Papers; Anna Aszkanazy to Madam Rosika Schwimmer, February 1930, Reel 106, WILPF Papers.

in her hometown destroyed all official records, making it impossible for her to give proof of Russian citizenship.⁴⁶

Those left without a nationality were often unable to fulfill their daily necessities, unable to find work or places to live without official state identity papers. Even if they could find work some countries, such as Austria, required that employers specifically request permission from the government to hire a stateless person. They were typically not eligible for aid in the governments they settled in, as assistance programs tended to be limited to citizens. Furthermore, gaining citizenship was often a long, arduous, and expensive process. A paradox then arose in many cases where one needed a good deal of funds to engage in the citizenship process. These funds could only be acquired through steady employment, something many couldn't obtain without citizenship papers.⁴⁷

The WILPF did not limit their political relief work to aiding Armenian Genocide survivors. Throughout the interwar period, the group worked to improve the lives of those most affected by war. This interest was not simply limited to the actions that are clearly linked to peace movements, such as the repatriation of prisoners of war.⁴⁸ Instead, the organization continued to broaden its definition of what a political peace organization was meant to deal with. In the case of the interwar period, the WILPF, as this chapter will argue, expanded upon traditional questions of women's nationality into broader questions of how nationality was achieved and framed.

The WILPF viewed itself as a primarily political organization, taking an interest in bringing about political changes, rather than focusing on more traditional relief work.⁴⁹ The WILPF, it should be noted, did not completely write off this type of work, taking part in more

⁴⁶ No Author, "The Problem of Statelessness from the Humanitarian Side," Undated, Reel 106, WILPF Papers, 5.

⁴⁷ No Author, "The Problem of Statelessness from the Humanitarian Side," Undated, Reel 106, WILPF Papers, 1-5.

⁴⁸ Emily Balch to Bainbridge Colby, March 12, 1920, Reel 1, WILPF Papers.

⁴⁹ No Author, "Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom," June 1920, Reel 9, WILPF Papers, 5.

traditional relief work, such as raising funds to support various organizations such as the Save the Children Fund.⁵⁰ Yet charity work, while seen as important and necessary, simply did not produce, in the eyes of the WILPF, the long-lasting effect necessary for the proliferation of peace. In order to truly enact change, WILPF members were expected to focus on encouraging and advocating for political change.⁵¹

In order to bring about said change, the WILPF employed an array of tactics. Members of the national sections often worked to pressure national governmental officials to enact change within their country.⁵² On the international scale, WILPF members approached League members to advocate for various topics. Among their main tactics was to bring international attention to various issues. If an government, or organization, insisted on acting in ways that the WILPF did not approve of, the WILPF would attempt to move public opinion to their side.⁵³ This had an interesting outcome in the 1930's with one WILPF member writing a letter, with a similar slight threat, to Adolf Hitler over the imprisonment of a member of one of the WILPF's German branch. It is not immediately clear if the WILPF followed through on this threat.⁵⁴

The existence of various national sections seems to have enabled the WILPF to diversify their activities with each national group having its own areas of interest due to political and geographical differences. The Irish section, for example, advocated for the freedom of Irish political prisoners held in British jails.⁵⁵ The Bulgarian section regarded refugee questions as especially important as they were faced with an influx of Bulgarian, Turkish, and Yugo-Slavian refugees following the population exchanges between Greece and Turkey.⁵⁶ To members of the

⁵⁰ No Author, "The British Section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Report", 1921, Reel 9, WILPF Papers. 35-36.

⁵¹ No Author, "Minutes of the Executive Committee," June 1920, Reel 9, WILPF Papers, 5.

⁵² Emily Balch to Officers of the W.I.L., May 1922, Reel 1, WILPF Papers, 1.

⁵³ Unsigned to Patrick Deardr, March 16, 1921, Reel 1, WILPF Papers, 1-2.

⁵⁴ Edith Pye to Adolf Hitler, June 6, 1933, Reel 2, WILPF Papers.

⁵⁵ No Author, "Bulletin of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom," December 1, 1920, Reel 1, WILPF Papers, 1, 14.

⁵⁶ Mosa Anderson "Bulgarian Problems and the Bulgarian Section of the WIL" Reel 99, WILPF Papers, 1-2.

Swedish section the conditions of life for Russian refugees were of special importance.⁵⁷ While this internationalism can be seen as a major strength of the WILPF, it must be noted that there were fears that national differences could effectively undermine the organization's unity. Such fears came to fruition in 1929 when the planning of an WILPF conference was severely hampered by disagreements between the German and Czechoslovakian branches over Germans living within Czechoslovakia hoping to form a second national branch.⁵⁸

The interest taken by the WILPF in refugees is not unique among women's movements. Instead, they were further contributing to a legacy of female refugee relief workers. This work in some ways began as an outgrowth of the belief that women were innately more caring, making them ideal for work that required a good deal of patience and compassion. Such work enabled women to expand their influence into the public sphere without encountering backlash for stepping outside of their traditional roles. This was especially true during the war when many women formed organizations and assisted their governments in helping refugees. Those who professed a commitment to internationalism were often more than willing to put national differences aside and aid civilians from "enemy" countries. As women, activists argued, they had a duty to aid other women in need. An interesting outgrowth of the maternalist feminism preached by aid workers was that they placed a special interest on helping refugee women set up a domestic life, believing that would make them feel the most comfortable. It is important to note, however, that despite believing that they had a duty to help their fellow women, relief workers did not necessarily advocate for the dissolution of national boundaries.⁵⁹ Instead, it was hoped that refugees would return home once the war ended. In its own way this speaks to a limit to sisterhood, there was still a perceived difference between women of different countries.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Matilda Widegren and Anna Petterson to the Board of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, November 1919, Reel 1, WILPF Papers.

⁵⁸ International Secretary to Gertrud Baer, January 17, 1929, Reel 44, WILPF Papers; Unsigned to Fraulein Heymann and Madame Duchene, February 14, 1929, Reel 44, WILPF Papers.

⁵⁹ Katherine Storr, *Excluded from the Record*, 3-4, 49, 94.

⁶⁰ Katherine Storr, *Excluded from the Record*, 94-95

Despite the best efforts of wartime refugee relief workers, there was no shortage of work to be done of the refugee question during the interwar period. As discussed in chapter 2, refugees spread throughout the continent from multiple directions. Millions of people were left without a nation to call their own.⁶¹ Before delving into the WILPF's work to aid these refugees, it is important to first establish how the League of Nations was seeking to address the crisis.

The League of Nations at the urging of international organizations, quickly took the refugee question into consideration, turning to Fridtjof Nansen to head their efforts. A scientist and arctic explorer from Norway, Nansen would become one of Europe's most respected activists, taking over the League's refugee work in 1920.⁶² Much of this work was directed primary toward Russian and Armenian refugees.⁶³ In his work, Nansen focused heavily on working to co-ordinate with pre-existing relief efforts.⁶⁴ Nansen was greatly revered for his efforts, with the League of Nations estimating that through his work, hundreds of thousands of refugees were saved.⁶⁵ This respect carried over to the WILPF who, in addition to turning to him for advice in aiding Armenian women, was the only male the WILPF believed was capable of representing women in the mandated territories.⁶⁶

Especially important to Nansen's legacy was the establishment of the Nansen passport. This document granted refugees official international identification.⁶⁷ Passports, beginning in the 19th century, had become integral for movement across national borders. This had the effect of essentially limiting the movement of refugees. Further aggravating the situation was the fact that,

⁶¹ Claudena M. Skran, *Refugees in Inter-War Europe: The Emergence of a Regime* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; 1995), 29, 31, 33, 42-45, 55.

⁶² "Fridtjof Nansen | Biography, Accomplishments, & Facts," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed April 15, 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Fridtjof-Nansen>.

⁶³ Claudena M. Skran, *Refugees in Inter-War Europe*, 99.

⁶⁴ No Author, "Measures to Help Refugees," 1924, Reel 106, WILPF Papers, 1.

⁶⁵ No Author, "Report on the Work for the Refugees", 1924, Reel 106, 1.

⁶⁶ Unsigned to Dr. Nansen, November 25, 1920, Reel 1, WILPF Papers; Emily Balch to Members of the Council of the League of Nations, February 18, 1921, Reel 1, WILPF Papers, 1-3.

⁶⁷ Claudena M. Skran, *Refugees in Inter-War Europe*, 104-105

without legal identification, refugees were often unable to get work.⁶⁸ Without proper identification or a state to call their own, stateless people had no hope for relying on a government for protection. Especially troubling to internationalists was the potential for statelessness to perpetuate itself if left unchecked, as the children of the stateless would have no nationality to inherit.⁶⁹ The Nansen passport effectively solved, or at least alleviated, these problems for thousands of refugees.⁷⁰ The Nansen passport, however was not without its faults, as it was limited solely to Russian and Armenian refugees. This limitation was met with sharp criticism by the WILPF who pointed to the existence of refugees from other origins, such as Austria-Hungary.⁷¹

In 1927 the WILPF created a formal resolution, vowing to convince the League of Nations to take up the statelessness question through the establishment of a special committee within the League. This committee would be held responsible for hearing and resolving individual appeals of stateless people. This decree, it should be noted, was met with caution within the WILPF, with some worrying that the committee would be unable to process the estimated 214,300 stateless people. Without the League of Nations looking into the issue, it must be noted, it was difficult for the WILPF to properly estimate the number of those effected by this issue.⁷² Another, undated, document in the WILPF archives called for the protection of children by the country they were residing in, regardless of nationality. Additionally it called for the creation of a Court of Arbitration in charge of determining if a stateless child should be repatriated, a task in which WILPF members would aid, or kept in their present location.⁷³

⁶⁸ Dr. Egidio Reale, "Stateless Persons and the Passport System", 1930, Reel 106, WILPF Papers, 1-2.

⁶⁹ Anna Askanazy, "The Problem of Statelessness", Undated, Reel 106, WILPF Papers, 5.

⁷⁰ Dr. Egidio Reale, "Stateless Persons and the Passport System", 1930, Reel 106, 1-2.

⁷¹ Anna Askanazy, "The Problem of Statelessness: People Deprived of Nationality", September 1930, Reel 1, WILPF Papers, 1-5.

⁷² No Author, "Report on Resolution Passed by the Women's' International League for Peace and Freedom," March 1927, Reel 106, WILPF Papers, 1-2.

⁷³ Regina Havas, "Practical Proposals", undated, Reel 106, WILPF Papers, 1.

Their admiration for Nansen's work with Russian refugees as well as the relative success of the Commission of Enquiry motivated the WILPF to turn their attention to other groups of stateless people, those who originated in, the now dissolved, Austria-Hungary.⁷⁴ Dissatisfied with the disinterest of the League of Nations, and concerned that charity work was ultimately futile, the WILPF called for members of the League of Nations reach an agreement amongst themselves on how to solve the problem. To this effect the WILPF appears to have given no concrete suggestions. In order to capture the League's interest, Ana Aszkanazy suggested that the WILPF compile tragic stories of statelessness to present to the League of Nations.⁷⁵

In order to best address the issue of statelessness the WILPF created a committee on statelessness in 1929.⁷⁶ One of the activities of this committee was sending out questionnaires to national branches, asking about the statelessness situation in their countries.⁷⁷ These questionnaires' were not well received, with only two responses being sent back to the committee. Undeterred, the committee suggested that the WILPF hold a conference of international groups concerned with the issue.⁷⁸

The WILPF showed an interest in pressuring the League of Nations, or the International Labor Organization, which was responsible for addressing Russian and Armenian stateless people, to address statelessness at large.⁷⁹ Part of their hope was that the Nansen passport would be extended past Armenians and Russians. Furthermore, the WILPF debated the idea that every stateless person, an estimated 214,300 people, was entitled to appeal to the commission for aid.

⁷⁴ Anna Aszkanazy to Madam Rosika Schwimmer, February 17, 1930, Reel 106, WILPF Papers.

⁷⁵ Anna Aszkanazy to Mrs. Havas, October 19, 1929, Reel 106, WILPF Papers, 1-2.

⁷⁶ Eguiene Miskiozy Meller and Regine Havas, "Report of the Committee on People Without Nationality", undated, Reel 106, WILPF Papers, 1-3.

⁷⁷ No Author, "Reply to the Questionnaire sent by the Committee for the Stateless", undated, Reel 106, WILPF Papers, 1-4.

⁷⁸ No Author, "Report of the Committee on People Without Nationality", April 14, 1930, Reel 106, WILPF Papers, 1-2.

⁷⁹ Unsigned to Miss Doty, August 23, 1927, Reel 106, WILPF Papers.

The reality of this idea was questioned by members of the organization.⁸⁰ The League of Nations, to the pleasure of the WILPF, made moves to address the statelessness issue, holding a committee meeting on the possibility of expanding identity documents.⁸¹

Much of the WILPF's work on statelessness culminated in conference on statelessness held by the organization. In attendance was a number of other international organizations including the International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship and the Federation of the League of Nations Union.⁸² Held in September of 1930, this conference served as a way to consolidate the efforts of various international organizations, working together in order to influence the League of Nations to act.⁸³ Several speakers at the conference invoked emotional appeals in their calls to action, sighting the horrific conditions stateless people, especially children, were forced to live in due to the inaction of world governments.⁸⁴ Among the ideas floated around at the conference was, perhaps unsurprisingly, the expansion of the Nansen passport to apply to all those without nationality.⁸⁵ From this conference a resolution was passed, announcing that a delegation to be formed which would pressure the League of Nations into enforcing peace and minority treaties, a process that the WILPF and its allies believed would

⁸⁰ No Author, "Report on Resolution Passed by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom", March 1927, Reel 106, WILPF Papers, 1-2.

⁸¹ No Author, "League of Nations: Third General Conference on [Communications] and [Transit]: Second Committee: Identity Documents for Persons Without Nationality", September 1, 1927, Reel 106, WILPF Papers, 1-5.

⁸² No Author, "For Immediate Release: [S]trangers – Statelessness.", September 8, undated, Reel 106, WILPF Papers, 1-2.

⁸³ No Author, "Conference on Persons Without Nationality", September 8, 1930, Reel 106, WILPF Papers, 1-4.

⁸⁴ Eugenie Miskolczy Meller, "Report on the Stateless Conference and After" undated, Reel 106, WILPF Papers, 1-2.

⁸⁵ No Author, "Conference on Persons Without Nationality," September 8, 1930, Reel 106, WILPF Papers, 1-2.

solve a vast majority of the stateless issue.⁸⁶ All of those that took part in the conference, one participant would later note proudly, enthusiastically offered their aid to the WILPF.⁸⁷

This delegation wasted no time springing into action, quickly meeting with members of the League of Nations. Delegate Anna Aszkanazy was unafraid to criticize the League, calling their efforts to aid those formerly from Austria-Hungary incompetent. Many of the stateless were stateless simply because of governments that chose to abuse, or outright ignore, treaties and to refuse to grant people the nationality they deserved. This belief was backed by Regine Havas, who cited nationality as a right that all children were entitled to enjoy. Nationality, to the WILPF, should be granted by birth and maintained until the point that a person chose to change nationality. Their requests to the League were twofold: Firstly, the League must step up to its responsibility to enforce Peace Treaties and Minority Treaties. Secondly, they asked the League of Nations to establish a Commission on the Problem of Statelessness that would work with those organizations present at the WILPF's conference.⁸⁸

The arguments used by the WILPF were often fascinating. In the Statelessness Committee's meetings with League members, Aszkanazy, speaking as a representative of the WILPF, framed nationality as something that everyone should hold. Nations, she argued, should not be allowed to simply ignore those people that were born within their territories. It was the League of Nations that was in the unique position to work with governments to solve this issue.⁸⁹ Their belief in the nationality was possibly most directly expressed by Regine Haves who stated that

As a social worker concerned with the fate of children in distress, abandoned, sick, impoverished or delinquent, I claim for them besides the elementary

⁸⁶ No Author, "For Immediate Release: [S]patrides – Statelessness.", September 8, undated, Reel 106, WILPF Papers, 2.

⁸⁷ Eugenie Miskolozy Meller, "Report on the Stateless Conference and After", undated, Reel 106, WILPF Papers, 2.

⁸⁸ No Author, "For Immediate Release", Undated, Reel 106, WILPF Papers, 1-2.

⁸⁹ No Author, "For Immediate Release", Undated, Reel 106, WILPF Papers, 1.

necessities of substance and education also an equal primary right: that of nationality⁹⁰

Again, the WILPF's feminism was present in such arguments, with the organization specifically being worried about women and children. These two groups, the WILPF feared, was at a special risk for the poverty that often coincided with statelessness, fearing that many stateless women and children were being abandoned by their husbands, leaving them with nowhere to turn.⁹¹ The statelessness issue was pressing, the WILPF argued, not simply because a large number of people were suffering but that good and hardworking people were being pushed to death. The interesting qualification here is on the qualities those people themselves held. A way to assert this was to look at individual cases of stateless people, a tactic used by the WILPF in their writings.⁹² In a similar thread the WILPF also stressed that people held a right to asylum.⁹³

The early work of the WILPF's commission on statelessness did not meet with much success. A meeting with the League of Nations' Hungarian delegation closed with the country refusing to acknowledge stateless people. The League of Nations itself did not open a discussion on statelessness, finding themselves wrapped up in discussing the Kellogg-Briand Pact.⁹⁴ Another attempt to send out questionnaires regarding statelessness to various national sections failed to yield results of use. A, presumably frustrated committee on statelessness appealed to the WILPF executives to motivate national branches to respond.⁹⁵

Conclusion

Members of the WILPF worked to improve the lives of stateless people around the world. Their activities were predicated on a sincere desire to help women in need. A prime example of

⁹⁰ While the letter this quote originates in is technically undated, it most likely originates around 1930 with the Statelessness Conference; Regine Haves, Untitled, undated, Reel 106, WILPF Papers.

⁹¹ No Author, "Report of the Committee on People Without Nationality", April 14, 1930, Reel 106, WILPF Papers, 2.

⁹² No Author, "The Problem of Statelessness Resulting from Transfers of Territory Under the Peace Treaties: The Case for a Settlement Through a League of Nations Conference," July 17, 1931, Reel 106, WILPF Papers, 1-2.

⁹³ No Author, "Minutes of the Executive Committee," June 1920, Reel 9, WILPF Papers, 7.

⁹⁴ Eugenie Miskolczy Meller, "Report on the Stateless Conference and After", Reel 106, WILPF Papers, 3-4.

⁹⁵ Regine, "Report on Statelessness" March 16, 1931, Reel 106, WILPF Papers, 3.

this desire is their work to lobby the League into appointing a Commission of Inquiry on the Deported Women and Children of Turkey and Neighboring Countries.

Despite the best efforts of the WILPF, as well as their allies, the League of Nations does not appear to have addressed, at least to the WILPF's satisfaction, the issue of statelessness as a review of the WILPF's official papers on microfilm do not provide any such evidence. What is immediately clear, however, is that the WILPF's interest in statelessness did not disappear despite these setbacks. Their statelessness committee did not disappear, remaining in action until at least 1933, when they were confronted with a whole new crisis: the rise of Hitler's antisemitic regime in Germany.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Gertrud Baer to Members of the Statelessness Committee, May 22, 1933, Reel 2, WILPF Papers.

Conclusion

The story of the WILPF and statelessness, like so many other stories of the interwar period, is one of the highest of hopes and crushing disappointment. Though their efforts to end statelessness were by no means universally successful, this story shows how international women's groups sought to redefine how nationality was approached in the interwar period through interactions with the League of Nations. Horrified at the struggles of fellow women around the world, the WILPF sought to ensure that they were taken care of by governments or the international community. As sisters in femininity, the WILPF believed that their voices were integral in achieving a peaceful world.

Questions and debates over nationality came at a time when the WILPF was still trying to aid the victims of the First World War. Uprooted in the millions, through genocide or war, the refugees and stateless people of the interwar period were faced with potentially horrific living conditions throughout Europe and the Near East.¹ Their stories brought to light prevalent problems in the preexisting nationality laws and expectations, which enabled, and possibly encouraged according to Eric Weitz, nations to homogenize their populations through forced deportation.² To the WILPF this impulse to remove undesirables from their borders further applied to the stateless of Europe who were often

¹ Claudena M. Skarn, *Refugees in Inter-War Europe*, 32-36; Agnes Czajka, "Migration in the Age of the Nation-State: Migrants, Refugees, and the National Order of Things," 45; Michelle Tusan, "'Crimes against Humanity': 74, 76.

² Eric D. Weitz, "From the Vienna to the Paris System," 1315, 1321.

denied their homes in the succession states simply because the governments did not want to give them the aid they were due.³

The WILPF activism was further spurred on by their maternalist feminism, believing that they owed it to their international sisters to speak out in favor of political change that would benefit the lives of women everywhere. It was their shared experiences as women as well as the belief that women were innately more peaceful that international feminists justified their activism. These women argued that their voices were necessary in the international community.⁴

That the WILPF's efforts didn't end with the complete erasure of statelessness does not render their story unimportant; indeed, by the early 1930s, the organization could point to significant successes. Their activism for victims of the Armenian genocide helped to lead to the creation Commission of Enquiry on the Deportation of Women and Children in Turkey and Neighboring Countries.⁵ Through this commission several hundreds of women and children were saved.⁶ This is why an official 1921 WILPF report called the creation of the commission of enquiry, along with the addition of a woman to the mandates commission, "our two bits of visible success."⁷ Then there was the WILPF's work to influence national and international policies. Throughout the period they pressured the League to convince successor states, where a vast majority of stateless originated, to accept those born within their national borders as citizens. The options

³ "For Immediate Release", No date, Reel 106, WILPF Papers, 1-2.

⁴ Leila J. Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, 82-88.

⁵ No Author, "Appointment of the Commission of Enquiry on the Deportation of Women and Children in Turkey and Neighbouring Countries," 118-119; Keith David Watenpugh, "The League of Nations' Rescue of Armenian Genocide Survivors," 1323.

⁶ No Author, "Report of the Commission for the Protection of Women and Children in the Near East," August 24, 1925, League of Nations Online Archives 1, 3-4.

⁷ No Author, "Report of Secretary-Treasurer," May 1920, Reel 9, WILPF Papers, 5.

open to the League were rather straightforward, to enforce treaties that would grant these people nationality or to allow stateless people to starve on the streets.⁸ Furthermore, the WILPF pushed for the League to establish a committee, comprised of representative from the successor states, which would hear individual appeals from stateless people seeking to claim a nationality.⁹

By including the WILPF into the narrative of interwar nationality debates we are able to get a clearer picture of the true extent of women's activism during the interwar period. Not simply concerned with the humanitarian side of refugee activism, which was more traditionally considered a female activity, the WILPF stressed political change above all else. In essence, this move from primarily social to political opened new doors for women's international activism. That women's voices could be heard in groups like the WILPF at the League of Nations gave women the unprecedented access to the rooms where national and international laws were being drafted. Through this newfound access, women had the ability, and some felt the responsibility, to shape how the world dealt with the rapidly changing 20th century.

Furthermore, the work of the WILPF on behalf of refugees and stateless people suggests a continuity in twentieth-century human rights activism, albeit under a different name. This shows that human rights did not suddenly appear in the 1970's as is argued by Samuel Moyn, in his book *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History*. In his book, he dismisses the human rights motivations of international women's groups, arguing that they were almost solely concerned with women. Due to this focus on women's issues, Moyn argues, the groups were inherently incapable of pushing for true universal human

⁸ "For Immediate Release", Undated, Reel 106, WILPF Papers, 1-2.

⁹ No Author, "Report on Resolution Passed by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom", March 1927, Reel 106, WILPF Papers, 1-2.

rights.¹⁰ This understanding of human rights, however, requires a much deeper analysis. While the WILPF was an organization centered on women, and concerned with the rights of women, they did not limit themselves to aiding women, as is evidenced by their involvement in the statelessness crisis where they readily pushed for the rights of all people, equally, regardless of gender. The WILPF simply saw themselves as filling a hole in the political landscape, clearly believing that the increased voices of women was integral to the improvement of life around the world. To ignore their contributions to human rights, simply because of their commitment to women and feminist ideology, is to do them a great disservice. Furthermore, it can be said that their instance on the inclusion of women's voices could have helped internationalism truly become international by refusing to let women's issues be glossed over or handled only half-heartedly.

Furthermore, the WILPF easily fills several of Moyn's criteria for human rights. Chief among these is their ability and willingness to take sharp political stances, rather than merely offer humanitarian aid. Through its politics the WILPF was interested in protecting people from their home governments, another one of Moyn's requirements.¹¹ Such a commitment can be found in the organization's advocacy on the behalf of Nazarene pacifists, who were imprisoned in Yugoslavia in 1928 for refusing to join the military. The WILPF, again, was not alone in criticizing this move by the Yugoslavian government, with many different international groups working to lobby the League of Nations to intervene in the crisis.¹²

¹⁰ Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 1, 124-125.

¹¹ Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, 1, 130-131, 147, 173.

¹² Mary Sheepshanks to National Sections, November 5, 1928, Reel 2, WILP Papers.

Another one of Moyn's requirements is that human rights as they came to be understood at the end of the twentieth century were considered individual and universal.¹³ Again, a belief in the universality of certain rights is present in their work on statelessness. Statelessness could be solved, according Regine Haves of the WILPF's statelessness committee, if children are acknowledged to hold the right to nationality. This right, belonging to children, would carry on throughout their lives, preventing another round of widespread statelessness crises. Additionally, it was through virtue of their births, not as members of a community, that this right should be granted.¹⁴

While the WILPF of the time did not appear to use the term human rights, they did eventually come to embrace the term. Today the WILPF proudly pronounces its commitment to, and work for, human rights. Furthermore, they have maintained their founder's commitment to political change through their work with the international community.¹⁵ Their history suggests a continuity in human rights thinking that contradicts the sharp discontinuity Moyn locates in the late twentieth century.

There is still more work to be done in completely understanding women's international activism during the early to mid 20th century. Within the WILPF alone it would be fascinating to further analyze if and how different members, Ana Aszkanazy as an example, interacted with other international organizations to address statelessness. This work could also be extended into the 1930's Jewish refugee crisis, focusing on women like Gertrud Baer and Edith Pye, analyzing how the reactions to each crisis of nationality different. It would also be extremely interesting to examine how each

¹³ Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, 1-3.

¹⁴ Regine Haves, Untitled, Undated, Reel 106, WILPF Papers.

¹⁵ No Author, "Human Rights," *Women's International League for Peace and Freedom*, accessed April 29, 2018, <https://wilpf.org/what-we-do/human-rights/>.

individual national section approached and prioritized work on statelessness. There is, of course, work to be done on how other international women's groups approached the topic. The WILPF, I have sought to show throughout this thesis, was far from alone in its activism. Therefore, there is an untold amount of information yet to uncover on international activism for stateless people. This is especially true when one considers what occurred only a few short years after the WILPF held their final conference on statelessness.¹⁶

Unfortunately for people across Europe, and really throughout the world, 1933 marked the beginning of an entirely new refugee crisis. Along with the rise of Hitler and the Nazi party came floods of refugees, primarily Jewish, fleeing the country with an estimated 37,000 people leaving in 1933 alone. Those that stayed were faced with increasingly anti-Semitic laws leading to a continual flood of refugees with 120,000 fleeing between 1938 and 1939. The world, then, was faced with a brand new set of nationality questions.¹⁷ Therefore, this is where our story ends.

¹⁶ No Author, "Conference on Persons Without Nationality", September 8, 1930, Reel 106, WILPF Papers, 1-4.

¹⁷ Walter Laqueur, *Generation Exodus: The Fate of Young Jewish Refugees from Nazi Germany* (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 2001), 1, 19-21.

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