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in the Humanities & Social Sciences



Leila J. Rupp. *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997. xiii + 325 pp. \$33.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-691-01675-7; \$65.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-691-01676-4.

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Published on H-Women (January, 1999)



In *Worlds of Women*, Leila J. Rupp captures the century-old origins of women's international organizing from their founding to the Second World War. She takes as her focus the three groups that "held center stage" (p. 4) in the world theater during the early years of the twentieth century: the International Council of Women (ICW), founded in 1888; the International Alliance of Women (IAW, initially the International Woman Suffrage Alliance), an offshoot of the Council established in 1904 to focus on suffrage; and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), created in 1915.

The International Council of Women, "the first lasting multipurpose transnational women's organization" (p. 15), grew out of an international conference in Washington, D.C. in 1888, called by the National Woman Suffrage Association, the Stanton-Anthony wing of the U.S. suffrage movement. The ICW, which came into being before there were national councils of women, prodded women to create the national councils in their home countries in order to join the ICW. Between 1888 and 1893, only the U.S. and Canada created those bodies. By 1939, thirty-six councils had affiliated with the ICW. Thus, the ICW helped to organize domestic women's movements. In addition, the ICW established committees as vehicles for the international work of women. In 1899, it created standing committees on peace and international arbitration and on the legal position of married women. Eventually, the ICW coordinated committees on suffrage, the "traffic in women," work, public health and child welfare, and immigration.

By 1933, the Council had adopted a wide-ranging agenda. To minimize conflict, it permitted other orga-

nizations to take up contentious questions. In light of its waffling on suffrage, in 1904 some of its members established the International Woman Suffrage Alliance, with a clear pro-suffrage stand. By 1929, the IAW comprised fifty-one national suffrage auxiliaries.

The WILPF emerged from World War I. Although the war disrupted international communications, a remarkable International Congress of Women nevertheless took place in the Hague from April 28 to May 1, 1915. Women from neutral and belligerent nations took a stand in favor of enfranchisement for women and a peaceful resolution of the international conflict. The Hague Congress established an International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace which, by the end of the war, had renamed itself the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. By 1921, it had twenty-two national sections. According to Rupp, "[a]s the most radical organization, WILPF played a vanguardist role in lauding international loyalty above what traditional notions of citizenship might consider appropriate support for one's country" (p. 119).

Women united internationally on the same bases that brought them together in their home countries: women's special role as mothers and propensity for nurturing, the need to protect the poorest working women from exploitation by employers, the movement for moral reform and against enforced prostitution ("white slavery") and sexual violence, the quest for suffrage and political rights, and the pursuit of peace. Says Rupp, "Referring to themselves as 'mother-hearts,' 'guardians, nurses & preservers,' 'Mothers of the Human Race,' 'carriers of life,' 'MOTHERS OF THE NATIONS,' 'guardians of the new generations,' women assumed that their gender united

them behind the cause of peace” (p. 86).

But, as Rupp points out, distance created special constraints in forging such alliances. International associations of women, even more than the domestic kind, resulted in exclusions based on means, religion, language, race, and nationality. Most active members of the international groups tended to be elite white Christian women with substantial resources, overwhelmingly from North America and Western Europe.

Such uniformity in personal characteristics did not generate consensus in views. Women’s international organizations, like the national ones, split over the politics of equality for women. The fissure between advocates of strict legal equality and proponents of special treatment for working women that divided women activists in the United States also split them in the international setting. The International Labor Organization, founded in 1919, became the locus for the dispute over special laws for women. A failure of women’s groups to concur on how to determine citizenship for women married to foreign nationals permitted an unsatisfactory draft from the Conference on Codification of International Law in 1930 to carry the day. Differences were not limited only to women’s issues. Members also divided over whether nationalism had a claim above internationalism or *vice versa*, with still others contending that no conflict obtained between the two loyalties.

However divisive, the conversations that women had toward resolving these disputes themselves fostered identity as internationalists among these women. These women shared both an international and a feminist consciousness, although members constantly contested the meaning of both terms. Internationalism was vaguely defined as “a sentiment like love, or religion, or patriotism,” in the words of Carrie Chapman Catt (p. 108). Feminism was similarly inchoate. According to Rupp, women were united by “a sense of themselves as a group with interests distinct from those of men; a perception that existing societal arrangements, differing as they did from country to country, disadvantaged women in relation to men; and a commitment to improving the situation of women” (p. 130). The organizations most likely to identify themselves as feminists were those that sought equal legal rights for women and that opposed sex-specific protective labor laws. Of the three major organizations, only the IAW used the term “feminist,” which was generally eschewed by the WILPF and the ICW. But the term changed its meaning over time, with some activists equating feminism and humanism and other calling a

reaffirmation of women’s traditional roles “new feminism.”

Rupp focuses especially on the development of “women’s international collective identity” within these organizations, examining the role of the women who staffed the headquarters and served on committees, the creation of special symbols (badges and banners), the connections established through newsletters and conferences, as well as personal relationships among activist women. Although her focus is on the Europeans, Rupp touches on the challenges to their Eurocentric world view posed by contact with women from Asia and the Middle East.

Rupp takes up the impact of these organizations chiefly in the Conclusion. She maintains that the publicity these organizations engineered made women’s issues salient to an international community of women. One of the several coalitions formed by women’s international groups, the Peace and Disarmament Committee—with members from the International Federation of Business and Professional Women, Soroptimist International, the International Federation of University Women, the World YWCA, the World WCTU, and the three major international women’s organizations—collected eight million signatures from fifty-six countries on a petition to present to the League of Nations in 1932. They lobbied both the League of Nations and the United Nations, forcing these bodies to take account of their perspective and to appoint at least a few women to relevant committees. The United Nations charter ultimately did include the principle of equality between women and men, a result for which the International Alliance of Women took credit. By 1946, a UN Commission on Women served as the foundation for an examination of women’s status that led to the UN Decade for Women conferences later in the century. But the aftermath of World War Two changed the international terrain. “[T]he years between the world wars represented the high tide of internationalism,” Rupp observes (p. 34). The bi-polar world created after the Second World War proved in some ways less hospitable to international organizing. But the efforts of women in the years before offered an alternative model for living in the world and generated enduring institutions and precedents for acting on behalf of women in the second part of the twentieth century.

Rupp’s work rests upon wide-ranging consultation of myriad archives in London, Paris, Amsterdam, and Berlin as well as on domestic archives and printed primary and secondary sources. Her discussion is therefore authori-

tative and her clear organization and writing makes the volume accessible to all readers. Some cavils: One wishes that she had included more about the workings of the International Council of Women of the Darker Races, founded in 1920, and that she had devoted more space to the effectiveness of women's international organizations. She might also have alluded to the domestic backlash in the United States against these women, which labeled them left-wing subversives, willing to sacrifice

their country's well-being for peace and feminism, a view that helped to undermine the national women's movement in the 1920s. But these omissions do not detract from this accomplished recovery of this heretofore unexplored and important component of women's activism.

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**Citation:** Cynthia Harrison. Review of Rupp, Leila J., *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement*. H-Women, H-Net Reviews. January, 1999.

**URL:** <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=2684>

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