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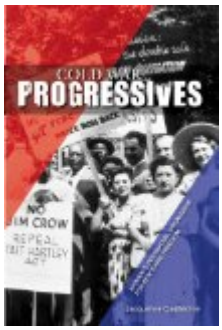
Jacqueline Castledine. *Cold War Progressives: Women's Interracial Organizing for Peace and Freedom.* Women in American History Series. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012. xii + 210 pp. $45.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-252-03726-9.



Reviewed by Andrea Friedman

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Jacqueline Castledine's *Cold War Progressives* is an accessible volume about women affiliated with the Progressive Party (PP) and associated groups in the United States. Her book joins a growing number of works offering a complex account of the effect of early Cold War repression on the U.S. left. Castledine seeks to make several interventions. First, she demonstrates that, despite their relative absence from national leadership positions and continuing ambivalence about women's political roles, women were vital members of Progressive coalitions. Second, she sheds light on the diversity of U.S. women's postwar activism, emphasizing the existence of interracial coalitions among women Progressives, contrasting the various stances toward equality taken by Progressive and liberal women, and attending to peace as a central concern of women on the left. Third, she argues that McCarthyism "reconfigured" but did not destroy radical women's activism, and she traces Progressive women's influence within the resurgent movements of the 1960s, in both liberal feminism and the New Left. In all of these ways, Castledine's work builds on and contributes to an increasingly sophisticated portrait of women's organizing for equality and social justice in the postwar years. Her book is, however, less illuminating on issues that might be of particular concern to H-Diplo readers: the relationship between domestic politics and foreign policy, transnational connections between activists, or even the substance of the program of "positive peace"--defined by Henry Wallace as "abundance and security, not scarcity and war" (p. 16)--that resided at the heart of Progressive politics.

Castledine examines the activities of a broad range of women, from well-known activists like Eslanda Robeson to some whose names may only be familiar to scholars--among them Mary Van Kleeck, Ada Jackson, and Kathryn Clarenbach--to those at the grassroots who have largely escaped notice, such as Marjory Haynes or Susie Stageberg. Some coordinated national initiatives, funding the PP, heading the "Women for Wallace" committee, or organizing related groups such as the

Council on African Affairs, while others ran state parties, campaigned for election on the PP ticket, or worked on local educational projects. Many of these women were active in Popular Front activities during the Depression and World War II, and despite Cold War era repression, they sustained their commitment to peace and social justice into the 1960s. Castledine adroitly narrates the activist lives of women like Susan B. Anthony II, whose commitment to women's equality stretched from the Congress of American Women to the National Organization for Women and beyond, and Helen MacMartin, chair of the Vermont Progressive Party who helped recruit a new generation of women to peace activism in Women Strike for Peace. MacMartin is an especially compelling figure, illustrating the ways that previous scholars have misconstrued the meanings and import of Progressive women's careers. Reported by one historian as dying in 1951 from the "malaise" (p. 68) she experienced in the wake of Wallace's defeat in the 1948 election, MacMartin in fact rebounded from her disappointment and persevered in her advocacy of Progressive principles. Her forty-year career as an activist serves as a ready symbol of the determination of her comrades, many of whom toiled over decades to alter the terms of American politics and policies.

Castledine dedicates two chapters to investigating the significance of motherhood to women Progressives, examining their attitudes toward maternalist arguments as well as the ways their activism affected their relations with family members. Especially in the immediate postwar period, women in the PP and affiliated groups disagreed over whether to emphasize maternalist or individualist justifications for their endeavors. These disagreements sometimes aligned with generational or affectional differences, as some older women who lived in intimate relationships with other women seemed to embrace individualist approaches. Castledine maintains that, whether they grounded their activism in declarations of women's equal rights or on the basis that women, as mothers, were uniquely in favor of peace, Progressive women were united by their belief that "peace activism offered women an opportunity to participate in transnational movements for equality that would give them a voice in domestic and international policy making" (p. 45). In general, however, Progressives tended to privilege maternalist arguments, a tendency that grew stronger with the hardening of postwar anti-Communism. Yet while PP women may have "linked [their] political rights to [their] maternal role" (p. 79), their activism frequently created tensions within their own families, as husbands, children, and parents disapproved of their radical stance. Castledine tells some gripping stories about the many ways in which the personal and the political both converged and collided for women whose participation on the left threatened definitions of good mothering.

This tale of Progressive women is an interracial one, and two chapters explore anticolonial and antiracist organizing among white and African American women in Progressive circles. In chapter 4, Castledine examines the activism of black women, such as Robeson, Shirley Graham (Du Bois), and Charlotta Bass, not only in the PP but also in the Council on African Affairs, Sojourners for Truth and Justice, and at the United Nations. By emphasizing the PP membership of these women, she seeks to highlight the ways that positive peace was central to their vision of social justice. Chapter 5 focuses on white and black women in the American Labor Party (ALP), which functioned as the PP's New York State organization. Training the lens on one state organization allows for greater attention to grassroots activism, and here Castledine is able to show African American and white women working together, for example, on initiatives relating to Negro History Week and other civil rights issues. This analysis of women's work on the local level also illuminates the challenges that Progressive activists faced as the burgeoning civil rights movement shifted calculations about the relationship between racial justice

and antimilitarism. While some Progressives began "to view peace and civil rights as competing, not complementary, issues" (p. 126), African American women activists like Thelma Dale continued to insist on their unity, sustaining the vision of positive peace that had initially fueled the PP.

Ultimately, Cold War tensions and political repression contributed to the collapse of Progressive groups, including the ALP, which dissolved in 1956. Yet Progressive women found other ways to continue advocating for peace and justice, such as publishing and speaking as well as organizing. By the 1960s, many of them had resurfaced in Women Strike for Peace and, later, the Jeanette Rankin Brigade. Not only did these groups continue the antimilitarism of an earlier era, but like their Progressive antecedents they also linked peace with racial justice and gender equality. Positive peace lived on, sustained by women who had never abandoned it despite the afflictions of the second red scare.

Castledine successfully traces Progressive women's tenacity notwithstanding the challenges they faced both within and outside of the PP, but her treatment of the substance of their political program for peace and freedom is less satisfying. Most troubling, she inadequately explores precisely what they meant by "positive peace." Castledine asserts that PP members' commitment to positive peace encompassed opposition to colonialism, racism, economic injustice, and other forms of what we might call structural violence, but she offers very little consideration of how these principles translated into concrete positions or organizing strategies. The exception is her discussion of African American activists, such as Robeson and Dale, for whom antiracist and anti-imperialist organizing was front and center, but even here the relationship between these priorities, peace, and antimilitarism is sometimes assumed rather than demonstrated. Additionally, it is not clear how many of the white women cataloged here spoke out on these issues, raising further questions about the meanings of positive peace for many Progressives. Since Castledine's central argument is that "it was their capacious understanding of peace, rather than feminism or civil rights, that framed [activists'] progressive vision" (p. 4), a more detailed analysis of what constituted that "capacious understanding" as well as its specific impact on their political mobilizing and, perhaps, its relationship to the broader history of pacifism would have been welcome.

There are tantalizing glimpses of moments when such an analysis might have yielded a clearer understanding of the possibilities and limitations of organizing for peace in the midst of the Cold War. Several of these arise in the context of Castledine's discussion of the ALP. For example, she briefly observes that alliances between Jews and African Americans within the ALP coalesced in part over disenchantment with President Harry Truman's policy toward Israel as well as what was perceived as his weak support for civil rights. But she does not connect her discussion of these affinities to growing disagreement in the group over the relationship between civil rights activism and peace. Similarly, quoting Robbie Lieberman (*The Strangest Dream: Communism, Anticommunism, and the U.S. Peace Movement, 1945-1963* [2000]), she notes that in the mid-1950s ALP members increasingly emphasized "peaceful coexistence" over "cooperation" with the Soviets, attributing this shift to the ALP's large Communist membership (perhaps half of the ALP by this time). But I wonder if there is more to be said about the different *meanings* of coexistence and cooperation, particularly in relation to such global developments as the Berlin airlift or the Soviet Union's development of nuclear weapons; about the broader understandings of peace that might make possible the "peaceful coexistence" of Communists and non-Communists *within* the ALP and like groups; or about the concrete ways those broader understandings might sustain *women* peace activists even as their organizations folded

and as the taint of being Communists or too tolerant of Communists isolated them from more traditional pacifist ventures.

Cold War Progressives offers an engaging and accessible chronicle of women's experiences within the Progressive Party, their contributions to postwar left politics, and their legacy to the movements of the 1960s and 1970s. It is well researched, making use of interviews and the archives of numerous women Progressives to bring to life the personal and political lives of these activists. And it moves smoothly between the local and the national while also paying attention both to the possibilities for and the barriers to interracial coalition. Together with its relative brevity, these qualities make it an excellent choice for those looking for accounts of postwar women's radical organizing for the undergraduate classroom. But it is less useful for scholars who are searching for more substantive analyses of the relation between domestic and foreign policy or the parameters of peace organizing, a somewhat surprising absence in a book about a social movement that, the author contends, situated peace not "on the margins" but "at the very center" of its vision (p. 3).

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[1] Robbie Lieberman, *The Strangest Dream: Communism, Anticommunism, and the U.S. Peace Movement, 1945-1963* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000).

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