

**"A Woman's Place is in the Cold War": American  
Women's Organizations and International Relations  
1945-1965**

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to explore the activities of American women's voluntary associations in the international realm. In the years immediately following the Second World War, American women saw both an opportunity and an obligation to become active in the international sphere. With obstacles and prejudices preventing their inclusion in mainstream political and diplomatic circles, many American women channelled their interest and activities in the international realm through the medium of voluntary women's organizations. These organizations participated in a number of programmes which sought to export the American way of life, and women's place within it, to overseas markets. Whilst many of these programmes were a product of American women's authentic desire to assist women in other nations, many originated with and were directed by the US government.

The work of American women's organizations in international relations were an important component of two government strategies. Firstly, they were a response to the enthusiasm and encouragement of the US government for the involvement of the private sector in Cold War Propaganda. Secondly, the efforts of the US government to reach and influence group identities (such as women) in the international

realm was aided by the co-operation of American representatives of that group. In co-operating with their government, American women's organizations were engaged in a constant process of negotiation between their 'natural' and international role as women and their role as Americans.

The task of defining and exporting the interests and identities of American women to a world audience was both the result of direct government involvement and the willingness of leaders of American women's organizations to serve national interests. Government involvement ranged from help arranging the details of overseas tours to full-scale funding for a women's organization to combat Communist propaganda. The co-operation of voluntary organizations with the government challenges traditional divisions between the private and public realm, which have in the past contributed to a historiography which has placed undue emphasis on American women's commitment to the domestic ideology of the post-war years, at the expense of an accurate assessment of their role in American foreign relations.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AAUW</b>	American Association of University Women.
<b>CAW</b>	Congress of American Women.
<b>CCCMF</b>	Carrie Chapman Catt Memorial Fund.
<b>CCCW</b>	Committee on the Cause and Cure of War.
<b>CIA</b>	Central Intelligence Agency.
<b>CofC</b>	Committee of Correspondence.
<b>CWWA</b>	Committee of Women in World Affairs.
<b>GFWC</b>	General Federation of Women's Clubs.
<b>IAUW</b>	International Association of University Women.
<b>IAW</b>	International Alliance of Women
<b>IFBPW</b>	International Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs.
<b>LWV</b>	League of Women Voters.
<b>NAACP</b>	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.
<b>NCCW</b>	National Council of Catholic Women.
<b>NCJW</b>	National Council of Jewish Women.
<b>NCNW</b>	National Council of Negro Women.
<b>NCW</b>	National Council of Women.
<b>NFBPWC</b>	National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs.
<b>OEF</b>	Overseas Education Fund (of the League of Women Voters).
<b>WIDF</b>	Women's International Democratic Federation.
<b>WILPF</b>	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.
<b>WOMAN</b>	World Organization of Mothers of all Nations.

WSP Women Strike for Peace.

WUUN Women United for the United Nations.

YWCA Young Women's Christian Association.

## INTRODUCTION

Women have never been completely excluded from participation in the public world --- but women have been incorporated into public life in a different manner from men.

Carole Pateman, The Disorder of Women(1989)<sup>1</sup>

In September 1939 American Home magazine put international affairs into perspective for its readers: 'Hitler threatens Europe, but Betty Havens' husband's boss is coming to dinner - and that's what really counts.'<sup>2</sup> The image conjured by this statement --- the American housewife absorbed in improving her domestic skills for the advancement of her husband and totally uninterested in European affairs --- was to change with U.S. entry into World War II. For the duration of the war, women were encouraged to invest their energy into national rather than domestic projects.

However, there were still constant reminders that this state of affairs was temporary and that, following the end of the war, women would return with renewed enthusiasm to their main roles of

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1 Carole Pateman, The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism and Political Theory (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989) p. 4

housewife and mother. An advertisement for Maytag washing machines presented their new appliances as a treat to look forward to once the war was over: 'You've waited a long, long, time for a new washer. But there'll come a day when Uncle Sam will say, "Go ahead"....Then we can start making those handsome new "post war" Maytags we have planned for you.'<sup>3</sup>

The importance of domestic tranquility as a haven after the traumatic experiences of war were recognized in a series run by Life magazine in January 1945. A Life editorial argued, 'The trials and separations of war have made real to millions of Americans the beauties and contentment of home. As a sentimental notion, the home today is a great success.'<sup>4</sup> It was a success that advertisers were keen to encourage as an advertisement for Kelvinator electrical appliances showed, 'When you come home to stay....We'll live in a kingdom all our own....A kingdom just big enough for three...with a picket

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2 Quoted by Laura Donaldson, Decolonializing Feminisms: Race, Gender and Empire-Building (London: Routledge, 1993) p. 102

3 Advertisement for Maytag Washing Machines, Life, 15 January 1945

For an account of the short-term and long-term changes experienced by American women following the Second World War, see Susan Hartmann, The Homefront and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982) and Sherna Berger Gluck, Rosie the Riveter Revisited: Women, the War and Social Change, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987).

4 Life, 22 January 1945, p. 63

fence for boundary.'<sup>5</sup> An advertisement from Roger Brothers cutlery expanded the theme, 'It's what every girl wants, I guess. Happiness. And somehow, that's all wrapped up with a home.'<sup>6</sup>

The cult of domesticity was not only a short-lived reaction to World War II. It proved to have considerable longevity. Elaine Tyler May in her work, Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era has explored domesticity in its wider social and political context. Tyler May argues persuasively that the domestic 'containment' of women must be seen in relation to the insecurity of the physical and political climate in Cold War America. She asserts, 'The home seemed to offer a secure private nest removed from the dangers of the outside world....The self-contained home held out the promise of security in an insecure world.'<sup>7</sup> As an illustration of this she cites the case of a newly-

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5 Advertisement for Kelvinator Electrical Appliances, Life, 22 January 1945

6 Advertisement for Rogers Brothers Cutlery, Life, 26 February 1945, p.70

As Eugenia Kaledin has pointed out, it is dangerous to rely upon advertising for a reliable picture of any era, although she concedes, 'It may be inevitable that historians of the media age over-use advertising images to define the entire society.' [Eugenia Kaledin, American Women in the 1950s: Mothers and More (G.K. Hall and Co., Boston, 1984), p.250]

7 Elaine Tyler May, Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era (New York: Basic Books, New York, 1988) p. 3

wed couple in 1959 who opted to spend their 'sheltered honeymoon' in a bomb shelter.<sup>8</sup>

The containment of women in their domestic roles was an argument vividly expressed by Betty Friedan in her 1963 classic The Feminine Mystique. Friedan argued powerfully that women's 'feminine role' as described by women's magazines was 'young and frivolous, almost childlike; fluffy and feminine; passive; gaily content in a world of bedroom and kitchen, sex, babies and home'.<sup>9</sup> Friedan complained that women's magazines were 'crammed full of food, clothing, cosmetics, furniture and the physical bodies of young women' and asked, 'Where is the world of thought and ideas, the life of the mind and spirit?'<sup>10</sup>

The impact of Friedan's book was huge, and it has been credited with inspiring the 'second wave' of the women's liberation movement in the 1960s, including the establishment of the National Organization of Women. Friedan herself acknowledged the impact that The Feminine Mystique had in a second book, It Changed my Life: Writings on the Women's Movement: 'I did not set out consciously to start a revolution when I wrote The Feminine Mystique, but it changed my life, as a woman and as

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8 Ibid.

9 Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965) p. 32

a writer, and other women tell me it changed theirs....I have had to take the responsibility for the revolution my words helped start.'<sup>11</sup>

Despite the work of feminist historians, most notably Susan Ware, which challenges the uniformity of this picture, Friedan's vision of the 1950s has proved to have considerable staying power.<sup>12</sup> Of course, part of this longevity is because Friedan's picture is not a total distortion or fiction. The search for examples of the enforced domesticity of the American Women in the postwar years has proved a fruitful field. The stereotypical woman of the era has reached the status of a cultural icon. Historians Leila Rupp and Verta Taylor have written of 'the "Happy Housewife" of the 1950s...an image so familiar it need not be belaboured: the smiling

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10 Ibid.

11 Betty Friedan, It Changed my Life: Writings on the Women's Movement (New York: Random House, 1976), p. xiii

12 Moreover, it is not only the reliance of Friedan on women's magazines for her material at the expense of other sources that have been questioned. Eva Moskowitz has asserted that the picture of domesticity in postwar American magazines was far from as uniform as Friedan infers. Moskowitz argues, 'My research suggests that these magazines [Ladies Home Journal, McCall's and Cosmopolitan] did not merely promote "the happy housewife" image. Indeed, far from imagining the home as a haven, the women's magazines often rendered it as a deadly battlefield on which women lost their happiness, if not their minds.' [Eva Moskowitz, '"It's Good to Blow Your Top": Women's Magazines and a Discourse of Discontent 1945-1965, Journal of Women's History, Vol 8:3, Fall 1996,. p. 67]

pretty suburban matron, devoted mother of three, loyal wife, good housekeeper, excellent cook'.<sup>13</sup>

Yet if the containment thesis of women's roles and activities in the immediate postwar years is not entirely inaccurate, it has been, in the words of historian Joanne Meyerowitz, 'consistently overdrawn.' Meyerowitz has argued, 'While no serious historian can deny the conservatism of the post-war era or the myriad constraints that women encountered, an unrelenting focus on subordination erases much of the history of the post war years.'<sup>14</sup>

An example of the possible rewards of a change of focus can be seen in Elaine Tyler May's narration of Vice-President Richard Nixon's 1959 visit to Moscow. In an incident that has become known as 'The Kitchen Debate', Nixon and Khrushchev squared off in a competitive discussion of the merits of Soviet versus American domestic appliances. Tyler May asserts, 'Nixon insisted that American superiority in the cold war rested not on weapons but on the secure, abundant family life of modern suburban homes,' and quotes Nixon's comment, 'I think that this attitude toward women is

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13 Leila J. Rupp and Verta Taylor, Survival in the Doldrums: The American Women's Rights Movement 1945 to the 1960s. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987) p. 14

14 Joanne Meyerowitz, 'Introduction,' in Joanne Meyerowitz (ed.), Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender

universal. What we want is to make easier the life of our housewife.'<sup>15</sup>

The way in which the leisure of women is used here as a competitive measure between the USSR and the US is obvious. However, a less well known account of the trip is that of Nixon's wife Patricia. The National Business Woman reported on her view of the trip in an article entitled 'Mrs Nixon: Ambassadors on Her Own.' The journal reported that, whilst the men talked of 'the big difficult problems of the world --- the political and economic and diplomatic ideas which divide us', Mrs Nixon talked to Russian women about 'strengthening the simpler and possibly more fundamental ideas which we share'.<sup>16</sup> Mrs Nixon reported to American women, 'They want peace...They have seen war and they want peace. That is what women spoke to me so much about. I said to them, "We women will have to find a way to get the men to bring about peace," and they liked that.'<sup>17</sup>

Without the focus on the 'Kitchen Debate' --- an event which the National Business Woman article

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in Post-war America 1945-1960 (Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1994) p. 4

15 Tyler May, pp. 16-18

For a further exploration of the 'Kitchen Debate' see Karol Ann Manning, As Seen on TV: The Visual Culture of Everyday Life (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1994)

16 'Mrs Nixon: Ambassadors on Her Own,' National Business Woman, Vol 38:9, September 1959. p4

did not mention --- the article conveyed a different story which is equally important in understanding the function of gender in international politics.

Mrs Nixon told The National Business Woman:

She and the wives of three top Russian officials had sat in silence for six hours at Mr Khrushchev's dacha while Mr Nixon and their host debated the issues of the Cold War. 'We women did not say a word the whole time. Neither did anyone else,' she recalled, 'It was just the two men talking.' At the end of the lengthy discussion, Mrs Nixon continued, 'I said jokingly to the women, "They ought to let the women settle this."' Mrs Kozlov (wife of Russia's Deputy Premier) agreed with me. Quite earnestly she said, 'Yes. They should let the women do it.'<sup>18</sup>

Whilst this thesis is in no way intended as a radical new assessment of Pat Nixon's feminist credentials, her conversation with Soviet women illustrates a completely different form of communication than that of the male politicians. Instead of a competition between two opposing nationalities, the Soviet women and Pat Nixon agree

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17 Ibid. p.4

on a shared set of priorities and values stemming not from their national identity but from their gender. The article asserted, 'Besides her gracious friendliness, her widespread invitation to "come and see us", the Vice-President's wife again and again suggested that peace was the universal desire of women in all parts of the world.'<sup>19</sup> The National Business Woman concluded, 'Perhaps the visit to Russia and Poland of the Second Lady of our land will tip the balance a bit further and the seeds of friendship planted with "small talk" between women will bear fruit in the homes of the men who will meet around conference tables.'<sup>20</sup>

It would be easy to dismiss this as 'small talk' and inconsequential idealism, the story of Mrs Nixon's visit to the Soviet Union, for the study of gender in international relations, is an essential counterpoint to the 'Kitchen Debate'. In traditional interpretations of the Kitchen Debate, women are described as inactive objects of consumerism and national prestige. In Mrs Nixon's account, women are described as possessing a different, but arguably more important, view of international relations than men.

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18 Ibid. p.4

19 Ibid. p.5

20 Ibid. p.5

The contribution of American women to the political sphere and specifically to international affairs in the postwar years was constructed primarily through their membership in women's-only voluntary associations, but the relative obscurity of serious academic work on the international activities of voluntary associations and their contribution to foreign relations in the wider sense is not a new phenomenon. In her study of American economic and cultural expansion from 1890 to 1945, historian Emily Rosenberg argues, 'Even though private impulses have often had only peripheral status in traditional diplomatic histories, a study of America's foreign affairs must, to a large degree, focus upon these non-governmental forces.'<sup>21</sup>

The failure to incorporate study of the work of voluntary associations into assessments of American international relations has developed as a consequence of a division between the 'public' or 'state' and the 'private' or voluntary realm, in which the activities of the former are privileged and accorded a greater respect than those of the latter. Political historian Irene J. Dabrowski has explained the low status of volunteer work in gendered terms, arguing:

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<sup>21</sup> Emily S. Rosenberg, Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion 1890-1945, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982) p. 12

Elected national power, the most visible layer of politics, has been the domain of men who have been the presidents, vice-presidents and most of the senators, governors, representatives and those other prestigious office-holders formally chosen by the electorate. Volunteerism --- that is, an exercise in practical politics of participatory democracy that is at the same time devoid of salary and frequently without official recognition --- can be considered the 'women's work' of politics.<sup>22</sup>

Not only has this division been applied to the internal politics of a nation, but its application to the world of international relations has contributed to the definition of the field of study.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, this division and a strict adherence to its boundaries not only reduce the importance accorded to the 'private' and voluntary effort, it also ignores the fact that the division between the private/voluntary and the public/state is arbitrary. As Emily Rosenberg has argued, the relationship between the two spheres has been marked

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22 Irene J. Dabrowski, 'The Unnamed Political Woman' in Frank P. Le Veness and Jane P. Sweeny (eds), Women Leaders in Contemporary U.S. Politics (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1987), p. 137

by an increasing degree of cooperation and collaboration: 'During the course of the twentieth century, the federal government increasingly intervened to rationalize or extend contacts organized by private interests....For each historical period, it is important to view American expansion within the context of both private and governmental activities and to try and understand the changing relationship between the two.'<sup>24</sup>

This oversight of historians of foreign relations in their treatment of voluntary associations is one explanation for the relatively scant material on America women's involvement in international affairs. Traditional scholars of international affairs have focused on the activities of the State, where there are and have been only a limited number of women actors.<sup>25</sup> The role of women's voluntary associations in the postwar world has also received little attention from feminist historians.<sup>26</sup> This is more surprising, given that feminist

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23 See Chapter 1.

24 Rosenberg, p. 12

25 See Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, Changing Differences. Women and the Shaping of American Foreign Policy 1917-1994 (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995)

26 Susan Lynn is a notable exception to this assertion. See for example, Progressive Women in Conservative Times: Radical Justice, Peace and Feminism 1945 to the 1960s (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992) In this study, Lynn focuses upon Women's voluntary associations as a force for progressive politics.

historians have led the way in asserting the importance of voluntary associations as a medium for political activities.

The battle to include the volunteer activities of women under the mantle of 'political action', however, has focused largely in the historiography of the 18th and 19th centuries. Paula Baker's examination of 'The Domestication of Politics' in the US asserted:

From the time of the Revolution, women used and sometimes pioneered methods for influencing government from outside electoral channels...Aiming their efforts at matters connected with the well-being of women, children, the home and the community, women fashioned significant public roles by working from the private sphere.<sup>27</sup>

Baker believes that the cornerstone of women's political role was their identity as mothers, arguing:

Through motherhood, women attempted to compensate for their exclusion from the

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27 Paula Baker, 'The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society 1780-1920,,

formal political world by translating moral authority into political influence. Their political demands, couched in these terms, did not violate the canons of domesticity to which many men and women held.<sup>28</sup>

Baker argues that political parties and electoral politics constituted a form of masculine ritual which deliberately and systematically excluded women. She asserts that the extension of suffrage to women in 1920, together with a new conception dating from the post-Civil War era which increasingly included welfare as a legitimate concern of government, destroyed the separation of the political cultures of men and women. By 1920, Baker argues, American women 'abandoned the home as a basis for a separate political culture and as a set of values and way of life that all women shared'.<sup>29</sup>

Rumours of the death of women's home-based separate political culture, to paraphrase Mark Twain, have been greatly exaggerated. Despite the extension of the franchise to American women, centuries of ideological conditioning about the

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American Historical Review, Vol 89:3, June 1984, p. 621

28 Ibid., p. 625

29 Ibid., p. 644

primacy of American women's domestic and maternal role were not rendered obsolete overnight. Both the obstacles to women's participation in mainstream political life and the benefits that women enjoyed from their involvement in 'separate-sphere' organizations, continued in the post-suffrage environment. As historian Susan Lynn has summarized, 'Middle-class women created and joined voluntary organizations in large numbers in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, in order to express their political concerns in the face of their exclusion from the male world of formal electoral politics.'<sup>30</sup> Moreover, this function of the voluntary association did not disappear with the ratification of the nineteenth amendment giving American women the vote. Lynn asserts, 'Opportunities to run as candidates in their own right, however, or to exert major influence in party councils remained slight. Thus, women's organizations in the post-war coalition continued to rely on older voluntary groups to achieve change through education, publicity and lobbying.'<sup>31</sup>

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30 Susan Lynn, Progressive Women in Conservative Times: Radical Justice, Peace, and Feminism 1945 to the 1960s (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), p. 3

31 Ibid.

The importance of a separate sphere based on domestic values was of increasing significance in the postwar years which popularized (or, arguably, re-popularized) cultural notions as to the primacy of women's domestic roles. As historian of the 1950s Eugenia Kaledin asserts, the resurgence of the popularity of traditional femininity in the post-war years did not mean that women simply conformed to the stereotype. Kaledin argues:

When women are discouraged from competing as equals with men they seem to evolve, perhaps to invent and *re-invent*, a set of values designed to confront, or assuage their powerlessness. We find them during the 1950s working in a number of ways to enhance the quality of life so that more of their voices might be heard.<sup>32</sup> (my italics)

One of the main ways American women were able to make their voices heard was to join and become active in a voluntary association.

The importance of women's voluntary associations was reinforced by a wider ideological shift in American attitudes to any form of voluntary activity. Whilst voluntary associations had always

been seen as a vital part of American democracy, their perceived importance grew in direct correlation to the evidence of threats to democracy from both Fascist and Communist challengers. In the postwar years voluntary associations became seen as a crucial tool in both the defence and promotion of American-style democracy on the world stage.

Evidence from the records of American women's voluntary associations shows their tremendous interest in and involvement with international affairs. The way in which this involvement was constructed was based on the assertion of an international gendered identity for women. American women argued that they had an interest in, and understanding of, women of other nations because of their shared identity and experience as women. Furthermore, the primacy of this identification negated divisions between women on the basis of national loyalties. Finally, American women asserted that their identity as women gave them a special interest in international affairs, contradicting constructions of womanhood that restricted women to domestic roles.

The idea of an 'international sisterhood' is a problematic one. Indeed the idea of sisterhood between any group of women, even within the same

nation, has come under fierce attacks in recent years. Criticisms of the notions of a gendered identity have been articulated on four central points. Firstly, and perhaps most simply, there has been a widespread refusal to accept the idea that a shared identity based on gender could or should exist.<sup>33</sup> Feminist theorist Donna Harraway asserts, 'There is nothing about "being" a female that naturally binds women.'<sup>34</sup> African-American feminist Audre Lorde concurs, 'There is a pretence to a homogeneity of experience covered by the word sisterhood that does not, in fact, exist.'<sup>35</sup> The notion of a shared identity based on biological, functional, psychological or social similarities between women certainly cannot be accepted uncritically.<sup>36</sup>

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33 Much of the dissent and discourse over the category 'woman' has been generated by debate between black and white women within feminism, in particular Black writers such as Audre Lorde and bell hooks. See for example, Audre Lorde, Sister Outsider (Freedom: The Crossing Press, 1984) and bell hooks, aint I a woman? (Boston: South End Press, 1981). Feminist theorist Judith Butler has written pioneering work on the deconstruction of the category 'woman' in Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (New York: Routledge, 1990)

34 Quoted by Christina Crosby, 'Dealing with Differences,' in Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott (eds.), Feminists Theorize the Political, (Routledge, New York, 1992), p.138

35 Lorde, p. 116

36 For a discussion of the idea of biological/genetic similarities between women, see Janet Sayers, Sexual Contradictions. Psychology, Psychoanalysis and Feminism (London: Tavistock, 1986)

Secondly, as a consequence of the vague nature of any claim to shared identity, it has been argued that appeals to women based on their supposed identity can be used to justify almost anything. The 'open-ended' and fluid nature of the construction of a gendered identity arguably make a poor platform from which to mount political action. Furthermore, political action based on identity is always vulnerable to challenges from groups and individuals who share that identity but not the same political convictions or agenda.

Thirdly, feminist theorists have asserted that any pretence that there is such a thing as a shared identity for women simply allows one group of women to dominate another. Much of the debate has centred around the refusal of many white American feminists to acknowledge the differences between their experience and that of black American women. Audre Lorde has argued, 'As white women ignore their built-in privilege of whiteness and define woman in terms of their own experience alone, then women of color become 'other' the outsider whose experience and tradition is too 'alien' to comprehend.'<sup>37</sup> The same criticism can be levelled at relationships between women of different nations. 'Shared gendered identity' could become a mask to ignore conscious

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<sup>37</sup> Lorde, p. 116

and unconscious national allegiances and agendas. The claims of women to an international identity have often been extremely temporary in nature and have lacked strength in the face of competing claims. In her study of identity in the cases of the British Vera Brittain and the German Edith Stein, historian Joyce Avrech Berkman concluded, 'They elevated their national identity above their gender and European identity without a second thought.'<sup>38</sup>

Finally, acceptance and/or use of the category of women and calls to political action based on that identity run the risk of simply mirroring and reinforcing the idea that there are essential differences between women and men which justify and necessitate separate treatment. In this way, the use of a gendered identity, even if for laudable feminist aims, may ultimately merely serve to confirm the same binary divisions between men and women which have been used to justify women's inferior status.

In examining the way in which American women's organizations asserted a gendered identity to claim and pursue an international role in the postwar world, all the problems with the use of this identity become apparent. For example, the vague

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38 Joyce Avrech Berkman, '"I am Myself It": Comparative national identity formation in the lives

nature of the gendered identity articulated by American women meant that its support could be lent to a multiplicity of causes, some of which were in direct conflict with America's national aims. American women's organizations, whilst themselves contributing to the construction of a gendered identity, were also in a constant battle to limit and censor the way in which this identity could be used.

This exercise in 'damage-control' was motivated in part as a spontaneous expression of American women's organizations. However, it was also promoted and encouraged by the United States government. The women's organizations which the American government cooperated with most frequently were almost exclusively middle class, despite their religious, racial or vocational differences. Six American women's organizations in particular were frequent participants in government/private initiatives. They were: The League of Women Voters, The American Association of University Women, The Young Women's Christian Association, The National Federation of Business and Professional Women, The National Council of Jewish Women and The National Council of Negro Women.

It was these 'established' and 'mainstream' American women's organizations which the US government privileged and acknowledged as the leaders and representatives of American women. Other organizations were excluded from this relationship. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), for example, was too independent, and arguably, too 'international' in outlook to enter into co-operation with the American government. The Women's Party, an explicitly feminist organization, was excluded from government cooperation because of their pursuit of 'feminist' objectives such as the Equal Rights Amendment.

The cooperation of some other associations with the government was limited. The General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC), for example, worked with certain programmes. However, their view of the function of women's organizations was too introspective to meet the government's purposes. In 1947 their handbook asserted their purpose of women's clubs was 'education', explaining:

The primary function of a Club or Federation of Clubs is education --- to educate the homemaker who would like to keep up with the trends of the day, but who would like to learn something about international relations, legislation, fine

arts etc., but who cannot leave the home to enter a educational institution.<sup>39</sup>

Confirming the GFWC's status as a social centre for housewives, the handbook further asserted, 'Many men state than a woman is easier to live with in the home, when they have outside contacts.'<sup>40</sup>

The US government used American women's organizations to produce, police and promote the export of the character, desires, role and opinions of American women across the globe. As a consequence, the boundaries between the 'private' and the 'public' in American life became hopelessly compromised, with a detrimental effect on both the credibility of American organizations overseas and on the role of private associations in representing non-state interests.

Finally, whilst this thesis aims to explore the problems and limitations of gendered identity as a basis for American women's international involvement, it does so with the recognition that, however facile and superficial declarations of a shared identity with women of other nations may have been, they played an important part in both motivating American women into activity outside the

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39 Sarah A. Whitehurst, The Twentieth Century Clubwoman. A Handbook for Organization Leaders (Washington: General Federation of Women's Clubs, 1947), p. 5

home and in making that activity acceptable to men. Amy Swerdlow has argued in her study of the activities of Women Strike for Peace, 'In 1961 maternalism was the only possible political vehicle for a broad-based women's peace movement, given the regressive political climate of the previous decade.'<sup>41</sup> Investigation of the construction of a gendered identity for and by women and its uses should not overlook the extent to which gendered identity can serve as an important tool for women's political activity.

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40 Ibid., p.5.

41 Amy Swerdlow, 'Female Culture, Pacifism and Feminism: Women Strike for Peace,' in Arina Angerman et al (eds), Current Issues in Women's History (London, Routledge, 1989), p. 110

## CHAPTER ONE

### WOMEN AND INTERNATIONALISM

International relations have not been considered an equal-opportunities interest. A special passport, issued to Americans travelling on government business in 1935, included a printed section blithely announcing, 'The bearer is accompanied by his wife.'<sup>1</sup>

The stereotypes and assumptions which surround attitudes to gender have influenced attitudes to and perceptions of men and women as actors in the field of international relations. These images have not been exclusively produced by men. The report of a 'World Co-operation Tour' by 40 members of the American General Federation of Women's Clubs explained its purpose as helping to build 'the Ramparts of Freedom.' The tour members were briefed on matters of foreign policy by the State Department before their trip. In listing the concrete things they thought they had achieved, however, the report asserted:

Dollars spent by Americans abroad are a help to the Marshall Plan. American

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<sup>1</sup> For an example of this passport see Frieda Miller Papers, Box 8.

travellers give substantial help by the dollars they spend in Europe and they provide a stimulus to European trade and recovery. This was true in a high degree of our party of forty generous clubwomen. Hats, coats, capes, shoes, and many other garments were eagerly purchased. Jewellery of all kinds, including cameos, 200 watches, two eterna-matic clocks and four singing birds were among the items taken back to America.<sup>2</sup>

Innovative as this statement may be as a justification for shopping, it could be said to be something of a come-down from the lofty aims of the clubwomen to promote peace. Similarly the tour of the National Association of Beauty School Owners and Teachers of Canada, Europe, the West Indies, the Caribbean and Mexico was defined as useful in that the group had 'received a liberal education not only in international relations but in keeping abreast of the newest techniques in the profession of beauty culture'.<sup>3</sup>

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2 General Federation of Women's Clubs World Co-operation Tour, 'To Help Build the Ramparts of Freedom', 28 August - 3 October 1950, Records of General Federation of Women's Clubs 1950-59, Schlesinger Library.

3 National Council of Negro Women Report 1953-57, p. 51, National Council of Negro Women Papers, Series 13, Box 5, File 2.

These examples illustrate the frivolous side to a serious problem that American women faced in defining an international role for themselves. The international sphere is one which has traditionally favoured individuals who could lay claim to an identity as political actors. International relations theorist Morton A. Kaplan has explained, 'National actors historically have been the distinctive actors in the international system.'<sup>4</sup> Women's traditional exclusion from the international realm has been a consequence of the fact that, in general, they have not been constructed as political actors in the traditional sense. Because of this, their motivation for action on the international arena has been explained in a different way to that of men. Their international activity may even, as these quotes illustrated, be defined in terms of their domestic interests as consumers. This problem is not exclusive to American women. In her study of British women's involvement in interwar international relations, historian Carol Miller argues, 'The contribution of women was severely circumscribed because claims made for the greater participation of women at the level of international politics could not break free from the association

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<sup>4</sup> Morton A. Kaplan, Systems and Process in International Politics (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1957) p. 54

of the category 'women' with specific political space or policy area rooted in traditional ideas about women's nature and women's spheres of activity.'<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the exclusion of women from international relations was sometimes a self-inflicted one. Anna Lord Strauss, President of the League of Women Voters and later an expert on international affairs and women's role in them, acknowledged that before the Second World War, 'I didn't want to be active in foreign affairs. I wanted to learn more about the city and be active closer to home.'<sup>6</sup>

The need for women to define an international role for themselves on the grounds of their gender stems from the construction of international relations in such a way as to explicitly exclude women. This exclusion is related to the construction of all politics as a masculine sphere of influence. Foreign policy and international relations, since they borrow from and are situated within this construction, repeat this gendered division. Nancy McGlen and Meredith Reid Sarkees, in their work on women in foreign policy, explain, 'Politics

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5 Carol Miller, 'Women in International Relations? The Debate in Inter-War Britain', in Rebecca Grant and Kathleen Newland, (eds.), Gender and International Relations, (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991), p. 65.

6 The Reminiscences of Anna Lord Strauss, Oral History Research Office, Columbia University, p. 98

especially has been seen as an area of utmost importance and thus has been prized and dominated by men. Even more than politics in general, foreign policy in particular has been the preserve of men.'<sup>7</sup>

This exclusion is a consequence of classic liberal political theory which specifically denies women roles as actors in the 'public' realm and limits their activities to the 'private'. Feminist political theorist Carole Pateman explains the creation of political nations as a process which explicitly excludes women and qualities deemed to be feminine. Pateman asserts:

The terms 'men' and 'individuals' in their [classic political] texts are now read as generic or universal, as inclusive as everyone. But this is a misreading. The classic contract theorists...argued that the natural freedom and equality were the birthright of *one* sex. Only *men* are born free and equal. The contract theorists constructed sexual difference as *political*

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<sup>7</sup> Nancy E. McGlen and Meredith Reid Sarkees, Women in Foreign Policy - The Insiders (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 34

difference, the difference between men's freedom and women's natural subjection.<sup>8</sup>

Pateman's point is a crucial one. The definition of men as political 'public' actors requires the parallel construction of women as non-political and 'private'. Given this construction, it is impossible to attempt simply to ignore the implicit gender directive in the term 'man' as an argument for a generic universal reading. Such a reading glosses over the importance of gender in the construction of national identity. As Pateman argues:

When the 'public' is analyzed in isolation, theorists are able to assume that nothing or no-one of significance is excluded or, to make this point differently, theorists work on the assumption that the public world, and the categories through which it is presented in theoretical argument, are sexually neutral or universal, including everyone alike.<sup>9</sup>

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8 Carole Pateman, The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism and Political Theory (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), p. 5

9 Ibid., p. 3

Pateman's argument that, in the discourse of political nations, men are constructed as the 'public' actors with distance and authority over the 'private' realm of women is not limited to the theoretical argument of classic liberal writers such as Rousseau and Locke. The gendered division between the private and the public remains a twentieth century construction. In his 1957 study, System and Process in International Politics, political theorist Morton Kaplan demonstrated the importance of the multiplicity of roles an 'individual' may have within state by using the example, 'A man may have a role as a head of a family and as a book-keeper in a business.'<sup>10</sup> What is so revealing here is not only that the 'individual' within the state is predictably male, but that he is a male who is the 'head of a family', that is to say, in charge of the private realm. Women are present within the state only as subordinates to the male individual.

The construction of the political nation into the public/private and masculine/feminine has been mirrored and, arguably, magnified in the area of international relations. Feminist international theorist Rebecca Grant has argued that the uncritical adoption of this construction by scholars

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10 Kaplan, p. 18

of international relations has resulted in the mirroring of the faults inherent within them:

International Relations adopted several classic concepts of political theory without investigating the gender bias in them, therefore International Relations duplicates the pattern of them.<sup>11</sup>

The division of public and private sphere is reinforced in international relations as the public sphere represents the legitimate voice of the nation in international affairs, whilst the private realm comes to represent that arena into which international systems or other international actors cannot legitimately intrude. The feminine thus comes to represent that which is fundamentally domestic and not international. An example of the way in which this division is gendered can be found in the work of former State Department official Louis Halle. In his description of the inevitability of the failure of international world government, innocently entitled The Society of Man, Halle argued that cultural and social differences between nations should be respected since they could not be resolved. Illustrating his point Halle argued,

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11 Rebecca Grant, 'The Sources of Gender Bias in International Relations Theory', in Grant and Newland (eds.), p. 9

'Having made our own conceptual model, however, we men cannot agree on what it should be. In some parts of the world girls are considered adult and ready for marriage at thirteen; and in others they have to be nineteen.'<sup>12</sup> Halle's example of the differences between states in the conduct of their internal affairs is described in gendered terms, as the male control of women's (or, to use his term, 'girls') behaviour.

Pateman further argues that it is not just women who are excluded from the public sphere but also qualities and values which are thought to be 'feminine'. She asserts, 'Women, womanhood and women's bodies represent the private' and therefore are excluded from the public realm at the risk of disruption and, in Pateman's words, 'disorder'. This division is again mirrored in international relations. The effect of the structural exclusion of the female and the feminine from the realm of international relations means that international relations themselves come to be seen as masculine. In a 1969 essay Lionel Tiger argued:

To forgo the exclusive or predominant use  
of men in international relations would  
involve considerable trust in the

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12 Louis J. Halle, The Society of Man (London: Chatto and Windus, 1965) p. 133

international and internal controls of other nations. Neither recent nor ancient political history stimulates the conclusion that this form of disengagement from effortful and hard international competition is imminent or even possible in the foreseeable future. This may mean that female political activity would concentrate on domestic and local concerns.<sup>13</sup>

The gendered construction of the public and international realms does not mean a simple and total exclusion of women from those areas. As Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones has shown, women have participated in international affairs.<sup>14</sup> However, this participation has often been accompanied by assertions that the women in question have lost their feminine qualifications and become 'men'. Furthermore, important as this correction is to the picture of women in international relations, feminist theorists have argued that it does not challenge the way in

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13 Lionel Tiger, 'Why Men need a Boys' Night out', in Roszak, Betty and Roszak, Theodore (eds.), Masculine/Feminine Readings in Sexual Mythology and the Liberation of Women (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. 43

14 Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, Changing Differences: Women and the Shaping of American Foreign Policy 1917-1994 (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995)

which the wider contribution of women to international relations has been excluded from the field. As Sandra Whitworth has argued in her work on feminism and international relations, 'simply adding women is not enough because it ignores the extent to which both the study and practice of International relations has systematically discriminated against women by making their activities invisible'.<sup>15</sup>

The structural exclusion of women from the realm of the 'public' in the internal life of the nation, echoed in their exclusion from the 'public' world of international affairs, is both a product of assumptions about gender and, simultaneously, a reinforcement of those assumptions. The central reason for the widespread failure to notice the absence of women in international affairs is that no one was looking for them there in the first place. Cynthia Enloe explains:

State-focused theory, like capitalism theory, generally takes the masculinization of public life for granted. The masculine character of the state elite (even when the nominal ruler might be a woman) is

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15 Sandra Whitworth, 'Feminism and International Relations: Gender in the International Planned Parenthood Federation and the International Labor Organization,' Ph.D., Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario, 1991, p. 28

seen as unproblematic....Women are thus virtually invisible, except as voiceless victims. Women can symbolize the consequences of state power unleashed but presumably do not play any special role in sustaining that power.<sup>16</sup>

In their study of the relationship between women and both the State and the Nation, Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias maintain that it is vital that feminist theorists not accept women's roles [and subsequent exclusion] at face value, but rather that they look for the ways in which women were and are active in defining their own roles: 'We find it vitally important to emphasise that the roles that women play are not merely imposed upon them. Women actively participate in the process... reproducing and modifying their roles.'<sup>17</sup>

The exclusion of all but a few American women from the public realm of international relations does not mean they were inactive or uninterested in international relations. Rather, their activities were, of necessity, channelled through a medium other than the traditional political role. The

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16 Cynthia Enloe, The Morning After - Sexual Politics at the End of the Cold War (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) p. 46

17 Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias, (eds), Woman, Nation, State (London: MacMillan, 1989), p. 11

cultural, social and political processes in post-war America by which women were restricted to the 'private' realm and (with a few notable exceptions) discouraged from involvement in international relations did not render them inactive, but it did mean that their activities, and the identity upon which those activities were predicated, were different to men.

The necessity for American women's construction of a separate identity to justify their international activities was not unprecedented. On the contrary, the practice of gendered political identity had a long history in America. As feminist historian Linda Kerber has detailed, American women have always found it necessary to provide interpretations of their gendered role as citizens in order to participate in a system which attempted to excluded them on the basis of sex.<sup>18</sup> This process may be seen, in Carole Pateman's words, as that of 'justifying political obligation'. Pateman argues,

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18 See Linda K. Kerber, 'May all our Citizens be Soldiers and all our Soldiers Citizens: The Ambiguities of Female Citizenship in the New Nations,' in Jean Bethke Elshtain and Sheila Rowman, (eds.), Women, Militarism and War: Essays in History, Politics and Social Theory (Savage, Md: Rowman and Littlefield, 1990). See also Linda K. Kerber, 'A Constitutional right to be treated like American Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship,' in Linda Kerber, Alice Kessler-Harris, and Kathryn Kish Sklar, (eds.), U.S. History as Women's History - New Feminist Essays (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995)

'There is a large literature on political obligation in the democratic state, but the question of women's obligation in a political order structured by patriarchal power is conspicuous by its absence.'<sup>19</sup> American women who wished to be active in the international realm also had to justify a political obligation which challenged their exclusion from the international sphere. To participate in international relations, American women had to define a political identity which had authority in international issues.

The construction of an international identity for American women in the years following the second world war arose from three main strategies. Firstly, American women simply challenged their exclusion from the realm of international relations on the basis that they were in fact, if often not in practice, full citizens of the United States of America. Moreover, as women who had some experience of citizenship, they had an important international role to play in guiding and educating women of other nations who were either completely new to the responsibility of citizenship or who had demonstrated themselves to be in need of education as responsible citizens. Secondly, American women drew upon essentialist notions of women's nature and

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19 Pateman, p. 10

role to explain their responsibility for international affairs. The two central elements of this construction of women's international identity were women's role as mothers and, partly as a consequence of this, women's interest in peace. Whilst this was not a new strategy, it drew renewed life from the events of World War II and from the growing fear of atomic and nuclear warfare. Finally, American women inverted the lingering stereotype that they were something less than full citizens, and lacked the requisite interest in and loyalty to their nation, to claim that they were in fact ideally suited to international affairs since they, unlike American men, were less likely to be influenced by issues of national pride. The lack of national identity was, in this construction, an acceptable loss since it brought with it a sisterhood and commonality with women of other nations. American women thus stressed their gendered identity in an international sphere at the cost of their national identity as Americans.

American women's demands for an increased role on the international stage following the second world war often consisted of a demand that their rights and responsibilities as citizens be taken seriously. Since American women had by 1945 been able to exercise the vote for 25 years, their calls

for increased representation in international affairs can be seen as an effort to develop and extend their role as fully-fledged American citizens on the same basis as men.

The context of the war was used by American women as a justification for a more active role for women. Not only had war shown women the necessity for their involvement in shaping the post-war world, their participation in the struggle had earned them that right and responsibility. The YWCA expressed this belief in the 'earning' of citizenship through contribution to warfare:

Women have served gallantly in every endeavour they undertook during the war --- on the home front and in the uniforms of all the armed forces. They drove trucks and they operated machines. They moved into key posts in the world of business and industry. The war proved women have earned the right to achievements, in business, industry, the professions, the arts the sciences and the government.<sup>20</sup>

The idea that women should be rewarded for their contribution to warfare through the extension

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20 YWCA Reconstruction pamphlet, YWCA Papers, Box 32, File 11

of their role as political actors was not new. Arguably it had been the reason for the granting of suffrage in America in 1920 following women's contribution to the war effort in World War I.<sup>21</sup> Many women's organizations demanded that, as a 'reward' for their participation in World War II, they be granted increased rights and responsibilities on the international scene. This recognition was not limited to women's organizations. For example, President Truman, in a statement issued in 1945 to mark the 25th anniversary of the ratification by the states of the 19th Amendment, acknowledged, 'In the total war through which we have just passed the home front has been no mere phrase, but truly a battlefield where women bore a major part of the struggle.'<sup>22</sup> Nor was this recognition limited to the United States. In their recommendation that a Commission of Women be

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21 Carrie Chapman Catt, previously active in the cause of pacifism, threw the weight of the National American Women's Suffrage Association (NAWSA) behind the war effort, arguing, 'Wartime service would win more support for the woman's suffrage than pacifism.' When President Woodrow Wilson signed the 19th Amendment giving American women the vote, he specifically mentioned the war-time service of American women and the efforts of the NAWSA, claiming the amendment was 'vitally essential to the successful prosecution of the great war.' Neil A. Wynn, From Progressivism to Prosperity. World War One and American Society (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1986), p.132

22 Statement by the President, 25 August 1945, Truman Papers, Harry S Truman Library, White House Official Files, File 120

established within the United Nations, the Brazilian UN delegation argued, 'The part that women have played in the war makes the consideration of their status and rights an urgent problem requiring solution.'<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, the practical experience of American women in World War II entailed a greater exposure to both the methods and experience of life in the public sphere, an experience which had consequences for post-war attitudes. Cynthia Enloe explains, 'Despite all such state and private attempts to restore the status quo, expectations of women and men are irrevocably changed by their war-time experiences and women do not suddenly lose their hard-won skills or their new sense of public place.'<sup>24</sup>

The important ideological connection between contribution to a national war effort and increased rights and responsibilities as citizens was not limited in application to World War II. The Cold War as a 'total' struggle was framed as a conflict from which the United States could not afford to exclude the contribution of women. Many American women's organizations saw in the apocalyptic 'struggle

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23 'Excerpts from the Journal of United Nations Conference on International Organization', 7 June 1945, Minutes of Committee II/3, p. 134, Papers of the League of Women Voters, Box 701, File 'UN'

24 Enloe, The Morning After, p. 62

between good and evil', envisaged by the President in the Truman Doctrine, a further rationale for their involvement in international affairs. The involvement of women in conflict, as Rosemary Ridd has pointed out, often serves as a symbolic marker of a nation's commitment to that conflict, as 'a society may use the power of women...to represent to the outside world its determination on an all-out struggle in which "even" women and children play their part'.<sup>25</sup> American women's organizations were not slow to recognize the opportunity to push their claims to greater responsibilities as citizens in the context of the Cold War. The AAUW sent a petition to President Truman in September 1950 calling for the full participation of women in policymaking on the basis that 'we cannot see ahead to the end of this struggle, but we do know that it will be a test of strength in which this nation cannot afford to waste the abilities and energies of any group of citizens.'<sup>26</sup> In the same way that World

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25 Rosemary Ridd, 'Powers of the Powerless', in Rosemary Ridd and Helen Callaway, (eds.), Caught Up in Conflict - Women's Responses to Political Strife (London: Macmillan Education, 1986), p.4

26 'Mobilizing all our Citizens,' Journal of the AAUW, Vol 44:1, Fall 1950. The launching of the Sputnik satellite by the Soviet Union in 1957 was used by the NFBPWC as further evidence of the need by the United States to exploit all its potential human resources in the new 'space race': 'It is not a very comforting feeling...to recognize that others have gone out in front in the invasion of Space... Every field must be opened to women because they are

War II had demanded the energies and talents of American women, the Cold War was framed as a battle in which women could not afford to shirk from playing their part. Judge Lucy Somerville Howarth, Chairman of the AAUW's National Committee on Status of Women, called for the greater involvement of women in policymaking through the explicit connection between the involvement of women in World War II and the need to exploit their talents in the Cold War:

Preparation for such a struggle demands that all, not part, of the Nation's resources be mobilized. Women have demonstrated in previous wars, both overseas and within the continental limits, that they can perform essential military tasks in a military manner. Their record in World War II is outstanding.... From now on any war will mean total war and plans should be underway now for the utilization of women and men in case of war.<sup>27</sup>

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greater in number than men.' [Hazel Palmer, 'Achieve through Action Today', National Business Woman, Vol 37:2, February 1958.]

27 Press Release, 5/11/48, AAUW Archive, Series III, ref. 00508

American women thought themselves so far advanced as political actors, well versed in the skills of responsible citizenship, that their international responsibility was in large part directed towards women of other nations who lacked their experience and expertise. The political upheavals after the war resulted in women in many nations suddenly finding themselves enfranchised. In countries such as Germany and Italy, women had been enfranchised before the war, but American women argued that they had lost the habit of democracy through the repression of their political rights. The war, it was argued, had in part been caused by a failure of active citizenship by women as well as men. Kathryn Stone of the League of Women Voters argued that the war had demonstrated the need to attach greater importance to training in citizenship to prevent further dictatorships from threatening world peace: 'A new awareness of the importance of the individual citizen has come to this entire country from the sharp lessons of contrast between free and fascist countries.'<sup>28</sup> The importance of educating women as citizens was amplified by the practical fact that the war had killed far more men than women, leaving women in a majority in many

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28 Kathryn H. Stone, '25 years of a Great Idea' (1946), League of Women Voters Papers, Box 1725, p. 33.

countries. In the U.S. zone of occupation in Germany there were an estimated 124 females to every 100 males.<sup>29</sup> The National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs (NFBPWC) noted, 'Due partly to the fearful wars, women now outnumber men in many countries. They must consequentially take their responsibility for building a more peaceful world.'<sup>30</sup>

In countries where women had gained the franchise following World War II, American women displayed the superiority of those who had fought for a right rather than those who had just been given it. American women conveyed the sense that they had experience as voters and therefore as citizens. This experience could be communicated to newly enfranchised women of the world, who otherwise wouldn't know what to do with their new status. The League of Women Voters launched the Carrie Chapman Catt Memorial Fund (CCCMF) in 1947 with the aim of 'acquainting the women of other countries, especially those newly enfranchised with democratic methods of stimulating more effective citizen participation in government'.<sup>31</sup> This sense of

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29 'What about Women in post war Germany?', speech by Freida Miller, Frieda Miller Papers, Box 13, File 271

30 Independent Woman, Vol 27:2, February 1948, p. 64

31 CCCMF Statement of Activities, 1948, Lucile Koshland Papers, Box 1, File 9

superiority was one of the experienced versus the inexperienced, and was often combined with the usual patronage of the Western world towards the Third World. Anna Lord Strauss, President of the League of Women Voters, told the World Affairs Council in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania:

Women are emerging, in many places from a tribal pattern, into the twentieth century where the U.N. is setting standards for equality of opportunity. It isn't an easy or necessarily a quick road to cover. But we have travelled it and have learned a lot that we should share. How to analyse our needs. The role of women's organisations.<sup>32</sup>

American women's organizations believed they should take the lead in educating, or re-educating, women of other nations in democratic ways. The YWCA in 1946 launched a 'reconstruction' programme which aimed to extend a helping hand from American women to women of other nations. A pamphlet extolling the virtues of the programme warned:

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32 Speech by Anna Lord Strauss to The World Affairs Council, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1st May, 1959. Anna Lord Strauss Papers, Box 3, File 47.

In many countries, however, women are unprepared for the new tasks now thrust upon them. The ways of democracy mystify young women reared under the blight of totalitarianism. Women in foreign countries will shape their own destinies. In this time of world flux, they need help and advice. It is natural for them to turn to the women of the United States, the most privileged and the most advanced in the world.<sup>33</sup>

The 'teaching' role of American women was illustrated by a picture of a group of young girls looking up respectfully at an American teacher. The caption informs its American audience, 'Girls learn good citizenship in the Prague YWCA. We must help them understand democracy.' Another photograph of a woman holding a baby whilst casting her vote is captioned, 'This young mother is casting her first ballot...a new privilege for Italian women. She needs YWCA guidance in democracy.'<sup>34</sup> The belief of American women's organizations in their natural role as a leader was an explicitly national one. The Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor had by

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33 Pamphlet on the Reconstruction Fund, Papers of the YWCA of Boston, Box 32, File 11

34 Ibid.

1945 become positively militant regarding the international role of American women, asserting, 'The United States is looked to by the whole world for leadership in all matters affecting the social and economic status of women.'<sup>35</sup>

The National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) shared the belief in the need for American women to inspire and lead women of the world, but to a certain extent restricted their sphere of influence to women in African nations. Vivian Carter Mason, President of the NCNW, established contact with Mrs Okala, a New York nurse married to a Nigerian, to solicit the names of African women to attend a ten-day conference of the International Assembly of Women in 1946 in Korkright, New York. Mason told Mrs Okala, 'The NCNW is most anxious that Negro women be represented in full. We regretted so much, for instance, that at the recent congress of Women held in Paris, there were only three Negro Women and they were from the United States.'<sup>36</sup> Mason told her new friend, 'Too long we have been separated from our people in Africa, and now that women all over the world are expressing their deep longings for

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35 'Statement for Internal Use of Women's Bureau', 22 August 1945, Women's Bureau Papers, Division of the Special Services and Publications General Records, 1918-1962, Box 2

36 Mason to Okala, 20 February 1946, National Council of Negro Women Papers, Series 13, Box 18, File 18

freedom and progress American women must exert every effort to help and inspire other women, especially women of the African continents.'<sup>37</sup>

The need for American women to 'lead' the rest of the world was not a gender-specific one but was part of a wider confidence amongst Americans that the post-war era would be the dawning of 'The American Century' in which the United States had an obligation to take the lead in world affairs. Lena Phillips, former president of the NFBPW and president of the International Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs (IFBPW), described the expectations the rest of the world allegedly had of the United States in a speech in 1944:

The United States is an integral part of a world order. The peoples overseas understand this better than we do. They need our financial help of course. But almost more than that they need and crave the spiritual leadership which they expect to arise from American idealism.<sup>38</sup>

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37 Mason to Okala, 21 March 1946, National Council of Negro Women Papers, Series 13, Box 18, File 18  
38 Phillips speech, Winter 1944, Lena M. Phillips Papers, Box 6

The construction of 'political obligation' in the international sphere, whilst it drew upon claims of equal rights and responsibilities to men, also drew from positive assertions of difference. The construction of women as 'private' citizens was not ignored, but specific strategies were used to overcome women's assumed preference for domestic containment. Again, efforts to overcome women's (domestic) isolationism can be seen to parallel wider national efforts to overcome American preferences for isolationism in general. American women recognized that the events of World War II had illustrated not only the futility of American attempts to isolate itself from the rest of the world, but also the futility of any idea that American women could isolate themselves within the boundary of the home. Helen C. White of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) explained:

Sometimes I think that the chief difference between our Victorian grandmothers and ourselves is that they thought that a good woman could create her own oasis of quiet goodness in a bad world by staying within her own home and garden and making them as nearly perfect as anything could be in this imperfect world.

But we know that the weeds outside the garden will blow over the wall and the germs of the unswept streets will be tracked on the cleanest floor.<sup>39</sup>

The first step in this process was to lure women out of their homes and into public affairs. Mrs Chase Going Woodhouse, a visiting member of the US Congress in Germany, described her strategy of involving more German women in public affairs after World War II as one of connecting the timeless concerns of women as mothers with the specific problems facing German women under reconstruction:

The good mother tradition can be used in an appeal for more participation in public affairs. The good mother today must be a good citizen for only she can help assure the right community environment for her children. Many of the acute problems, touch the family --- juvenile delinquency, returning POWs, refugees, housing, school reform, for example. Women can see when it is pointed out to them how their families

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39 Helen C. White, 'Liberal Education, 1944,' Journal of the AAUW, Vol 38:1, Fall 1944

are affected by the solution, or lack of a solution to community problems.<sup>40</sup>

Once women were motivated to leave the private realm for action in public affairs, the maternal justification for action could be extended beyond the community and the nation to the international realm. Harriet Hyman Alonso, in her explanation of women's strategies in the peace movement, has highlighted the extent to which appeals made by women on the basis of their status of motherhood can be understood as a tactical move. She argues, 'The "motherhood" concern has also given feminist peace activists a special position in a society in which they have never had any real political power, especially in the area of international affairs.'<sup>41</sup>

The post-war conditions demanded that women exercise their maternal role and extend the boundaries of their domestic influence beyond the boundaries of the home. Lena Phillips explained:

For centuries women have been considered the repositories of certain values ---

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40 News Release, September 5th, 1948, Ruth Woodsmall Papers, Box 51, File 5

41 Harriet Hyman Alonso, Peace as a Woman's Issue: A History of the U.S. Movement for World Peace and Women's Rights (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1993), p. 11.

tolerance, kindness, justice, morality. In the past, to be sure, she was expected to practice these virtues mainly in her own home; now that community has become for us, the world, or expanded home, it is there we should practice these virtues. If then we set our home in order by bending our efforts to the practice of democracy in our community, we can extend hands to the women of other lands, not merely in friendship but in unity of effort towards one world at peace.<sup>42</sup>

Thus, while expressing agreement with definitions of women's role and place which limited her interest and activities to the home, American women's organizations again developed an extension of the boundaries of the home into the international realm. As a method for justifying women's intervention in areas which were traditionally considered beyond their influence, the strategy of extending maternal and domestic influence beyond the home was not new. The process by which women's groups of the late 19th century effectively widened women's sphere beyond the home through a radical definition of the boundaries of family life has been

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42 K. Frances Scott, 'Women in Today's World', Independent Woman, Vol 28:9, September 1949, p. 262

well documented. In her study of the work of the National Council of Jewish Women, historian Paula Hyman concluded, 'Like the general women's organizations of the time, the National Council of Jewish Women, Hadassah and the networks of synagogue sisterhoods relied on the concept of social housekeeping to legitimize --- and mask --- what was in fact a radical redefinition of appropriate behavior for women.'<sup>43</sup>

Some women's organizations were unapologetic and assertive about their enlarged realm of activity. In the definition of their activities, the National Council of Jewish Women asserted, 'In the lives of most of these women [their members], home comes first. But "home" is not unrelated to the rest of the world and in itself is not enough. They want, and in the Council they find, a "wider margin to their lives".'<sup>44</sup> It is interesting, however, how often the extension of this realm and consequently women's sphere is written in reluctant terms, as women are 'forced' to extend their sphere of activities whilst still acknowledging the home as their primary calling.

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43 Paula Hyman, 'The Volunteer Organizations: Vanguard or Rear Guard?', Lilith, The Jewish Women's Magazine, Number 5, 1978, p. 16

44 National Council of Jewish Women, 'Design for Serving,' undated, English Judaica Pamphlets, Reel 42

The extension of the home was vital to American women's definition of a role for themselves in International affairs. The Guide to Women's Organizations, published by the Public Affairs Press in 1950, listed a vast array of women's groups from the mainstream League of Women Voters to the 'Women's International Bowling Congress', whose 300,000 members were devoted to the promotion of 'bowling as a sport for women'.<sup>45</sup> The increasing volume and variety of women's organizations was explained by the author with reference to women's obligation in the face of the international situation:

This does not mean that women are forsaking their role of homemakers --- far from it. It does, however, mean that they have come to recognize that in this troubled day and age the true preservation of the home requires every woman to be informed about the problems of our time and to participate in activities which are concerned with these problems.<sup>46</sup>

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45 Ellen Anderson, Guide to Women's Organizations. A Handbook about National and International Groups (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1950), p. 130

46 Ibid., p. v.

A large part of the extension of women's roles beyond domestic boundaries was based upon the vulnerability of those boundaries in the face of an atomic threat. It has been powerfully argued by Elaine Tyler May that the response of American women to the threat of atomic warfare was to retreat with renewed enthusiasm into the false haven of the home and hearth.<sup>47</sup> Whilst this was undoubtedly the reaction of many American women, the threat of the atomic bomb and later the hydrogen bomb did not cause total national paralysis. One method of dealing with the threat to the home from nuclear weaponry was the attempt to reinforce women's roles as the defenders of the hearth, without any acknowledgement of how hopeless this task had become. This approach is typified in the campaign which called upon women to become active in civil defence in order to protect their homes.

However, it would be a mistake to interpret this campaign and women's participation in it as an enthusiastic endorsement of domestic containment. Laura McEneney has shown the extent to which American women's groups adopted civil defence 'hoping to show that women's patriotic commitment had not abated after World War II and that the

international situation was still urgent enough to warrant women's participation in issues related to foreign affairs'.<sup>48</sup> In presenting themselves as the defenders of the Hearth, American women's organizations could claim an increased role as full citizens. Katherine Howard, the Deputy Administrator of the Federal Civil Defence Administration, told the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, 'It is in the hands on the American housewife and mother that the defence of our home front must lie in a very large part.'<sup>49</sup> Alice Leopold, head of the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor, reinforced the image of women as defenders of the hearth in her speech to the Women's Advisory Committee of the Federal Civil Defence Administration (FCDA). Leopold asserted:

Civil Defense begins at home, and since time began women have protected home and hearth while men in the family go out and fell the enemy --- be it wild animals on the frontier or the battlefronts of modern

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47 Elaine Tyler May, Homeward Bound ((New York: Basic Books, 1988) p 3.

48 Laura McEnaney, Civil Defense begins at Home: Domestic and Political Culture in the Making of the Cold War, Ph.D., University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1996, p. 46

49 Howard speech to the National Encampment of Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, August 5th 1953. Katherine Graham Howard Papers, Box 1, File 3

welfare. We women might not shoulder muskets nor protect our homes from Indians, but we have a job to do in educating the people about Civil Defence.<sup>50</sup>

The inability of the individual or the community to 'protect' the homefront from nuclear attack could not easily be dismissed or ignored and proved to be an important motivation for women to assert an active political role. Many American women realized that the vision of the retreat to the home was one of false security. As early as 1946 anthropologist Margaret Mead recognized the possibility that paralysing fear and hopelessness would be the response of many to the threat of atomic warfare. In an article in Woman's Day, she acknowledged:

The very size of the undertaking, the great sums of money which had to be spent, the cities that had to be built to house the workers on the bomb and the size of the cities in Japan which were devastated --- all makes us feel that this is

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50 Leopold speech to Women's Advisory Committee to Federal Civil Defense Administration, 'Civil Defense Begins at Home,' 23 September 1958, Records of the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor, (University Publications of America, Part 1, Edited by Dale Grinder) Reel 19.

something outside our power to act, something like an earthquake which will either come or not and there is nothing any individual can do about it....Women especially, even the women who are always on hand for the PTA meeting, or to canvass voters in the local election, even the women who worked so hard during the war, feel this problem is just too big.<sup>51</sup>

However, Mead urged her readers not to allow the question of atomic power to scare them into inactivity:

It is not true that there is nothing women can do about it. We don't have to sit quietly by while our lives and those of our children hang by a single thread --- wondering when someone, some dictator, some nation, may let loose these forces which could wipe out the world.....They can keep their families thinking - not just about the bomb alone - for that is just one little part of the whole problem, but about the whole question of our new power and what we are going to do about it and keep doing about it....The day the

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<sup>51</sup> Women's Day, April 1946, p. 20

polls show that people aren't thinking about atomic power any more, that they are either too satisfied or too frightened even to talk about it, then the men who govern the country will start to relax.<sup>52</sup>

The development of atomic weaponry had a dramatic effect on the political role of American women. In his study on the effects of atomic weaponry upon international politics, John Herz has argued that atomic power changed political structures drastically: 'I refer to its effect --- far beyond the area of the military and its usual implications --- on the structure and function of the unit of protection....The power of protection, on which political authority was based in the past, seems to be in jeopardy for any imaginable entity.'<sup>53</sup> The potential threat from atomic weapons served to increase American women's claims for an increased role in international affairs in three specific ways.

Firstly, in destroying the security of the home, atomic weapons contributed to the expansion of women's role beyond the domestic boundary. Women's role was to protect and preserve the home. When the

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 53-56.

<sup>53</sup> John H. Herz, International Politics in the Atomic Age, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 13

home became vulnerable to international forces, women could justify their activity in that sphere. The National Council of Women (NCW) recognized that a woman was 'chained by inhibitions created in her through the centuries' and was therefore reluctant to act: 'She has become conditioned to the idea of being the passive observer, not the initiator, of bold plans for the good of humanity. She has been trained to shrink away from "politics" as something socially unacceptable to her sex; to accept meekly the status quo of living in a world ruled by men.'<sup>54</sup> The reluctance of women to be politically active was challenged by the NCW, who asserted that the arrival of the 'hour of destiny' for women would force them to act.

Secondly, the connection between warfare and citizenship, an argument which American women had used in connection both the World War II and the Cold War, also had relevance to the atomic threat. As Carole Pateman has argued, there is an important connection between citizenship and the willingness to sacrifice one's life for one's country.<sup>55</sup> In

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54 'A Woman's Manifesto for Zero Hour,' 24 January, 1946, National Council of Women of the United States, National Council of Women Papers, Box 24, Folder 12

55 Carole Pateman, 'Equality, difference, subordination: The politics of Motherhood and women's citizenship.' pp17-31, in Gisela Bock and Susan James (eds.), Beyond Equality and Difference. (London: Routledge, 1992).

America before 1945, this sacrifice had been the preserve of those willing (and permitted) to travel to foreign battlefields --- overwhelmingly men. However, the development of nuclear weaponry meant that the distinction between the public world of the battlefield and the private world of women, which had already been hopelessly compromised by the total nature of World War II, was lost forever. In the event of a nuclear attack, women would be the casualties of war and could, therefore, describe themselves as combatants. Cynthia Enloe has pointed out the consequences of this for women's lives:

The nuclearisation of NATO and the Warsaw Pact military doctrine has made virtually meaningless one of the foundations of the military system for controlling women: the mythical dichotomy between 'home front' and 'battle front'. So long as women could be defined as inherently, naturally and intrinsically non-combatants and therefore as the objects of protection, their labour could be mobilized by government strategists without the fear that such mobilization would shake the social order in which women are the symbols of the

hearths and homes the armed forces claimed to be protecting.<sup>56</sup>

Finally, the atomic threat increased American women's claims of political obligation by making the penalty for ignoring that obligation monstrous. The threat of atomic destruction gave new urgency to the age-old wisdom that women could, if they made the effort, divert men from their aggressive ways. Susan B. Riley, President of the AAUW, informed her members through an article in the Journal of the AAUW entitled 'The Art of Survival':

In the long evolution of society, generic Man has represented the forces of destruction, generic Woman of conservation. Women have more power than they have dreamed of. If their latent strength was once aroused and organized they could accomplish miracles. They could even stop war....If women cared passionately enough to consider the whole world their home and if women of all nations and races would unite and say: 'No more of this talk of World War III. Find another way to settle your differences.

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56 Cynthia Enloe, Does Khaki Become You? The Militarisation of Women's Lives (London: Pandora Press, 1988), p.217

But we will have no more talk of war. For in this Atomic Era we must live in peace if we would live at all.'<sup>57</sup>

The National Council of Women was so motivated by the atomic age as to designate 1946 as 'Zero Hour', arguing, 'We members of the human family, wherever we may live on the earth's surface - women and men, savage and civilized, colored and white, aetheist and disciple of religion - share the common threat of complete destruction in a man-made inferno.'<sup>58</sup>

The response of women to the threat of nuclear warfare was not limited to the inactive fear described by Tyler May. As Erik Erikson recognized in 1965 in his essay on 'Inner and Outer Space: Reflections on Womanhood', 'The special dangers of the nuclear age clearly have brought male leadership close to the limit of its adaptive imagination.'<sup>59</sup> Erikson lamented women's failure to fill this vacuum in leadership:

Maybe if women would only gain the determination to represent as image

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57 Journal of the AAUW, Vol 40:2, Winter 1947, p. 69

58 'A Woman's Manifesto for Zero Hour,' 24 January 1946

59 Erik Erikson, 'Inner and Outer Space: Reflections on Womanhood' in Lifton, Robert Jay (ed.), The Woman in America (1965)', p. 2

providers and law-givers what they have always stood for privately in evolution and history (realism of householding, responsibility of upbringing, resourcefulness in peacekeeping and devotion to healing), they might well be mobilized to add an ethical restraining, because truly supranational, power to politics in the widest sense.<sup>60</sup>

This expression of forlorn hope ignored the massive efforts that women's organizations had made in the previous twenty years to involve their members in an increased awareness of international affairs, using the threat posed by atomic and nuclear weapons as a powerful illustration of the consequences of their failure. Nuclear and atomic weaponry thus served as a powerful symbol which was instrumental in raising awareness amongst American women of the terrible possible consequences of another failure to keep the peace. Whilst the response of some American women was the campaign for the obvious step of controlling, if not abolishing, such weaponry, many American women's organizations argued that the existence of such weaponry should be met with an increased awareness of the need for

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60 Ibid.

women's responsible involvement in international affairs as champions of peace. Independent Woman, the Journal of the NFBPWC, urged its members to channel their energies into the promotion of the United Nations:

Those who are asking the question 'What can I individually do for peace?' may find the answer in this account of the general disregard by the newspapers of the fundamental work of the United Nations for the establishment of World Peace. Can you not locally bring to the attention of your newspaper editors the underlying facts and the fascinating stories connected with them?<sup>61</sup>

If World War II had made efforts at invulnerable isolation look difficult, atomic weaponry made them look hopeless. American women's call for women to become involved in international affairs to avoid paying the newly terrible price for the loss of peace drew not only upon images of the atomic age but also essentialist notions of women as peacekeepers. American women had long defined the need for their involvement in international affairs as the prevention of wars. Calling upon essentialist

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61 Independent Woman, Vol 27:1, January 1948, p. 55

notions of women's role as peacekeepers, American women had argued that the international activism of women of all nations would quickly make war a thing of the past. American suffragist Alice Stone Blackwell, for example, had urged, 'Let us do our utmost to hasten the day when the wishes of mothers shall have their due weight in public affairs, knowing that by doing so we will hasten the day when wars shall be no more.'<sup>62</sup> A similar motivation had inspired many women to become involved in international affairs following World War I. The International Federation of University Women, for example, had been founded in 1918 in response to what it saw as the disaster of the war.<sup>63</sup> The failure of women through their organizations to secure peace in the aftermath of that conflict was not seen as proof of the futility of their efforts but rather as evidence of the need to work even harder this time round. Virginia Gildersleeve, President of the IFUW, explained in an article entitled 'International Reconstruction --- the Second Chance':

We should not feel discouraged by the loss  
of the first race. The task of educating

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62 Quoted in McGlen and Sarkees, p. 4.

63 See Edith C. Batho, A Lamp of Friendship 1918-1968: A Short History of the International Federation of University Women (Eastbourne: Sunfield and Day Ltd, 1968).

and organizing the world for peace and human welfare is a stupendous one. University women played a good part in the first great effort. They have learned from that experience and will do far better now that mankind is given a second chance.<sup>64</sup>

The events of World War II had demonstrated to many women the failure of male-dominated international relations. In the aftermath of such a devastating example of unfettered militarism, American women argued that the time was ripe to insist that women must be given the opportunity to practice a better way of mediating international disputes. The International Alliance of Women asserted in 1946 that the circumstances facing women in the world demanded that they make 'a special choice'. This choice was a gendered one: 'Either we must ape men, or use that power for peace that rests in every emancipated woman's hand.'<sup>65</sup> Women must act in the future in order to prevent the outbreak of violence in which their children would be sacrificed. Twelve national women's organizations banded together after the war to form the Committee

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64 Virginia Gildersleeve, 'International Reconstruction - The Second Chance.', Journal of the AAUW, Vol 38:2, Winter 1945, p. 67

65 'Report on the 14th Annual Congress of the International Alliance of Women,' International Women's News, Vol 40:8, May 1946.

on the Participation of Women in Post-War planning. They argued, 'Women did not participate in the organization of the world after the First World War, but they are sharing in its fateful consequences. And in the world that will emerge from this Second World War, women --- and children --- will have to live as well as men. Why shouldn't they have a hand in planning it?'<sup>66</sup>

The desire on the part of American women to influence international relations to prevent future war was something that they shared with women across the world. American women saw their identity as peacekeepers as a common bond with women across the world. The International Alliance of Women held a conference at South Korkright, New York, in 1946 to stress the need for an active role for their organization in the post-war world. Mildred Adams, who narrated the event in her book, The World We Live In --- The World We Want (1946) stressed that the women who attended the meeting were called there by a common purpose:

One thing they knew, all of them, and that was that the world must not again be put to the consuming cruelty of another war such as one they had survived. How this

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66 League of Women Voters Papers, Series III, Box 701, UN file

could be prevented they did not know, but they felt the driving need to take counsel and find out.

This need was based upon women's timeless concern as mothers: 'If their children and their children's children were to live they must somehow live in peace or put humanity itself in peril.'<sup>67</sup>

The almost apocalyptic nature of the conflict the world had just experienced, together with the prospect of the almost certainly apocalyptic nature of any future conflict, inspired American women to take refuge in essentialist descriptions of women's interests and natures. Lena Phillips, President of the International Federation of Business and Professional Women, drew upon these ahistorical concepts in her keynote address to the 4th International Congress of IFBPW in Paris in July 1947:

I wish...that women could sit at these diplomatic tables where the fate and future of the world is being decided: women who think more in terms of human beings and less in terms of material things; women so long trained in

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<sup>67</sup> Mildred Adams, The World We Live In, The World We Want, (Hartford: Stone Book Press: 1947), p. 14

protecting the weak and curbing the unruly; women who know the way to fight an idea is not through war. I wish that more women sat at those international conference tables because women are perhaps more socially conscious about many of the things that count for the most now. They are close to the Church and therefore have more faith in God and in good. They would be less bound by protocol; they have had much more experience in difficult situations and therefore might display more flexibility and ingenuity. They have had long experience in selflessness.<sup>68</sup>

Whilst male and national interests were represented as dangerous temporalities, women's essential nature was represented as timeless. Julia Kristeva, in her essay Women's Time, explains the concept that women's connection to and experience of 'Time' is a crucial element in the construction of identity. She argues that '[women] are not just a linear history of cursive time but also monumental time in which they echo the universal traits of

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68 Phillips speech, Proceedings of the 4th International Congress of the International Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, Paris, 19-25 July 1947, Lena M. Phillips Papers, Box 6

their structural place in reproduction and its representation'.<sup>69</sup> Women's connection to the 'monumental time' of the world was used by American women's organizations as justification for their increasing interest in international relations. A 1948 poem in The Journal of American Association of Business and Professional Women, normally wary of anything limiting women to a celebration of their reproductive functions, expresses this concept:

The Axis of the world is womankind  
 She gives men birth and comforts them in  
     death  
 From woman back to woman makes the world  
 On her, men's blessing or their curses  
     rest  
 And in her arms are cradled hemispheres!<sup>70</sup>

Finally, the assertion of women's essentialist interests in peace, and their roles as mothers and care-givers contributed to American women's third strategy for asserting the importance of their international role. Insistence upon the essentialist role of women around the world was an integral part of American women's claim to a shared

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69 Julia Kristeva, 'Women's Time' (1979) in Toril Moi (ed.), The Kristeva Reader (Oxford: Blackwell Ltd, 1986), p. 190

70 Verna Loveday Harden, 'From Woman unto Woman,' Independent Woman, Vol 27:2, February 1948, p 55

identity with women of other nations and, inversely, a lack of shared identity with men of their nation. The refusal of the claim of national identity was an inversion of women's traditional exclusion from the international realm. Rather than challenging this exclusion, many women embraced it as the basis of their shared identity with women of other nations and celebrated it as an important element of women's value systems. The ideal of sisterhood with women of other nations was not new. American suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton, for example, had articulated a belief in a commonality amongst women of all nations based upon their shared oppression as women: 'There is a language of universal significance, more subtle than that used in the busy market of trade, that should be called the mother-tongue, by which, with a sigh, or a tear, a gesture, a glance of the eye, we know the experiences of each other in the varied forms of slavery.'<sup>71</sup>

Women's shared experience, in Cady Stanton's example, is based upon their exclusion from the political life of the nation. Virginia Woolf shared this belief that women's lack of political rights resulted in her lack of loyalty to her nation of birth. On the eve of World War II she famously

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71 Quoted in Mineke Bosch and Marjan Schwegman, 'The Failure of Women's History: A Dutch Perspective,' Gender and History, Vol 3:2, Summer 1991, p. 138

asserted, 'As a woman, I have no country. As a woman, I want no country. As a woman, my country is the whole world.'<sup>72</sup> In this statement Woolf's argument was that, in a nation where women were denied full citizenship either through the withholding of the franchise or by restrictive political, social and/or cultural practices, they could not be held responsible for the actions of that nation.

The consequences of women's lesser commitment to nation was described by American women in the post-war world as a positive, rather than a negative, attribute. Lack of national identity, they argued, could be a vital element in building international peaceful relations. Historian Sylvia Walby has discussed women's relationship to nation in terms of their relationship to militarism, arguing:

Women's greater commitment to peace and opposition to militarism might be thought to be linked to their lesser commitment to 'their' nation. Do women less often think war for nationalist reasons is worth the candle because they have fewer real interests in 'victorious' outcome since it

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72 Virginia Woolf, Three Guineas (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovitch, 1938), p.109

would make less difference to their place in society than that of men?<sup>73</sup>

This link between women's lesser commitment to nation and thereby their interest in peace was a crucial one to American women's organizations in the postwar world.

Whilst the ideal of women's special interest in peace and the value of her role as a symbolic maternal figure on the international stage was ahistoric, its popularity in the years following World War II had a contemporary resonance. The postwar period saw a renewed interest in the ideals of the functionalist movement in international relations. The chief exponent of international functionalism, David Mitrany, asserted that its ideal was to 'begin anew...with a clear sense that the nations can be bound together into a world community only if we link them up by what unites not by what divides'.<sup>74</sup> The popularity of this theory following World War II lay in the hope that a new focus on the common needs of individuals rather than on issues which divided them, such as the interests of state-powers, could assure peace. The United

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73 Sylvia Walby, 'Woman and Nation' in Gopal Balakrishnan, (ed), Mapping the Nation (London: Verso, 1996), p. 248

74 Quoted in Ernst B. Haas, Beyond the Nation-State: Functionalism and International Organization (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964), pp. 8-9

Nations, through its network of agencies devoted to guaranteeing common needs, exemplified this approach. American women, in common with women of many nations, articulated a conception of what might be called 'maternal functionalism'. By stressing the common desires and needs of women as mothers, they asserted the primacy of the functional aims of maternalism over national loyalties.

In his exploration of functionalism, international relations theorist Ernst Haas warns, 'Functionalism must be distinguished from simple "one world internationalism" in that it depends on a recognition that group loyalty and national attachments are more real than vague intentional goodwill.'<sup>75</sup> American women's internationalism was explicitly based on an appeal to a group identity --- that of women. Whilst the exponents of functionalism seldom made any attempt to include women within their conceptual model, American women's assertion of the potential international force of maternalism may usefully be considered as a functionalist response to the difficult nature of postwar international relations. The report of Dr Arenia Mallory, representative of the NCNW at the Helsinki Conference of the International Council of Women in 1954, exemplified the way in which women by

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75 Ibid., p. 11

a focus on common tasks and interests could transcend national boundaries: 'Over these barriers between nations, races, professions and ideals, even over the walls of our small centered private lives, the women from different parts of the world came to see their common tasks and solve their common problems.'<sup>76</sup> Similarly, the NCNW report from the International Assembly of Women conference in South Korkright, New York, in October 1946 stated, 'Since the International Assembly met in a world of political tensions, of economic instability, of social unrest and of moral and spiritual deterioration, it was decided that these universal conditions be discussed within the framework of common needs. All delegates were asked to keep in the background their own controversial national political problems as they affect any other nation or region.'<sup>77</sup>

American women's claims to have escaped the limitations of national identity were more a rhetorical device than an accurate assessment of the evidence. In fact American women were always informed, led and strongly influenced by their

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76 Mallory report on the Helsinki Conference of the International Council of Women, June 1954, National Council of Negro Women Papers, Series 13, Box 8, File 12

77 Summarised reports of the 1946 IAW Conference, National Council of Negro Women Papers, Series 13, Box 18, File 18

national identity. Whilst they may have claimed a sisterhood with women of the world, this sisterhood was, in fact, far less an influence on their action than the agenda of their government.

The construction of an international identity for and by American women was a exercise in motivation and justification. The three main elements of this identity should be regarded as strategies which enabled American women to claim space, interest and influence in the international realm rather than as a considered articulation of aims and ideals. In fact, these three aspects of American women's international identity quickly conflicted with one another. Commitment to the Cold War battle could be argued to contradict American women's assertions that they were interested in the cause of peace. The contradictions inherent within American women's international identity are obvious. Each aspect of their international identity was to prove problematic to American women's organizations in their pursuit of an international role. However, as a strategy for both motivating American women and convincing their government of the need for women's participation in international affairs, the construction of a gendered international identity met with considerable success. Membership of women's voluntary associations which, as Estelle Freedman

has noted, dropped dramatically following the extension of suffrage in 1920 began to climb again.<sup>78</sup> Whilst they would never again achieve the membership levels of pre-suffrage years, American women's focus upon international relations did have an effect on membership numbers. Membership in the League of Women Voters, for example, climbed steadily in the postwar years from 50,000 in 1944-45 to 125,000 in 1953-54.<sup>79</sup> Anna Lord Strauss, former president of the League, attributed this growth entirely to the League's new emphasis on international relations and the pursuit of peace. She asserted:

A great many of the younger women felt that they didn't want to have their husbands have to go to war again. They didn't want to have their children live under war conditions. Therefore they managed to eke out a little time to give to the LWV on the understanding that this was the best chance of developing an understanding, keeping peaceful conditions in the world.<sup>80</sup>

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78 Estelle Freedman, 'Seperation as Strategy: Female Institution Building and American Feminism', Feminist Studies, Volume 5, 1979, pp 512-19.

79 'League Growth, April 1954,' League of Women Voters Papers, Box 1725, File 1

80 The Reminiscences of Miss Anna Lord Strauss, p.153. Strauss further speculated that the input of

Alongside this growth in membership was the increasing use of women's voluntary associations by the US Government in a variety of overseas programmes. The Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor facilitated co-operation between the government and organizations in areas such as policy towards the UN Commission on the Status of Women, and the exchange of women leaders from countries such as Germany, Japan, and Latin American countries.

The assertion of an international identity by American women's organizations in the post-war years should be understood as a strategic exercise. However the forms of relationships that identity facilitated between American women and women of other nations were heavily influenced by the nature of the construction of that identity. Feminist international relations theorist J. Ann Tickner has warned, 'The creation of global identities necessary for building conflict-reducing universal structures must be approached with caution.'<sup>81</sup> She notes, 'When

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these younger, focused and motivated women was an important factor in the professionalization of the League. She argued, 'I think any organization or institution that grows can start off with just an informal understanding between the people because they have a common objective and are apt to have had similar experiences. Then it grows and it has to become more professionalized, and it did during my period.'

81 J. Ann Tickner, 'Identity in International Relations Theory: Feminist Perspectives,' in Yusef

women create transnational alliances, non-western women complain that they are required to accept models based on Western understandings of feminism and western ways of doing things.'<sup>82</sup> It would be a mistake to restrict this caution to relations between western and non-western women. In *all* their international relations, women's actions are inextricably tied to national assumptions and agenda. In her study of internationalism and theory in women's history, Mineke Bosch has pointed out that the uncritical acceptance of women's assertions that they were able to subordinate national and other 'differences to the principle of unity/identity/equality' ignores the ascendancy of American women in the international movement.<sup>83</sup> She concludes:

My problem is not so much that the American women dominated and influenced the internationalism of the Alliance [the International Suffrage Alliance, later the International Council of Women] but that in not seeing their ascendancy we miss the

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Lapid and Frederick Kratochwil (eds.), The Return of Culture and Identity in International Relations Theory (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1996), p. 158

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 159

<sup>83</sup> Mineke Bosch, 'Internationalism and Theory in Women's History,' Gender and History, Vol 3:2, Summer 1991, p. 139

impact of national and other differences, and in this 'not seeing' we overlook the internationalization based on (invisible) domination instead of upon equal participation.<sup>84</sup>

Similarly in the postwar world American women's assertion of an international identity, consisting of a range of justifications and motivations, drew much of its strength from the claim to sisterhood and shared experience with women of other nations, what feminist theorist Anne Marie Goetz has called 'the claim to know'.<sup>85</sup> However, the ability of American women to 'know' and understand women of other nations was seriously hampered by their loyalty to national identities. As Valentine Moghadam has argued, identities such as those described by nation and gender 'are not shared, but exist in competition. Competing loyalties may be manipulated both by the state and by social forces purporting to represent those identities.'<sup>86</sup> In

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84 Ibid., p. 140.

85 See Anne Marie Goetz, 'Feminism and the limits of the "Claim to Know": Contradictions in the Feminist Approach to Women in Development', Millennium, Winter 1988, Vol 17:3.

86 Valentine M. Moghadam, 'Women and Identity Politics in Theoretical and Comparative Perspective,' in Valentine Moghadam (ed.), Identity Politics and Women: Cultural Reassertions and Feminisms in International Perspective (Boulder Co: Westview Press, 1994), p. 5

practice, American women's international gendered identity was influenced more by their national loyalty to their government than by their gendered loyalty to the essentialist construction of womanhood which they argued they shared with women of other nations.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 'A NATION OF JOINERS': AMERICAN VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS IN THE COLD WAR

The voluntary association has enjoyed a long history as an ideal in American society. Alexis de Tocqueville commented on 'the American penchant for turning to voluntary actions as a solution to social, political and personal problems'.<sup>1</sup> Given this status, however, the critical writing on the subject is conspicuous by its absence. Constance Smith and Anne Freedman, in their 1972 survey of the literature, concluded, 'There is no grand, all encompassing and generally accepted theory of voluntarism, or even a respectable middle range theory.'<sup>2</sup>

The lack of a general school of criticism on voluntary associations is a particularly serious flaw when studying their role in the Cold War. Their importance has been almost completely overlooked, despite the fact that at the time voluntary associations were hailed as a crucial component in the preservation of democracy. In his 1962 essay 'The Dispossessed', Daniel Bell argued that the

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1 Quoted in Constance Smith and Anne Freedman, Voluntary Associations: Perspectives on the Literature (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. v

2 Ibid., p. 1

importance of voluntary associations and other representations of group interests (such as corporations and trade associations) had grown to such an extent that they had come to usurp the both the function and the rights of the individual as a subject:

The chief realization of the past thirty years is that not the individual, but collectivities... have become the units of social action, and that individual rights in many instances derive from group rights, and in others have become fused with them.<sup>3</sup>

As Grant McConnell has pointed out, the approach to voluntary associations which became popular in Cold War America had more in common with hagiography than with a school of criticism:

For a rather long time now, at least since the end of World War II, we have seen the rise and consolidation in a position of dominance of a body of doctrine which extols the private association as an

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3 Daniel Bell, 'The Dispossessed' in Daniel Bell (ed.), The Radical Right: The New American Right (New York: Doubleday, 1962), p. 19

essential feature of American democracy,  
perhaps of any genuine democracy.<sup>4</sup>

McConnell defines this view of the role of voluntary associations as one which posits that 'liberty itself is best served where a multitude of associations exist. Not only is the individual under such conditions unthreatened by mass movements and totalitarianism, he has the positive values of fellowship and meaning in his life without which liberty is a negative and empty thing.'<sup>5</sup> The voluntary association offers an alternative, and at times an opposition to the potential coercive power of the state. Furthermore, through the involvement of the individual in the design and implementation of the work of voluntary associations, the opportunity for what Isiah Berlin has labelled 'positive' liberty is greatly increased.<sup>6</sup>

An example of this positive view of the role of voluntary associations in Cold War American society can be seen in the 1959 message of Grace Daniels, head of the NFBPWC. Daniels asserted, 'Forty years ago at the time of our founding,

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4 Grant McConnell, 'The Public Values of the Private Association' in Roland Pennock and John W. Chapman (eds.), Voluntary Associations (New York: Atherton Press, 1969), p. 147

5 Ibid., p. 150

6 Isiah Berlin, 'Two Concepts of Liberty.' in Four Essays on Liberty (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969) p.131

volunteer organizations were not as closely woven into the fabric of our free way of life as they have now become...It is my firm opinion that today the volunteer organization is the one best possible show-case for freedom.'<sup>7</sup>

The advancement of voluntary associations after World War II was a direct response, firstly to the totalitarian regimes of Fascist states and secondly to the authoritarian states of Communist powers. The genesis of this approach can be seen in Arthur Schlesinger Sr.'s 1944 article, 'The Biography of a Nation of Joiners,' in the American Historical Review. Schlesinger pointed to the repression of private associations in totalitarian states as proof that they contained some germ of liberty which dictators felt it necessary to eradicate. He argued:

It was with calculated foresight that the Axis dictators insured their rise to power by repressing or abolishing political, religious, labour and other voluntary groups. They dared not tolerate those guardians of the peoples' liberties..these

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<sup>7</sup> Grace B. Daniels, 'An Anniversary Message,' National Business Woman, Vol 38:7, July 1959, p.5.

joiners were among the earliest casualties of the totalitarian system.<sup>8</sup>

This interpretation became an orthodoxy amongst postwar historians of voluntary associations. Mary Handlin concurred with Schlesinger in a 1961 speech to the overseas branch of the League of Women Voters, 'It is significant...that totalitarian governments must immediately aim to wipe out voluntary activities for these are an obvious threat to absolute control by the State.'<sup>9</sup> In contrast to the repression of private associations in totalitarian regimes, Handlin argued that the United States embraced these associations as vital training groups in democracy and liberty:

Considering the central importance of the voluntary organization in American History, there is no doubt it has provided the people with their greatest school of self-government. Rubbing minds as well as elbows, they have been trained from their youth to take common counsel, choose

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8 Arthur Schlesinger Sr., 'Biography of a Nation of Joiners,' American Historical Review, Vol 50:1, October 1944, p. 25

9 Handlin speech at the Annual Meeting of the CCCMF, 'The Values of Translating the Voluntary Association Concept into other Societies,' 23 May 1961, Lucille Koshland Papers, Carton 1

leaders, harmonize differences and obey the expressed will of the majority. In mastering the associative way they have mastered the democratic way.<sup>10</sup>

Handlin concluded her tribute with the assertion, 'It is in the very nature of voluntarism that it compounds itself and, by spreading to multitudinous activities, increases the potential for freedom.'<sup>11</sup>

This view of the importance of voluntary associations was not confined to academic commentators. The associations themselves were self-consciously proud of their role in preserving American democracy and took a pro-active role in advertising their importance. In her first presidential address to the General Federation of Women's Clubs, Mrs Theodore S. Chapman told members, 'There is no clearer expression of the democratic process than in voluntary organizations. They are the free channels of communication and co-operation,

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10 Ibid.

11 Ibid. Mary Handlin's view of the central role of voluntary associations in the preservation of American democracy was more fully expressed in her 1961 work (co-written with Oscar Handlin), The Dimensions of Liberty. Taking a historical perspective, the Handlins argued, 'The emergence of a distinctive pattern of voluntary associations was inextricably bound with the history of liberty in America for it created a significant range of alternatives to the use of coercive power through the state.' [Oscar and Mary Handlin, The Dimensions of Liberty, (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1961), p. 89.]

and are essential safeguards in freedom.'<sup>12</sup> Walter White, President of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People concurred, 'In America, organizations like the NAACP are free to criticize all that which displeases them --- including the government.'<sup>13</sup> The popularity of voluntary associations in America following the Second World War was considerable. A survey in Detroit in 1951 suggested that 63 percent of the population belonged to some organization other than a church. Of this number, more than half belonged to two or more other organizations.<sup>14</sup>

The importance of the voluntary association in creating and protecting freedom was both functional and structural, a product of the practice and methods of voluntary associations and a result of their positioning outside of the state, or public, realm. On a structural level, apart from a useful education in citizenship skills, voluntary associations operated within the nation to offer individuals a method of representation separate from that in traditional politics. Voluntary associations occupied the same structural space as trade

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12 Chapman speech, '63rd Annual Convention, Denver, Colorado,' 4 June 1954, National Council of Negro Women Papers, Box 7, File 12

13 Quoted in Arnold M. Rose, Political Process in American Society (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 240

14 Ibid., p. 219

organizations and labour associations as a repository of non-governmental interests. Because of this alternative form of representation, a government with tyrannical designs would be faced with an organized opposition on behalf of its citizens.

The ideal of the voluntary organization in domestic American politics as a guardian of freedom was extended after World War II to the international arena. Americans hoped that the model of the voluntary association as a model for democracy, which had proved so successful in their own collective historical experience, could be exported to other nations. If American voluntary associations were what stood valiantly between liberty and tyranny in the United States, the argument was that they could surely perform a similar role in other nations. Their application as a panacea against tyranny was projected as equally relevant in states such as Germany which had suffered the experience of tyranny or in nations whose sudden emergence from colonial rule raised concern in some American quarters in respect about their lack of training in or understanding of citizenship. This was particularly true of societies in which political interests were thought by Americans to be closely tied to non-democratic interests. In his 1962 study

Political Development in the New States, Edward Shils deplored the lack of voluntary associations in states formed after World War II, arguing that, in their absence, 'strong attachments to kinship, caste and local territorial groups' were allowed to exercise undue influence. Shils elaborated:

Outside the State, the major institutions through which authority is exercised are the kinship and lineage groups and the religious and caste communities. None of these is voluntary; in many of them there is no publicly acknowledged mode of contending for positions of influence. The 'infra-structures' for collaboration in pursuit of influence and for the exercise of influence in the wider society are largely lacking.<sup>15</sup>

Furthermore, international non-governmental organizations were thought to provide an important force for freedom on behalf of the individual by offering an alternative to and a check upon national governments. This aspiration was greatly increased by the theory following World War II that peace would be guaranteed, not through the pursuit of

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15 Edward Shils, Political Developments in the New States (The Netherlands: Mouton and Co, 1962), p. 29

government policy, but through the efforts and communication of the peoples of the world directly with each other, free from government direction.<sup>16</sup>

Article 71 of the United Nations Charter recognized the role of international non-governmental organizations in its statement, 'The Economic and Social Council may make suitable arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations which are concerned with matters within its competence.' Esther W. Hymer, a member of the NFBPW, explained in an article in Independent Woman, that voluntary associations had an important role to play in world peace:

A large proportion of the people of the world are connected through membership in some local group in their town to a national organization which is connected with an international organization, that is promoting the interests of the local groups in the different countries or is advocating a common issue. Since membership is held by people of different

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16 A similar sentiment had prevailed after World War I. Emily Rosenberg argues, 'Many Americans hoped that privately led efforts, rather than governmental crusades, would succeed in bringing about a peaceful and liberal international order.' Emily Rosenberg, Spreading the American Dream. American Economic and Cultural Expansion 1890-1945 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), p. 121.

nationalities and may include friendly individuals from unfriendly nations, world unity is achieved in the limited area of interest in which they associate. Through these associations individuals learn to think in terms of the world and are prepared to accept and support the idea of co-operation among governments.<sup>17</sup>

Hymer asserted that the network of private associations, which privileged the identity of the individual on grounds other than those of nationality, formed 'the great unexplored continent in the world of international affairs that may be able to keep peace in the balance'.<sup>18</sup>

The authenticity of the voice of voluntary associations in the post war world was further enhanced in the U.S. by the statements of President Truman that the voice of these organizations was a more accurate and genuine representation of the will of the people than the voice of the government. In his address to the International Alliance of Women in 1946, Truman asserted:

Such an assembly will gain rather than lose in significance because its members

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17 Esther W. Hymer, 'Balancing Peace with Peoples,' Independent Woman, Vol 29:3, March 1950, p. 83

18 Ibid. p.83

represent peoples rather than governments. Now, more than at any other time, the successful conduct of International Relations depends upon the extent to which the peoples of the world can and will speak directly to each other, discussing their common problems and increasing their mutual understanding.<sup>19</sup>

In encouraging the efforts of individual organizations, Truman was fulsome in his praise of what they could potentially contribute. In a letter to Mrs Susan R.C. Beyer, the President of Pilot International, a women's group devoted to the idea of international co-operation, Truman explained:

Every American can play a part in this tremendous international undertaking. Your organization and other groups of world-minded American women can offer inspiring leadership in helping to meet the economic and cultural needs of our friends abroad. For example, no government can do much to develop international understanding among illiterate people. American women can help to promote the exchange of educational and

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19 Mildred Adams, The World We Live In, The World We Want (Hartford: Stone Book Press, 1947), p. 4

cultural ideas among our neighbours in an ever-shrinking world.<sup>20</sup>

As the Cold War intensified, protests about the failure of totalitarian regimes to tolerate voluntary associations, with their implied importance in preserving liberty, resurfaced. This time, however, the repressive state power was not fascist but communist. The enemy was the Soviet Union rather than Nazi Germany.

'100 things you should know about Communism', a booklet produced by the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC), unequivocally reminded its readers of the status of voluntary associations in Communist-control regions. In answer to the question, 'Could I belong to the Elks, Rotary, or the American Legion?', HUAC responded:

No. William Z. Foster, the head of the Communists in the United States, says: 'Under the dictatorship all capitalist parties --- Republican, Democratic, Progressive, Socialist, etc. --- will be liquidated, the Communist Party functioning alone as the Party of the toiling masses. Likewise will be dissolved

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20 Truman to Beyer, 16 May 1950, Truman Papers, President's Correspondence, Subject file

all other organizations that are political props of the bourgeois rule, including chambers of commerce, employers' associations, Rotary Clubs, American Legion, YMCA, and such fraternal orders as the Masons, Odd Fellows, Elks, Knights of Columbus, etc.<sup>21</sup>

The international role of American voluntary associations in preserving freedom and countering totalitarianism was encouraged and facilitated through a partnership between the leaders of voluntary associations and the U.S. government. Emily Rosenberg has argued in Spreading the American Dream that the relationship between the American government and private associations has always been both an important and an overlooked aspect of foreign policy.<sup>22</sup> She asserts that the connection between them became increasingly close in the years 1890-1945: 'Operating on the assumption that the growing influence of private groups abroad would enhance the nation's strategic and economic position, the government gradually erected a

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21 Committee on Un-American Activities, US House of Representatives, '100 things you should know about Communism,' League of Women Voters Papers, Series IV, Box 1741

22 See Emily S. Rosenberg, Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion 1890-1945 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982).

promotional state; it developed techniques to assist citizens who operated abroad and mechanisms to reduce foreign restrictions against American penetration.'<sup>23</sup> Following World War II, these connections assumed even greater importance, as voluntary associations became a vital branch of the government's propaganda effort.

In US propaganda, the international activities of American voluntary associations were intrinsically demonstrative of the nature of American life. The involvement of individuals through voluntary collective action demonstrated that the American system was a co-operative, consensual one in which the private sphere recognised the public sphere as their partners. The cooperation of private associations in the production and dissemination of information about America and the American way of life was presented as representing the genuine beliefs of the individual, elicited without coercion or pressure. Emily Rosenberg explains, 'Because the American government did not usually generate or severely censor information, liberal developmentalists could not perceive American Culture as either value-laden or ideological, because it was based on mass appeal

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23 Ibid., p. 38.

and appeared inherently democratic.'<sup>24</sup> As such, information produced and distributed by voluntary associations, rather than by government, was able to lay claim to a higher level of authenticity as 'the truth' rather than merely 'propaganda'.

The input of private associations in expressing the views, desires and character of the American people was particularly important in the realm of cultural diplomacy. In his ground-breaking work The Diplomacy of Ideas, Frank Ninkovich outlines the importance of the role of voluntary associations for cultural diplomacy:

A bed-rock principle underlying the cultural approach was the conviction that peoples ought to communicate directly with peoples. Although some governmental involvement seemed necessary, the voluntarist tradition dictated that the 'task of institutionalizing a set of ideals' as one writer characterized it, should properly remain the preserve of the private sector.<sup>25</sup>

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24 Ibid., p. 11.

25 Frank A. Ninkovich, The Diplomacy of Ideas: U.S. Foreign Policy and Cultural Relations 1938-1950 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 87

The Town Hall Meeting of the Air was a important example of this way of thinking. Modelled upon a national radio program which took the format of a local 'Town Hall' meeting, in which participants debated issues in a 'typical' American format, the Town Hall Meeting toured the world in 1949. Chester Williams, on leave from the U.S. delegation to the United Nations, directed the tour. He summarised the importance of its 'private' nature with constituent members drawn from a cross-section of voluntary associations: 'That is the kind of talk which carried conviction, for it is the people themselves talking - not paid propagandists grinding out a "line".'<sup>26</sup>

Whilst the Town Hall Meeting of the Air prided itself on not being an official government programme, it was not completely independent. Clarence Decker, one of the members of the tour, asked in October 1947 if President Truman could record a brief message for audiences but was told that, due to 'considerations of protocol', this would not be possible.<sup>27</sup> Instead, government involvement was more indirect, such as the pressure

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<sup>26</sup> Chester Williams, 'Adventure in Understanding' in 'Good Evening Neighbors! The Story of an American Institution,' Edith Sampson Papers, Box 9, Folder 194

<sup>27</sup> Decker to Truman, 3 October 1947, Clarence Decker Papers, Harry S Truman Library, File 1

brought to bear on Anna Lord Strauss of the League of Women Voters to take part in the trip. Strauss told George Denny, organizer of the trip, that she was 'too tired' to make the journey.<sup>28</sup> She soon changed her mind, however:

The State Department really brought very strong pressure on the League to have its President take part. They felt that we should be represented there, and they had been so co-operative with us in so many instances that I really couldn't stand out against them because I thought it was quid pro quo.<sup>29</sup>

Strauss acknowledged the importance of the leaders of voluntary associations' participation in such a public relations exercise for the United States, arguing, 'I think that our Hosts realized we were a country where individuals could speak for themselves.'<sup>30</sup> Whilst Strauss may have been speaking for herself, it was at the encouragement of, if not under pressure from, her government.

It is true that many associations went to great lengths to preserve, as far as possible, the

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28 The Reminiscences of Miss Anna Lord Strauss, Oral History Collection, Columbia University, p. 323

29 Ibid., p. 324.

30 Ibid., p. 333.

'private' nature of their programmes. After lengthy deliberations the Overseas Education Fund (OEF)<sup>31</sup> of the League of Women Voters decided it could accept government money only for specific projects:

One of our main purposes is to demonstrate what voluntary non-governmental groups can do...The OEF should not accept Government funds for administration, headquarter expenses, or other expenses without which we could not continue.<sup>32</sup>

However, the lengths to which associations' involvement was manufactured and directed by the Government has been overlooked. The importance and value that the American government gave to the involvement of the 'private' sphere in international relations was so great that they at times felt the need to intervene in order to ensure that involvement, ironically compromising the 'private' nature of the enterprise. An undated State

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31 Formerly the Carrie Chapman Catt Memorial Fund. The name of the CCCMF was eventually changed to The Overseas Education Fund of the League of Women Voters (OEF) in 1961. Anna Lord Strauss, President of the League explained, 'So often on the telephone people would say "Catt fund?" and they figured it was "Cats" instead of "Catt". So we decided that we really should change the name and make it sound a little closer to the League.' [The Reminiscences of Miss Anna Lord Strauss, p. 382]

32 OEF board minutes, 7 February 1963, Lucille Koshland Papers, File 12

Department report listed numerous private groups, noting their potential influence on 'foreign shores': 'Americans are prodigious "joiners", and their voluntary organizations number in the thousands...the lowliest of land-locked sewing circles may be knitting mufflers for the laplanders.'<sup>33</sup> The Psychological Strategy Board, (PSB), a body set up by President Truman in 1951 to co-ordinate all aspects of the US psychological battle with the USSR produced a document in October 1951 on private associations as a potential source of psychological warfare. The report suggested for future action 'that a series of projects be assigned to veteran's, youth and women's organizations, which appear to be institutionally inspired, which could permit contact with similar groups in other countries whose goals, aspirations and activities have a common aspect'.<sup>34</sup> The report suggested that contact between American women's organizations and women's organizations in Japan be encouraged in order to 'ensure continued pro-Western orientation.'<sup>35</sup>

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33 State Department Survey of Agencies and Private Groups, undated, US Declassified Documents Reference System, 1990, Document 1545

34 Psychological Strategy Board report, 11 October 1951, US Declassified Documents Reference System, 1992, Document 945

35 Ibid.

The government's promotion of 'private' groups culminated in the 'People-to-People' programme proposed by President Eisenhower in 1956. Its aim was for the government to increase international understanding by facilitating relationships between private groups and individuals. The importance of the programme was its emphasis on the development of links which were essentially *private*. The very title explicitly excluded the involvement of the government and suggested a form of international relations which circumvented the state and allowed the citizens of the United States to participate directly in relationships with citizens of other nations. Enlisting Anna Lord Strauss's assistance with the establishment of the programme, President Eisenhower stressed the practical demands inherent in the struggle to export 'information' about the American way of life:

There will never be enough diplomats and information officers at work in the world to get the job done without help from the rest of us. Indeed if our American Ideology is eventually to win out in the great struggle being waged between the two opposing ways of life, it must have the

active support of thousands of independent private groups and institutions and of millions of individual Americans acting through person-to person communication in foreign lands.<sup>36</sup>

Yet the government was not detach itself completely from People-to-People. In April 1957 the government offered a course, entitled uncompromisingly 'World Ideological Conflict', to all participants in People-to-People. Held at the International Conference Suite of the U.S. Information Agency in Washington, the five-day course was 'patterned after the comprehensive course of instruction given to United States Foreign Service Officers'. The aim of the course was to give its participants...

...a unique opportunity to broaden their knowledge of U.S. Foreign Relations and to consider how they and the committees with which they are working may more effectively combat international communism, further American foreign policy objectives and protect their own individual interests through positive

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36 Eisenhower to Strauss, 29 May 1956, Anna Lord Strauss Papers, Box 9, File 182

contributions to international understanding and goodwill.<sup>37</sup>

The boundary between what was and was not constituted as 'private' was a confused one. On one point, however, the government was intractable: the 'private' aspect of the People-to-People foundations must be maintained in the realm of funding. Charles E. Wilson, president of the People-to-People Foundation, wrote to the trustees in May 1958 complaining about the problems of fundraising, 'My inquiries among the members of the financial community indicate a decided reluctance to support the Foundation until the government shows its own confidence in the project with substantial initial financial backing.'<sup>38</sup> This the government proved singularly unwilling to do, however, as Eisenhower explained to Wilson,

In discovering and developing the right structure for the People-to-People project, there is no alternative to preserving efforts of the kind you are making --- all based on the principle that this must be a truly private effort, with governmental ties limited to liaison only,

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37 World Ideological Conflict pamphlet, April 1957, Anna Lord Strauss Papers, Box 9, File 182

38 Wilson to Trustees, 12 May 1958

but with a constant readiness on the part of my associates and myself to help in any legitimate way we can.<sup>39</sup>

The goal of an effective propaganda campaign that could be launched without expense to the government had its attractions, and the potential financial resources offered by voluntary associations was substantial. In 1947 it was estimated that the collective budgets of voluntary agencies for that year totalled more than \$200 million.<sup>40</sup> The alliance between American voluntary associations and their government can be seen as less a demonstration of the co-operative spirit, unity of purpose, and happy co-incidence of intent between the two, than an exercise in government cost-cutting.

Similarly, the motives and consequences to voluntary associations in participating in this informal partnership were subject to critical scrutiny. The co-operation of voluntary associations with the government and the subsequent blurring of

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39 Ibid. The financial position of the People to People programme was never very secure. In the first five months of its existence, it had secured, as a gesture of good faith \$25,000 from the government, and a paltry \$1,000 from private foundations.

40 'Statement by the President to Delegates of American Council of Voluntary Associations for Foreign Service', 20 February 20 1947, Truman Papers, White House Official Files, File 426-G

the distinction between private and public sphere were deleterious to the role of the private association in protecting the interests of and representing the views of its members.

Some commentators disputed this. For example, the vision of Oscar and Mary Handlin of co-operation between private and public spheres implied that the blurring of the distinction between private and public was not particularly important. They argued that the line between the private and the public had never been a very clear one:

Through the nineteenth and twentieth Century, the line between public and private sectors of society was... impossible to draw....It was never possible clearly to define two distinct spheres: the public, reserved for the state and the private, reserved for the voluntary association. Politically useful as that distinction may have been, whether for liberal or conservative ends, it had no basis in actual historical development.<sup>41</sup>

The Handlins did not see the lack of distinction between these realms as problematic, arguing, 'That

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<sup>41</sup> Oscar and Mary Handlin, p. 103

the voluntary association sometimes served the ends of the state was less important than the fact that it also offered society an alternative to it.'<sup>42</sup>

Other assessments of the effects of co-operation between private associations and the State are not so positive. Grant McConnell asserts that the involvement of a variety of voluntary groups in government, rather than restraining the State, allow the government an avenue of influence and control over a large section of the population:

In the United States, at least, private associations have also contributed to order and stability through a pattern of relationships with the government to a degree which is seldom acknowledged. In a multitude of ways, the distinction between what is private and what is public has been blurred so that it is often extraordinarily difficult to determine which is the character of a particular form of action or rule....It has been particularly important in time of war when networks of trade associations, commodity organizations, trade unions and other private associations on the one hand and

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42 Ibid., p. 112

public agencies, representative committees or boards on the other hand, have been established to undertake a rigorous task of mobilization and regulation required by modern war.<sup>43</sup>

McConnell argues that this co-operation between the public and private spheres in American life was not limited to the duration of war:

This process has probably done more than anything else to procure the co-operation of vitally placed elements in the population in the ends of the nation during its most serious moments of crisis. The process has been most visible --- and most extensive --- in wartime, but it should be clear that it has continued in other time as well, albeit more loosely and less conspicuously.<sup>44</sup>

He concludes, in direct contradiction to the beliefs of the Handlins and Schlesinger, that private associations, far from offering a source of opposition to the government, 'have been --- and

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43 McConnell in Pennock and Chapman (eds.), p. 155.

44 Ibid., p. 156.

continue to be --- important adjuncts of government in the United States'.<sup>45</sup>

In his critique of the 'power elite', political theorist C. Wright Mills argues that leaders of voluntary associations constituted a significant part of the elite to the detriment of the general membership. Mills asserts that the growth of the size of voluntary associations in fact weakened the role of the non-leader within them:

Voluntary associations have become larger to the extent that they have become effective, and to just that extent they have become inaccessible to the individual who would share by discussion the policies of the organization to which [s]he belongs....Accordingly, along with older institutions, these voluntary associations have lost their grip on the individual. As more people are drawn into the political arena these associations become mass in scale, and as the power of the individual becomes more and more dependent upon such mass associations they are less accessible to the individual's influence.<sup>46</sup>

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45 Ibid.

46 C. Wright Mills, The Power Elite (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 307

Mills contends that the interests of the leaders of voluntary associations lay in protecting their leadership position within the associations, and in seeing themselves as members of an 'elite.' He argues that these interests are evident in the gap between 'the terms in which issues are debated in the elite and the way in which they are presented to membership'. The result of this is that, 'as the pressure group expands, its leaders come to organize the opinions they represent'.<sup>47</sup>

This distance between members and leadership is obvious in studying American women's organizations. Whilst both branch and national leadership was decided on by vote, matters of detailed policy and cooperation between the leadership and government were not something for the rank and file membership's involvement or, in some cases, awareness. For example, in 1951 a declaration entitled the Memorial Day Statement, written collectively by ten American women's organizations, was presented to the Honourable Warren Austin, Chairman of the United States Mission to the United Nations, and broadcast abroad by the Voice of America. The statement asserted, 'It is hoped that this positive declaration may help to refute Soviet Propaganda against American Women and their

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47 Ibid., p. 308

organizations.'<sup>48</sup> Although this statement purported to represent the opinion and views of American women, it was not voted on by the membership but was signed, on their behalf, by their presidents.

The aim of the statement, and the broader involvement of the leaders of American women's organizations in the Cold War, revealed the extent to which a discourse appealing to the interests of groups and elevating them above the base claims of nation created a new battleground. Unlike previous wars, the Cold War was not primarily a territorial or military dispute<sup>49</sup> but was a psychological battle. The development of atomic and nuclear weaponry effectively blocked victory by military means. Instead, the victor in the Cold War would be the nation which convinced the most people that their way of life was the superior one.

In this propaganda war both the U.S. and Soviet Union made specific appeals to interest groups based on the presumed characteristics of their collective identity. Through these appeals, collective identity was constructed as essentialist identity, whose needs and desires were then

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48 'Winning the Peace: A Statement from Women's Organizations,' Journal of the AAUW, Vol 44:4, Summer 1951.

49 Obviously there are exceptions to this, and in areas such as Korea and Vietnam --- the Cold War 'hot spots' --- territorial and military considerations were primary.

demonstrated as being met and fulfilled by the United States but thwarted and opposed by the USSR.

The extent to which Cold War propaganda focused on international identities in this way has been largely overlooked, perhaps due to continuing habits of viewing international relations through the prisms of nations. Whilst it is obvious that traditional strategic interests dictated that, for example, the United States should act to secure a friendly Greek 'state', the fact that, in the global context of the Cold War, it was equally important for the Americans to win the loyalty of private groups such as women or labour has been neglected. If US propaganda is freed from the restrictive stranglehold of the 'nation' template, it is possible to define Cold War battlefields in a more imaginative and useful way. If Cuba and Vietnam were important Cold War battlefields, so too were 'Labour', 'Youth' and 'Women'.

For example, Soviet and US propaganda aimed to convince intellectuals that the causes and priorities dictated by their identities as intellectuals would be best served under communism or democracy respectively. Following the 1949 'Waldorf Conference', many American intellectuals believed that the Soviet Union was launching a propaganda offensive to convince them that their

'natural' loyalty lay with the Soviet Union. In response to this threat, a group of American and European intellectuals, including Arthur Koestler, Sidney Hook and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., with the helpful financial backing of the CIA launched the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF) in Berlin in 1950. Historian Christopher Lasch describes the theme of the Berlin Congress as being 'that a moral man could not remain neutral in the face of the present crisis'.<sup>50</sup> One participant, Robert Montgomery, argued, 'No artist who has the right to bear that title can be neutral in the battles of our time...Today we must stand up and be counted.'<sup>51</sup>

At a less 'high-brow' level, educators constituted an important group identity. The Committee for International Educational Reconstruction (CIER) is an example of the manipulation of this identity. Established in spring 1946, CIER included representatives of the State Department, the United States Office of Education, UNESCO, UNRRA, and leading educational groups such as the Associations of American Colleges and the AAUW.<sup>52</sup> Initially the group aimed at world peace and

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<sup>50</sup> Christopher Lasch, 'The Cultural Cold War: A Short History of the Congress for Cultural Freedom,' in Barton J. Bernstein (ed.), Towards a New Past (New York: Pantheon Books, 1968), p. 325.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> By March 1948 the membership of CIER included; the Department of the Army, National Educational

understanding through education, proclaiming, 'The Youth of the world and their leaders look hopefully to America. Educational opportunity is not only the right of each individual but the basis of international understanding and world peace.'<sup>53</sup> By 1948, however, the organization had taken something of a patriotic and combative tone, reporting, 'UNESCO has asked CIER to estimate the total of American aid for educational, scientific and cultural reconstruction during the calender year 1947. This report will be extremely useful in making known the world the extent of American philanthropy, but also the concern which American organizations are showing for educational and spiritual reconstruction.'<sup>54</sup>

'Workers' were also targets of Cold War propaganda. Richard J. Barnet explains:

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Association, Department of Elementary School Principles, National Council of Christians and Jews, National Red Cross, American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, Institute of International Education, State Department Division of International Exchange of Persons, Association of Childhood Education, American Association of University Women, the Department of Classroom Teachers of the National Education Association, American Junior Red Cross, Girl Scouts International Division, and the American Friends Service Committee. (Records of the AAUW, Reel 144)

53 'The Bulletin of the Commission for International Education Reconstruction,' 30 October 1946, Vol 1:1, Records of the AAUW, Reel 144

54 CIER letter to its member organizations, 10 February 1948, Records of the AAUW, Reel 144

Millions of American workers now heard much the same message [through the educational department of their unions] that was being promoted by business groups. American workers should be against Communism, not only to protect God, country family, and the American way of life, but also to express solidarity for repressed workers, for nowhere in Stalin's domain did a free labor movement exist.<sup>55</sup>

Positing an essential identity for women the world over, US propaganda explained that the American way of life was sympathetic to that identity whilst the Soviet system was in all ways repressive of it. A pamphlet entitled Women! It's your fight too!, published by the US-backed International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), reinforced the notion of essentialist feminine values with statements like, 'No woman would choose to work in a mine.' The ICFTU claimed that, in its insistence on 'equality of labour', the Soviet Union was repressing women's essential natures. Furthermore, propaganda encouraging Soviet women to work outside the home challenged women's

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55 Richard J. Barnet, The Rockets' Red Glare: War, Politics and the American Presidency (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), p. 299

essential role as the principal caregiver: 'They are called "sluggards", and "selfish" and "unproductive" if they stay at home and take care of their little children. More often they are forced by the low wages of their husbands to take jobs to supplement the family's earnings in order to make ends meet.'<sup>56</sup>

The most distressing transgression of the Soviet system against essential womanhood, however, was in its challenge to women's peaceful nature. The ICFTU pamphlet showed pictures of East German women holding rifles with the caption, 'In East Germany even mothers are given rifles. Have they ever thought that they might have to use them on sons of mothers like themselves?' The text elaborated on this theme:

Women who must aim guns and targets and practice methods of destruction and also produce more and more children must feel a revulsion against it all (unless of course, the political indoctrination that goes with the military training has been successful). Even Communism can't kill the spirit of a woman! *Women under communism are not different from other women. The*

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<sup>56</sup> International Confederation of Free Trade Unions pamphlet, 'Women! It's your fight too!', 1956, Esther Peterson Papers

*basic desires of women are the same. If communist-controlled women had any other way of obtaining the basic necessities of life, supply their family with food, shelter and clothing, they would break away to live under freedom.*<sup>57</sup> (my italics)

The ability of the American way of life to satisfy the essentialist demands and desires of any collective identity was better supported by testimonials of members rather than government protestations. Representatives of groups such as labour, intellectuals, African-Americans and women were enthusiastic and no doubt sincere in their efforts to convince an international audience of their satisfaction with America. However, their efforts were helped and encouraged to a considerable extent by the US Government.

As a 'representative' of the African-American community, Edith Sampson, a Chicago lawyer, was a sincere and effective proponent of the success of the American way in providing opportunity for African-Americans and overcoming racism and prejudice. In her role as an alternate delegate on the US delegation to the United Nations, Sampson was an outspoken critic of communism and an enthusiastic

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57 Ibid.

supporter of the American system. In a widely reported confrontation with Soviet Ambassador Jacob Malik, Sampson stated:

We Negroes aren't interested in Communism...We were slaves too long for that. Nobody is happy with second-class citizenship, but our best chances are in the framework of American Democracy.<sup>58</sup>

Yet Sampson's convictions would have not have reached an international audience without the efforts of the US government, who sent her on speaking tours of Europe as well as appointing her to the US delegation to the UN. Paul Robeson, in an attack on Sampson and those like her, bluntly assessed:

Our government has been employing Negro intellectuals, entertainers, ministers and many others to play the roles of ambassadorial Uncle Toms for years. They are supposed to show their well-fed, well-groomed faces behind the Iron Curtain as living proof that everyone is free and

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58 J.D. Radcliffe, Christian Herald, 1 August 1968, Edith Sampson Papers, Box 2, Folder 43.

equal in the U.S. and the color bar is a myth.<sup>59</sup>

The American government made strenuous efforts to promote Sampson as a spokesperson on the international stage for the collective identity of African-Americans. Hand-in-hand with this effort, the government also attempted to repress and undermine representatives of that collective identity whose version of the opportunities of American democracy diverged from the government line. So while the American government was promoting Sampson, it was refusing to issue a passport to the inconveniently outspoken Robeson.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, the 'official' (by which I mean those who co-operated with the United States government) spokespeople of any group identity were quick to repudiate the authenticity of 'non-official' spokespeople, arguing that their views were not representative. Sampson assured audiences in Delhi, 'Unfortunately, Mr Robeson had all his training in America, and he has forgotten that he owes a great deal to our democracy. He does not represent any organization --- only a lunatic fringe in America.'<sup>61</sup>

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59 Paul Robeson, Here I Stand (Boston, 1971)

60 See Martin Duberman, Paul Robeson (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988).

61 Town Hall Meeting of the Air, 557th transcript, 'What are Democracy's best Answers to Communism?', 13 September 1949, Edith Sampson Papers, Box 9,

It was this value of the testimonials of representatives of group identities that led to increased co-operation between the government and private associations. Simply by quoting membership figures, leaders of voluntary associations could claim a representative and, therefore, authentic role. Without the backing of a large organized group following, individuals who criticised the American government could be written off as non-representative, their views being directed and informed by individual rather than collective identity.

The involvement of voluntary associations in international activities was therefore an important component of American Cold War policy. With the support and encouragement of their government, American groups took their place in international non-governmental structures as advocates of the American way of life. Through their monitoring and encouragement of this position, the American government was able to direct an international group identity whose loyalty and support was an important aim of Cold War strategy.

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Folder 192. Sampson was also a critic of Josephine Baker's outspoken views on race relations in America. See 'Edith Sampson Attacks Josephine Baker Stand,' Jet, January 1952, Edith Sampson Papers, Box 2, Folder 43.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### 'NO LIMIT TO WHAT I CAN DO':

#### AMERICAN WOMEN'S VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS

The role of American women's voluntary associations in offering their members an opportunity to become politically active in the years before the extension of suffrage in 1920 is a well documented one.<sup>1</sup> Historian Susan Lebsock summarized the field, stating:

For Nineteenth Century women the characteristic form of political activism was participation in a voluntary association. Whether women would have chosen this path had they the option of voting, we will never know....In the meantime, most American women, if they wanted influence, had no choice but to work through non-electoral politics.<sup>2</sup>

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1 See for example Louise M. Young, 'Women's Place in American Politics: The Historical Perspective,' *Journal of Politics*, Vol 38, August 1976; Karen J. Blair, The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined 1868-1914 (New York: Holmes Meier Publishers, 1980)

2 Suzanne Lebsock, 'Women and American Politics 1880-1920,' in Louise Tilly and Patricia Gurin (eds.), Women, Politics and Change (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1990), p. 37

The effectiveness of women's groups in providing an entree for women into the public sphere was most famously recognized by former President Grover Cleveland in a back-handed compliment which attacked women's groups for distracting women from the important business of running a home:

I am persuaded that without exaggeration of statement we may assume that there are women's clubs whose objects and intents are not only harmful, but harmful in a way that directly menaces the integrity of our homes, and the benign disposition and character of our wifhood and motherhood....I believe that it should be boldly declared that the best and safest club for a woman to patronize is her home.<sup>3</sup>

Yet the contribution of women's associations in facilitating and encouraging American women's activism has been assessed primarily in the period before the extension of suffrage. The continuing existence of women's voluntary associations in a period when American women had, in Susan Lebsack's words, the 'option' or the 'choice' of exercising

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<sup>3</sup> Glover Cleveland, 'Woman's Mission and Women's Clubs,' Ladies Home Journal, Vol 22, May 1905,

political influence through the vote has been more problematic to feminist historians.<sup>4</sup>

This may in part be ascribed to a contemporary feminist dislike of voluntary associations.<sup>5</sup> As Susan Ellis and Katherine Noyes point out in their 1978 study of American voluntary associations:

"Volunteering" is often synonymous with acts of charitable social welfare and not connected to other voluntary involvement such as politics and policy making....What is recorded by most histories is a clear division of roles: we remember the men for voluntary political reform and the women for their voluntary social welfare acts.<sup>6</sup>

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quoted in James J. Lorence (ed.), Enduring Voices, Volume II (Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1996)

4 Suzanne Lebsock, 'Women and American Politics 1880-1920,' in Louise Tilly and Patricia Gurin (eds.), Women, Politics and Change (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1990), p. 37.

5 See in particular Linda Christiansen-Ruffman's essay on the tendency to regard women's volunteer work as 'secondary' and somehow 'non-political', even when men's role as volunteers is described as 'political' despite being outside the realm of electoral politics. Linda Christian-Ruffman, 'Participation Theory and the Methodological Construction of Invisible Women: Feminism's Call for an Appropriate Methodology,' Journal of Voluntary Action Research, Vol 14, April/September 1985.

6 Susan J. Ellis and Katherine H. Noyes. By the People: A History of Americans as Volunteers (Philadelphia: Energize, 1978), p. 4

Contemporary dissatisfaction with the volunteer role was described by political theorist Irene Dubrowski as a concern that 'volunteerism...[constitutes a] sexist institution that robs women of their potential economic resources and delegates them to the status of second-class citizens'.<sup>7</sup> In her description of women volunteers as 'the un-named political woman', Dabrowski describes the writings of the National Organization of Women (NOW) as defining volunteerism as 'a sexist institution that robs women of their potential economic resources and delegates them to the status of second class citizens'.<sup>8</sup> This concern may have lead to an unease with historical investigation of this role.<sup>9</sup>

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7 Irene Dabrowski, 'The Un-named Political Woman' in Frank Le Veness and Jane P. Sweeny (eds.), Women Leaders in Contemporary U.S. Politics (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1987), p. 137

8 Ibid., p. 137. Dubrowski considers this attitude to women volunteers particularly prevalent in the case of 'service orientated' volunteers.

9 An example of the lack of historiography on volunteerism in this period is the biographical dictionary, Notable American Women: The Modern Period, edited by Barbara Sicherman and Carol Hurd Greet (Cambridge MA: The Belknap Press, 1980). Whilst it is easy to criticize texts of this nature on the basis of whom they omit, the exclusion of leaders of voluntary associations does stand out. The editors list the criteria for selection for inclusion as 'the individual's influence on her time or field; the importance and significance of her achievement; the pioneering or innovative quality of her work; and the relevance of her career for the history of women'. Very few leaders of women's organizations are listed, with the exception of African-American leaders such as Mary McLeod

In her influential article 'Separatism as Strategy: Female Institution Building and American Feminism 1870-1930', Estelle Freedman recognised the important role played by American women's associations in the years leading up to the extension of suffrage:

When I survey the women's movement before suffrage I am struck by the hypothesis that a major strength of American Feminism prior to 1920 was the separate female community that helped sustain women's participation in both social reform and political activism....Most feminists did not adopt the radical demands for equal status with men that originated at the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848. Rather they preferred to retain membership in a separate female sphere and one in which women would be free to create their own

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Bethune or Eunice Carter of the National Council of Negro Women. Prominent leaders such as Anna Lord Strauss, Lena Phillips, Kathryn McHale and Rose Parsons are excluded. Strauss's exclusion is particularly ironic given her belief, expressed in 1971, that 'the League of Women Voters will really be out of proportion to any other organization, because there was no voluntary organization of anything like our kind that has their papers there [in the Library of Congress] so anybody studying this period is going to be greatly influenced by what the League did'. [The Reminiscences of Anna Lord Strauss, p. 221]

forms of personal, social and political relationships.<sup>10</sup>.

Freedman asserts that with the granting of suffrage and the advent of the 'New Woman' the appeal of female-only institutions waned, to be replaced by women who were eager to assimilate 'in the naive hope of becoming men's equals overnight'.<sup>11</sup> Whilst it is undeniable that, following the extension of suffrage, membership in women's organizations underwent a decline, it is not accurate to assert that the era of 'separate female organizations and institution building' was completely and irrevocably over. Freedman herself later reconsidered her position, acknowledging, 'New historical research...has shown the ways that separatism or female institution building did in fact survive as a reform strategy after 1920.'<sup>12</sup> An example of this revisionism is Susan Hartmann who, in her work on American women during and after World War II, concurs, 'Their own organizations afforded

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10 Estelle Freedman, 'Separation as Strategy: Female Institutional Building and American Feminism 1870-1930', Feminist Studies, Vol 5:3, Fall 1979

11 Ibid.

12 Estelle Freedman, 'Separatism Revisited: Women's Institutions, Social Reform and the Career of Miriam Van Waters' in Linda Kerber et al (eds.), US History as Women's History: New Feminist Essays (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), p. 173

women autonomous and more active vehicles for engagement in the political process.'<sup>13</sup>

American women's organizations served as an important bridge of women's activism in a period that was not overtly enthusiastic about any role for women outside of the home. As Susan Lynn argues, women's organizations represented a bridge between pre-war progressive activities of women reformers and women's activities in civil rights, anti-war and feminist movements in the 1960s.<sup>14</sup> It is interesting that, whilst the role of 19th-century women's organizations in fostering female activism in a period where the feminine ideal was the domesticity of 'true womanhood' has been lauded by feminist historians, their activities during the 'feminine mystique' (what Rupp and Taylor have called 'the traditional ideal dressed in fifties garb'<sup>15</sup>) has been more or less ignored.<sup>16</sup>

Women's voluntary associations, by avoiding a direct challenge to cultural tropes which place women within the domestic and not the 'political'

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13 Susan Hartmann, The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), p. 144

14 See Susan Lynn, 'Gender and Post World War II Progressive Politics: A Bridge to Social Activism in the 1960s,' Gender and History, Vol 14:2, Summer 1992.

15 Leila J. Rupp and Verta Taylor, Survival in the Doldrums: The American Women's Rights Movement 1945 to the 1960s ( New York: Oxford University Press, 1987) p.3.

sphere, were instrumental in allowing and encouraging American women to expand their horizons. If traditional 'political' activities were closed to women, either legally or through social and cultural restrictions, involvement in a voluntary association could offer women the only socially acceptable way to escape from the monotony of their domestic lives. A USIA report, 'Profile of America', approvingly documented the involvement of a 'Homemaker and Civic Worker' in the League of Women Voters. Mrs Mancourt Downing, whilst asserting, 'I don't believe in working mothers,' nevertheless recognized the value of activities outside the home: 'I do believe all women are better wives and mothers if they realize there is more to life than their home and local surroundings.'<sup>17</sup> Mrs Downing was frank about the escape that membership in the League offered, 'After the baby came...I felt as if I were in a vacuum with only diapers and bottles around me. I heard about the League of Women Voters and joined because I felt that it was a place where I could work and gain knowledge at the same time.'<sup>18</sup>

The political historian Louise Tilly has asserted that the involvement of women in voluntary

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16 Ibid., p.15

17 USIA Feature, 'Profile of An American (Part IX),' undated, p. 5, League of Women Voters Papers, Box 1787, File 'Government Agencies 1959-1967'

18 Ibid., p. 3

associations created a social and political space for women which was relatively unaffected by the granting of suffrage. 'Both philanthropic organizational and civic reform activities remain characteristic of women even after they gained the suffrage...partly because the local community area continued to be the arena of so many of their socially constructed, self-defined interests.'<sup>19</sup> The reasons American women continued to direct their energies through voluntary associations can be classified along the same lines of Freedman's analysis of the motivation for pre-suffrage American's women involvement: 'on the one hand, the negative push of discrimination in the public, male sphere, and on the other hand of the positive attraction of the female world of close personal relationships and domestic institutional structures'.<sup>20</sup> Both of these factors, defined loosely as 'push' and 'pull', were present in the years following the Second World War.

Perhaps the most obvious reason women chose to pursue careers in voluntary associations rather than in more mainstream political areas was the problems

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19 Louise A. Tilly, 'Dimensions of Women's Politics,' in Tilly and Gurin (eds.), p. 10

20 Estelle Freedman, 'Separatism Revisited: Women's Institutions, Social Reform and the Career of Miriam Van Waters' in Linda Kerber et al (eds.), US History as Women's History: New Feminist Essays (Chapel

that women in those realms encountered in entering what was still a male stronghold. The masculine nature of politics affected women both as voters and as prospective candidates. Susan Hartman explains, 'Women's eligibility for voting and office-holding had thus far left unshaken the cultural norms which defined politics as masculine.'<sup>21</sup> In the elections of 1948 women's turnout was 56 percent, compared to a 69 percent turnout for men.<sup>22</sup> Prejudice against women as politicians was common. A 1945 Gallup survey revealed that only 26 percent of men and 37 percent of women would vote for a woman for President, even if she were the best qualified candidate.<sup>23</sup> The women's magazine Woman's Day, whilst encouraging its readers to get involved in local politics nevertheless, warned:

Rule Three: Don't try to fly above your ceiling....Few women rise to the highest altitudes in politics....The main difficulty obviously is biology. Being a woman is almost a full time job. So is big time politics....So the men who run

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Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), p. ??

21 Hartmann, p. 143

22 Ibid.

23 Cynthia Ellen Harrison, Prelude to Feminism: Women's Organizations, the Federal Government, and the Rise of the Women's Movement 1942-1968, Ph.D., Columbia University, 1982, p. 204

political organizations are sometimes reluctant to push a young woman ahead as rapidly as her ability merits. 'Why invest all the time and effort to build up the gal into a household name,' remarked a political friend of mine about one such case, 'when she's sure to cross out of the game to have a couple of kids at just about the time we're ready to run her for mayor?' The prudent woman thus sets a realistic ceiling on her political ambitions.<sup>24</sup>

For many women, family obligations meant that the local nature of voluntary associations was a crucial advantage they had over mainstream political activities. Susan Ware explained, 'Groups such as the League of Women Voters...created public roles for women denied access to the usual sources of power. And they made these roles available on the local level, when women could most easily make political contributions without necessitating drastic changes in their familial arrangements.'<sup>25</sup> Activism in a woman's voluntary association could offer the benefits of a pseudo-career without

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24 John Fischer, 'Are you a Political Morning Glory?', Woman's Day, September 1954, p. 62

causing a difficult confrontation and conflict with women's popularly ascribed role as a 'homemaker'. Alice Leopold, Assistant Secretary of Labour for Women's Affairs, encouraged participants in a 1957 'Girls Nation' conference to pursue this career option. In a speech entitled 'Girlpower', Leopold spoke admiringly of women volunteers who...

...assumed their role as homemakers in their own communities --- a role which we know is of the utmost importance. But they made an additional choice. They decided to become active citizens as well as homemakers....They have enjoyed their combination of career and homemaker.<sup>26</sup>

Of equal, if not greater, importance to the continued importance of women's voluntary associations were the 'positive' benefits women gained from membership. Anna Lord Strauss of the League of Women Voters explained, 'As a result of the great proliferation of a variety of organizations women...in the United States have developed considerable civic prowess. Some observers

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25 Susan Ware, 'American Women in the 1950s: Non-partisan Politics and Women's Politicization' in Tilly and Gurin, p. 291

26 Leopold speech, 'Girlpower,' 28 July 1957, Records of the Women's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor 1918-1965 (Frederick: University Publications of America,)

believe that there should not be so much emphasis on groups solely of women members but there is little doubt that feminine self-confidence has been nurtured in them and many women have gone on to broader interests.'<sup>27</sup> A paper prepared by Anna Lord Strauss entitled 'Arguments For and Against Changing name of League of Women Voters to League of Active Voters (or some such)' pointed out that 'good citizenship should not have a sex differential' and 'it has always been a weak spot for us to discriminate against men within our organization'. More practically, 'it would be easier to enlist contributions if "Women" was not in the name'.

The paper did recognize that, on the negative side, 'some people fear that the men would gain control of the organization and would be the more forceful influence or turn it over to be staff run'.<sup>28</sup> The YWCA similarly investigated the possibility of merging with the YMCA but decided that the two organizations had radically different operating procedures. The Dodson Report: The Role of the YWCA in a changing Era (1958) speculated that the day of separatist, sex-segregated organizations

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27 Anna Lord Strauss working paper, 'The Participation of Women in the Process of Government,' undated, Anna Lord Strauss Papers, Box 13, File 271

28 Anna Lord Strauss, 'Arguments For and Against Changing the Name of the League of Women Voters to

may well be over. The report quoted Russell W. Leedy, a member of staff at the School of Social Administration, Ohio State University, who argued:

It becomes increasingly difficult to justify separate organizations and completely separate facilities on the basis of sex alone. It is doubtful whether there are now any significant reasons. Separateness is based mainly on personal preference, tradition and resistance to change.<sup>29</sup>

The Dodson Report, however, concluded that there were important positive benefits to the continuation of separatism. The report reasoned that sex-segregation...

...has provided and at present provides for women an autonomous agency where, in an atmosphere of religious commitment, they can (1) marshal resources to work for a greater measure of freedom for women, (2) demonstrate the capacities of women to operate an institution indigenous to themselves and serve the community through

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League of Active Voters (or some such), ' 22 April 1953, League of Women Voters Papers, Box 1198

its program and (3) have a testing ground in a supportive climate for the newly-found freedoms wrested from the male dominated society.<sup>30</sup>

The Dodson Report concluded that co-operation, not consolidation, was the best way to ensure that the positive values of women-only voluntary associations were not lost.

The 'service' factor of the YWCA was not just a function of their religious approach. Other women's voluntary associations shared the conviction that their work was an act of 'service'. The NFBPWC in 1956 changed the name of their magazine from Independent Woman to National Business Woman. The National Chairman explained, 'The name of it tends to set us apart as a group of independent women interested only in ourselves.' Miss Palmer explained, 'We are independent, yes as far as earning our own livelihood. We are not independent as far as our interests in our families, our communities, our country are concerned.'<sup>31</sup> Dorothy Height, a veteran of various voluntary associations including the YWCA, the NCNW and civil rights

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29 The Dodson Report, 1958, YWCA of Boston Papers, File 420. p. 10

30 Ibid. p. 11.

31 'Text of letter from Miss Hazel Palmer,' National Business Woman, Vol 35:11, November 1956, p. 2

organizations, explained this attitude in her membership of her college sorority:

When I was president of my sorority, Muriel Rahn, one of the very popular actresses said to me..., 'Well Dorothy, you took the fun out of the sorority,' ....So I said back to her, 'Maybe I didn't understand it, but for me a sisterhood has to have a purpose and you don't just have a sisterhood for a sisterhood, and I don't see how it is that you cannot enjoy yourself and also do something to make life better.'<sup>32</sup>

Height finished her interview with a reflection on the approach then current (1991) towards women and volunteerism, concluding with an assertion of the service ethos:

There has been a recent challenge coming from some elements of the women's movement, who hold that volunteering is sort of a feminine activity that displaces people who might otherwise have jobs and that, if women didn't volunteer, then a

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32 Dorothy Height oral history, The Black Women Oral History Project, Volume 5 (London: Meckler Westport, 1991), p. 85

society might find a way to pay for the services that volunteers render. I happen to believe...that it would be a pretty sad society if it paid for everything that was done for everyone.<sup>33</sup>

Moreover, the chance to serve in a voluntary association also offered to women the chance to pursue a rewarding career. Anna Lord Strauss explained in a working paper to the United Nations Seminar 'Civic Responsibilities and Increased Participation of Asian Women in Public Life':

Since the wider participation of women in government calls above all else for the development of many inspired leaders and few of them can be paid, I should like to describe the evolution of voluntary public service, for the volunteer spirit, is, in my opinion, the key to success.<sup>34</sup>

Strauss explained the way in which the volunteer sector offered women a chance to make a career for themselves whilst gaining valuable leadership skills:

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33 Ibid., p. 222

34 Strauss working paper, undated, Anna Lord Strauss Papers, Box 13, File 271

There is no longer so sharp a differentiation between career women and homemakers as there once was. Women move back and forth from paid to voluntary work according to circumstances and with no loss of status....The advent of the competent volunteer and her increasing effectiveness in public affairs is perhaps the most valuable chapter in the history of the development of women as citizens.<sup>35</sup>

The League of Women Voters' overseas fund, the CCCMF, argued that women in voluntary associations were so professional and well-educated that they had an obligation to educate not only women of other nations but also their less-enlightened American sisters. Verging on contempt for their less-involved countrywomen, the CCCMF suggested the programme 'Operation Wives'. The CCCMF expounded on the theory that women other than 'professional' volunteers who became involved, albeit unwillingly, in international affairs ran the grave risk of jeopardizing America's reputation and business success:

Every day, all over the world, American women, in 'temporary exile' as wives of

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35 Ibid.

business men abroad, have the challenge and the opportunity to interpret our way of life. Instead these women wish their time and lives away as they only exist breeding discontent and unhappiness in their husbands, destroying the efforts of our public relations departments and our State Department abroad. The nagging discontented wife develops a pattern of response which becomes a way of life. This rubs on the husband and reduces his performance and emotional health. This is certainly destructive of our business enterprises.<sup>36</sup>

The proposed series of seminars in 'Operation Wives' was designed to 'prepare the American women to go along on foreign assignments with a real sense of privilege, responsibility and adventure'.<sup>37</sup> The input and training given to the previously slothful harpy of a wife by the professionals at the CCCMF would transform her from 'excess baggage' to an 'Ambassador for the American Way'.<sup>38</sup>

The concept of involvement in voluntary associations as a career gathered strength from the

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36 CCCMF suggestion for 'Operation Wives', undated, Anna Lord Strauss Papers, Box 14, File 290

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.

social standing of the majority of the members of these organizations. Susan Ware's comment on the membership of the League of Women Voters that 'it could more accurately have been called the League of Affluent Women Voters' could equally be applied to the other leading women's organizations of the period.<sup>39</sup> The satisfaction with which women viewed their contribution through voluntary associations and the effect this had on their views of themselves as career women has been documented by Susan Ware. Ware's work is an important contradiction of the all-pervasive nature of Betty Friedan's picture of the 1950s as an era of feminine housebound frustration --- the 'Feminine Mystique'. Ware asserts, 'Friedan...overdrew her pictures of the 1950s. Not only was the Feminine Mystique not a phenomenon unique to the post-war world, but many women managed to lead active and interesting lives, even at its height.'<sup>40</sup> Ware points to Friedan's own survey of her classmates at Smith College, which showed that three-quarters of the respondents had interests outside the home and their families which they found satisfying. Ware's conclusion, based on League material, is that the importance of voluntary associations as a political outlet for American women has been largely underestimated:

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<sup>39</sup> Ware in Tilly and Gurin (eds.), p. 287

Did the League members of the 1950s suffer from a terminal case of the feminine mystique? Not at all. Rarely in the volumes of survey material or in its supporting correspondence was there any manifestation of frustration, boredom, or conflict between activity outside the home and women's domestic roles. There was no hint of defensiveness about being a modern, activist woman volunteer of the 1950s. In fact the [League] survey presented strong evidence that the members were quite fulfilled by combining familial roles with participation in local and community affairs.<sup>41</sup>

In undertaking leadership in a voluntary association, many American women thought of their activities as of an important career choice. Lena Phillips, President of the Business and Professional Women's Clubs and subsequently the International Federation of BPWC, was introduced to an audience in Lawrence, Kansas, as a woman who had chosen to pursue a career in voluntary associations rather than in her chosen profession:

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40 Ibid., p. 290

41 Ibid., p. 290

Dr Phillips was once a lawyer in New York. There came a time, however, when she realized she had to choose between her vocation and her advocacy. She realized that the world could do without another lawyer, but women needed another woman.<sup>42</sup>

Anna Lord Strauss, a long-serving president and representative of the League of Women Voters, also chose between a salaried career and a voluntary career. She was asked to take the examination to become a foreign service officer in the State Department following her service at the US Shipping Board and at the War Trade Board During World War I, but she refused, preferring to pursue a career in voluntary associations.<sup>43</sup> She recalled that Zeila Reubhausen, a later director of the League, made a similar choice:

I always remember what Zelia Reubhausen said when she was asked why she did voluntary work when she could have almost any professional job. She's a very bright intelligent person, and she said, 'Because

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42 Newsletter of the BPWC, December 1944, Lena M. Phillips Papers, Box 6

43 The Reminiscences of Miss Anna Lord Strauss, p. 30

as a volunteer there's no limit to what I can do.'<sup>44</sup>

Whilst convinced of the importance of a career in voluntary service, mainstream American women's organizations were vocal in their belief that women must also increase their representation in mainstream politics. Phillips ran for the Office of Lieutenant-Governor of Connecticut in 1948 on Henry Wallace's Progressive Party ticket.<sup>45</sup> She frankly assured her friends in the New Zealand Federation, 'Please do not plan to visit me in the State Capitol as there is no chance of my being elected.'<sup>46</sup> Instead, Phillips asserted that she was motivated by a conviction that it was her responsibility to set an example of political involvement to other women. In her speech accepting the nomination, she explained:

It is not from desire, however, that I accept this nomination, but solely in the line of duty. I mention this in the hope that other members of our party may be

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44 Ibid., p 563

45 The members of the NFBPWC were in fact the most active of all the women's organizations in traditional electoral politics. In 1951, for example, there were eight women in the House of Representatives and one woman in the Senate. All were members of the NFBPWC.

encouraged to realize and to assume their political responsibilities.<sup>47</sup>

Work in volunteer organization was sometimes presented as something of a 'training course' for women, who otherwise lacked access to training in political methods and practice. Jeanne Kirkpatrick, a U.S. Delegate to the United Nations, in her work Political Women, defined two potential paths to mainstream political for women, the first being as a worker in party politics, the second being 'the volunteer route'. She argued, 'Volunteer community service and volunteer political work alike provide women without special professional or educational training for a legislative career an opportunity to acquire experience, skills and reputations that qualify them for public office.'<sup>48</sup>

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46 TEARA, Newsletter of the Federation of Business and Professional Women of New Zealand, Vol 3:13, July-September 1948, Lena M. Phillips Papers, Box 6  
 47 Phillips speech, 26 June 1948, Lena M. Phillips Papers, Box 6. Wallace's campaign as a whole was unusual in the extent to which is attempted to appeal to women. In a pamphlet produced by the Women for Wallace Committee, Wallace made an insightful comment on the position of women in post-war American society. Noting the active role of women in World War II, Wallace asserted, 'Today, all women know that the drive to prevent their acting as full-fledged citizens and workers is as active as that against all our civil rights. Women are being told to abandon political and community work on the grounds that it is "unfeminine".' [Women for Wallace pamphlet, 'Woman: First Class Citizen,' Lena M. Phillips Papers, Box 6.]

48 Dabrowski in Le Veness and Sweeny (eds.), p. 140

The reluctance of American women to challenge their exclusion from political life was something which the journals of American women's organizations constantly challenged. A letter in the Journal of the AAUW entitled 'They Prefer Glass' asserted that women's organizations were more interested in lectures on Venetian glass than political and international affairs. The writer complained:

All women want a peaceful world. But how many want to help actively to preserve peace? Through cooking classes, magazines and books and lectures on housekeeping and home decorating, and through child study groups, our college women try intelligently to improve their homes and help their families. But why do some many of them stop there? Are they content to bound their entire outlook by the home circle, ignoring the whole world in which their children will live?<sup>49</sup>

The AAUW acknowledged that it was sometimes difficult to arouse women from prevailing ideological prescriptions of domesticity. In an article explaining and promoting their Community Program, the Journal of the AAUW admitted:

Many women feel that any participation in community affairs means a corresponding neglect of their families. They make a virtue of indifference to local issues.<sup>50</sup>

Ironically, whilst women's associations were supportive of careers for women in mainstream politics, their very existence may have served to distract and contain women's political energies. In an interview for Women's Day, Bertha Adkins asserted that women's associations had 'drained off too much time, energy and resources'. Adkins argued, 'A good deal of this could be diverted to doing a job in politics.'<sup>51</sup> In this opinion she was joined by a young (or, as Woman's Day equivocated, 'youngish') senator from Massachusetts, John F. Kennedy, who told a Virginia women's club, 'This nation cannot rely upon the members of the male sex. Our political leaders must be drawn from the ranks of the most capable, dedicated citizens regardless of sex.'<sup>52</sup> Kennedy asserted that women's clubs were in themselves not a sufficient medium for women's political talents.

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49 Valentine Von Tassel, 'They Prefer Glass,' Journal of the AAUW, Vol 39:3, Spring 1946

50 Mabel Newcomer, 'Let's Begin at Home', Journal of the AAUW, Vol 39:4, Summer 1946

51 Roul Tunley, 'Are American Women Backward Politically?', Women's Day, October 1958, p. 102

52 Ibid.

Susan Hartmann argues that, whilst women's organizations meant that American women 'became familiar with political issues, enjoyed opportunities for leadership and public visibility and gained self-confidence in a supportive environment', they also functioned to 'isolate women from mainstream party politics'.<sup>53</sup> Their role as an alternative to mainstream politics was constructed in two ways. Firstly American women's voluntary associations described their membership in terms of voters, citizens and consumers of policy, rather than as potential producers of policy. Secondly, because of the access of the leaders of women's' voluntary associations to a relatively high level of government activity in their roles as representatives of their respective organizations, the issue of women's involvement through other mediums may have seemed less pressing.

The configuration of the membership of voluntary associations as consumers of politics was a result of the structural raison d'etre of voluntary associations in American society. Voluntary associations were supposed to preserve liberty by keeping check on the government. The role of voluntary associations, therefore, whether male or female, was constructed in terms of the governed

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53 Hartmann, pp. 144-145.

and the governors, the citizens and the state. Lucille Koshland, in a speech to mark her retirement from the Overseas Education Fund of the League of Women Voters, explained:

I am proud of the OEF because it is a non-governmental organization which stresses *the role of the volunteer*. When we talk of the government by consent of the governed, whom do we mean by 'the governed', whose consent is the sine qua non of our democracy? Who are the governed? They are not just the professionals and the experts. They are the business men, the housewives, the labourers, teachers and doctors --- just plain citizens.<sup>54</sup>

However active, informed and intelligent the 'governed' may be, their role as members of a voluntary association nevertheless is to serve as a foil, a watch, and a check on government rather than to participate *through* government. American voluntary association saw themselves explicitly as extra-governmental, and any emphasis on the importance of increasing the participation of women

in mainstream politics risked negating the importance of women's activities through the association. Even the name of the League of Women Voters stresses their role as citizens and voters, rather than policy-makers. Moreover, the strict principle of 'nonpartisanship' to which some organizations, such as the League of Women Voters, subscribed often resulted in non-participation. Officers of the League were prohibited from involving themselves in partisan politics.<sup>55</sup>

Consequently, whilst male American politicians showed an awareness of the importance of wooing women as voters, this did not translate into any real effort to increase their role in policy making. President Eisenhower's electoral strategy was a vivid example of this.<sup>56</sup> A confidential

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54 Koshland speech to the Overseas Education Fund Board of Directors, January 13, 1965, Lucille Koshland Papers, Box 1, File 1

55 This was not true of all women's organizations. The League was (and is) unusual in the extent to which it has followed the principle of non-partisanship (an important value in an organization which sponsors televised Presidential debates). The National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, who counted Senator Margaret Chase Smith and Representative Mrs Chase Going Woodhouse amongst its members, obviously took a different position.

56 Eisenhower was more comfortable with the company of men at his 'stag dinners' than when surrounded by women. The all-male character of these evenings was pointed out to Eisenhower at a Presidential press conference, in November 1953. Doris Fleeson, a Bell Syndicated columnist, asked Eisenhower, 'None of these 115 guests have been women. How do you square that with your anti-discrimination policy?'

memorandum, 'Consideration of a Direct Appeal to Women by the President,' recognized the importance of the women's vote.<sup>57</sup> A memo from Mrs J. Ramsey Harris, Co-Chairman of the Citizens for Eisenhower Committee, Chair of the Women's Division, to James Murphy, Chairman of the National Citizens for

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Eisenhower responded with 'a belligerent air of injured innocence' that he wanted to invite women, but 'the women couldn't decide who should come'.

As an answer to the negative publicity generated by the all-male dinners, Bertha S. Adkins, a former head of the Women's Activities Committee of the Republican National Committee and then Undersecretary of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, organized a series of six breakfast sessions with President Eisenhower and the leaders of women's organizations at the Solgrave Club in Washington. These breakfast meetings included twenty women, each of whom were allocated two minutes to tell the President about their organization. The breakfast sessions were more an exercise in public relations than an effort at consultation. Adkins admitted, 'The breakfasts gave him, I think, an insight into the ways in which women's organized efforts were being used. Certainly it gave a satisfaction to the heads of women's organizations to be able to have this personal association with the President of the United States.' [Bertha S Adkins oral history, 18 December 1967, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Oral History Collection]

57 Murphy to Roberts, 4 February 1954, 'Consideration of a Direct Appeal to Women by the President,' Eisenhower Papers, Central File, Official File, Box 852, File DF 158, 'Women'

Moreover, the memorandum pointed out, 'there is a hidden dividend within this appeal to women voters which arises from the increasing youth factor in the American voting population'. The recent demographic shifts in the American population gave added weight to women's political importance, as 'the profound influence of mothers on the impressionable minds of teenagers will continue to be at work over the next few years establishing political predilections which will determine voting patterns for years to come'.

Eisenhower Congressional Committee, explained her belief regarding women's political identity:

In my opinion, women, by and large, are still fearful of actual political alliance and yet are increasingly and intensely interested in good government. They do not necessarily vote with their husbands.<sup>58</sup>

Eisenhower's campaigns therefore made a concerted effort to appeal to women, specifically in terms of domestic and spiritual values. In a message sent to 594 leading Republican women, Eisenhower confided:

More and more in recent days I've been laying plans for the campaign, I have turned for counsel to the women, especially with respect to the spiritual and moral aspects of our crusade. Women feel these values more deeply than men, I believe. Perhaps we men are too busy, are too hard-boiled, but with thoughts of their children and grandchildren in mind, and with real concern for the kind of

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58 Harris to Murphy, 19 January 1954, Eisenhower Papers, Central File, Official File, Box 852, File DF 158, 'Women'

world these youngsters will go into, women are mightily interested in these values.<sup>59</sup>

In fact the only woman on Eisenhower's campaign was Katherine Howard, who served specifically as the 'Women's Advisor'.<sup>60</sup> Republican women were included in the Eisenhower campaign in very gender-specific ways. For example, the National Federation of Women's Republican Clubs carried out highly specialized polls for the party which returned the following form of data:

Baker, grocer, veteran and next-door neighbour are for Ike. About half the milkmen are for Eisenhower, and the other half don't like Ike. The shoemen are not enthusiastic. The next-door neighbor in

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59 Katherine Howard oral history, Oral History Research Office Columbia University, p. 456

60 Eisenhower's lack of commitment to appointing women to his White House staff comes through in an account by Katherine Howard of how she got her job as deputy chief of the Federal Civil Defense Administration: '[Sherman] Adams was Chief of Staff. Much as he liked and respected me, he saw no place for a woman on the White House Staff. There was a great hue and cry from the women's organizations to have a woman on the White House staff --- and to have me. I would have liked that. But Adams said he wasn't going to have an Arab for Arabs, a woman for the women, and a Negro for the Negroes on the White House Staff, but he wanted me to continue to be part of the team. Would I be interested in the Women's Bureau or the Labor Department?. I didn't know too much about labor and social welfare laws. It didn't appeal. How about the Children's Bureau? The same there. We went over many possibilities and finally

the mid-west are more against or are not talking. In the Northeast or New England many of the neighbors will not get into discussions. The laundrymen are silent except in the Far West where most of them are for Eisenhower....Several women from the different areas said their hairdressers were for Eisenhower.<sup>61</sup>

Women were also encouraged to throw themselves into celebrations for Eisenhower's birthday in October, although a memo from Eugene Munger, Director of the Eisenhower Birthday Celebrations, to Ivy Priest, Director of the Women's Division, warned, 'Do not sponsor cake baking contests. Experts tell us these contests create competition and complications among women --- a thing we do not want.'<sup>62</sup> The culinary theme continued following Eisenhower's elections, as the National Federation of Republican Women (NFRW) established a 'Kitchen Kabinet', which was to be comprised of 'Republican women representing each of the presidential Cabinet Posts', whose job would be 'to

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hit on Civil Defence.' [Katherine G. Howard, With My Shoes Off (New York: Vantage Press, 1977), p.248]

61 'Analysis of Replies to the 2nd Questionnaire sent out by National Federation of Women's Republican Clubs,' October 1952, Eisenhower Papers, White House Central Files, Official Files, Box 106

clearly interpret to the Housewives of America the job that is being carried out in each of the departments under the Republican Administration' or, in the words of the publicity department, 'keep the women of America informed on 'what's cooking in Washington'. The aim of the Kitchen Kabinet was 'to provide Republican women with nutritious political recipes to serve their friends and neighbors with a cup of coffee'.<sup>63</sup>

This method of involving women in politics was very much resented by some who believed in a more central role for women. India Edwards, who had served as an advisor to Truman asserted in an interview:

The men were perfectly willing to have the women help in the campaign in a menial way...give teas and you know. But most of them around the country --- not Roosevelt and not Truman --- but most of the country acted as if women had no brains and that they weren't capable of anything

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62 Munger to Priest, 28 September 1952, Eisenhower Papers, White House Central Files, Official Files, Box 106

63 Press release, 15 April 1955, Eisenhower Papers, White House Central Files, Official Files, Box 142

more than a seven-year old child could do  
 --- something of that sort.<sup>64</sup>

The leaders of American women's organizations may have regretted the lack of women in policymaking posts, either elected or appointed, but it was not something they necessarily pursued.<sup>65</sup> Because their own access to government was relatively high, the difficulties for these leaders to gain power through other means were ameliorated. Grant McConnell argues that the function of the private association has been to enlist, on the behalf of the state, the support and co-operation of spokespeople of significant portions of the population in return for minimum concessions and rewards. McConnell asserts that the blurred distinction between the private and the public sphere marked the 'means by which leadership elites have perennially been co-opted for

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64 India Edwards oral history, 1975, p. 27, Harry S. Truman Library, Oral History Collection

Edwards' exemption of Truman from such patronizing attitudes is more partisan than it is accurate. In 1948 Edwards, at that time the head of the Women's Division of the Democratic National Committee, co-ordinated their efforts under the campaigning title, 'Housewives for Truman'. [Cynthia Ellen Harrison, 'Prelude to Feminism: Women's Organizations, the Federal Government, and the rise of the Women's Movement 1942-1968,' Ph.D., Columbia University, 1982, p.190]

65 By 1952 women constituted only 2 percent of all executive appointments. [Laura McEnaney, Civil Defense Begins at Home: Domestic Political Culture in the Making of the Cold War, Ph.D., University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1996, p. 278]

them maintenance of at least a minimal unity'.<sup>66</sup> He argues:

Through the private associations it has been possible to discover authoritative spokesmen for segments of the population which have the capacity to disrupt common life. Through these leaders it has been possible to strike bargains permitting a reasonable degree of social peace, to obtain the disciplining of the segments of the population and guarantees of their performance.<sup>67</sup>

The rewards for co-operation with government were, for the leaders of sizable organizations, plentiful. Perhaps the most important important for them was the prestige which frequent consultation with the government carried. Truman's frequent meetings with Anna Lord Strauss and other members of the League of Women Voters served to convince her that she, on behalf of her organizations, played an important role in national and international affairs. Her patronizing descriptions of meetings

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66 Grant McConnell, 'The Public Values of the Private Association' in Pennock, J. Roland and Chapman, John W. (eds.) Voluntary Associations (New York, Atherton Press, 1969), p. 156

67 Ibid. p. 156.

with Truman show that she regarded her input as important and valuable:

We did a very good job of educating President Truman. We were very close to Truman, particularly in his first days. Mr Truman was a scared rabbit when he came into office as President. The Vice-President really wasn't very involved in what happened in those days. He was given rather formal responsibilities. When he became President he was ill at ease.<sup>68</sup>

Because President Truman was new and, Strauss argued, lacked confidence, she asserted that the League exerted a good deal of influence through her meetings with the President:

I really got embarrassed because we went over to the White House so often to talk to him. I thought he would say, 'My goodness, here she is again', but he was really interested...he was truly grateful for the information we brought to him of

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68 The Reminiscences of Miss Anna Lord Strauss, pp. 311-312

what was happening throughout the country.'<sup>69</sup>

Whilst Strauss felt that her influence with the President waned when Eisenhower came to power, it is interesting that his letters to her are worded as respectful solicitations of her advice and help. A letter enlisting her participation in the People-to People programme, which Strauss was initially wary of, informed her, 'There is a matter in which the President is personally interested and on which we would very much like to have your counsel and help.'<sup>70</sup>

A further inducement to co-operation with American government may have been the frequent opportunities for foreign travel it offered. For Strauss, alliance with the government entailed enough foreign trips to fill a passport. In addition to her round-the-world trip with the Town Hall Meeting of the Air, Strauss visited Japan and the Far East as an adviser for the Educational Exchange Programme of the State Department in 1953. In 1967, she was asked by the White House to go to Vietnam with Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker, Eugenie Anderson, and Mrs Norman Chandler, the wife of the owner of

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69 Ibid., pp. 312-313

70 White House to Strauss, Anna Lord Strauss Papers, File 182, Box 8

the Los Angeles Times.<sup>71</sup> Other government-sponsored trips included a tour of India in 1957.

The involvement of the leaders of American women's associations in government, albeit on an ad hoc and unofficial basis, diminished in their eyes the urgency of demands and efforts to increase the number of women in policymaking roles. In her study of American women's organizations and the Federal government, Cynthia Harrison points out that actual political appointments for women tended to be rewarded to 'party women', women active in national party organizations such as the Democratic National Committee and the Republican National Committee. Harrison argues, 'Party-women considered high-level positions for deserving qualified female candidates to be both encouragement and reward for the campaign work of thousands of loyal women in local precincts.'<sup>72</sup> Harrison argues that 'party women' took pride in this manifestation of their influence with the federal government, even at the expense of the two other groups of women (leaders of voluntary associations, and 'militant' feminists working for the Equal Rights Amendment): 'Although the actual number of women named to important positions was in fact small it satisfied political women who themselves took pride in their access

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<sup>71</sup> Anna Lord Strauss Papers, Box 13, File 264

to the chief executives. Of the three groups competing for federal attention, only the party women could claim success.'<sup>73</sup>

How 'success' is measured is crucial to this argument. In fact, voluntary associations counted success in terms of gaining federal attention, but not necessarily federal appointments. After all, leaders of voluntary associations, believers in the principle of the importance of non-governmental work may not have valued political patronage appointments in the same way that women who choose to channel their efforts in electoral politics may have done. It was the appointment of their leaders to *non-governmental* appointments --- particularly on the international spheres, where they already had contacts and possibly some reputation --- which were prized by leaders of American women's organizations. In this area they had an important advantage over 'party women'. As Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones points out, appointing partisan women to important international positions was disruptive, as a change in government led to resignations and new appointments. For example, when the Republican President Eisenhower was

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72 Harrison, p.183.

73 Ibid., p.185

elected, the Democrat Eleanor Roosevelt had to resign from her position at the United Nations.<sup>74</sup>

Leaders of women's organizations such as Strauss or Virginia Gildersleeve of the AAUW 'represented' American women in two ways. They 'represented' in the sense that they assumed responsibility for mediating between American women and the government. They were also 'representative' in that their presence within government circles 'represented' the inclusion of women in American political life.

This 'representing' function was, to use Daniel Bell's phrase, 'symbolic'. He explains:

The fact that decision-making has been centralized into the narrow cockpit of Washington, rather than in the impersonal market, teaches groups like the National Association of Manufactures, the Farm Bureau, the American Federation of Labour et al to speak for 'Business', for the 'Farmers', for 'Labor'.<sup>75</sup>

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74 Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, Changing Differences: Women and the Shaping of American Foreign Policy 1917-1994 (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995)

75 Daniel Bell, 'Interpretations of American Politics' in Daniel Bell (ed.), The Radical Right: The New American Right (New York: Doubleday, 1964), p. 70

In their liaison with the US government, leaders of American women's organizations did not only represent their specific organization but also functioned as the representatives of the 'symbolic' group of 'women'.

Given the high level of investment in their role as the representatives of 'Women' in political life, leaders of American women's organizations perhaps lacked motivation to improve other forms of representation for women such as electoral politics. Their reluctance to emphasise this issue was reinforced by the unpopularity amongst American women's organizations of any activity which could be construed as 'feminist'. American women in post-suffrage years often expressed the feeling that activities which focused on the issue of 'women's rights' and 'women's status' were 'outmoded'. The dismissal of feminism in these terms is a consistent thread in the discourse of American women's organizations. Margaret Hickey, President of the Business and Professional Women's Federation, had, in the words of historian Susan Hartman, 'sounded the death knell on the "old selfish strident feminism"' in 1945. Hickey called for a 'new feminism' which 'emphasised women's responsibilities as citizens rather than women's rights'.<sup>76</sup> Addressing

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<sup>76</sup> Hartmann, p. 152

a conference sponsored by the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor, 'The American Woman, Her Changing Role: Worker, Homemaker, Citizen,' Frieda Miller assured her audience, 'This conference will not yield a 1948 declaration of women's rights. Women have gone too far and achieved too much to make action of that kind either necessary or appropriate.'<sup>77</sup>

Voluntary associations which were devoted exclusively to the issue of women's rights drew scepticism from American women. The AAUW grudgingly acknowledged that the International Council of Women 'serves a purpose, since the women's groups belonging to it are in that stage of feminine history that some groups in this country are still, but was more typical of women's groups 25 years ago'.<sup>78</sup> Anna Lord Strauss was particularly hostile to what she saw as the 'feminist' stand-point of some of the international women's organizations, complaining to her office staff, 'If I hear much more about women's rights, I am going to turn into a

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<sup>77</sup> Miller speech to Women's Bureau Conference, 'The American Woman, Her Changing Role: Worker, Homemaker, Citizen,' 17-19 February 1948, Records of the Women's Bureau of the US Department of Labor 1918-1965 (Frederick: University Publications of America), Part One, Reel 10

<sup>78</sup> McHale to Heinman, 17 March 1948, Records of the AAUW, Reference 00585

violent anti-feminist.'<sup>79</sup> In particular she criticised the International Alliance of Women, (IAW), of which the League was a member, arguing, 'It was so very feminist in its point of view and I felt that the day of the feminist approach was over and they should work from a wider base.'<sup>80</sup> Judge Dorothy Kenyon, an observer at the IAW's 1946 conference, concurred, 'The group was divided into those primarily interested in women (The old line "feminists") and those primarily interested in seeing women play their part in world affairs.'<sup>81</sup> Rejection of the label 'feminist' was a common strategy amongst American women's organizations. Cynthia Harrison argues, 'No matter how devoted to the quest for women's rights and improvement in women's status, female leaders between World War II and the second half of the 1960s eschewed the label "feminist".'<sup>82</sup>

The IAW, from its perspective, believed that the League's channelling of political activity solely through their organization, worked to the

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79 Quoted in Leila J. Rupp, 'The Survival of American Feminism: The Women's Movement in the Post-war Period,' in Robert H. Brenner and Gary W. Reichard (eds), Reshaping America: Society and Institutions 1945-60 (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1982), p. 42

80 The Reminiscences of Miss Anna Lord Strauss, p. 378

81 Kenyon report on the IAW Conference, 18 October 1946, League of Women Voters Papers, Box 1882, File 'International Alliance of Women'

detriment of women's entry into mainstream politics. After praising the organizational skills and the enthusiasm of the League members, Hannah Ryah, an observer from the IAW at the League's 19th Annual Conference in 1950, wrote in the IAW's journal:

One question is, however, burning on the visitor's lips when she leaves this convention. How can it be that these skilled American women seem not to care for using their political ability directly in the political work? Only 1 percent of the numbers of Congress are women. Is it that they feel that they must penetrate the problems deeper and deeper before they share the responsibility of putting into effect the declaration which during many years introduced the League's Programme: 'The realization of efficient government depends upon making laws, charters and constitutions fit the needs of the people, upon the nomination and appointment of responsible officials, upon the acceptance by citizens of participation in government as a public trust'?<sup>83</sup>

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82 Harrison, p. i

83 Hannah Ryah, 'League of Women Voters of the U.S. invites board members of the IAW to its 19th

To position mainstream politics and voluntary associations as an either/or construction is perhaps to miss the important way in which women's voluntary associations offered American women an alternative to domesticity. The choice for American women may not have been between voluntary associations and a mainstream political career but between voluntary associations and an entirely private/domestic life. In his 1955 study The Political Role of Women, Maurice Duverge recognised that the role of women's voluntary associations in the relationship between women and politics was not as simple as offering an alternative to or a distraction from politics. Duverge asserted:

One of the characteristic features of women's associations is their dislike of openly admitting any political interests and still more of acknowledging a connexion with any particular party.... This camouflage of political activities, this attempt to enlist women's support for a particular political view by way of their practical interests, religious convictions or education for citizenship is a most important phenomenon. It

probably reflects the present psychological and social attitude of women towards politics and the doubts many of them still show about political life.<sup>84</sup>

By offering their members an active role in terms which were non-threatening, stemming as they did from a domestic role, American women's organizations served an important role. Reminding its readers of the vulnerability of boundaries between domestic and political life, the Journal of the AAUW encouraged them to step outside of those boundaries:

The welfare of the family is largely bound up with the welfare of the community and the welfare of the world. This is clear enough in time of war. But it is equally true in time of peace. In fact, the continuance of peace depends upon the acceptance of this and all that it implies.<sup>85</sup>

In the years following World War II, American women's voluntary associations underwent something of a renaissance, both in terms of their popularity

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84 Maurice Duverge, The Political Role of Women (Paris: UNESCO, 1955) p. 115.

85 Ibid.

and in terms of their importance in American political culture.<sup>86</sup> In 1949 the Department of Commerce estimated that there were over 100,000 women's clubs across the United States.<sup>87</sup> The 'voluntary associations' model of political participation for American women had important repercussions for their role in mainstream politics. Moreover the export of this model, encouraged by the participation and co-operation of the voluntary associations with the government's international programmes, had significant effects on the way in which American policy towards women of other countries was shaped.

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86 The AAUW membership increased from 93,463 in 1947 to 106,593 in 1949.

87 Bell in Bell (ed.), p. 55

## CHAPTER FOUR

### MAKING FRIENDS AND INFLUENCING NATIONS

The continuing importance of single-sex voluntary associations as a medium for American women's political expression played a vital role in their contribution to international affairs. If the activities of women's international organizations are ignored, American women's involvement in international affairs looks slight: as late as 1987 women made up less than 5 percent of senior foreign service ranks.<sup>1</sup> In contrast to the opposition, hostility, and perpetual glass ceiling which faced women seeking involvement in international affairs through government service, women's involvement in international affairs through the medium of women's voluntary associations was both welcomed and encouraged by the American government.

Initially, American women's organizations pressed for women to be allowed to contribute to international affairs through their inclusion in the foreign policy establishment. In this respect, the mainstream American women's associations were continuing with the policy which had been conceived

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1 J. Ann Tickner, 'Identity in International Relations Theory' in Yosef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwil (eds.), The Return of Culture and Identity in International Relations Theory (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1996), p. 152

and directed by Carrie Chapman Catt and her allies in the Committee on the Cause and Cure of War (CCCW). This coalition of nine women's organizations demanded the increased participation of women in foreign policy to prevent a reoccurrence of the sacrifice of the First World War.<sup>2</sup> The historian of the CCCW, Susan Zeiger, has argued that the Committee pursued a policy of educating women for their involvement in mainstream political circles: 'Looking ahead to the 1930s, Catt and her colleagues like AAUW president Mary Wooley would focus on an increasingly elitist strategy, trying to promote within the foreign policy establishment a small group of semi-professional women reformers.'<sup>3</sup>

Even after the outbreak of World War II, the CCCW and its successors continued to pursue this strategy. On 14 June 1944, a conference sponsored by Eleanor Roosevelt was held at the White House at the instigation of the CCCW. Titled 'How Women may share

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2 The initial members of CCCW were the American Association of University Women, the Council of Women for Home Missions, the Federation of Women's boards of Foreign Missions, the General Federation of Women's Clubs, the National Board of the Young Womens' Christian Association, the National Council of Jewish Women, the League of Women Voters, the Women's Christian Temperance Union and the Women's Trade Union League. The Federation of Business and Professional Womens' Clubs and the National Women's Conference of the American Ethical Union joined later. [Susan Zeiger, 'Finding a Cure for War,' Journal of Social History, 1990, Vol 24, p. 83]

3 Ibid., p. 75

in Post-War Policy Making', it was attended by 230 women. The outcome was the production of a 'Roster of Qualified Women', a list of (initially) 260 women qualified to serve the US government in an international capacity. Eleanor Roosevelt commented that the value of the list was that 'now no man can ever say he could not think of a woman qualified in a particular field'.<sup>4</sup> The Continuation Committee of the Conference continued until February 1945, parallelling the effort of the Committee on Women in World Affairs (CWWA), founded by Emily Hickman and Mary Woolley in 1942 to push for female appointees to international organizations and conferences.<sup>5</sup>

Amidst these efforts, American women became increasingly anxious that they not be excluded from policymaking. Their concern was not misplaced. The State Department's view that the question of women appointments to positions in the State Department and international organizations was more a matter of public relations and domestic support than a

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4 'Roster of Qualified Women drawn up by the Continuation Committee of the June 14th White House Conference,' Journal of the AAUW, Spring 1945, Vol 38:3.

5 See Susan M. Hartmann, American Women in the 1940s: The Home Front and Beyond (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), p. 148. US women's organizations belonging to the Committee of Women in World Affairs included WILPF, NCJW, NCW, YWCA, NFBPWC, and the National Women's Party. Organizations which had observers at meetings but were not full members included the GFWC, AAUW, WTUL, and the NLWV.

seriously considered policy was illustrated by a memorandum from Francis Russell, Chief of the Office of Public Affairs, to Under- secretary of State Dean Acheson. Russell advised Acheson, 'I think it is desirable that some publicity be given to the action of the Staff Committee on the question of women in the Department and American delegations to international conferences.' He suggested that the best way to do this would be through a letter drafted by him but sent in the name of Mrs Roosevelt to Acheson, asserting:

There is a general desire among women and women's groups in this country for assurance that women will receive full consideration for appointments on international delegations and to policymaking posts in connection with our foreign policy.<sup>6</sup>

'Mrs Roosevelt' could then urge Acheson to clarify the policy of the State Department towards the appointment of women in the Department and on international missions.<sup>7</sup> Acheson's reply, again

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6 Russell to Acheson, 24 May 1946, US National Archives, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, Office of the Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, Subject Files 1945-52, Box 1

7 Draft letter from Eleanor Roosevelt, 24 May 1946, US National Archives, General Records of the

drafted by Russell, commented that he was 'glad of the opportunity afforded by your letter' to state that the Department's policy was 'to provide equal opportunities, on the basis of qualifications, for employment and promotion of women in the department and in the Foreign Service, and for representation on United States delegation to international conferences'.<sup>8</sup>

To his credit, Acheson scribbled on the top of Russell's memorandum, 'I don't like this,'<sup>9</sup> but the Undersecretary was not above using women's organizations as a publicity forum. When Acheson agreed to give an informal speech to the Committee of Women in World Affairs in January 1946, Russell noted, 'This undoubtedly will be a good spot for a few well chosen words on the British loan.'<sup>10</sup>

Predominantly because of the number of letters that the CWWA generated, it had some effect in the appointment of more women to

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Department of State, RG 59, Office of the Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, Subject Files 1945-52, Box 1

8 Ibid.

9 Russell to Acheson, 24 May 1946, US National Archives, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, Office of the Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, Subject Files 1945-52, Box 1

10 Russell to Acheson, 25 January 1946, US National Archives, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, Office of the Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, Subject Files 1945-52, Box 1

international delegations and organizations. An update on the work of the Committee in 1947 reminded its members that about eighty women had served in international conferences since 1941: 'This record of eighty in five years --- sixteen a year --- contrasts with the previous five years when only one woman was appointed to an international mission.' <sup>11</sup> However, the National Chairman warned that there was no time for the Committee to 'rest on their laurels' since...

...there were no women in the United States delegation at the Paris Peace Conference; there was no American woman in the delegation at the Preparatory Conference for the International Trade Organization. There is no woman among the President's administrative assistants. There is no woman among the eight assistant secretaries of state. There is no American woman high in the Secretariat of the United Nations.<sup>12</sup>

The CWWA's constituent members also acted as individual groups to pressure the government. In

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11 Hickman to Committee of Women in World Affairs members, 1 March 1947, National Council of Negro Women Papers, Series 5, Box 8, Folder 1

12 Ibid.

1945 the American Association of University Women (AAUW) issued a press release on appointments to the US delegation to the United Nations, arguing, 'In bodies representing governments by the people, it is fitting that women as well as men should participate.'<sup>13</sup> The following year the AAUW publicised a letter to the President urging the appointment of women to defense positions: 'The women of our country have been encouraged to feel that during this emergency they would not only be expected to help in the carrying out of national and local plans, but would have full representation in the making of plans.'<sup>14</sup> By 1948, perhaps spurred by the lack of any substantial action by the government, the AAUW stepped up its pressure by asking President Truman to form a commission of men and women 'to survey and recommend measures designed to integrate women into every phase of the preparedness program --- military, industrial, scientific and civilian defence'.<sup>15</sup>

The CWWA was an important attempt to break women out of the ghetto, self-imposed or otherwise, of international involvement solely through

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13 Press release, 1945, Records of the AAUW, Series III, Reference 00461

14 Press release, 18 September 1946, Records of the AAUW, Series III, Reference 00468

15 Press Release, 11 May 1948, AAUW Archives, Series III, Reference 00508

voluntary associations. At a meeting between Dr Hickman and Judge Lucy Howarth, another member of the CWWA, with Alger Hiss and Mr Thompson of the State Department in November 1945, Dr Hickman explained, 'the Committee was not interested in seeing women appointed on the delegations to international conference for political reasons or as representatives of women's organizations.'<sup>16</sup> Yet the failure of women's organizations to make any substantial improvement in the employment of women within the foreign policy elite was still evident in a meeting of ten women in August 1961. Whilst two of these women were representatives of women's organizations, the remaining eight were 'government women, all in very responsible positions --- all rather high in grade and pulling down good salaries (mostly over \$13,000 per annum)'. They aimed to form a pressure group, as 'all are very tired of the general State Department posture of belittling the importance of women and women's activities both here and abroad, and are determined to do something about it'. The meeting was arranged for a Sunday in the apartment of one of the participants, Miss Jacobsons of the Office of Deputy Director for Program and

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16 Meeting of Mr Hiss, Mr Thompson, Dr Emily Hickman, Judge Lucy Howarth, 8 November 1945, US National Archives, General Records of the Department of State, Subject Files of Durward V. Sandifer,

planning in the International Co-operation Administration, 'so that it could be completely unofficial and out of regular channels'.<sup>17</sup>

There was, however, one area of activity in which the US government enthusiastically sought the participation of women. American women's organizations, through their links with similar organizations in other nations, had established an international network by the outbreak of World War II. This network survived the war relatively intact, leading to a system in which leaders of women's voluntary associations pursued quasi-official careers in international affairs with the active encouragement of their government. The government in turn was able to direct and observe American women's involvement in the international network of women's organizations.

Leaders of American women's organizations put themselves and their groups at the government's disposal. Reporting on the contribution of their President, Dr Anna Hawkes, the AAUW noted:

As an observer for the US Advisory Commission on Educational Exchange, of which she is the only woman member, Dr

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Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for United Nation Affairs 1944 -54, Box 6  
17 Overseas Education Fund memorandum, 8 August 1961, Lucille Koshland Papers, Carton 1, File 12

Hawkes recently completed a tour of 78 days which covered 14 countries and 19 cities. Everywhere her position as president of the AAUW brought her entree no diplomatic passport could give. Returned AAUW grantees and members of the IFUW [International Federation of University Women] entertained her and gave her insight into the status of and work of women in their country.<sup>18</sup>

Anna Lord Struass described the co-operative nature of the relationship between the State Department and the League of Women Voters:

We told our friends in the State Department that unless they would help us to do the education that was necessary, tell us what was going on, tell us what their thinking was, we couldn't inform our members. They were very good about having special briefings for us, and then they set up briefings for other organizations because they realized that they couldn't expect to have the support and the votes

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18 'Proceedings of the 14th Biennial Conference, North-East Central Region of the AAUW, April 27th - 28th,' Dorothy Zeiger Papers, Box 1, File 18

they wanted if they hadn't kept us informed.<sup>19</sup>

The extent to which American women's organizations constituted a 'network' was helped by the fact that many women belonged to more than one organization. Dorothy Height, for example, served in important positions both on the National Council of Negro Women and the Young Women's Christian Association. Susan Ware's study of the membership of the League of Women Voters showed that only 15 percent of the League's membership belonged to fewer than two other organizations and more than a third of the League members belonged to more than five other organizations.<sup>20</sup>

Cooperation between women's organizations was not always smooth, and there were well-documented disputes between various organizations. The AAUW, for example, had disaffiliated itself from the National Council of Women of the United States in 1932, and despite repeated requests that they reaffiliate, the AAUW was disparaging about the nature of the National Council. Kathryn McHale, the

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19 The Reminiscences of Miss Anna Lord Strauss, p. 310

20 Susan Ware, 'American Women in the 1950s: Non-partisan Politics and Women's Politicization' in Louise Tilly and Patricia Gurin (eds.), Women, Politics and Change (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1990), p. 284

director of the AAUW, had a particular grudge against the National Council, who had made use of her time to direct research for a book (Angels and Amazons) about the achievement of women in the US; this was to be their chief display at the exhibition 'A Century of Progress' in Chicago. To McHale's annoyance, the National Council not only assigned the writing-up of the project to a writer other than the assistant researcher McHale had recommended, they refused to fund an AAUW exhibit at the exhibition --- an accommodation they had made to reimburse the AAUW for the loss of Dr McHale's time.<sup>21</sup>

As President of the National Council of Women, Rose Parsons felt strongly that the combined strength of America's organized women was vital in the face of the Cold War threat. In 1958 she wrote to Dr Anna Hawkes, President of the AAUW, urging her, since the AAUW was reluctant to resume membership of the council, at least to 'attend meetings with representatives of other nonmember organizations which the National Council of Women has in New York from time to time'.<sup>22</sup> Stressing the

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21 McHale to Heineman, 17 March 1948, AAUW Archives, Reference 00585

22 Parsons to Rose, 22 January 1958, Records of the AAUW, Reference 00604. Whilst there is no evidence to document the exact nature of these meetings, it seems likely that Mrs Parsons was pursuing her habit of inviting prestigious and influential women

importance of Dr Hawkes' involvement, Mrs Parsons argued:

These are times of great emergency and unusual steps must be taken to ensure the preservation of our way of life. It seems to me that one way to do so is for women's groups, which have the same ideology, to meet together on subjects of importance. ...It is widely said that women's organizations cannot get together. Is this not the time to disprove that?<sup>23</sup>

Unmoved, Hawkes continued to refuse to cooperate closely with the Council, writing to Mrs Parsons, 'I appreciate your statement that those are times of great emergency. I am not entirely certain however that the best way to assure the preservation of our way of life is to do so through an organization of women's groups.'<sup>24</sup> The persistent Mrs Parsons resumed pressure on the AAUW to rejoin the Council, urging Dr Hawkes, 'Is not this, then, a

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leaders to become members of the CIA-backed Committee of Correspondence. Parsons issued similar invitations to the journalist and activist Dorothy Thompson. In the face of opposition to the united front of American women she desired, Mrs Parson's strategy seems to have been, 'If you can't beat them, invite them to join your CIA-funded club.'

23 Ibid.

24 Hawkes to Parsons, 28 January 1958, Records of the AAUW, Reference 00606

strategic moment for redoubled efforts towards better understanding and goodwill among peoples? I suggest this stabilizing influence as the special province of women. And, as a means to this end, membership in the council.'<sup>25</sup> Across the top of the letter Dr Hawkes scribbled an exasperated response, 'Is there no way we can make them understand what we mean?'<sup>26</sup>

However, the disputes and rivalry between women's organizations on specific issues should not obscure the extent to which they worked together. Often with the impetus and assistance of the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor, they cooperated to arrange the visit of foreign experts and to define publicly American women's commitment to peace.

The involvement of women's organizations in US responses to the call for a United Nations Sub-Commission on the Status of Women is a vivid example of the network of cooperation between American women's organizations and the US government. The presence of women at the United Nations in anything other than the role of an observer was not initially an important issue. A discussion of the status of the World Federation of Trade Unions made it clear

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25 Parsons to Hawkes, 19 September 1958, Records of the AAUW, Reference 00607

26 Ibid.

that the admission of women to the United Nations was not something which would be universally applauded. Senator Tom Connally's address to the General Assembly was nothing if not blunt:

[In] an American electioneering-style speech...complete with arm-waving and table-pounding....[Connally] declared that if the Federation was admitted all sorts of other groups, including women's organizations, would have to be let in too. Then he turned and shouted at a Syrian delegate sitting nearby, 'Would you like to have women in here telling us what to do?' The Syrian, caught off guard, answered with a startled, 'No.'<sup>27</sup>

Women's involvement in the establishment of the United Nations had been minimal. Out of the 159 delegates to the San Francisco conference, only six had been women. Of the 42 organizations represented there, only five were women's organizations. Only four of the 160 signatories of the United Nations Charter were women. Women's involvement was further hampered by the lack of any real attempts to ensure their representation within the UN staff. As

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27 AP report, 24 January 1945, Truman Papers, White house Official Files, File 120

historian Betsy Thom has pointed out, it was not until the early 1980s that any real attempt was made to investigate the issue of discrimination in staff rules and regulations within the UN.<sup>28</sup>

The issue of women's involvement, however, took on an unexpected twist on 6 June 1945. A member of the Brazilian delegation suddenly proposed the establishment of a sub-committee of the Economic and Social Commission to investigate the issue of the status of women. Caught by surprise, a group of American women immediately met to consider the adoption of the proposal. The group included women from the Women's Bureau at the Department of Labor and leaders of women's organizations, a collaboration which was to set the pattern for the future dealings of American women with the Sub-Commission.<sup>29</sup> This group concluded that 'U.S. women have no alternative but to consider the subject and together advise, at the earliest possible moment,

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28 See Betsy Thom, 'Women in International Organizations: Room at the Top, the Situation in some United Nations Organizations' in Cynthia Fuchs Epstein and Rose Laub Coser (eds.), Access to Power: Cross-National Studies of Women and Elites (Boston: George Allen and Unwin, 1981).

29 The members of the meeting were A.H. Johnstone, (League of Women Voters), Dr Brunauer (State Depatment), Dr Hickman (YWCA, temporarily on staff at State Department), Miss Cochrane (State Department, formerly BPWC), Dr Amelia Rhinehart (AAUW), and Mrs Mallowe Graham (AAUW). [Johnstone to Strauss, 21 June 1945, Freida Miller Papers, Box 7, File 143]

the United States Representative on the Preparatory Commission as to their views on the desirable relationship of the United Nations Organization to the special problems of women'.<sup>30</sup> The group called a special conference to include other women's associations such as the YWCA, NCJW, NCCW, and representatives of the Women's Bureau like Frieda Miller and Mary Anderson.

It was the hope of this informal group that, however unenthusiastic the US delegation might be about the prospect of the Sub-Commission, it would recognize the necessity for the group's involvement; if the group was not involved, the Sub-Commission would become the domain of more dangerous participants. The informal group concluded:

We believe that the group would...be prepared to conclude that United States women, who are not extreme 'Equal Righters' should take the initiative in [sic] behalf of a United States policy in order to prevent having a doctrinaire view which will be pushed if we default --- leaving us in the usual negative role --- which internationally is almost impossible. Furthermore, philosophically

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30 Ibid.

speaking, if the majority of nations are persuaded that women as such need the special attention of the new organization, we are involved whether we like it or not.<sup>31</sup>

The Washington Conference on United Nations Organizations and the Special Interests of Women, held on 19 September 1945, proceeded with a notable lack of enthusiasm for the whole idea of a Sub-Commission. Concern centred around two issues, firstly that the United Nations might make the Sub-Commission an excuse to ignore women's issues in other areas and secondly that the committee might become the tool of a powerful clique. Dr Helen McHale of the International Association of University Women protested that the Sub-Commission was 'too easy a solution of the question; that if set up it might become a vested interest of a group of non-representative women'.<sup>32</sup> The conference concluded that, rather than support the idea of a Sub-Commission, it would encourage the establishment of a consultative committee of experts to UNESCO

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31 Ibid.

32 Report of Commission on the United Nations and Special Interests of Women, 19 September 1945, Papers of the Women's Bureau, International Division Correspondence, General Records, Box 22

which would 'concern itself with implementing the terms of the Charter with respect to women'.<sup>33</sup>

Yet the US government recognized that, since the suggestion had been made, it would be impolitic, to say the least, to be seen to act in a way which could be construed as discriminatory towards women. Anna Lord Strauss of the League of Women Voters, Dr Reid of the AAUW and Rachel Nason from the Women's Bureau represented the views of the Washington Conference to Alger Hiss, Director of the Office of Special Political Affairs of the State Department. Hiss was informed of the conference's view that the Sub-Commission should take the form of 'a consultative committee made up of experts without regard to sex to act as a friendly watching body on the needs of women'.<sup>34</sup> Hiss acknowledged this but warned that 'the nature of the subject would make it unlikely that men would qualify and that it therefore would become a women's committee with all the dangers usually associated with a special approach to the problem'.<sup>35</sup>

The eventual set-up of the body was, as Hiss predicted, gender-specific. Established by the

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33 Ibid.

34 Nyswander to Nason, 24 October 1945, Papers of the Women's Bureau, Women's Bureau International Division, International Work File 1945-50, Box 8

35 Nason to Miller, 12 October 1945, Papers of the Women's Bureau, Women's Bureau International Division, International Work File 1945-50, Box 8

Economic and Social Commission in February 1946, the Sub-Commission consisted of nine women and eventually led in June to a full Commission on the Status of Women. The prevailing attitude of male diplomats and statesmen remained somewhat patronizing, however. Dorothy Kenyon, who became the US Representative on the Commission, complained to the New York Post in January 1948 that the Commission suffered from a lack of funding because 'they don't think we are doing anything important and so they don't bother too much about us'.<sup>36</sup> The US Legation in Beirut, Lebanon, anxiously prepared for the 3rd Session of the Commission by writing the Secretary of State:

Woman's unique position as a home builder is of such importance in forming her outlook on world affairs...[that] it is believed that thought might be given to supplementing the conventioal biographic sketches of United States women delegates with a brief description of their own families, with particular emphasis placed

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<sup>36</sup> New York Post, 7 January 1948

on the number, age and activities of their children.<sup>37</sup>

This approach to women was echoed in many press reports. Time reported in May 1946 on the 'Stateswomen at Work', noting that 'chic' Mme Marie-Helene LeFaucheux was called by veteran reporters 'the best looking of the Commission members'. The Indian representative was described as 'black-eyed' and 'soft-spoken' whilst her Polish colleague was 'petite, brunette'.<sup>38</sup>

The choice of delegates to the Commission was a cause of concern for reasons other than their looks. Helen Sater, an observer of the Sub-Commission, reported to the Women's Bureau that the Women's Party of the United States, a small but active feminist organization, was lobbying for these places: 'They have put in recommendations for additions to the Sub-Commission, including women from the United States....They have convinced the Sub-Commission that the organizations which don't agree with them cannot be trusted to develop equal rights.'<sup>39</sup> In a memorandum to Frieda Miller labelled 'somewhat confidential', Sater elaborated:

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37 Beirut to State Department, 5 April 1949, US National Archives, Records of the Department of State, Central Decimal File 1945-49, Box 2203

38 'Stateswomen at Work,' Time, 20 May 1946

39 Sater telephone conversation with Miller and Nason, 6 May 1946, Papers of the Women's Bureau,

The Women's Party is around. Strong --- Alice Paul, Wright from Albany etc. They don't do nearly so well with the members of the sub-commission as I do, but I think they are doing some clever work behind the scenes with other strategic people at the U.N. I'd like to put a detective to trail them. Mrs Begtrup [president of the Sub-Commission] said that the sub-commission had already recieved suggestions of the names to recommend as additional members and I'm fearful they may be largely Women's Party people. What do we do about this?<sup>40</sup>

The response of the Women's Bureau was to contact other organizations to write to Mrs Begtrup with nominations, 'emphasising their international relations as well as devotion to equality for women'.<sup>41</sup> Since the Women's Party lacked international links, it could not compete with the mainstream women's organizations in this area.

The fight against the Women's Party became part of the raison d'etre of the Women's Bureau. An

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Women's Bureau International Division, International Work File 1945-50, Box 10

40 Sater to Miller, 4 May 1946, Frieda Miller Papers, Box 7, File 143

41 Nason to Sater, 8 May 1946, Frieda Miller Papers, Box 7, File 143

internal statement of the Women's Bureau defined the mission:

Women's Bureau activities are necessary to counteract the extremist feminist groups who seek to nourish grievances and create sex antagonism....For some twenty years a small but militant group of leisure class women has given voice to their resentment at not having been born men by loudly proclaiming that men and women are 'equal'.<sup>42</sup>

Women in the United States were not all pleased with such a political slant. On Dorothy Kenyon's appointment to the Commission in 1949, the New York Times published a letter signed by women such as Katherine Hepburn and Alma Lutz, protesting that a woman who was opposed to the Equal Rights Amendment should be the representative of American women at the UN.<sup>43</sup> However, the majority of the liberal women's organizations with whom the Women's

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42 See Papers of the Women's Bureau, Division of Special Services and Publications, General Records 1918-62, Activities and Functions, Box 2.

43 Dorothy Kenyon represented a continuity in American policy from before World War II, since she had served as a member of the Committee on the Legal Status of Women in the League of Nations.

Bureau and other departments of the U.S. government were links shared the anti-ERA feeling.<sup>44</sup>

The 'mixed message' which the various American groups were sending out led to confusion at the Commission itself. In 1946, Mrs Begtrup and Miss Bernadino, the Vice-President of the Sub-Commission, visited the Women's Bureau and met informally with Frieda Miller:

Mrs Begtrup finally confessed that she was utterly confused by the United States issue, that she was not accustomed to such feminist tactics and that she would appreciate some indication of what support could be expected from the United States women....We [at the Women's Bureau] took the line that the ERA is an entirely

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44 The 'liberal' (as opposed to 'feminist') slant of the Commission as a whole is illustrated in the resignation of Gabriela Mistral, the Chilean delegate to the Commission in June 1946. Whilst her official reason for resigning was on the grounds of ill health, The Philadelphia Inquirer reported another motivation: 'Actually, Senoriate Mistral's view-points on various issues differ radically from those of many members of her erstwhile fellow committee memebrrs. Renowned in her own country as an ardent feminist, she does not believe, for example, that "protective" legislation will ease the lot of women.' ['Everybody's Weekly', The Philadelphia Inquirer, 2 June 1947]

constitutional question for the U.S. only.<sup>45</sup>

At a second meeting Mrs Bernadino admitted to problems dealing with the Women's Party:

She had been wrongfully accused of supporting the equal rights groups in the U.S. It was, she felt, a domestic constitutional question which we should settle, and she thought it was up to our groups to thrash the whole thing out immediately as it represented a really dangerous threat to achievement at the international level....She hoped that we could understand this, as she was really upset by the impression US women were making on the Sub-Commission.<sup>46</sup>

The control which the Women's Bureau and its cooperating clique of women's organizations kept over the US relationship with the Commission was vital to maintaining a 'liberal' rather than a more 'feminist' presence. This bias was enhanced by the liaison of the Women's Bureau with non-governmental

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45 Nason to Sater, 22 May 1946, Papers of the Women's Bureau, Division of Special Services and Publications, General Records 1918-62, Box 15

46 Ibid.

women's organizations on the follow-up to the Washington Conference in September 1946. Frieda Miller warned that 'our recommendation will have to be fairly specific to avoid domination by the feminist agitators'. She advised taking advantage of 'the clause authorizing co-operation with non-governmental agencies to have the conference include representatives of both international and national women's organizations. The persons appointed by these groups will be responsible to large national constituencies and can offset the feminist angle if it develops.'<sup>47</sup>

The involvement of American women's voluntary associations in the international sphere was also an important corrective to stereotypes of American women perpetuated by Hollywood. In a glowing report on 'America's "Amazing Women"', The Readers Digest lamented, 'There is a widespread impression in other countries that American women are the most spoiled and self-centred in the world.' This 'superficial judgment' was, in the Digest's opinion, erroneous since it 'overlooks the vast and growing numbers of women who selflessly devote their time and energy to an astounding variety of good works, through welfare

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47 Miller to Nason, 24 October 1946, US National Archives, Records of the Department of State, Interdepartmental and Interdepartmental Communications, Record Group 353, Lot File 122, Box

agencies, churches, clubs, Red Cross, Girl Guides, Junior Leagues, YWCA, and similar organizations'.<sup>48</sup>

Alice K. Leopold, Assistant to the Secretary of Labor for Women's Affairs, told the the National Order of Women Legislators in June 1957:

Women, I think, are helping to achieve... benefits through several different lines of action. One of these is through their work in women's civic organizations. Another is through their co-operation in international exchange projects, which bring to our shores women from countries the world over. Still another is through their service on international bodies --- the United Nations, NATO, the ILO [the International Labor Organization], the Inter-American Commission of Women. All of these activities add up to accomplishments --- what we might call women's new role on the international scene.<sup>49</sup>

Leopold suggested that this model, in which women participated through organizations other than

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48 Clarence Hall, 'America's "Amazing Women"', Readers Digest, April 1955, p. 67

49 Leopold speech before the National Order of Women Legislators, 7 June 1957, Records of the Women's Bureau of the US Department of Labor 1918-1965, Part One, Reel 19

national governments, was typical across the world. Using the example of women's political involvement in Latin America, she explained:

Frequently...the first step is an organization of a woman's club. This may be a sewing group, or a committee for a hospital, or a study program on child welfare. Any such group provides experience in the conduct of meetings and the problems of organizations...But, and this is important, helping the official authorities are the private organizations. Here is what Miss Hahn [US Representative on the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women] said about them: 'The great international federations which sit with us as non-governmental consultants begin in local clubs. Some of them already have branches in countries where women have not yet won the vote'.<sup>50</sup>

Leopold defines women's political activity as emerging from local concerns before considering international organizations. Implicit in this description of the political training which women receive in their private organizations is the idea

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50 Ibid.

that they need such training. Because of their traditional exclusion from organized political activities, women must be instructed in their organizations before being able to contribute as citizens. In her 1985 book on the relative status of men and women in the international realm, Arvonne Fraser argued that international non-governmental organizations were of vital importance to women:

Over this period [preceding the United Nations' Decade of Women in the 1970s] and again during the decade, women have learned that organizational activity has another benefit. It is an important training area. Because women have been denied access, historically, to decisionmaking positions and training opportunities in government and other primary sectors of society, they have learned leadership and participatory skills and responsible citizenship through non-governmental activities and projects.<sup>51</sup>

Significantly, the function of voluntary associations in the political education of men was

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51 Arvonne Fraser, 'Forward', Looking to the Future: Equal Partnership between Women and Men in the 21st Century (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1985) p. v

seldom mentioned. When Mr Hobbing of the Latin American Information Committee wrote to the Overseas Education Fund of the League of Women Voters to request that their work with Latin American women might be adopted for use by their countrymen, he specifically noted that it must be done 'without injury to male vanity'.<sup>52</sup>

The political path for which women were being trained by voluntary associations was not intended to follow that of masculine involvement. Leopold concluded her 1957 talk by referring to an 'outstanding' example of women's involvement in international relations, their cooperation in the 1955 programme 'Operation American Home'. The emphasis of the programme, which brought 36 women from France and 31 women from Italy to the United States, was 'on American homes, churches, schools, welfare --- or in short, 'the heart of America''.<sup>53</sup> In a speech to the Catholic Federation of Women's Clubs of Greater Cleveland, Leopold again stressed how foreign exchange visitors were informed of how American women's political role proceeded from her primary loyalty:

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52 Hobbing to Board of the League of Women Voters, 17 August 1962, Lucille Koshland Papers, Carton 1, File 5

53 Ibid.

Mindful again that the home is woman's first obligation, we try to give each visitor the opportunity to see for herself what American women are doing, how they work through organizations and as individuals and how they raised their families and still had an articulate voice in their communities....It was encouraging to see how these women reacted. To see how they were always surprised at the breadth of our vision, our energy, and our community spirit. Their remarks all tended to reflect a growing sense that women all over the world share the same goals and the same objectives --- peace, and the opportunity to be of constructive usefulness within our communities and to extend this usefulness to our government *wherever possible*.<sup>54</sup> (my italics)

For American women's organizations this 'usefulness' entailed the export of the voluntary association overseas so other women might reap the benefits of its potential for women's political

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54 Leopold address to the Catholic Federation of Women's Clubs of Greater Cleveland, 'Spotlight on Women,' 13 March 1958, Records of the Women's Bureau of the US Department of Labor 1918-1965, Part One, Reel 19

education, training, and participation. Anna Lord Strauss explained to a meeting in the US Information Service (USIS) Library in Burma this role in developing the political awareness and confidence of the member:

One time she came back from a meeting and her neighbor said in a very perfunctory way, 'Was it a good meeting?' And the woman said, 'Yes, it was a wonderful meeting.' And the neighbor, quite taken aback (never having heard such enthusiasm) said, 'What made it such a wonderful meeting?' And the woman thought for a moment and she said, 'I spoke twice.' And to my mind that was the beginning of her realization that she was an individual that counted; that what she thought was important, because what she had said had carried weight.<sup>55</sup>

The training of women as citizens was thought particularly relevant in many Latin America countries and Japan where women became enfranchised for the first time after World War II. Women's organisations from America could educate their

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55 Strauss speech, 24 September 1957, Anna Lord Strauss Papers, Box 13, File 272

foreign sisters who hitherto had no tradition of democratic participation. The Journal of the AAUW reported in an article entitled 'SOS from Korean, Japanese Women':

Visitors to [our] headquarters emphasized the fact that women with whom they work do not know what to do with their newly-won freedom. They look to American women for aid and suggestion'.<sup>56</sup>

Mrs Maurice S. Goodman, an observer for the League of Women Voters' Overseas Education Fund at the UN seminar on the Participation of Women in Public Life in Bogota, Columbia in May 1959, reported:

In the beginning I felt that the presence of the North American women was somewhat superfluous. But as the days wore on...it became apparent that hope, courage and the promise for the development of women's role in the emerging countries was materially supported by the fact that we who had travelled similar uphill roads were able to give them the moral support

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<sup>56</sup> 'SOS from Korean, Japanese Women,' Journal of the AAUW, Vol 41:2, Winter 1948, p. 116

and the helping hand essential to faith in themselves and in their future.<sup>57</sup>

This intervention was also seen as necessary in such countries as Germany and Italy, where women had had the vote but had failed to prevent totalitarian governments from coming to power.

The US government recognised that they could use channels of communication between women's organisations in the US and Europe to foster a new spirit of democracy. An example of this network is the activity of Mrs Marc Law, a field-worker for the CCCMF, who was sent to Italy from November 1948-April 1949. Mrs Law enjoyed the support of various branches of the American government including 'the whole-hearted support and active co-operation of the American Embassy in Rome, the Cultural Attache and his staff, and the Economic Co-operation Administration and the United States Information Agency'.<sup>58</sup>

African-American women's organizations were used by the US government in the same way as white American women were used. This was emphasised in two areas. Firstly, African-American representatives

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57 Goodman report on Women in Public Life, Bogatoa, Columbia, 18-29 May 1959, Lucille Koshland Papers, Carton 2, File 51

58 CCCMF Statement of Activities, 1948, Lucille Koshland Papers, Carton 1

were put onto an international stage to counteract the negative impression of US race relations held by many abroad. Edith Sampson, a member of the National Council of Negro Women, was a particularly effective spokesperson, sent on various foreign tours by the State Department and serving two terms as a US delegate to the United Nations.<sup>59</sup> African-American women were in demand when the US needed a representative at official functions in Liberia.<sup>60</sup>

Their relationship with the State Department was not always harmonious, however. Following a tour of Europe with the Crusade for Freedom, Dr Nancy McGhee, the Vice-President of the National Council of Negro Women, complained:

We were depressed in all the cities visited by the absence of Negro officials with the exception of a Negro soldier at SHAPE in Paris who was taking pictures. This situation was brought to the attention of the Vice-President, Richard Nixon, in a personal interview....It is

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59 For details of Sampson's career, see Helen Laville and Scott Lucas, 'Edith Sampson, the NAACP and African-American Identity,' Diplomatic History, Vol 20:4, Fall 1996 pp.565-590.

60 Dr Helen Edmonds, a member of the NCNW, was the personal representative of President Eisenhower at the dedication of the Capitol Building in Monrovia, Liberia. [National Council of Negro Women Papers, Series 13, Box 5, Folder 2]

very poor practice for the United States Government not to have competent Negro Officials, where they can be unmistakably seen and heard as part of the United States missions abroad.<sup>61</sup>

A further bone of contention between the NCNW and the State Department was the government's sponsorship of the overseas tour of the musical 'Porgy and Bess'. The NCNW complained, 'It was pointed out that in countries where this play was given there was very little known about the Negro and what was known was in many instances quite inaccurate. The story of a Negro prostitute and her paramour, a pimp, does not convey a real picture of the American Negro and does him and the United States a disservice.'<sup>62</sup>

Domestic concerns also meant that African-American voluntary associations did not emphasize international affairs in the way that many white organizations did. An example of the different priorities for the NCNW is a special News Bulletin issued by that organization in June 1954. The bulletin announced:

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61 'Report of Dr Nancy McGhee,' National Council of Negro Women Papers, Series 13, Box 5, Folder 2

62 Ibid.

Mrs William Thomas Mason, President of the Natinal Council of Negro Women,...has announced her withdrawal as a delegate to the International Council of Women Conference in Helsinki, Finland, June 7-18th....'First things must come first. Because of the momentous aftermath of the recent Supreme Court decision in desegregating schools, the National Council of Negro Women has an unprecedented opportunity and duty to make a lasting contribution to the implementation of this epoch-making decision.'<sup>63</sup>

An article in the Journal of the NCNW, The Afra-American Woman's Journal, summed up this limitation on their international commitment, asking, 'Could we really get the Council membership stirred up about the newly-acquired voting rights of French women, when thousands of Negro women in New York are too indifferent to cast a ballot, and at least a million in the South are not permitted to cast one?'<sup>64</sup>

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63 Special News Bulletin, 3 June 1954, National Council of Negro Women Papers, Series 13, Box 8, File 12

64 'Our most Intimate Friends for 1946: The Women of the World,' Marjorie McKenzie Lawson, The Afra-American Women's Journal, March 1946, p. 7

Despite such obstacles, the cooperation of both white and African-American women's organizations with the US government set a pattern for the way in which American policy towards women in other countries would be modelled. Not unnaturally, leaders of American women's voluntary associations saw their example of participation as ideal and advocated its export to other nations. Fighting the Cold War, the US government would soon make use of this example.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### AMERICAN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATIONS IN GERMANY

The activities of American women's associations in postwar Germany exemplify how national identities, pre-conceptions and aims shaped American women's approach to international affairs and how the private sector cooperated with the US government. American women's organizations embarked upon a programme of 're-education' for German women, with fixed notions about the role that German women had played in the war and the construction of that role in postwar Germany, and they then channelled the political participation of German women through their example of voluntary associations. As the Cold War tightened its grip and Germany became the focal point of conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union, women's organizations became a vital battleground in the ideological war for the hearts and minds of the German people. Having played such an important role in establishing and reviving German women's organizations to safeguard democracy, US groups found themselves warning against the encroaching threat of communism rather than the revival of National Socialism.

Perhaps the most obvious reason that German women were of importance in American occupation

policy was demographic. Because of wartime losses, women made up a disproportionate amount of the German population. In a report for the Women's Affairs Bureau, Director Ruth Woodsmall wrote, 'There has been an alteration of a normal population structure to an abnormal one as a result of the war losses. There has been no corresponding change in the social mores within the German community.'<sup>1</sup>

Americans analysed the Nazi approach to women as 'Kinder, Kueche and Kirche'. This statement, used by contemporary analysts and subsequently by historians, often operates as a convenient shorthand for the lack of real knowledge about women's activities in Nazi Germany. In his 1939 study on German women, Clifford Kirkpatrick documented the involvement of women in National Socialism. Recognizing the stereotypes Americans had of German women, Kirkpatrick prefaced his remarks with the complaint, 'The average American newspaper reader conceives of German women driven out of offices by storm trooper and herded back into the home and enforced motherhood....The women of Germany are dimly perceived through a fog of headlines, slogans, atrocity stories and selected anecdotes.'<sup>2</sup>

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1 Women's Affairs report, undated, Ruth Woodsmall Papers, Box 50, File 4

2 Clifford Kirkpatrick, Women in Nazi Germany, (London: Jarrods, 1939), pp. 33-34

The belief in the non-involvement of German women in national socialism was not only derived from historical evidence. In her study Mothers in the Fatherland, historian Claudia Koonz argues that postwar attitudes to German women were shaped by their exclusion from the national life: 'Because Nazi contempt for women was so blatant from the beginning, it would be easy to assume that women ought not to share in the question of German Guilt.'<sup>3</sup> Koonz argues that, whatever the reality of women's role in the national life, the belief in their non-involvement was an important component in the construction of gender:

The image of the politically inert woman reinforces cherished myths about motherhood. A fantasy of women untouched by their historical setting feeds our own nostalgia for mothers beyond good and evil --- preservers of love, charity and peace no matter what the social and moral environment.<sup>4</sup>

Koonz argues that American beliefs about the non-participation of German women had less to do

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<sup>3</sup> Claudia Koonz, Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family and Nazi Politics (London: Methuen, 1988), p. 3

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.4

with a calm knowledge and consideration of the evidence and more to do with a refusal to contemplate the complicity of women in a regime which was responsible for death camps. The refusal of many Americans to ascribe guilt and blame to German women was an direct contradiction to American occupation policy which forbade fraternization between Americans and Germans, regardless of their sex, by reminding US servicemen of the widespread popularity of national socialism. An article in the military newspaper The Stars and Stripes warned, 'In heart, body and spirit....Every German is Hitler! If in a German town you bow to a pretty girl or pat a blond child....You bow to Hitler and his reign of Blood.'<sup>5</sup> However, as historian Petra Goedde has argued, this spirit of hostility proved unworkable in the face of a widespread refusal to obey non-fraternization orders.<sup>6</sup>

The importance of gender roles in the consideration of national guilt is not exclusive to postwar Germany. Sociologists Alice Eagly and Mary

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5 Quoted in Eugene Davidson, The Death and Life of Germany - An Account of the American Occupation (London: Jonathan Cape, 1959), p. 54

6 Petra Goedde, 'From Villains to Victims: Gendered Interpretations of the German National Character During the American Occupation of Germany, 1945-1949,' paper at the Conference of the Society of Historians of American Foreign Relations, 14 June 1994.

The non-fraternization ban was cancelled on 1 October 1945.

Kite have shown that national stereotypes are usually thought to be more applicable to men than to women, resulting in a situation whereby 'women are perceived more in terms of their gender stereotype than their nationality stereotype'.<sup>7</sup> In their study of American attitudes to other nationalities, Eagly and Kite found that the distancing of women from the national identity is especially strong when the inhabitants of the country in question were particularly disliked:

The inhabitants of these disliked countries were perceived as relatively unfriendly and unkind. However, the women of these countries largely escaped this characterization, presumably because they were not responsible for the problems these countries were thought to have created for the United States. As shown by the relatively low agency ascribed to the women of these disliked countries, women's powerlessness becomes much more evident for these countries than for more likable countries.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Alice H. Eagly and Mary E. Kite, 'Are Stereotypes of Nationalities Applied to Both Women and Men?', Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol 53:3, 1987.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 461

The assertion of women's powerlessness allowed them to escape the negative characteristics with which their countrymen were viewed. This powerlessness was so important to the outsider's view of women's share in nationality that the low status of women became further evidence of the negative national characteristics of men. Americans' belief in the exclusion of German women from the politics of national socialism was an additional reason for dislike of the regime. Thus American attitudes to German women were not as laden with war-generated hostility as one might expect.

American women's organisations recognized that it would be difficult to gather up the threads of communication with European counterparts as if the war had been an unpleasant interruption. The first postwar meeting of the Fellowship Award Committee of the International Federation of University Women (IFUW) debated the problem. While acknowledging the 'intense and determined desire among University women to co-operate with each other', the Committee recognised the 'appalling difficulty and complexity of the business'. Unsure of what attitude to take towards conquered nations, the Committee agonised:

How are we to make complete understanding among them all? Between neutrals and belligerents, between occupied and unoccupied countries, between those who resisted strongly and those who are suspected of collaborating or even merely of acquiescence?<sup>9</sup>

It was the un-involvement (or 'innocence') of German women in national socialism that enabled American women to sidestep the potentially embarrassing question of war guilt. Eagly and Kite explain that women's powerlessness in a national political system allows them to escape responsibility for the events which may have caused outside disapproval of their countries.<sup>10</sup> As Elizabeth Heineman has persuasively argued, this escape from national responsibility also allows women to be at the forefront of reconstruction in the aftermath of a war. Although 'German women were not, collectively, simply passive victims of a ruthless regime', their narratives emphasized 'the sufferings and losses and downplayed their

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9 Edith Batho (President of the British Federation of University Women), 'Journey to Switzerland,' International Women's News, Vol 40, No (, June 1946, p. 98.

10 Ibid. p. 464.

contribution to and rewards from the Nazi regime'.<sup>11</sup> Heineman argues that 'Women of the Rubble' or Trummerfrau, became symbolic of German Women's new role in reconstruction, concluding, 'The Women of the Rubble quickly came to suggest a story that began with the bombing of German cities, focused on terrible hardships and promised renewal by the cooperative efforts of ordinary Germans.'<sup>12</sup>

In most cases American references to German women's activities under National Socialism could not be said to be anything other than mild chastisement. For example, Eleanor Roosevelt told German women, 'We are shocked to find that the women in many cases did not stand out as firmly as they should against the encroachment of totalitarian power in Germany,' but she quickly recovered from her shock to express the hope that 'the realization will come to all women the world over that they themselves have as individuals a responsibility within every nation to act as citizens to prevent anything which may bring suffering and deprivation again to the people of the world'.<sup>13</sup> This approach was echoed in a letter to Mrs Roosevelt from Mrs

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11 Elizabeth Heinman, 'The Hour of the Woman: Memories of Germany's "Crisis Years" and West German National Identity,' American Historical Review, Vol 101:2, April 1996, p. 359

12 Ibid., p. 375

13 Roosevelt speech, undated, Ruth Woodsmall Papers, Box 50, File 4

Heming, the President of the CCCMF, thanking Roosevelt for her help in arranging the educational programme for seven German visitors to the United States. Mrs Heming asserted, 'We want to emphasize our belief that in a democracy every single person counts and that none of us can evade the responsibility for what happens in our country. This seems to me a more constructive approach than it would be to talk of "guilt". Don't you agree?'<sup>14</sup>

This illusion of history allowed American observers to place German women at the forefront of German reconstruction. US Congresswoman Mrs Chase Going Woodhouse announced during a tour of West Germany:

It is not only a question of numbers; psychologically women are better orientated to reconstruction on a democratic basis than are the men. They have no 'face to save'. Since 1933 they have had no status. In fact their post World War I spurt to a better position flickered out by 1928. They were not a part of policy making Nazi Germany. They

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14 Heming to Roosevelt, 18 February 1949, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Box 3395

have everything to gain, nothing to lose  
in democratic reorganization.<sup>15</sup>

The belief in the political inactivity of German women was an important component in American occupation policy, in which the Women's Affairs Division of the Office of Military Government of the United States (OMGUS) saw it as their responsibility to educate German women about their civic and political responsibilities. This education was a two-stage concern. Firstly, Germany women must be awakened from the political apathy with which Americans were convinced they approached life. Lorena Hahn, the original Chief of the Women's Affairs Division, informed Dr Alexander, the Chief of the Educational and Religious Affairs Branch:

National Socialism isolated German women from public life, restricted them from women in other countries and indoctrinated many women with Nazi ideals. There are German women who are keenly aware of these facts and are eager to re-establish the social, political and economic structure of their lives. On the other hand a large number of German women are indifferent to

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15 News release, Women's Affairs Section, 5  
September 1948, Ruth Woodsmall Papers, Box 51, File  
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this reconstruction. We are therefore confronted with a stimulus program as well as one of guidance and education.<sup>16</sup>

Once German women were aroused from apathy, they could be 're-educated' in the ways of democracy.

In their insistence on channelling the political activities of German women through voluntary associations, American women betrayed a serious misunderstanding of the role of Germany women under National Socialism. They assumed that women's organizations, synonymous with freedom and liberty, could not coexist with totalitarianism. Ruth Woodsmall, chief of the Women's Affairs Section told representatives of American women's organizations, 'Women's organisations that were disbanded by Hitler are being re-organised.'<sup>17</sup> The Carrie Chapman Catt Memorial Fund (CCCMF) of the League of Women Voters told its members, 'Although women in Germany had the vote for many years before the rise of Nazism, they suffered the set-back of being relegated to subservient domesticity....Many

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16 Hahn to Alexander, 'General Observations on Women Affairs,' 23 January 1948, Ruth Woodsmall Papers, Box 50, File 4

17 'Summary of a talk given by Miss Ruth Woodsmall to Representatives of National Women's Organisations,' 19 April 1950, Records of the AAUW, Series VIII, Reel 47

were so intimidated that they are still terrified of putting their names on any list.'<sup>18</sup>

Indeed the independent women's organizations which had existed in Germany before National Socialism were consolidated under Frauenwerk, where all independence and autonomy was denied. However, the concept of women's organizations as a medium for the activities of women was not abolished in the 1930s. Claudia Koonz's study Mothers in the Fatherland shows that many women were wholehearted supporters of Hitler. Nazi women leaders created an empire of organizations which, while advocating traditional sex-roles and subservient femininity, also held great power:

Without encouragement from Party leaders, several women Nazis independently organized in what one women leader called 'a sort of parallel movement', separate from the Nazi party and yet supportive of it....At the local and national level, women leaders emerged, each with her own style, objectives and class of followers.<sup>19</sup>

In his study of women under National Socialism, Kirkpatrick documented the organization

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18 CCCMF request for Ford Foundation Grant, June 1952, Anna Lord Strauss Papers, File 15

19 Koonz, p. 71

of German women into voluntary associations. Nazi women believed that their role was vital to the future both of their political cause and their country. Whilst using rhetoric which celebrated their role as mother and homemaker, they enjoyed a sense of crisis which necessitated their involvement in the public world. Koonz recounts the story of a Nazi housewife, canvassing passers-by, who was confronted by an irate businessman telling her that good Nazi women ought to stay at home and serve dinner to her family. 'The nation is in peril!', she responded, 'I cannot remain happy and carefree at the supper table when Mother Germany weeps and her children die. Germany must live on, even if we sacrifice our lives!'<sup>20</sup>

This picture of women's lives in Nazi Germany is vital to understanding the reaction of German women to the efforts of American women's organisations. The attitudes of US women towards German counterparts were based on two assumptions. Firstly, they believed that the model of political participation through voluntary women's associations would appeal to women who had previously been isolated in the home. A report by Mrs Bartlett B. Heard, a member of the League of Women Voters and the YWCA sent to Germany by the

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 78

State Department, confirms this attitude, 'In Germany, where for centuries women have been relegated to a status below that of man and psychologically conditioned to interpret the role of homemaker in its narrowest terms, very special effort will have to be made over periods of years before women and men understand that while home is the centre of a woman's life, it cannot be the boundary.'<sup>21</sup>

Secondly, American women believed that the postwar world was the crisis situation which would inspire women to become politically active. These assumptions were deeply flawed. For German women, World War II had been the 'crisis situation' which had left many drained and apathetic to anyone offering political solutions. This apathy is illustrated in a meeting organised by an army adviser on 'Women and Youth affairs' between twenty German women from Bad Homberg and several American women:

Due to German reticence, the dialogue got off to a creaky start. Urged to speak up, they did, but to vent their anger over the

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21 Heard report, 27 May-28 August 1950, Ruth Woodsmall Papers, Box 51, File 5

food policies of the American army, not to air abstract hopes for democracy.<sup>22</sup>

A panel of American women representing national women's organisations were told by German women that, 'because of the shattered illusion of the Hitler era, women in Germany were hesitant to join new organisations and many were apathetic towards policies and their civic responsibilities'.<sup>23</sup> The practical priorities of German women were illustrated in the despairing comment of Mrs Melle, Vice-President of the German women's group Notgemeinschaft, on a visit to the United States:

The difficulties of attracting the women are enhanced by the fact that in the Russian Zone, when the Communist women meet, a heated hall is provided, plus a dinner, both of which have an undeniable appeal to people who are cold and hungry.<sup>24</sup>

As a member of the 'Town Hall Meeting of the Air', Mary Decker, observed the same lack of

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22 Donna Harsch, 'Public Continuity and Private Change? Women's Consciousness and Activity in Frankfurt 1945-55,' Journal of Social History, Vol 27:1, Fall 1993, p. 29

23 'U.S. Women's Panel launches Barvarian Tour,' Records of the AAUW, Series VIII, Reel 47

24 'Visiting Group will seek to Arouse Citizenship Interest Among German Women,' Christian Science Monitor, 14 March, 1949

enthusiasm amongst German women for joining anything. At the seminar entitled, 'What problems are women facing in Germany today?', Decker complained:

These women leaders are disturbed because the mass of German women are not coming into organizations. They are not active in political and social welfare work. They are too burdened with poverty, home cares, too fearful --- recalling what happened to Nazi women --- too man-dominated to respond to the democratic organizations struggling to help them.<sup>25</sup>

International exchanges were similarly fraught with tension. The place of the international exchange program in American propaganda was explained by a memorandum from Edward Barrett, the Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs. Bewailing the lack of funding for propaganda following the end of World War II, Barrett explained:

In 1946 and 1947, an interesting thing happened. The great majority of members of

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25 Mary Bell Decker, The World We Saw with Town Hall, (New York: Richard R. Smith Inc, 1950) p. 63

Congress took trips abroad. They came smack up against the gross misrepresentation abroad of the United States, its actions and its policies. They thereupon voted to establish, as a permanent part of the United States Government, a United States Information and Educational Exchange Program. It was designed to present to the world a 'full and fair picture of America' and to combat distortions and misrepresentations about America.<sup>26</sup>

The exchange programme with Germany was the largest government-sponsored programme with another country.<sup>27</sup> Under the offices of OMGUS and HICOG, a total of 14,000 people participated in exchanges between the United States and Germany.<sup>28</sup> In his study of the programme, State Department historian Henry Kellerman assessed the programme as a tool of US foreign policy, describing it as 'a unilateral American-initiated, American-funded and American-

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26 Barrett to Webb, 13 November 1951, Foreign Relations of the United States 1951, Vol 1, National Security Affairs, Foreign Economic Policy.

27 Henry J. Kellerman, Cultural Relations Programs of the United States Department of State: The Educational Exchange Program between the United States and Germany, 1945-1954 (Washington D.C.: Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, US Department of State, 1978), p. 1

28 Ibid., p. 10

directed implement of United States policy, serving primarily United States interests'.<sup>29</sup> Kellerman asserted that the purpose of the programme was 'to help assist Germans in creating a new society modelled on Western democratic concepts'.<sup>30</sup> Lucille Koshland, President of the Overseas Education Fund of the League of Women Voters, credited General Clay with the inspiration for women's participation, encouraged by Anna Lord Strauss of the LWV. Koshland wrote to Strauss:

Didn't you sit next to General Clay at a dinner when he mentioned his idea, as Military Governor of Post-war Germany, to bring some Germans to the U.S.A. to observe democracy in action at the grass roots? And didn't you ask him innocently how many women would be included? Apparently a new idea to him, which led to him asking whether the League of Women Voters would assist in programming such a group.<sup>31</sup>

Whatever the inspiration for the programme, it quickly gained a place as an important instrument

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29 Ibid., p. 4

30 Ibid., p.4.

31 Koshland to Strauss, 8 November 1971, Anna Lord Struass Papers, Box 13, File 288

of US policy in postwar Germany. Dr Anna Hawkes, president of the AAUW and a member of the US Advisory Commission on Educational Exchange, concluded after a 78-day tour of 14 countries, 'Person-to-person diplomacy as practiced through the work of the International Educational Exchange Service of the United States Department of State, is the most important facet of our foreign policy.'<sup>32</sup>

The belief behind the exchange programme was that funding foreign visitors to visit the US would allow them to see for themselves the benefits of American democracy. William C. Johnstone, Director of the Office of International Exchange, explained the propaganda value of international exchanges:

It is the one activity in which the Communists cannot successfully compete with us. The Soviet Union, Communist China and other satellites dare not invite foreign nationals to visit, observe and travel freely behind the iron curtain. So long as the United States Government and private organizations continue to bring people from the other countries to the United States, to let them see us as we

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32 Hawkes address, 'Proceedings of the 14th Biennial Conference, North-east Central Region of the AAUW,' 27-28 April 1956, Dorothy Zeiger Papers, Box 1, File 18

are, we demonstrate our faith in our American ideals of freedom.<sup>33</sup>

Crucial to this display of 'freedom' was the involvement of private individuals and voluntary associations in the exchange programme. William K. Hitchcock, Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs at the U.S. Department of State, acknowledged, 'The Department-sponsored program has been dependent from the outset on a solid and enthusiastic partnership with a large body of private organizations and citizens to numerous too count.'<sup>34</sup>

The re-education of West German women was the first postwar programme in which women's voluntary associations and the US Government cooperated at a high level. In November 1948 the Civil Administration Division of OMGUS requested the Carrie Chapman Catt Fund of the League of Women Voters to sponsor a reorientation project for a group of German women. The US Government paid travel and living expenses for a group of German women visitors to the United States, whilst the CCCMF financed and organized an education programme for the women.

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33 Johnstone to Johnson, 5 May 1953, Anna Lord Strauss Papers, Box 13, File 264

34 Quoted Kellerman, p. 1

This initiative accorded with the founding principle of the Women's Affairs Section, established in May 1948 within the Educational and Cultural Relations Division of OMGUS.<sup>35</sup> Chief of the Section was Ruth Woodsmall, who had served as the General Secretary of the World YWCA from 1934 to 1947.<sup>36</sup> Woodsmall's background in the YWCA may have been a factor in the subsequent closeness of the Women's Affairs Section to American women's voluntary associations. The Section operated on the principle that its role was to 'observe, supervise and assist' German women through the agency of women's voluntary associations:

It is the policy of this section to further the attempts of the above mentioned groups [German voluntary associations of women] to exercise a constructive role in the re-establishment

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35 Previously women's affairs had been co-ordinated through the Office of Personnel Adviser to the Deputy Military Government for Fostering German Women's Affairs, established 1 November 1947. On 2 December 1949 the Women's Affairs Section was restructured as the Women's Affairs Branch within the Educational and Cultural Relations Division of HICOG.

36 Woodsmall was appointed after a meeting between her and Eleanor Roosevelt prompted Roosevelt to write about Woodsmall to Chester Bowles at the State Department, 'I thought possibly there might be some position for which you would like to consider her.' [Roosevelt to Bowles, 20 May 1948, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Box 3395]

of democratic procedures in community life.<sup>37</sup>

Initial public statements of the Section often described its activities as 'demand-driven' by the spontaneous requests of German women:

Literally hundreds of women's organizations are beginning to spring up throughout the zone. German women leaders are eagerly seeking advise and help in the formation and development of these organizations along democratic lines. It is therefore the duty of the Chief of Women's Affairs to assist in setting up these new organizations and to keep in touch with them until firm democratic patterns are attained.<sup>38</sup>

However, the mandate for the Section was more up-front in its intentions, stating:

It is the policy of this office to serve as a liaison agency and a clearing centre for information between German voluntary

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37 'Germany,' Lucille Koshland Papers, Box 2, File 38

38 'Specific Activities for the Chief of Women's Affairs,' 14 June 1948, Ruth Woodsmall Papers, Box 50, File 4

women's organisations and other countries.<sup>39</sup>

Since German women felt unwilling to enter political life, the Section encouraged voluntary associations to work to overcome this hesitancy.

Meanwhile the Section, like the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor, with whom it worked closely, was eager to avoid any hint that their activities could be seen as an encouragement of feminism. For example, in 1949 the Section cooperated with several German women leaders on a project to raise the status of German women through a version of the Civil Code (Buergerliches Gestetzbuch). The Section stressed:

In giving assistance to German women in their effort to revise the Civil Code with special reference to the inequalities affecting women, the representatives of women's affairs are in no sense promoting a "feministic" movement in the traditional concept of the word....There will be need for a careful interpretation of the basic necessity for the revision of the Civil

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39 Ibid.

Code in order to avoid the misinterpretation in the press'.<sup>40</sup>

Despite this care, the US military newspaper The Stars and Stripes published an account of the programme under the headline 'Suffragette Movement Revived to Help Women in the U.S. Zone.' The story reported, 'The equal-suffragette movement is being stimulated by Women's Affairs officers in Hesse, Bavaria and Wuettemberg-Baden.'<sup>41</sup> The next day The Stars and Stripes published a follow-up, 'HICOG officials pointed out that a story in The Stars and Stripes erred Friday in reporting that German women, "encouraged" by HICOG women's affairs officers, were reviving a "suffragette" movement in the U.S. Zone.'<sup>42</sup> Mrs Bartlett B. Heard's report to the Women's Affairs Section in 1950 assured, 'Any apprehension that programs for women will bring about a feminist movement seem to be unfounded. In my opinion it would be impossible to revive feminism or create a feminist movement in Germany.'<sup>43</sup>

The Women's Bureau of the Department of Labour also co-operated with the drive for non-

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40 Women's Affairs Branch, Semi-Annual Report, 1 July-31 December 1949, Ruth Woodsmall Papers, Box 51, File 5

41 The Stars and Stripes, 9 December 1949

42 The Stars and Stripes, 10 December 1949

43 Heard report, 27 May-28 August 1950, Ruth Woodsmall Papers, Box 51, File 5

governmental international relations. Like the Women's Affairs Section, the Bureau focused on exchanges between women's organisations, announcing the Women Leaders Program in April 1949 as 'a project which is designed to foster better international understanding through the channels of women's organisations'.<sup>44</sup> This programme was not just for German women but was world-wide in its scope: the first five women leaders to enter the United States under this programme were in fact from Mexico and Latin America. The head of the Women's Bureau, Frieda Miller, praised the nine women's organisations involved in the programme,<sup>45</sup> arguing, 'their actions undoubtedly will establish the avenues for future co-operation between women of this and other countries and serve to help women everywhere to meet certain of their problems through strengthening the work of their democratic women's organizations'.<sup>46</sup>

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44 Bulletin of the US Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, 7 April 1949, Records of the AAUW, Series VIII, Reel 47

45 The American Association of University Women, the General Federation of Women's Clubs, the National League of Women Voters, the National Council of Jewish Women, the National Board of the YWCA, the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, the National Council of Negro Women, the National Council of Catholic Women, and the National Council of Church Women

46 Bulletin of the US Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, 7 April 1949, Records of the AAUW, Series VIII, Reel 47.

The model of democracy advocated for German women by American women's organisations rigidly followed American lines. A tour of ten American women at the request of the Department of State and OMGUS typified this approach. The national news release of the American Association of University Women related:

In a discussion over tea with the Lord Mayor of Wiesbaden and with leaders of the local women's organizations, the Americans learned that many problems that are the concern of private organisations in the United States are handled by government agencies in Germany. The group gained the impression that the paternalistic strain which persists in the German Government discourages initiative and frustrates the political influence of women's organisations. At the same time, the American groups observed that there are a number of social problems confronting German women which need the crusading efforts of their organisations to correct them.<sup>47</sup>

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47 National news release, 15 May 1951, Records of the AAUW, Series VIII, Reel 47

Exchanges between German and American women were organised mainly by the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labour with the cooperation of American women's organisations. Between the start of the programme in 1946 and 1953, an estimated 4,000 German leaders visited America, at least 800 of them women.<sup>48</sup> The importance of educating German women about the role of voluntary associations was stressed by the Women's Bureau in its 'Suggestions to Sponsors' note to American women's organisations:

These women are brought to the United States in order that they may have a broad and sympathetic understanding of American life, culture and ideals, that they may learn about non-governmental organisations and how to adopt the knowledge and experience gained here to their important task of contributing to the development of Germany as a democratic state.<sup>49</sup>

The focus on the voluntary association as a medium of women's political activities was stressed in a somewhat repetitive manner in a description of

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48 Imrie to Woodsmall, 6 March 1953, Ruth Woodsmall Papers, Box 55, File 2

This figure does not include any women who came to Germany in the categories 'teenagers and students'.

49 'Suggestions to Sponsors of German Women Leaders,' Ruth Woodsmall Papers, Box 55, File 2

twelve German women leaders distributed by the Bureau. The description for each of the twelve concluded with the sentence, 'She is here to study Women's Organizations in Reference to Civic Participation.'<sup>50</sup>

Whilst it is not perhaps extraordinary that a group visiting women's organizations should profess to have such an interest, what is important is the extent to which this model dominated German women's experience of the US to the exclusion of other aspects of American life. The segregation of women into a 'category' of exchange visitor, alongside such groups as 'labor', 'youth', or 'religion', meant that their trips were specifically organized on the basis of assumed gender interests. Not infrequently, this approach was resented by the German visitors. Mrs Anna Maire Heiler disliked the bias of the exchange programme towards women's associations. Mary Cannon, Chief of the International Division at the Women's Bureau, passed Heiler's complaints to the State Department, 'Her primary interest was in government rather than in women's organizations. She resented being sponsored by women's groups rather than by political

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50 'German Women Leaders: Description used by US Women's Bureau, Department of Labor, Records of the AAUW, Series VIII, Reel 43

scientists.'<sup>51</sup> Since 28 of the first 50 women who came to the United States under the HICOG programme were members of the Bundestag, it is not unlikely that this complaint was widespread.

The Women's Bureau, directing the proposed programme of German women visitors, explained the need to encourage volunteer women's groups in Germany. Doing so, they unconsciously defined American women's use of 'social feminism' through voluntary associations as a 'pathway to power'<sup>52</sup> :

The Woman's Bureau is also aware of the fact that there is an increasing need for volunteer leaders who, with the help of their organizations, can supplement the work of the women who are professional social welfare workers or government officials in related fields, active in carrying out social welfare in their countries.<sup>53</sup>

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51 Cannon to Batson, 23 August 1951, Ruth Woodsmall Papers, Box 55, File 2

52 For details on the theory and ideology of 'Social Feminism' see, for example, Nancy F. Cott, 'What's in a Name? The Limits of "Social Feminism" or expanding the Vocabulary of Women's History.' Journal of American History 1989 pp.446-467.

53 'Proposed Program in the United States for Leaders of Women's Organizations of the Western Hemisphere,' Women's' Bureau, Department of Labor, Records of the AAUW, Series VIII, Reel 147

Thus, even when the Bureau envisaged a role for German women outside voluntary associations, it was as officials involved in the field of welfare.<sup>54</sup>

A further barrier towards understanding between German visitors and their American hosts was national pride. American women expected to be in a superior position to German women and were not receptive of any criticism of their own system by the Germans. Indicative of this is the nature of the exchanges. Rather than an exchange between equals, eager to learn about the other's way of life, the German women were to come to the US to learn valuable lessons about the American way of life while American women visiting Germany were there to spread the message about American values to German women not fortunate enough to make the trip for themselves. In other words, German women travelled to the US to learn, whilst American women travelled to Germany to teach or perhaps to reinforce their pre-existing prejudices about the status of German

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54 This restriction was not limited to German women. The CCCMF reported a telling incident in which the Fund had been asked to put on an educational tour for some Japanese women who were dieticians. 'The LWV of DC gals arranged a spectacular tour through the Department of Agriculture's Home Economic Division, including a research center at Beltsville Md. Then the Pentagon called again to say that the Japanese Ladies were not dieticians, but members of the DIET! [the Japanese legislative body]' [Heming speech to State Conference of the League of Women Voters, 1951, Lucille Koshland Papers, Box 1, File 2

women relative to their own. Ten US women visiting Germany in 1951 under the auspices of the State Department explained that they had 'discovered' how far behind America German women were in the establishment of women's organizations. One report noted, 'The American delegation...was told that their counterpart German organizations have a long way to go before they can achieve the active role and effective influence in community affairs which is second nature to American women's groups.'<sup>55</sup> A group of American women leaders touring Bavaria stated their superiority over German women through the metaphor of the 'helping hand': 'If American women residing in Germany will extend a helping hand to German women in their fledgling efforts to find a way to democratic living...they will hasten the day when Germany will assume full status among other countries.'<sup>56</sup>

Any observations that German women made about America which were less than overwhelmingly positive were met with indignation. The Association of American University women (AAUW) collated the opinions of its members who played host to a German

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55 National news release, 'Rocky Mountain Area AAUW Leader on Official Tour of West Germany,' 15 May 1951, Records of the AAUW, Series VIII, Reel 43  
 56 Dyke memorandum, 'Report of US Women's Panel Barvarian Tour,' undated, Records of the AAUW, Series VIII, Reel 47

exchange visitor in a programme intended to 'give German women a working knowledge of the American way of life and the part women played in it'.<sup>57</sup> Reaction was mixed. For example, the visit of Dr Hildegard Wolle-Egenolf to the Montana Division of the AAUW was sympathetically reported by the chair of the Havre branch. Describing Wolle-Egenolf as 'a very brilliant and aggressive seeker of the truth of the facts about the place American women have taken in society', the chair concluded:

If her visit fails to be one of constructive value, I should feel inclined to blame the American women with whom she comes into contact. She has the involuntary resentment of the conquered for the conquerer....Perhaps due to this she seemed at times more impressed with our failures than with our successes.<sup>58</sup>

The Great Falls branch was also sympathetic to Wolle-Egenolf's visit, reporting, 'She has been a good tonic for us here in Great Falls. We had an informal open house for her, and she had all the

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57 'A Brief account of AAUW participation in the program for German women,' 12 May 1950, Records of the AAUW, Series VIII, Reel 47

58 'Report from the Montana Division of AAUW on the visit to Montana of Dr Hildegard Wolle-Egenolf,' 13-27 August 1950, p. 7, Records of the AAUW, Series VIII, Reel 47

women at her feet while she told them what is wrong with American women.'<sup>59</sup>

Not all branches were quite so understanding of Wolle-Egenolf's candour. A representative of the Helena branch reported:

I had expected an amount of misunderstanding but was not prepared for the constant vigilance that had to be exercised. Nor was I prepared to cope with her apparent suspicion that I was trying to cover up....Her own personality and nature are such that she made more confusion for herself....I have greater respect than ever for the tremendous efforts of the State Department.<sup>60</sup>

The Bozeman branch reported on Wolle-Egenolf's 'habit of outspoken criticism and belligerent cross-questioning', concluding, 'She had definite preconceived ideas which she may have brought with her from Germany or acquired during her stay in this country. At any rate her mind was pretty much closed to anything we had to tell her.' The chair of Bozeman reported unfavourably how Wolle-Egenolf's insisted on petting the bears in Yellowstone park,

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 3

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 3

despite warnings from the driver, and proclaimed, 'See, they don't hurt me. They are so friendly.' Sympathy was not hindered by Wolle-Egenolf's insistence on some days that she would speak only in German. All groups commented on Wolle-Egenolf's legal approach to women's position and her lack of interest in the 'women's association' approach. The Harve branch commented, 'Her attitude is almost one of our old-time feminists.'<sup>61</sup>

Not all German visits were so negative. Mrs Margitta Richstadt, brought to America by the League of Women Voters, professed herself eager to learn 'the American recipe for democracy so that I can make it a part of all phases of German life'.<sup>62</sup> The Women's Bureau chose in its speeches and statements to emphasise the positive aspects of exchanges and the sense of shared female identity for which they were designed:

[The] remarks [of German women visitors to the US] all tended to reflect a growing sense that women all over the world share the same goals and the same objectives...[including] peace and the opportunity to be of constructive

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61 Ibid., p. 4

62 'Statement of Activities of the CCCMF, 1952,' Lucille Koshland Papers, Box 1, File 9

usefulness within our communities and to extend this usefulness to our government wherever possible.<sup>63</sup>

American women's efforts at the political re-education of their European sisters were not designed to encourage introspection and self-analysis. It was disheartening for US women to find, when lecturing about the advantages of American life, that their audience often seemed more interested in focusing upon negative aspects of what they had heard about America.

This was vividly illustrated by the issue of racism. American women's organisations had often admitted to themselves that it would be necessary to solve the problem of racial discrimination if the US were to represent itself to the rest of the world as the bastion of freedom. Zeila Ruebhausen, the observer for the League of Women Voters at the United Nations, reported that while the US had had considerable success in condemning the Soviet Union for putting down the Hungarian uprising in 1956, the issue had been clouded by the trouble over integration of schools in Arkansas, with the Soviet delegate telling the Ambassador from Ceylon in the

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63 Leopold address, 'Spotlight on Women,' Records of the Women's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor 1918-1965, Part 1, Reel 19

General Assembly that 'he would be safer in the streets of Budapest than he would in Little Rock'. Mrs Ruebhausen concluded, 'If the United States is to exert leadership, it cannot do it by dollars alone. We must also live up to our beliefs in the dignity of man and the rights of all citizens to equal opportunities.'<sup>64</sup>

American women were often unwilling to be this frank with critics from other nations. Perhaps they displayed the 'restless vanity' that de Tocqueville had observed over a century earlier, making Americans in their dealings with strangers, 'impatient of the slightest censure and insatiable of praise.'<sup>65</sup> The primary argument American women used was that reports of discrimination had been widely exaggerated and that the situation was improving all the time. This attitude was typified in a 1955 report of the San Francisco News: 'Better View of Americans --- East Bay Woman Corrects some of Britain's Distorted Ideas'. Mrs Harry Kingman, of the Berkeley League of Women Voters, had visited Britain under the sponsorship of the CCCMF and was shocked to find 'that even schoolchildren knew the name of Emmett Till and details of his Mississippi

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64 The National Voter, January 1958, p.12

65 Quoted in Daniel Bell, The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties, (New York: The Free Press, 1960), p. 13

murder and the subsequent trial and acquittal of the accused white man'. The article described this version of events as a 'distorted idea', although it made no attempt to explain exactly in what respect this account was 'distorted'.<sup>66</sup>

The eagerness to correct the appearance of discrimination was echoed in the treatment of visitors to America. Mrs Koshland of the OEF complained, 'Unfortunately we find that so many exchanges arrive here with very unfavourable pictures of us in their minds (Communist Propaganda? Maybe.) They all seem to have heard about Little Rock and Lynching.'<sup>67</sup> Mrs Robert Lambkin, a member of the Arlington, Virginia branch of the AAUW, wrote to headquarters about her concern that German women voters not get the 'wrong' picture of the conditions in which African-Americans were living:

Mrs Meyer-Spreckels [a German visitor] unburdened her soul about the Negro situation. She had had a rather disillusioning experience that afternoon --- had been taken by a Negro group<sup>68</sup> to a fine housing development for Negroes, but

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66 San Francisco News, 15 December 1955

67 Koshland to Hoag, 12 October 1960, Lucille Koshland Papers, Box 1, File 32

68 Probably the National Council of Negro Women, since they cooperated with the Women's Bureau in the exchange programmes

had then been taken to the back alleys and into the homes of the poorest Negroes. She was left feeling that Americans were doing little for the poor Negro. Mrs Goode thought felt that whoever had been her guide had not done too good a job. Although it was important to see conditions as they are, it might be well in future trips to reverse the process and watch the guide in charge.<sup>69</sup>

American women's organizations were not alone in their concern that German visitors received what they saw as the 'correct' picture of American life and women's place in it. Sponsoring government agencies also kept a watchful eye on the reports of the exchanges. One German visitor, Suse Windisch, reported on her visit: 'I don't think any of the housewives whom we met has prepared fresh vegetables for lunch or dinner, (with the exception of salad) but they always used canned vegetables. This fact as well as some others seem to explain to me why American women can spend much more time for club

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<sup>69</sup> Lambkin to Koshland, undated, Records of the AAUW, Series VIII, Reel 47

activities.'<sup>70</sup> Betsy Knapp, the Cultural Attache in Frankfurt, commented:

I am just a little bit concerned about Miss Windisch's conclusion that the participation of American Women in the community is primarily related to household conveniences....I think it important for our foreign visitors to know that there was a tradition of participation in the community long before gadgets and time-saving devises became so plentiful. It is all too easy for people to jump to the conclusion that our behaviour pattern is completely the product of the conveniences of life.<sup>71</sup>

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70 Extract from Windisch letter, 19 December 1951, quoted in Knapp to Cannon, 3 January 1952, League of Women Voters Papers, Box 757, File 'Germany'

71 Knapp to Cannon, 3 January 1952, League of Women Voters Papers, Box 757, File 'Germany'

An acknowledgement of the practical fact that household labour-saving devices left increased time and energy for political activities came from Dr Moffat, the NFBPWC's representative on a State Department tour of Germany. Moffat reported to her organization, 'German housewives...are incorrigible scrubbers. Mostly they know nothing of the labor-saving devices that American Housewives take so much for granted. It is their tradition that every floor must be scrubbed by hand every day. It is also in their tradition that if they discharge properly their duties of housewives, they will have no time for keeping up with public affairs through the reading of newspapers, newspaper reading being the special prerogative of men....It would be better if German housewives would leave one floor unscrubbed

The increasing anxiety about the impression German women received about American society was part of a shift in US policy towards Germany. Whilst initial American attitudes towards Germany may have been shaped by a concern for their de-Nazification and re-education in democracy, the wider context of the Cold War quickly ensured that it was of equal, if not greater importance, that the loyalty of the West German people towards the US be assured. This change manifested itself through an increasing concern over perceived Soviet attempts to target West German women for propaganda. As early as spring 1945, a proposal for International Study Grants from the AAUW for 'Women of the Liberated Countries' noted, 'Our enemies have been diabolically clever in sowing seeds of suspicion and hatred. We need to get about the business of sowing our own seeds of understanding and friendship with all speed.'<sup>72</sup> In a 1948 report, 'The Forgotten Women may decide the German Battle,' journalist Anne O'Hare McCormick explained to readers, 'The Russians have worked to make women feel important; first in comparison with the position under Hitler, who

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each day and read one newspaper.' (Independent Woman, Vol 30:8, August 1951, p. 246)

<sup>72</sup> 'A Proposal for International Study Grants: Our Fellowship Committee's Plan for Women of the Liberated Countries,' Journal of the AAUW, Vol 38:3, Spring 1945.

started by shooing them back into the home and ended by pulling them out to work in the factories; and second, in contrast with the indifference manifested toward them by the other occupying Powers.'<sup>73</sup>

Mrs Elizabeth Holt, a women's activities specialist stationed in Berlin, also voiced concern: 'There is a great danger of communism in the women's groups. As I'm fond of telling...the communists have said, "Take the women and the youth and the Americans can have the men".'<sup>74</sup> The Women's Affairs Section made repeated allusions to the Soviet targeting of women's groups as justification for an increased importance for their role. Their report for July to December 1949 warned:

In this formative period of the new Germany, women's organizations merit careful consideration as they are of important political potential. They may be developed as a democratic force or used as an effective instrument for propaganda. There is evidence of systematic efforts from the Eastern Zone to undermine the Western German state by appealing to

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73 Anne O'Hare McCormick, 'The Forgotten Women may decide the German Battle,' New York Times, 13 September 1948

74 Holt speech, 'The Women's Affairs Section,' 20 January 1949, Ruth Woodsmall Papers, Box 50, File 5

certain women's organizations through slogans of peace and unity and condemning the division of Western Germany.<sup>75</sup>

The report concluded, 'The great majority of women's organizations are orientated towards Western Ideology and are developing as an affirmation of democratic ideals. The support of these organizations is a sound investment towards German Democracy.'<sup>76</sup>

To ensure the support of these groups, the Women's Affairs Section co-operated in the organization of the Congress of Women at Bad Pyrmont. Attended by more than 600 German women, the Congress resulted in the foundation of Deutsche Frauenring, a federation of women's organizations which immediately affiliated to the International Council of Women. The section asserted, 'The founding of the Deutsche Frauenring and its affiliation to the ICW has definite significance as a countercheck to the claims of the over-all women's organization in the Eastern Zone, Demokratischer Frauenbund, which is affiliated to the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF), the

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75 Women's Affairs Section, Semi-Annual Report, 1 July- 31 December 1949, Ruth Woodsmall Papers, Box 51, File 2

76 Ibid.

Soviet propaganda organization on a world scale.'<sup>77</sup>  
The strategy of uniting German women from all three Western zones furthered overall American policy of uniting West Germany as a viable and strong national power. The Section concluded:

The founding of a Federation of Women's Organizations of Western Germany has considerable significance. An overall organization uniting the three zones is indicative of growth toward the Cultural unity of Western Germany. It may also have wide political influence as the channel for expression of opinion of women on public issues throughout Western Germany. It is one of the salient evidences of the de facto end of the period of trizonal division of Western Germany, even though the zonal boundaries still exist.<sup>78</sup>

This strategy was also evident in the 'Tripartio Project', organized by the Women's Affairs Section in February 1951 for citizenship training with the specific purpose of countering the Communist threat. The Section asserted, 'Such a joint training project for all three zones will

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77 Ibid.

78 Ibid.

greatly strengthen the solidarity of German women from different Laender and give them a stronger sense of their total responsibility as citizens, as well as a clearer understanding of the integral relationship of Germany to Western Europe.'<sup>79</sup>

Despite the best efforts of the Women's Affairs Section to counter Soviet propaganda, concern grew that a full response to the Soviet efforts was beyond the scope of the Section's meagre resources. The Section reported in 1950 that it was particularly concerned with the Women's International Day celebrations held in Berlin on 8 March.<sup>80</sup> The Section fretted:

Although the Soviet movement has not succeeded in its appeal in Berlin, there is apprehension of the effect of such large-scale campaigns which appeal to masses of women under the perverted slogans of peace and unity. The lack of help from the U.S.A. in Berlin, since the Women's Affairs position in Berlin was eliminated last summer, has been difficult for Berlin women to understand and has

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79 'Tripartio Project Report,' 3 February 1951, Ruth Woodsmall Papers, Box 56, File 1

80 Women's Affairs Section, Semi-Annual Report, 1 January-1 April 1950, Ruth Woodsmall Papers, Box 52, File 1

been a cause for alarm. The mass effort campaign in Berlin is considered by some as more dangerous than the youth rally because of the degree of unemployment among women, who constitute more than half the breadwinners in Berlin.<sup>81</sup>

A 1950 report, 'Communist Propaganda and Influence in Relation to Women's Organizations and the Women's Affairs Program', by Women's Affairs Advisor Betsy Knapp connected the issue of 'defense' against communist propaganda to the earlier concern to educate German women in democracy: 'The problem of meeting the present pressure on the part of the Communists against the women is the same problem that the United States Government has been endeavouring to meet through the Women's Affairs Program.'<sup>82</sup> The report concluded with regret:

The pressure from the Communists only indicates that the work was started late, that sufficient top level political importance has not yet been attached to the factor of women, that there have been inadequate facilities for tackling the

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81 Ibid.

82 Knapp memorandum, 'Communist Propaganda and Influence in Relation to Women's Organizations and the Women's Affairs Program,' 1950, Ruth Woodsmall Papers, Box 52, File 6

problem on an all out basis. The size of the task of overcoming the basic political apathy of the German women, of doing something about their political ignorance and of bringing about basic changes in behaviour patterns which will make it possible for the women's organizations to be effective instruments of education and activity, has been consistently underestimated, or perhaps the importance of tackling it on a large scale has been underappreciated.<sup>83</sup>

Intelligence reports seem to confirm Knapp's assessment that the issue of women as a target of communist propaganda was being underestimated by US officials. A report from the Intelligence Division of HICOG in Bremen in 1950 asserted:

Communist endeavours to influence West German women encounter great difficulties insofar as West German women in their majority are very little interested in politics. This fact which worries all political parties --- from SPD [the Social Democratic party] to DP [Democratic Party] --- constitutes a certain advantage as far

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83 Ibid.

as communist activities are concerned....

It can be said in conclusion that the overall success of communist influence is insignificant and not worth the efforts put into it.<sup>84</sup>

This suggests that American Intelligence underestimated Soviet propaganda targeted at women because of a misguided idea of what constituted 'political' activity. Official intelligence, lacking access to women's organizations, chose to ignore them.

Whilst she sympathized with the problems the Women's Affairs Section faced, Knapp's report specifically criticized their concentration on the 'voluntary association' approach, asserting, 'There is some tendency to simplify the problem of women's affairs by thinking of it as "women's organization" rather than as a business of bringing women into all types of activity: Boards, Committees, forums, offices --- all the agencies where community and public problems are involved.'<sup>85</sup>

The desirability of a change in strategy regarding German women was something that was becoming increasingly apparent in the reports of the

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84 Report of the Intelligence Division, Bremen, 'Communist Influence on West German Women,' 11 October 1950, Ruth Woodsmall Papers, Box 52, File 6  
85 Ibid.

Section. Whilst the exchange programme with America continued to stress the women association's model, perhaps due to the reliance of the programme upon American women's organizations, the Section's programme within Germany was increasingly aware of the need for a more diverse approach. The Section's report on women's conferences in Bad Pyrmont and Furth in 1949-1950 made an interesting comparison between the conference in Furth of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the non-party (or, to use their terms, 'above-party') conference of women in Bad Pyrmont. The report pointed out the advantages of an emphasis on party gatherings, particularly the fact that 'there was a welcome lack of any vague resolutions on world peace, so characteristic of above-party conferences, as sincere as they are unconstructive'.<sup>86</sup>

Still, this was not to say the 'above-party approach' was useless, since it could attract the mass of German women who were 'totally unenlightened politically'.<sup>87</sup> The founding of the Deutsche Frauenring at Bad Pyrmont was recognised as an important alternative to the Communist Demokratische Frauenbund Deutschlands (DFD), since 'women who

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86 'Report of Recent Women's Conferences at Bad Pyrmont and Furth,' Ruth Woodsmall Papers, Box 56, File 2

87 Ibid.

would not join a political party but are looking around for some sort of activity with a wider scope might well have joined the DFD in the sincere belief that they were becoming members of a genuine non-party organization'.<sup>88</sup> Moreover, the report noted that the affiliation of Deutsche Frauenring to the International Council of Women would serve a useful purpose in connecting German women with women of other countries, a benefit the 'party' approach lacked.

Concern over Soviet targeting of Women's Organizations was unabated. In 1953 a special report, commissioned by the Women's Affairs Section, warned of 'a systematic campaign from communist quarters, paid for and provided with material and propaganda directives from the Soviet Zone of Germany, to capture the leadership of various kinds of women's organizations'.<sup>89</sup> The report named three German women's organizations as agents of the propaganda campaign.<sup>90</sup>

The effect of American women's organizations in the re-education of German women is obviously

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88 Ibid.

89 Holborn memorandum, 'International Problems Pertaining to the Growth and Effectiveness of Women's Work in Germany,' 1953, Ruth Woodsmall Papers, Box 51, File 5

90 These three organizations were the Gesamtdeutsche Volkspartei, the Bund der Deutschen and WOMAN. See Chapter 8 for further details of the problems of WOMAN in Germany.

difficult to gauge. The efforts of the Section to gain the support and loyalty of German women had some tangible results. The German women who were picked to take part in the exchange programme were carefully selected in order to have the maximum effect on their return to Germany, despite historian Harold Zink's claim that 'in certain cases... American officials took advantage of an excellent opportunity to send their German mistresses on an excursion to the United States'.<sup>91</sup> Many of the German women chosen to visit America became formidable allies to the Americans. Gabrielle Strecker, an employee of OMGUS and a founder of the Christian Democratic Union, had been sent to the United States in 1946 to attend the International Assembly of Women in New York.<sup>92</sup> Mrs Strecker was to prove a valuable ally for American women's groups in future years. A memorandum on Psychological Warfare from the Women's Affairs Bureau suggested the possibility of financial support for German women's groups who were making counter-communist efforts on their own initiative. As an example of this kind of group, the memorandum named Gabriele Strecker, who had

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91 Harold Zink, The United States in Germany 1944-1955 (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1957), p. 225

92 Quoted in Kellerman, p. 40

The exchange programme at that time had yet to be formally announced, but the US government gave its approval and support for Mrs Strecker's trip, following the urgent request of General Clay.

established a group of women in Frankfurt to educate women on the 'real meaning of Communist Propaganda'. Mrs Strecker subsequently wrote a book, Propaganda Tactics, on the strategies of the Soviets, published under German auspices with a US subsidy.<sup>93</sup>

In an application to the Ford Foundation for a grant to fund further international exchanges, the CCCMF, perhaps none too surprisingly, waxed lyrical about the positive effect a visit to American women's organizations had on European women:

Our visitors have commented over and over again on the warm friendliness of their hosts, on the fact that government officials here are regarded as public 'servants' not 'masters', that it is the 'spirit of co-operation' rather than wealth and gadgets in the home that makes it possible for more women here to take part in community activities, that Negroes and members of other minorities have many opportunities for public service and are not at all oppressed, that American Democracy has a 'spiritual side'.<sup>94</sup>

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93 Secret memorandum, undated, 'Communist Peace Aggression,' Ruth Woodsmall Papers, Box 59, File 4

94 CCCMF request for Ford Foundation Grant, June 1952, Lucille Koshland Papers, Carton 1, File 15, p.

Beyond a mere positive feeling about America and American values, the international exchange of women leaders had an important role to play in strengthening the Free World against Communist encroachment, claimed the CCCMF. By carefully selecting women who 'have standing and prestige in their own communities', the CCCMF argued, 'The results of their stay...[will]...in turn influence large numbers'.<sup>95</sup> If the programme was expanded with the Ford Foundation grant, the CCCMF would put itself in the forefront of the worldwide struggle to combat the forces of Communism: 'Who knows where time is running out fastest, what chances there are that the cold war will turn hot, where the infiltration process is likely to extend the Iron Curtain?'<sup>96</sup> The AAUW was similarly confident of the effect of the exchange programmes, asserting, 'Exchange of persons has been a major part in the democratic re-orientation of the cultural rehabilitation of the occupied countries.'<sup>97</sup>

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95 Ibid., p. 3

In their programme in Italy, the CCCMF claimed they had been effective in helping to prevent a communist takeover: 'It is only by helping Italian women to solve their community problems democratically that they can be saved from resorting to the extremes, the regimentation, the loss of freedom involved in accepting communist or fascist solutions.'

96 Ibid., p. 19

97 'German Leaders: Suggestions to Sponsors,' Records of the AAUW, Series VIII, Reel 43

German women's organizations certainly developed a 'special relationship' with American women's organizations through the postwar American programmes. At the Conference of the International Council of Women in Helsinki in June 1954, Dr Ulrich-Beil, head of the German delegation, was fulsome in her praise of American women's leadership:

America is the home of the world because she has spiritual integrity and high moral virtue. Surely the United States is the logical country to lead the world and the women of the National Council of Women of the United States and its affiliates are the logical ones to spearhead the movement for a great spiritual revival. As earlier American women led in the movement for the International Council of Women, let today's American women lead in the movement for spiritual regeneration of the world.<sup>98</sup>

In her article on German women's 'consciousness and activity' in Frankfurt, Donna Harsch points to the conservative political outlook of German women as an

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98 Mallory report, June 1954, National Council of Negro Women Papers, Box 8, File 12

outcome of the model of participation impressed upon them by Americans: 'In the Federal Republic, women voted at a higher rate than men for the Christian Democrats, a party that implemented a conservative family policy, promoted the housewife, resisted the enactment of egalitarian family law, opposed the legalization of abortion and tightened the divorce law.' More specifically, Harsch points out that German women's organizations which emerged from post war Germany were 'by and large, very moderate.' Harsch argued, 'By concentrating on issues that arose out of women's experience in the family, they revived the "organized motherliness" and what Ann Taylor Allen has called the "maternal metaphor" of pre-1914 bourgeois women's associations.'<sup>99</sup>

The export of the model of voluntary associations as a medium for women's political activity was not restricted to Germany but was applied to other countries. U.S. representatives displayed the same disregard to, and impatience with, any 'native' conditions that were at odds with the voluntary association model. As late as 1957 Anna Lord Strauss was assuring the readers of Bangkok World that the model of women's associations was appropriate for Asian women:

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<sup>99</sup> Harsch, p. 32

The outstanding single factor of the just conducted Asian Women's Seminar is the emphasis laid on individual and voluntary initiative. Government activity will never be enough to arouse the Asian woman and to free her from her many bonds....She herself must be educated in her rights and her duties and dignities....And this can best be done by women's organizations.<sup>100</sup>

The Overseas Education Fund of the League of Women Voters gradually came to see the error of applying American models to overseas development. In their 1961 annual report, it recognised:

The voluntary association, especially as directed towards citizenship education, has achieved its highest degree of effectiveness in the United States. This is a concept that individuals and groups in many countries request in increasing numbers that we share with them. But it cannot be transported intact --- it needs to be adopted and translated into terms appropriate to the culture and level of

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100 Bangkok World, 18 August 1957, Anna Lord Strauss Papers, Box 13, File 271

functioning of the society in which it is to take place.<sup>101</sup>

In recognition of this fact, the new full-time field worker of the OEF in Latin America was described as a 'transformer', that is, one who 'enables the Fund to convert U.S. Patterns and ideas into a frame of reference that is meaningful and valuable in Latin America'.<sup>102</sup>

Nevertheless old ideas died hard, and the OEF was unusual in its change of policy. In 1967 Elizabeth Greenfield, a visitor to Korea and Japan on an American Specialist Grant, concurred with Anna Lord Strauss on the importance of the wholesale export of women's organizations:

The women of Japan and Korea can learn much about democracy by its introduction into their own organizations. Democracy in the United States is constantly being re-enforced by the demands of the electorate reflected in voluntary group action. I think we can import some of our know-how

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101 Annual Report of the Overseas Education Fund of the League of Women Voters, 1961, Lucille Koshland Papers, Box 1, File 10

102 Ibid.

and experience in the field of voluntary community organization.<sup>103</sup>

The model of cooperation between American women's voluntary associations and the US government as it was applied in Germany produced a template for US involvement with women in other nations. This template dictated that women's political participation, stemming from an essentialist gendered identity, be directed through voluntary associations.

The claim of American women to share an identity with German women was the basis for their assertion that they were the most suitable 'teachers' in the re-education of German women. Such a role was not always easy, often being marred by misunderstandings and resentment. As Cold War tensions tightened their hold, American women's strategy altered. Rather than a task of 're-education', their aims became more focused on propaganda, aimed at refuting the allegations of the Soviet Union and winning the loyalty of women of Germany and elsewhere to the American cause. The rhetoric of American women's organizations, which had in the immediate aftermath of World War II

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103 Greenfield report, May-June 1967, Louise Backus Papers, Box 1, File 1967

proclaimed them internationalists and women, became increasingly focused on their role as Cold Warriors and Americans.

## CHAPTER SIX

### FROM INTERNATIONAL ACTIVISTS TO COLD WARRIORS

The entry of American women's organizations into the Cold War was a long and, for some, agonising process. Like many Americans in the post war world, American women's organizations were optimistic that the United Nations could establish and preserve global peace and prosperity. The popularity of the concept of a collective world-organization in post war America is unquestionable. A poll conducted in 1945 found that 85 percent of Americans favoured an organization which would, 'marshal the forces for understanding among the peoples of the world.'<sup>1</sup> Historian William Preston described and explained the popularity of the United Nations ideal in America as a reaction to the destructive potential of atomic power and the global destruction of traditional war:

Historians studying the wartime statements that U.S. political leaders made about the significance of and the necessity for international education and cultural exchange must surely believe they are

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<sup>1</sup> William Preston Jr., 'The History of US-UNESCO Relations' in William Preston, Jr., Edward S. Herman, and Herbert I. Shiller, Hope and Folly: The United States and UNESCO 1945-1985 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), p. 33

witnessing an assembly of faith healers selling ideological nostrums to an audience of true believers....The deluge of slaughter and the menace of its total and final climax under the atom's bright sun only confirmed the authenticity of everyone's incredible paroxysms of hope.<sup>2</sup>

American women's organizations shared the national belief in the promise of internationalism. John Sloan Dickey, the Director of the Office of Public Affairs in the State Department, collaborated with Helen Dwight Reid, President of the American Association of University Women, to write an article for the Journal of the AAUW, exploring 'Some Implications of International Co-operation.' The article announced, 'For many years, the AAUW has endorsed "international co-operation" as the basic principle of our foreign policy. Now for the first time in world history there is a chance of putting that principle into effective operation.'<sup>3</sup> In an article for Independent Woman, the official publication of the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, Mildred Burgess praised the United Nations as the 'Tree of Life'.

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2 Ibid., p. 32

3 John Sloan Dickey and Helen Dwight Reid, 'Some Implications of International Co-operation,' Journal of the AAUW, Vol 38:3 Spring 1945, p. 140

Burgess asserted, 'We have learned that the roots of war are economic and social....By the some token, too, we have learned that the roots of peace are in the soil of humanitarianism, in human adjustments.' The United Nations could help guarantee peace, since 'it is by sitting down together to discuss the ways and means for bettering man's economic and social conditions everywhere that brotherhood and co-operation are engendered'.<sup>4</sup>

The AAUW asserted in an editorial in its journal, 'The only sound policy for the United States, especially in the light of our past history, is to take the lead in strengthening the United Nations.'<sup>5</sup> Announcing that 'there has never been a time when the international program of the American Association of University Women was of more vital significance', the AAUW urged its members to support actively the resolutions of the 1945 convention. Of particular importance was Resolution Two in which the AAUW committed itself to...

...foster a world society in which individuals and nations may live in security, dignity and peace. We must emphasise international co-operation as a

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<sup>4</sup> Mildred Burgess, 'United Nations, Tree of Life,' Independent Woman, Vol 27:2, February 1948, p. 32

practical test of domestic and foreign policies and we must effectively work at the continuing task of establishing and maintaining international organization.<sup>6</sup>

The Journal of the AAUW listed ten specific things that branches could do to show support of this resolution, including, 'Discuss these issues with your friends and neighbours', 'Ask your local editor to start a question and answer column on United Nations questions' and 'Ask your church, library, or school to arrange a series of public showings of documentary films of the United Nations'.<sup>7</sup>

American women's organizations worked hard to educate and inform people in the US about the aims and activities of the United Nations. Often this educational programme was directed to the more 'feminine' aspect of the UN's work, particularly the efforts of the UN in the area of human rights. A press release from the Women's National News Service in October 1949 explained, 'Women are serving as the right arm of the United Nations on one measure that has strong feminine appeal --- Declaration of Human Rights.' In an interesting choice of words, the

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5 'Let's make the U.N. Work,' Journal of the AAUW, Vol 39:2, Winter 1946

6 'Resolutions of the 1945 Convention,' Journal of the AAUW, Vol 38:4, Summer 1945

7 Ibid.

press release elaborated on the 'feminine' credentials of the document:

The Declaration was *mothered*, through the necessary stages to its adoption by the UN, by a loved and respected woman, Mrs Franklin D. Roosevelt, Chairman of the UN Commission on Human Rights. And with the Declaration now adopted as the formal principles of human rights and freedom for all peoples, leaders in women's organizations think it especially appropriate that the women of this country get behind it and push.<sup>8</sup>

Work by women's organizations included encouragement by national boards to branches to develop educational programmes, numerous publications and a choral drama, produced by the YWCA and based on the UN Charter and the Declaration.

The commitment of American women's organizations to internationalism contrasted with the increasingly ambivalent attitude of their government to the effectiveness of the UN and to the

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<sup>8</sup> Press release from the Women's National News Service, 31 October 1949, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Box 3612

value of channelling international efforts through its mediation. In 1947 the League of Women Voters displayed its support of the United Nations in a letter to President Truman criticising the Marshall Plan. The letter, written by Anna Lord Strauss, informed Truman, 'Although we are in general agreement with Secretary Marshall's proposals we are very much disturbed that no mention has been made of the role of the United Nations in this project, either in the speech itself or in any subsequent statement by our government.'<sup>9</sup> The League chastised Truman:

We know that in by-passing the United Nations, in failing to take advantage of its existing machinery, our government is not doing its part in firmly establishing that international co-operation on which, ultimately, our own security and that of other nations depends. We know that the United Nations will never be stronger and hence able to fill the role we wish it could unless in the conduct of our foreign relations day by day we take steps to strengthen it.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Strauss to Truman letter in International Women's News, Vol 42:2, November 1947

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

Throughout the late 1940s, hopes for a peaceful world ruled through the aegis of the United Nations seemed misplaced. The obvious cause of this was growing tension between the Soviet Union and the US. Daniel Yergin sees the early months of 1946 as pivotal in the development of the Cold War, as 'American officialdom became coherent and consistent in their hostility to an suspicion of Soviet intentions'.<sup>11</sup> Yergin argues that the 'Long Telegram' by George Kennan, which described the 'no compromise' attitude of the Soviet Union 'became the bible for American Policy Makers'.<sup>12</sup> This antagonism towards the Soviet Union was not at this point shared by the wider American public, however. Yergin explains, 'The postwar anti-communist consensus existed first in the centre, in the policy elite, before it spread out to the nation.'<sup>13</sup>

The Truman Doctrine of March 1947 should be understood, not merely as the public expression of the Truman Administration's move towards an aggressive policy towards the Soviet Union but also as a public relations event for that policy. Gary W. Reichard argues, 'Emotional anti-communism of the post-war years was shaped by Truman's depiction of

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11 Daniel Yergin, Shattered Peace: The Origins of the Cold War and the National Security State (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Co, 1977) p. 163

12 Ibid., p. 168

13 Ibid., p. 171

Soviet motives and U.S. policy options, his portrayal of U.S. actions as wholly altruistic and his preference for military power over accommodation.'<sup>14</sup> Truman's speech to Congress, ostensibly an appeal for funds to withstand the spread of communism in Turkey and Greece, drew upon an apocalyptic vision of a world divided between democracy and communism, good and evil, light and darkness. Presenting the USSR as a threat to freedom and democracy across the globe, US policy was firmly set upon the road of an active opposition, outside the mediating body of the United Nations, to communism. A repudiation of the tactics of accommodation, Truman's speech was quickly followed by a flood of pronouncements from his administration all underlying its central theme: the impossibility of negotiation with the Soviet Union. On 1 April 1947, Under Secretary of State Dean Acheson informed the executive hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 'I think it is a mistake to believe that you can, at any time, sit down with the Russians and solve questions. I do not think that is the way that are problems are going to be worked out with the Russians.'<sup>15</sup>

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14 Gary W. Reichard, Politics as Usual: The Age of Truman and Eisenhower (Arlington Heights: Harlan Davidson, 1988), p. 201

15 Quoted in Yergin, p. 275

The Truman Doctrine, together with American unilateral economic aid to Europe through the Marshall Plan, contributed significantly to a policy whereby, in the words of historian Harold Josephson, the US 'undermined the world organization by committing the United States to a policy of unilateralism and globalism rather than internationalism'.<sup>16</sup> Josephson argues:

At the moment of [internationalism's] greatest triumph --- the establishment of the United Nations Organizations with American participation --- internationalism began to lose ground. As the Cold War emerged out of the turbulence of World War II, the United States backed away from adopting internationalism as the operational basis for its foreign policy. By 1950 the nation was committed to a policy of unilateralism and intervention.<sup>17</sup>

Within this Cold War context, American women's organizations sought to define their internationalism in terms which did not vary

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16 Harold Josephson, 'The Search for Lasting Peace: Internationalism and Foreign Policy, 1920-1950' in Charles Chatfield and Peter Van Den Dungen (eds.), Peace Movements and Political Cultures (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988), p. 213

significantly from the agenda of their national government. Anna Lord Strauss's message to Truman questioning the US intervention into Greece and Turkey proposed by the Truman Doctrine was typical of this maneuvering. Strauss again emphasised the League's commitment to the UN: 'The fact that the President is asking Congress to take responsibility for a problem which ideally would be handled by the United Nations emphasizes again the necessity for strengthening the United Nations.'<sup>18</sup> However, Strauss recognized that failure to act through the UN was not entirely misguided given the demands of the situation:

We must keep in mind that, of the methods for carrying on international relations at the present time, the United Nations is not the only one. It is only a year old and it is still in the process of organization. Every effort should be made to expand the scope of the United Nations' competence and to strengthen the collective security system. Until the organization is stronger, it is reasonable to question the wisdom of giving it

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18 Strauss memorandum to Local and State League Presidents, undated, League of Women Voters Papers, Box 1775, File 3

problems which it is clearly not equipped to deal with.<sup>19</sup>

The AAUW's approach to the Marshall Plan was similarly constructed to reconcile a commitment to internationalism with an acceptance of the Cold War realities perceived by the US government. The AAUW was wary of overstressing the anti-communist dimension of economic programmes, but Mabel Newcomer, a Professor of Economics at Vassar and a former chairman of the AAUW's Social Studies Committee, explained the value of the Plan in the Journal by directing her readers to Marshall's original assertion, 'Our policy is directed, not against any country or doctrine but against hunger, poverty, desperation and chaos. Its purpose should be the revival of a working economy in the world so as to permit the emergence of political and social conditions in which free institutions can exist.'<sup>20</sup> Newcomer stressed that the emphasis was and should continue to be humanitarian rather than political. Regretting that 'in the US the discussion has turned more and more to the virtues of the program as a device for undermining Communist influence', Newcomer argued that this consequence should be

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted by Mabel Newcomer, 'American's Share in ERP --- Profit or Loss?', Journal of the AAUW, Vol

seen as a side effect of the programme, rather than its *raison d'etre*. If the focus of the programme was stopping communism rather than rescuing and stabilizing European economies, Newcomber argued that the US would be asserting its intention to meddle in the internal politics of other nations. Whilst she accepted that some measure of control over the political institutions which administered the Marshall Plan was inevitable, Newcomber also argued against inflexibility and intolerance, specifically in restricting popular socialism:

Our aim is to foster democracy and not to stop it when we don't like the outcome.... We will have a good chance of preventing the spread of communist dictatorships in consequence of our aid. We haven't a chance in the world of preventing some measure of socialization by the will of the majority. There is a limit to what we can buy, even with sixteen billion dollars.<sup>21</sup>

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21 Ibid., p. 203

Newcomber concluded her article with the familiar plea that America must 'set its own house in order.' She argued, 'There is one more closely related problem that we have to tackle --- the problem of civil rights. If we are going to preach democracy, as we are doing, to the nations of Western Europe, we are going to have to practice

American women's organizations struggled to resist the growing orthodoxy of American attitudes towards the Soviet Union as a global adversary and implacable foe. Like many Americans in the aftermath of World War II, American women's organizations were hopeful that wartime alliance with the Soviet Union could lead to peaceful cooperation between the superpowers in the postwar world. Janette S. Murray, President of the Cedar Rapids, Iowa branch of the AAUW, wrote to President Truman in April 1945, urging that the government 'at least use good diplomacy' and 'extend just consideration to Russia'. She wondered 'if our United States officials at the San Francisco Conference [establishing the United Nations] treated the Russians with proper diplomatic courtesy'.<sup>22</sup> Throughout the postwar period, the journals of American women's organizations were anxious to avoid misunderstanding between the US and the USSR. The Journal of the AAUW ran an article in summer 1947 by Vera Micheles Dean, known for her work with the Foreign Policy Association. In an even-handed discussion of the rising tensions, Dean explained:

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Independence and our own Constitution have defined it. This, too, is something that the Communists have taken pains to point out to our European friends. The success of our European aid program, then, depends on this, too.'

22 Murray to Truman, 5 April, 1945, Truman Papers, White House Central File.

There are all over the world places which have been left as vacuums by the defeat of Germany and Japan and by the weakening of Britain. Into these vacuums the U.S. and Russia are both pressing in an effort to establish their influence, whether it be territorial, economic or ideological. The question is where both the U.S. and Russia will stop.<sup>23</sup>

Dean pointed out that the question of 'blame' and the view which many Americans had of the Soviet Union as 'intransigent' were misplaced, explaining:

[While] it is true that the American representative at Lake Success has been much more agreeable in his relations with the U.N. than Mr Gromyko,...if we look behind the facade of diplomatic language, we may find that on some major points the United States is not quite as different from Russia as we think.'<sup>24</sup>

Dean even suggested that the US resign its privilege of veto at the UN Security Council in the hope that

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23 Vera Micheles Dean, 'US Relations with Russia,' Journal of the AAUW, Vol 40:4, Summer 1947, p. 204

the Soviet Union would follow the example. Referring to specific issues such as US support for the Greek anti-communist regime, Dean warned, 'While we stand rightly opposed to political dictatorship of the communist type, we must not let ourselves become known as a country which supports reactionary governments solely because they happen also to oppose Russia and communism.'<sup>25</sup>

The AAUW's stance was that the US should attempt to understand and, where possible, accommodate the Soviet Union and avoid the appearance of implacable enmity and hostility. Even when the AAUW acknowledged the difficulty of this approach and the reality of US/USSR rivalry, they were anxious that this confrontation not be 'talked up' into a world conflict. Helen Dwight Reid, an AAUW fellow in International Education and later AAUW President, expressed particular concern that American prejudice and hostility to the Soviet Union would be interpreted in neutral countries as US 'war-mongering'. Reid explained:

One of the Canadian press representatives at the Toronto International Federation of University Women Conference commented on the fact that many of the European

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University women had been shocked to see the shadow of a new war behind the headlines in American and Canadian newspapers, for they thought of Russia still as an ally and good neighbor. Today more than ever we must beware of letting our prejudices masquerade as intelligent judgements.<sup>26</sup>

Where the AAUW recognised the global conflict, they advised that the US lead by example by improving and strengthening the practice of democracy at home. For example, the extension of civil rights should be encouraged, since 'democracy as a symbol and slogan is weak unless democracy as operated in reality is strong'.<sup>27</sup> Sarah Blanding, a member of the AAUW and the President of Vassar, wrote in The Journal:

It is apparent that the future of this nation, and perhaps the future of the world, rests upon the character of the decisions that we make at the present time in extending the democratic process. Only

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26 Helen Dwight Reid, 'The US in World Affairs --- Russia: Challenge to Understanding,' Journal of the AAUW, Vol 41:1, Fall 1947, p. 49

27 Althea K. Hottel, 'Town Meetings Around the World,' Journal of the AAUW, Vol 43:2, January 1950,

by seizing the opportunity to achieve greater unity by removing barriers of discrimination that separate group from group within our country, can we maintain and advance our position at home and our leadership among the world.<sup>28</sup>

As the Cold War tightened its grip, the AAUW struggled desperately to maintain some sense of proportion and clung to the hope that tensions could be defused through the UN and world co-operation. The Journal argued in spring 1950:

Although we do not, at present, enjoy the friendship of Russia, this fact in itself constitutes no actual hindrance to the maintenance of world stability. We must discard the idea that it is necessary to choose between a close alliance or a bitter enmity with other nations. It is a terrible mistake to look on war as the inevitable end of our present mistrusts and divided opinions.<sup>29</sup>

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28 Sarah Blanding, 'States Presidents Consider Program, Policy, Problems,' Journal of the AAUW, Vol 42:1, Fall 1948, p. 23

29 Anne Gary Dannell, 'AAUW's Position: Continue Building,' Journal of the AAUW, Spring 1950, Vol 43:3. p. 141

This edition of The Journal explored the issues behind world organization, including an article by Cord Meyer Jr explaining the position of the United World Federalists.<sup>30</sup>

The extent to which this position of accommodation was out of step with the views of the US government was illustrated by an article in The Journal in summer 1950 by Senator William Benton. Benton argued, 'We are in the crucial moments of a struggle for the minds and loyalties of mankind. The US is in a world political campaign.'<sup>31</sup> The position of liberal women's organizations would be an increasingly harried one. Historian Susan Lynn explains:

Women who endorsed internationalist goals faced a major dilemma. On the one hand, they shared the concern of U.S. political leaders that the Soviet Union posed a real threat and thus they remained wedded to the fundamental assumption of US foreign policy: that military preparedness was essential for national security. On the

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30 'From UN to World Federation,' Journal of the AAUW, Vol 43:3, Spring 1950, p. 135

Cord Meyer Jr. later became a CIA official responsible for links with private organizations.

31 Senator William Benton, 'A Marshall Plan of Ideas,' Journal of the AAUW, Vol 43:4, Summer 1950,

other hand, women in the coalition deplored the excessive emphasis on militarism of US foreign policy and urged the government to put more energy and resources into constructive activities that could ease international tensions and create greater economic security throughout the world.<sup>32</sup>

The position of American women's organizations was compromised by their participation in programmes such as civil defense. Through involvement in measures for military preparedness, the organizations arguably contributed to the state of insecurity and tension which fostered and encouraged a tougher US policy in the Cold War. This position was further complicated as women consciously used civil defence as an issue upon which to mount a campaign for great responsibilities and rights as citizens.<sup>33</sup>

In 1951 the AAUW moved towards a more anti-communist stance by recognizing the reality of global conflict with the Soviet Union. In an article

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32 Susan Lynn, Progressive Women in Conservative Times: Radical Justice, Peace and Feminism 1945 to the 1960s (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), p. 104

33 See Laura McEnaney, 'Civil Defense Begins at Home: Domestic Political Culture in the Making of the Cold War,' Ph.D., University of Wisconsin, 1996

written for The Journal by Ina Corinne Brown, Chairman of the AAUW Social Studies Committee, the division of the world into two hostile opposing ideologies which President Truman had described was reiterated:

The world is rapidly being divided not merely between two political systems, but between two philosophies of life. Not only is our political and economic freedom as a people at stake, but our freedom as individuals to think, speak and worship is threatened.<sup>34</sup>

Brown linked the protection of freedom from the encroachment of the Soviet Union with the defence of freedom at home from the threat of witchhunts. Brown asserted, 'We have been shocked by the subversive activities of disloyal individuals and further shocked by irresponsible and unfounded accusations against loyal citizens and by the cropping up of such strange doctrines as "guilt by association".' Brown refused to separate the two issues, insisting:

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the Cold War,' Ph.D., University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1996.

34 Ina Corinne Brown, 'We Can Make History,' Journal

We are not confronted with two problems but with a single problem having two aspects. We must mobilize for physical survival but that survival will have little meaning if our basic values are lost in a disorganized and disintegrating world. Our goal is survival in a free world which has in it enough decency, trust and integrity in the relations of men and nations to make survival worth while.<sup>35</sup>

This position was formally established in The Journal of summer 1951. A special Convention Edition commenced with the address of Althea Hottel, President of the AAUW. Hottel affirmed the AAUW's dual strategy:

There is the external threat of the Soviet Union and there are some of our citizens who endeavour to sap the strength of our nation through subversive activities. We must have loyal Americans in our government, our schools and our industries. The third danger is found in evidence that we might be losing the right to differ and in some instances the right to a free trial. We are justifiably

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid. p. 131

concerned with security, but personal freedom and responsibility for years has been the basis of our national security and thinking men and women must be equally concerned with a preservation of individual liberty.<sup>36</sup>

Another article by Ina Corinne Brown further explored the 'liberal dilemma' of the Cold War:

One particularly insidious aspect of this two-edged threat to our freedom is the way in which it lends itself to the false dilemma. Those who use totalitarian methods to fight communism make it appear that persons who oppose these methods are thereby revealing communist sympathies. Both the witch-hunting demagogue and the communists are threats to our freedom. We do not have to keep one of them in order to get rid of the other. Both of them are totalitarian in their methods, both of them must be repudiated if we are not to become like the thing we profess to hate.<sup>37</sup>

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36 Althea K. Hottel, 'Making Freedom a Reality,' Journal of the AAUW, Vol 44:4, Summer 1951, p. 196

37 Ina Corinne Brown, 'The Things We Can Do,' Journal of the AAUW, Vol 44:4, Summer 1951, p. 60

The concern of the AAUW to protect civil liberties manifested itself in campaigns to raise awareness at branch levels of the threat of anti-communist hysteria. The Journal reported in January 1952 on the activities of the Wellsville, New York branch, in an article entitled 'Security and Civil Rights: How One Branch Approached a Controversial Topic'. Wellsville branch members were asked to define such words and phrases as 'Communist, Fellow-traveller, liberal, subversive, seditious, clear and present danger, civil liberty and guilty by association'. Members were then asked to study topics such as; Presidential Order 9835 (which established the Federal Employee Loyalty Programme), the Civil Service Loyalty Review Program, the McCarran Act, the Subversive Activities Control Board, the Smith Act, Congressional immunity, the activities of the FBI and the Justice Department, and loyalty oaths in state education.<sup>38</sup>

The position outlined in The Journal was established as policy through the announcement of the Board of Directors of the AAUW in January 1953 that 'the time has come for a bold, positive and frontal attack on the communist threat to freedom

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38 'Security and Civil Rights,' Journal of the AAUW, Vol 43:3, March 1952, p. 155

and democracy'. The Board explained why they had delayed so long in making this decision:

For the most part we and like-minded groups have been put on the defensive. If we attacked communism and the communists, we found ourselves in the same camp with self-seeking or fascist-minded individuals who by their methods of attack were undermining the freedom and democracy they professed to defend. If we defended our liberties as a free people, we ran the risk of being called communist sympathizers, fellow-travellers and even communists. So we have sat back, more or less paralyzed and have allowed other people to take the initiative and create a dilemma for the honest and loyal liberal.<sup>39</sup>

The Board announced that the threat *both* from communists *and* from anti-communist groups challenged the essentials of American freedom and democracy: 'The direct threat comes from communists and communist sympathizers. The indirect threat lies in what fear of communism may lead us to do to

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39 'The Communist Threat to Freedom and Democracy.' Journal of the AAUW, Vol 46:2, January 1953 pp67-69

ourselves.'<sup>40</sup> The Board committed itself to a fight against both communism and the tactics of McCarthyism:

We believe that to attempt to fight communism by using totalitarian techniques is not only ineffectual but actually aids the communist enemies of democracy by undermining our free institutions. We do not have to choose between communist infiltration and methods of witch-hunting, character assassination and demagoguery. Both are evil; both are threats to freedom and democracy. We repudiate them both.<sup>41</sup>

The response to the statement was warm, and the May 1953 issue of the Journal reported that, 'The statement on "The Communist Threat to Freedom and Democracy"...has become the most-publicized, most quoted, most-praised statement ever issued in the name of the association.'<sup>42</sup>

The question of the damage to American democracy and liberty by the witchhunt was not an abstract one for the AAUW, which had been subjected to repeated attempts to tag them and their leaders as subversive. Dorothy Kenyon, the Vice-President of

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40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.

42 Journal of the AAUW, Vol 46:4, May 1953, p. 239

the AAUW and the US delegate to the UN Sub-Commission on the Status of Women, was the subject of a loyalty investigation in 1950 following accusations from Senator McCarthy that she was a 'fellow-traveller'.<sup>43</sup> Kenyon was accused, in McCarthy's inimitable style, of being a member of a fluctuating number of Communist-front organizations. One of her more serious organizational links was to the National Council for Soviet-American Friendship, an organization designated 'subversive' by the Attorney General's List. However, as historian David Oshinsky notes, '[Kenyon] was in good company.' The membership of NCSAF included four United States senators and the scientist Albert Einstein. Other women affiliated to the NCSAF included not only Mrs

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43 Kenyon strenuously denied that she was disloyal, a communist, or a fellow-traveller. However she admitted that she had lent her name to 'a number of liberal anti-fascist organizations'. Kenyon received widespread support from the liberal, and not so liberal, press: Life acknowledged her to be a 'convincing witness [with] a look of deadly and impressive seriousness'. However, her career in government service was at an end. 'Literally overnight,' she complained, 'Whatever personal and professional reputation...I may have acquired has been seriously jeopardized, if not destroyed, by the widespread dissemination of charges of communist leanings that are utterly false.' [David M. Oshinsky, A Conspiracy So Immense: The World of Joe McCarthy (New York: The Free Press, 1983) pp. 120-122]

For a biography of Kenyon, see Barbara Sicherman and Carol Hurd Grett (eds.), Notable American Women: The Modern Period (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1980). For a discussion of the loyalty investigation of Kenyon, see Susan M. Hartmann, The Home Front and

Elinor S. Gimbel, who went on to found the Congress of American Women, the US branch of the Soviet-sponsored Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF), but also Mary McLeod Bethune and Charlotte Hawkins Brown of the National Council of Negro Women, Mary Anderson, who had served as the director of the Women's Bureau, and journalist Dorothy Thompson.<sup>44</sup> In an article in The Journal entitled 'The Image of the Things We Hate', Kenyon attacked the loyalty investigation as a threat to American democracy, arguing that if it was allowed to continue...

...something precious will have gone out of America and we will all of us be defeated in our battle of ideas with Russia. For if there is one thing that is wholly American and Non-Russian it is our freedom to think, to express those thoughts and to hear the thoughts of others freely given without fear or intimidation of any sort. America is built on adventuring minds, ranging freely over the entire world of ideas. When the shadow

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Beyond; American Women in the 1940s (Boston: Twayne, 1982), p. 156.

44 Pamphlet on The Council of American-Soviet Friendship, 1943, National Council of Negro Women Papers, Box 24

of fear falls over those minds it will be the beginning of the end.<sup>45</sup>

Confirmation of the appointment of Kathryn McHale, the President of the AAUW onto the Subversives Activities Control Board was held up in the Senate because of charges of disloyalty. One of these charges was that she had defended Kenyon from the charges of which she had been found innocent.<sup>46</sup>

The AAUW's challenge to anti-communist hysteria should not be underestimated. Unlike other organizations which either crumbled in the face of accusations of subversion, such as the Congress of American Women,<sup>47</sup> or participated in the witchhunt by

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45 Dorothy Kenyon, 'The Image of the Thing We Hate,' Journal of the AAUW, Vol 43:4, Summer 1950, p. 220

46 Hartmann, p. 156

Leila Rupp has pointed out the extent to which 'Red-tagging' of women in the McCarthy era was accompanied by accusations of lesbianism. Following McHale's nomination to the Board, Senator Pat McCarran advised Truman that her name should be withdrawn, threatening that if this was not done, he would hold public hearings in which 'information would be brought out that she was a lesbian'. [Leila J. Rupp, '"Imagine my Surprise": Women's Relationships in Mid-Twentieth Century America' in Martin Bauml Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey Jr. (eds.), Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past (New York: Penguin Books, 1989), p. 407]

47 For a meticulous account of the effect of the anti-communist witchhunt against the Congress of American Women, see Amy Swerdlow, 'The Congress of American Women's Left-Feminist Peace Politics in the Cold War' in Linda Kerber, Alice Kessler-Harris, and Kathryn Kish Sklar (eds.), U.S. History as Women's History: New Feminist Essays (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

rooting out suspected 'subversives' from their own ranks, such as the NAACP,<sup>48</sup> the AAUW maintained a strong critique of the dangers of the security inquisition. Mabel Newcomer in particular challenged such Cold War absolutes as the prohibition on communist texts in colleges. With education a central interest of the AAUW, the growing conformity and censorship on college campuses was noted with concern. In an article 'Citizens and Scholars', Newcomer argued:

Many people confuse teaching about communism with indoctrination....In the list of self-confessed Communists in recent years, the number who specialized in social sciences during their college

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48 For an account of the way in which the NAACP dealt with anti-communist pressures see Gerald Horne, Black and Red: W.E.B. Du Bois and the African-American Response to the Cold War 1944-1963 (New York: State University of New York Press, 1986). Horne has remarked on the fact that the effect of the Cold War consensus on African-American leftists has been an unexplored area of African-American history. He argues, 'In a nation where the Cold War and the Red Scare have been the defining post-war paradigms, the attacks on the civil liberties of black leftists --- which were taking place as civil rights for blacks generally were being expanded --- are not part of either myth. It is as if W.E.B. DuBois, Paul Robeson, Ben Davis, Claudia Jones and William Patterson did not exist.' Horne argues that W.E.B. DuBois' expulsion from the leadership of the NAACP was due to his 'refusal to go along with accommodation to the gathering Cold War consensus'. [Gerald Horne, '"Myth" and the Making of "Malcolm X"', American Historical Review, Vol 98:2, April 1993]

course is conspicuously small. Are not those who are so fearful under-rating the intelligence of our youth? And the virtues of our social institutions? What have we to fear from comparison with Russia?<sup>49</sup>

The AAUW was not the only American women's organization concerned with the outcome of anti-communist witchhunts. The League of Women Voters, as one of the most visible mainstream women's organizations, received special attention as a site of Communist sympathies or infiltration. Anna Lord Strauss recalled that, immediately following World War II, the League had had 'some trouble with Communists in our ranks, not a good deal, but when there were any it too often made the newspaper and this was no help in recruiting members from the conservative element in the United States who were looking for Communists under the beds anyway'.<sup>50</sup>

The League learned the hard way that the accusation of communism was often enough to damn an organization. Anna Lord Strauss complained bitterly that she was often confused with or, she suspected, deliberately 'mis-identitified' as Anna Louise Strong, a woman active in communist circles on the

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49 Mabel Newcomer, 'Citizens and Scholars,' The Journal of the AAUW, Vol 47:1, October 1953, p. 17

50 The Reminiscences of Miss Anna Lord Strauss, p.

West Coast.<sup>51</sup> Similar confusion was caused by Walt Disney's dramatic revelation to the House Committee on Un-American Activities that he had obtained information that the League of Women Voters was nothing less than a communist front. A few days later, Disney looked up his correspondence on the matter and apologised, saying that the organization he had meant to refer to was the League of Women Shoppers.<sup>52</sup>

The level of rumour and unsubstantiated accusation which followed witchhunts was illustrated when a concerned member of the League, Mrs Sam Becker, sent the Head Office a letter she received from Charles M. Burgess, presumably an interested friend. Burgess warned Mrs Becker:

I believe that you and other members of the Local and County League of Women Voters in all instances are not aware of the ways and means found to utilize your efforts and your standing in the community by the National organization for purposes that I believe to be inimical to the interests of the United States....I obtained from the Congressional files in

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51 Ibid., p. 417

52 See Action, Journal of the National League of Women Voters, January 1948.

Washington a synopsis of a report on the National President of your organization and on one of its Board Members. This report would indicate that your President, Anna Lord Strauss, was either consciously or unconsciously an indirect supporter of the Communist party from 1937 through 1944....This report also indicates that Mabel Newcomer, one of your National Directors, was even more involved, and perhaps not unconsciously, with the Communist Party activities.<sup>53</sup>

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53 Burgess to Becker, 12 January 1949, League of Women Voters Papers, Box 1741, File 5

The League was justifiably nervous about the extent to which their sponsorship of civil liberties awareness could bring them into disrepute. In August 1949, for example, Mrs Harold A. Stone, the Vice-President of the League, wrote to Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson, 'From time to time we receive in this office rumours to the effect that the League of Women Voters is on an unidentified Army 'List' as being a Communist-front organization.' Mrs Stone asked for and received confirmation that the League was not listed by any Department of Defense agency. [Stone to Johnson, 18 August 1949, and Johnson to Stone, 19 September 1949, League of Women Voters Papers Box 1741, File 5]

The League moved carefully to challenge this innuendo. A draft memorandum from the League to Professor Austin Clifford, a conservative Republican lawyer and a professor at the Indiana Law School, detailed the League's concern with the current threat to civil liberties:

The new weapons of the Cold War make us more concerned than ever before to preserve our own institutions and form of government. We have seen nation after nation brought under totalitarian control largely through well-organized minorities operating from within....It would be folly for us to ignore these developments and neglect to take such steps as are necessary to safeguard the national security....In attempting to do so, however, some of our governmental bodies are using methods which implicate the innocent with the guilty. They do not always make the distinction between actual threats to the state and unconventional economic, political and social views.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Mitchell to Strauss, 5 January 1949, League of Women Voters Papers, Box 1734, File 4

Professor Clifford advised that, as discretion was the better part of valour, the League should not publish any material on civil liberties at that time:

The United States is in a Cold War with the USSR. One of the main objectives of the USSR agents is to make America lose faith in their democratic government by proving that it isn't democratic anymore....The danger to American Civil Liberties is not from the misuse of power by government agencies. The danger to Civil Liberties now is from the activities of communist groups....[The memorandum] repeats so many legally untenable left-wing arguments that it would subject the League to suspicion of being a tool.<sup>55</sup>

Perhaps because of this 'suspicion', the League's efforts to fight the threat to civil liberties was launched and run through the Carrie Chapman Catt Memorial Fund, the overseas division of the League. The 'Freedom Agenda', as it was known, strove to inform the public about the danger of obsessive 'security' programmes. 'Freedom Agenda' (telephone number 1776) sought a low-profile,

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

community-based campaign to counter the rumour and suspicion of the witch-hunts, enabling 'citizens to explore the problem of how to preserve our national security without sacrificing individual liberties'.<sup>56</sup>

Anna Lord Strauss explained:

We wanted these organizations that had acceptance in their communities to do it on their own....Its potential and effectiveness was really very large because people did handle the situation themselves from their hometowns. In a way that squelched the misinformation, the innuendoes and the other things, unfortunately the gossipy kind of thing that people love to pick up and repeat.<sup>57</sup>

Strauss recognised that the work of the Freedom Agenda had been overlooked, due to the policy of not seeking any kind of publicity. Nevertheless, she argued, 'I think Freedom Agenda did a much more important job than is generally recognized.'<sup>58</sup>

However discrete the League was about the Freedom Agenda, it inevitably attracted some measure of censure. In 1955, the Un-American Committee of

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56 'CCCMF statement of Activities, 1955,' Lucille Koshland Papers, Box 1, File 9

57 The Reminiscences of Miss Anna Lord Strauss, p. 392

58 Ibid.

the American Legion in Westchester County, New York attacked six pamphlets produced by Freedom Agenda and distributed through the League on the grounds that they were 'designed to delude the public into believing that communism is a red herring'. The National Executive Committee of the American Legion called upon the League of Women Voters to disown the pamphlets. The League was unrepentant, however, as Strauss boldly declared:

We are proud of the Freedom Agenda program. It is as American as the Town Meeting. Communities all over the country are organizing Freedom Agenda groups to discuss the fundamental principles of American Liberty.<sup>59</sup>

A sympathetic article by Malvina Lindsay, 'Defending the Right to Discuss Freedom,' appeared in the Washington Post pointing out that, in the American Legion's anti-communist crusade, 'Mrs Catt, Jane Addams and Julia Lanthrop have been exhumed and accused of having "Communist front records"'.<sup>60</sup> The Freedom Agenda, which by this time had enlisted the support of organizations such as the AAUW, the Anti-

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59 'Freedom Agenda', Pamphlet, Lucille Koshland Papers, Box 1, File 21

60 Malvina Lindsay, 'Defending the Right to Discuss Freedom', Washington Post, 21 November 1955

defamation League, the National Council of Jewish Women and the YWCA, was undamaged by the accusations.

By linking international anti-communism to concern about the effects of anti-communism at home, the AAUW and the League of Women Voters were hesitant, almost reluctant, Cold Warriors. Their loyalty to the ideals of internationalism did not die but sat uneasily alongside rhetoric of a global crusade against the Soviet Union. Other American women's organizations escaped this dilemma by embracing the Cold War wholeheartedly at home and abroad. Even in 1940 the National Council of Women had been on the alert, warning 'against the insidiousness of foreign propaganda and agents who would attempt to spread their doctrines through speakers supplied for Women's Clubs'.<sup>61</sup> In May 1947, following the lead of the Truman Doctrine, the NCW produced and distributed a pamphlet which addressed the Cold War menace in no uncertain terms:

It becomes increasingly clear that we are at the crossroads and that in this most crucial period of our civilization the United States is the last great rampart of freedom and democracy. The National

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<sup>61</sup> 'Women Urged to be Guardians of Democracy,' New York Times, 6 October 1940

Council of Women of the United States, realizing the importance of this crisis proposes to accelerate its program so that through the millions of women in this nation, it can help to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms....Through its membership in the International Council of Women it will intensify the promotion of the principles of democracy and freedom throughout the world.<sup>62</sup>

In 1953 the YWCA found it necessary to state its policy on Communism, announcing, 'The YWCA is unalterably opposed to communism and any other ideology which denies dignity and fundamental human rights to the individual. Its Christian Purpose commits the Association to fight totalitarianism in any form and to work actively to safeguard and support democratic principle.'<sup>63</sup>

Whilst the need to state a position on anti-communism may have derived in part from domestic pressures, American women's organizations had two further reasons to make this position explicit. Firstly, it became obvious to American women's organizations that any form of internationalism

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62 Pamphlet of the National Council of Women, May 1947, Records of the AAUW, Series VIII, Reel 145

63 'Policy with Respect to Communism,' 28 September 1953, Mary S. Ingraham Papers, Box 1, File 30

which did not adopt anti-communist rhetoric would have little chance of securing external funding. Secondly, American women's organizations became suspicious about communist expansion when faced with evidence of it in their own realm of international women's organizations.

The practical need to frame internationalism within an anti-communist context was soon apparent to American women's organizations engaged in overseas work. In 1952 the Carrie Chapman Catt Memorial Fund applied to the Ford Foundation for a grant for an international exchange programme. The preamble to the application matched the original *raison d'être* of the CCCMF to educate people in citizenship on a worldwide basis:

Men and women in all parts of the world long for peace but are seldom able to translate this longing into action. They lack accurate information about their own government and their relationship to it. They feel inadequate and frustrated when it comes to voicing their own opinions and making their influence felt. They need the techniques and tools with which to

discharge their responsibilities as citizens.<sup>64</sup>

However, in their exposition of the proposal, the CCCMF was careful to stress the benefits in the fight against the spread of communism. Detailing the priority of various initiatives, the proposal pointed out, 'To assign priorities calls for knowledge on a high policy level. Who knows where time is running out the fastest, what chances there are that the cold war will turn hot, where the infiltration process is likely to extend beyond the Iron Curtain?'<sup>65</sup> Outlining a specific project, the CCCMF asserted, 'The Vice-President of a French women's group begs for help in reaching the farm women whose only newspaper bringing the welcome recipes, household hints etc, is poisoned with vicious lies about the U.S. and the U.N.'<sup>66</sup>

In July 1958 Forrest Murden, a Director of the Ford Foundation's International Division, advised the CCCMF on their new grant application. Murden noted, 'You may wish to point out in such a [cover] letter the particular significance attaching to such a program in view of the steady and successful Soviet infiltration of the under-

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64 CCCMF request for Ford Foundation Grant, June 1952, Lucille Koshland Papers, Box 1, File 15

65 Ibid.

66 Ibid.

developed areas and the particular importance of women to women projects in combating this infiltration.'<sup>67</sup>

From the end of World War II, the question for US women of a position on communism was linked to the evolution of international women's groups. In November 1945 Union des Femmes Francais, a subsidiary of the French Communist Party, called a conference for women from all nations in Paris. The Soviet contingent at the conference were conspicuous by their participation. The Christian Science Monitor noted:

The largest and certainly the most representative delegation was that of Soviet Russia. Numbering 42 it included a woman general, a famous surgeon, wearing the uniform of lieutenant colonel, a captain who carried out night bomber flights, a Russian Film Star, architects, women industrial workers, writers and mothers of large families.<sup>68</sup>

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67 Murden to Cunningham, 18 July 1958. Lucille Koshland Papers, Box 1, File 15

The CCCMF's position was obviously popular with the Ford Foundation, who gave them grants of \$25,000 in 1959.

68 'World Conference of Women', Christian Science Monitor, 6 December 1945

The American delegation was comparatively small, headed by Elizabeth Gurley Flynn of the Communist Party of the United States.<sup>69</sup> African-American women's organizations explored ideas and associations to an extent which might be surprising in the later climate of anti-communism. The National Council of Negro Women sent two delegates to the conference.<sup>70</sup> The more mainstream women's organizations, aware of the political origins of the conference, stayed away.

The Paris Conference led to the founding of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) and its US affiliate, the Congress of American Women (CAW). A press release of 27 February 1946 described the CAW as 'the first mass political organization of American women since suffrage'.<sup>71</sup>

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69 There is an interesting letter from Elizabeth Gurley Flynn in the Records of the Director of the Women's Bureau. Gurley Flynn had joined the mailing list for the statistical fact-sheets on the status of US women which the Bureau produced and distributed. She wrote to thank them, gratefully telling the Bureau, '[The fact-sheets] are very good and useful. I appreciate them very much.' [Flynn to Women's Bureau, US National Archives, Department of Labor, Records of the Women's Bureau, Office of the Director, General Correspondence File, 1948-1953, Box 25]

70 See Sicherman and Greet (eds.), Notable American Women.

African-American women did not emerge unscathed from the witchhunt. Mary McLeod Bethune's invitation to speak in a public school in Englewood, New Jersey was withdrawn after unfounded allegations that she was a communist.

71 Congress of American Women press release, 27 February 1946, National Council of Negro Women Papers, Box 8, File 11

There was some support for the initiative. The National Council of Negro Women's report on the WIDF resolved 'that the National Council of Negro women affiliate with the WIDF for the promotion of peace and freedom'.<sup>72</sup> The CAW's members included Dr Charlotte Hawkins Brown, Susan B Anthony (Jr), and aviator Jacqueline Cochrane.

Initially CAW attempted to enlist the cooperation of established women activists and women's organizations. Mary Mcleod Bethune of the NCNW informed Eleanor Roosevelt in March 1946:

Our delegates were impressed with the earnestness, the clarity of thinking and the spiritual unity which characterized the deliberations. Mrs Elinor Gimbel..., Chairman of this committee, is very anxious for you to make a statement encouraging American women to participate in socially progressive movements in this country and to co-operate with women of other countries in the task of establishing a better world and enduring peace.<sup>73</sup>

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72 Report of WIDF Paris Meeting, 26-30 November 1945, National Council of Negro Women Papers, Box 39, File 1

73 Bethune to Roosevelt, 2 March 1946, National Council of Negro Women Papers, Box 8, File 11

CAW was short-lived and unsuccessful, however. Attacked in 1948 by HUAC, labelled as a Communist Front organization, and forced to register as 'subversive', the organization folded in 1950.<sup>74</sup>

The Women's International Democratic Federation became the focus of American fears about the Soviet campaign to influence women overseas. The anti-American stance of the organization was clearly illustrated in their journal Women of the Whole World. A typical article lambasted the state of child-care in the United States. In another article, 'My Big Family', mother of ten, Anastasia Goriuchkina observed:

Obviously it is no easy matter to care for and bring up ten children. But in our country, the Soviet Union, mothers and children are surrounded with the great many maternity clinics, dispensaries, kindergartens and creches [which] have been set up in town and country to help parents raise their children....None of us

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In fact this letter was written by Vivian Carter Mason, the Executive Director of the NCNW, at the instigation of Elinor Gimbel. Mason wrote to Gimbel, 'I talked with Mrs Bethune and she instructed me to write a letter to Mrs Roosevelt asking her for the statement which you desire.' [Mason to Gimbel, 2 March 1946, National Council of Negro Women Papers, Box 8, File 11]

parents raise their children....None of us has to worry about tomorrow, about the future. For us and our children the future is joyous, magnificent and cloudless.<sup>75</sup>

An article by R. Shahirova, the mother of a Soviet soldier, continued the theme of the US as more concerned with military issues than the welfare of children:

We mothers of soldiers of our army feel particularly strongly the menace in the reported threats of the U.S. government to start another war. We do not want war!... The Soviet army has never threatened anybody, is not threatening and will never threaten!<sup>76</sup>

This targetting of women in Cold War propaganda was an important motivation for the growing involvement of US organizations in international propaganda. However, it was not their only motivation. Implicit in their defence against McCarthyism and opposition to witchhunts was the assertion that the 'right' way to fight communism

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75 'My Big Family,' Women of the Whole World, July 1955, Number 7

76 'We Protest,' Women of the Whole World, May 1955, Number 5

was vigilance and vigorous activity in the international realm. For an effective domestic campaign for 'freedom', anti-communist activity in the international sphere was an essential prerequisite. Historian Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones has noted that Margaret Chase Smith was the first Republican 'of any standing' to speak out against McCarthy. Following an attack on her in the Maine press for this stance, 'Smith went to some lengths to show that she really did detest the Communists.'<sup>77</sup> A similar strategy is evident in the policies and activities of American women's organizations.

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77 Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, Changing Differences: Women and the Shaping of American Foreign Policy 1917-1994 (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), p. 115

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### AMERICAN WOMEN AND PEACE

The link between women and peace could be described as both tenuous and tenacious. It is tenuous since critics such as Simone de Beauvoir have challenged its validity and described it as proceeding from the same gendered divisions which for centuries have been used to underpin and justify patriarchal constructions of women's inferiority.<sup>1</sup> It is tenacious since, despite these criticisms, it has persisted as an important if vague component of constructions of the feminine identity. Historian Denise Riley, illustrating the problem of 'constant historical loops which depart or return from the convictions of women's natural dispositions', chose women's 'natural' interest in pacifism as a paradigm.<sup>2</sup>

The connection between women and peace has a long history in Western society.<sup>3</sup> Jean Bethke

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1 Cited in Amy Swerdlow, 'Female Culture, Pacifism and Feminism: Women Strike for Peace.' in Arina Angerman, Geerte Binnema, Annemieke Keunen, Vitie Poels and Jacqueline Zirkzee (eds.), Current Issues in Women's History (Routledge: London, 1989) p.109.

2 Denise Riley, 'Am I that Name?' Feminism and the Category of 'Women' in History (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), p. 1

3 Harriet Hyman Alonso offers a superb survey of the history of this connection in the United States in Peace as a Woman's Issue: A History of the U.S. Movement for World Peace and Women's Rights (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1993). See also Betty A. Reardon, Women and Peace: Feminist

Elshtain has argued that identifications around issues of peace and violence (what she refers to as 'Just Warriors' and 'Beautiful Souls') are crucial tropes in the construction of gendered identities.

Man construed as violent, whether eagerly and inevitably or reluctantly and tragically; women as non-violent, offering succour and compassion; these tropes on the social identities of men and women, past and present, do not denote what men and women really are in time of war, but function instead to re-create and secure women's location as non-combatants and men's as warriors.<sup>4</sup>

Elshtain argues that 'the times have outstripped beautiful souls and just warriors' since 'the beautiful soul can no longer be protected in her virtuous privacy. Her world, and her children, are

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Visions of Global Security (New York: State University of New York Press, 1993); Ruth Roach Pierson (ed.), Women and Peace, especially the essay by Berenice A. Carroll, 'Feminism and Pacifism: Historical and Theoretical Connections', (London: Croom Helm, 1987); Cynthia Enloe, 'Feminist Thinking about War, Militarism and Peace,' in Beth Hess and Myra Mary Ferree (eds.), Analyzing Gender (London: Sage, 1987). For an exploration of the link between women and peace from a psychological viewpoint, see Janet Sayers, Sexual Contradictions: Psychology, Psychoanalysis and Feminism (London: Tavistock Publications, 1986).

4 Jean Bethke Elstain, Women and War (New York: Basic Books, 1987), p. 4

vulnerable in the face of nuclear reality'. Nevertheless, these identities have such force and continuing appeal that Elshtain sees their resonance in 'contemporary feminist statements [which] involve celebrations of a "female Principle" as ontologically given and superior to its dark "other" masculinism'.<sup>5</sup>

The appropriation of 'peace' as a special concern for women has caused many feminists to argue that the pursuit of peace is in their domain. Sara Ruddick, an influential proponent of what she calls 'maternal thinking', has claimed that women as mothers have a special role in the struggle for peace and in the assertion of the values of 'preservative love' over military destruction.<sup>6</sup> Ruddick advocates the proclamation of women's maternal role in peace-led politics: 'Were I a leader and a persuader, I would attempt to rally mothers and other women to a mother-identified politics of protest.'<sup>7</sup> Whilst not explicitly embracing an essentialist position, Ruddick argues

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5 Jean Bethke Elstain, 'Reflections on War and Political Discourse: Realism, Just War and Feminism in a Nuclear Age,' Political Theory, Vol 13:1, February 1985, p. 45

6 Sara Ruddick, 'Maternal Thinking', Feminist Studies, 6:2, Summer 1980, pp.342-367.

7 Sara Ruddick, 'Preservative Love and Military Destruction: Some Reflections on Mothering and Peace' in Joyce Trebicot (ed.), Mothering: Essays in Feminist Theory (New Jersey: Rowman and Allanheld, 1984)

that the experience of mothering creates a 'rationality of care' amongst women. Though she asserts, 'A woman is no more "naturally" a caretaker, no more obliged to caring labor, than a man is "naturally" a scientist or obligated to become one,'<sup>8</sup> she continues, 'Although the work of care could transcend gender, care has been profoundly womanly. This is not, in the first instance, because many women are caretakers, but rather because most caretakers are women.'<sup>9</sup>

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8 Sara Ruddick, 'The Rationality of Care', in Jean Bethke Elshtain and Sheila Tobias (eds.), Women, Militarism and War: Essays in History, Politics and Social Theory (Savage: Rowman and Littlefield, 1990), p. 238

9 Ibid. p.238

However, Ruddick has also had her critics, notably Mary Dietz. In her examination of 'maternal thinking', Dietz presents a comprehensive critique of the problems of attempting to base women's --- or indeed men's --- political behaviour on the model of the relationship between mother and child. Dietz points out that the relationship of mother to child is essentially authoritarian and argues that familial relationships of any sort are not acceptable models upon which to base political relations: 'The actual relationship between a mother and her child is not analogous to the relationship among citizens even when it displays the ideal virtues Elshtain praises....Social Feminism commits a version of one of the ideological extravagances of the French Revolution, namely, the demand that democratic citizenship reflect the "brotherhood of man". But citizens do not, because they cannot, relate to one another as brother does to brother, or mother does to child.' [Mary G. Dietz, 'Citizenship with a Feminist Face: The Problem with Maternal Thinking,' Political Theory, Vol 13:1, February 1985]

Moreover, critics have attacked Ruddick for espousing beliefs that, whilst they are explicitly not essentialist, nevertheless can be described as 'functionally essentialist'. Sandra Whitworth explains, 'Even those perspectives who claim to reject biological determinism and argue instead that

Not all feminists have shared an enthusiasm for the assertion of a female identity with a special interest in and responsibility for peace. Simone de Beauvoir argued that such thinking would inevitably reinforce the idea of difference between women and men:

Women should desire peace as human beings, not as women. And if they are being encouraged to be pacifists in the name of motherhood, that's just a ruse by men who are trying to lead women back to the womb. Women should absolutely let go of that baggage!<sup>10</sup>

The assertion that women are more peaceful than men implies that men are somehow inherently more violent than women. The subsequent value on aggression as a part of masculinity and thereby a

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social practices such as mothering produce fundamental differences between women and men, universalize those practices, creating yet again an essentialist vision of feminine and masculine characteristics. One single activity such as mothering, by this view, produces the same characteristics in women and men across time, place, culture, class, race and sexual orientation.'

[Sandra Whitworth, Feminism in International Relations: Gender in the International Planned Parenthood Federation and the International Labor Organization, Ph.D. Carleton University, 1991, p. 42]

10 Quoted in Amy Swerdlow, 'Female Culture, Pacifism and Feminism: Women Strike for Peace,' in Arina Angerman et al (eds.), Current Issues in Women's History (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 109

qualification for public service is also deeply troubling, as Myrian Miedzian has argued:

Being compassionate and concerned about human life can cause a man to lose his job. It can cause a woman not to get a job to begin with. Women's reputed empathy and compassion are viewed by many as rendering them unqualified for high offices that involve 'tough' international decision-making.<sup>11</sup>

Berenice A. Carroll has questioned what she refers to as 'the "gut feeling" there is some fundamental bond between feminism and pacifism, some inherent and inevitable logic that binds them ultimately together'.<sup>12</sup> Other feminist theorists have shared her unease, questioning whether there are valid and positive aspects to the assertion of a female identity which is closely allied with the cause of 'peace' or whether, in fact, such an identification risks perpetuating the same notions

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11 Myrian Miedzian, 'Real Men, Wimps and National Security,' in Robert Elias and Jennifer Turpin (eds.), Re-thinking Peace (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1994). See also Sheila Tobias, 'Shifting Heroisms: The Uses of Military Service in Politics,' in Elshtain and Tobias (eds.).

12 Berenice A. Carroll, 'Feminism and Pacifism: Historical and Theoretical Connections' in Ruth Roach Pierson (ed.), Women and Peace: Theoretical, Historical and Practical Perspectives (London: Croom Helm, 1987), p. 2

of femininity which have been used to explain women's 'difference' and to thereby justify their separate and unequal treatment. The historian of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Jo Vellacott, has termed this anxiety the 'fear of feminists that any form of women's pacifism may be positively subversive of feminist purpose'.<sup>13</sup>

Moreover, if the connection between women and pacifism can be detrimental to the status of women in reinforcing the idea of 'difference' between men and women, the connection between femininity and peace has also been unhelpful to the peace movement. To paraphrase a popular logic of the time, the peace movement may have become 'feminine by association'. International relations theorist J. Ann Tickner has argued that the association of female essentialist identities with the peace movement has had a troubling effect both for women and for peace movements:

At best, images of peace appear uninteresting, at worse they invoke identities that are problematic and unpatriotic, identities that are associated with women and feminine

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13 Jo Vellacott, 'A Place for Pacifism and Transnationalism in Feminist Theory: The Early Work of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom,' Women's History Review, Vol 2:1, 1993

characteristics....While peace movements more generally disturb the image of a unified national purpose embodied in states' national security policies, the association of feminine characteristics with peace has contributed to the disempowerment and delegitimation of peace projects undertaken by both men and women.<sup>14</sup>

Whatever the criticisms of the political implications of women's assertion of difference based upon their essential pacifism, it is possible that this position was a vital one in articulating an active political role for women in post war America. In her work on the organization 'Women Strike for Peace' (WSP), Amy Swerdlow has argued, 'In 1961 maternalism was the only possible political vehicle for a broad-based women's peace movement, given the regressive political climate of the previous decade.'<sup>15</sup> If this was true for 1961, it was certainly the case throughout the previous decade.

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14 J. Ann Tickner, 'Identity in International Relations Theory: Feminist Perspectives,' in Yosef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwil (eds.), The Return of Culture and Identity in International Relations Theory (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1996), p. 155

15 Swerdlow in Angerman et al (eds.), p. 110

Women Strike for Peace organized a strike involving an estimated 50,000 women on 1 November 1961.

The belief that women could apply their 'essentially' peaceful natures in an international context was not just a postwar phenomenon. One of the founding principles of the International Council of Women, whose first meeting was in Washington in March 1888, was the belief that international organizations of women could be important in the achievement and maintenance of peace. American feminist Elizabeth Cady Stanton argued, 'Closer bonds of friendship between the women of different countries may help to strengthen the idea of International Arbitration in the settlement of all differences.'<sup>16</sup> In 1923 British Diplomat Lord Robert Cecil, speaking to an audience in Des Moines, Iowa asserted, 'There is no greater force for peace in the world than the organized women of America.'<sup>17</sup>

The proponents of the essentialist position, which asserts a 'natural' connection between women and peace, and of the pragmatic position, which views the adoption of such an identity as a strategic and tactical move, share an approach to

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Swerdlow has pointed out the way in which WSP based its appeals on the assertion of the maternal identity, using slogans such as 'Pure Milk and not poison' and 'Let the children grow'. One placard held by a little girl read, 'I want to grow up to be a mommy some day.' [Swerdlow, p. 111]

16 Quoted in Emily Kneibuhl, 'The Growth and Contributions of Women's Organizations of the United States in International Relations,' M.A., Syracuse University, 1927, p. 6

17 Ibid., p. 1

peace that is somewhat static and uncritical. Whilst they differ over *why* women might work for peace, they rarely consider the constitution of that peace. American women's organizations' relationship to peace in the 1950s must be considered, not just as a question of identity but also as an issue in the context of wider American approaches to the issue.

American women's organizations drew heavily upon the assumed connection between women and peace in asserting their claim for a more active role in the post-war world.<sup>18</sup> However, whilst this identification may have motivated and justified the *fact* of their international activities, it was not prescriptive as to their *content*. As Mary Deitz argues in her critique of the work of Jean Bethke Elshtain, 'Surely a movement or a political consciousness committed simply to caring for "vulnerable human existence"...offers no standards...when it comes to judging between political alternatives or establishing political values.'<sup>19</sup>

Not only was the American national agenda not *prescribed* by essentialist feminine identity, it was

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18 See Chapter 2.

19 Mary G. Dietz, 'Citizenship with a Feminist Face: The Problem with Maternal Thinking,' Political Theory, Vol 13:1, February 1985, p. 30

to a certain extent *excluded*. Essentialist feminine identity in the international realm made a virtue out of its superiority to and disinterest in national agenda. Julia Kristeva explains, 'By demanding recognition of an irreducible identity, without equal in the opposite sex, and, as such, exploded, plural, fluid, and in a certain way non-identical, this feminism situates itself outside the linear time of identities [such as those of nation].'<sup>20</sup> Claims to essentialist interest in peace placed women above and outside the practical objectives and strategies of everyday international politics.

Women's international gendered identity, structured around an open-ended commitment to 'peace', became an important Cold War battlefield. If women were indeed less influenced by national loyalties than by who seemed more committed to the cause of peace, they could be defined as a kind of international 'floating voter' whose loyalty and support were there for the taking. Aloof from the details and wider considerations of national and international geopolitics, they were vulnerable to any government persuasive enough to present themselves as the defenders of peace.

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20 Julia Kristeva, 'Women's Time,' in Toril Moi (ed.), The Kristeva Reader (London: Blackwell, 1986), p. 194

Underlying the fear that women would be particularly vulnerable to 'peace' propaganda was a sub-text regarding women's instability as political subjects, what Carol Patemen categorizes as the 'disorder of women'.<sup>21</sup> Jack Lotto, a columnist for the Hearst Press, charged that Women's Strike for Peace exhibited just this feminine weakness in being exploited by external forces. Lotto claimed, that although the organization described themselves as 'a group of unsophisticated housewives and mothers who are loosely organized in a spontaneous movement for peace, there is nothing spontaneous about the way the pro-Reds have moved in on our mothers and are using them for their own purposes'.<sup>22</sup> In his 1955 study Are American Women Degenerating?, the anonymous author colourfully illustrated this belief in the 'disorder of women':

But ideals, to be practical, must be based on reason and judgement: Aristotle, Schopenhauer, Spencer, etc. have warned against the dangers to government of false ideas dominating politically influential but pathogenic emotional, hysterical

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21 See Carole Pateman, The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism and Political Theory (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989).

22 Quoted in Swerdlow in Elstain and Tobias (eds.), p. 11

women. In history their political record is a poor one. Such poorly adjusted personalities are subject to paroxysms of morbid sentimentality utterly uncontrolled by reason.<sup>23</sup>

The dust-jacket of the book warned of the dire consequences of this 'morbid sentimentality': 'It has been predicted that eventually millions of irrational, emotional women voters...led by the CIO [Congress of Industrial Organizations] will spearhead a majority vote that will elect a president who will foist state socialism on America.'<sup>24</sup>

Study of the relationship of American women's organizations with peace in the years after World War II requires a broader context, not just in terms of the extent to which such a relationship is 'strategic', 'natural', or both, but also in the context of national and international meanings of peace. After five years of war, the American people were enthusiastic in the hope that, following the defeat of militaristic powers, national leaders could develop mechanisms to assure their citizens of a durable peace. American women's organizations were quick to recognise that the vague desire for peace

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23 Anonymous, Are American Women Degenerating? (New York: Exposition Press, 1955), p. 6

24 Ibid., Dust-Jacket

expressed by many of their members, not to mention their leaders, was in need of a more stringent definition. Behind the concern to define 'peace' carefully lay the fear that unless the term was tied to concrete and achievable aims, it would remain a lofty ideal, impossible to work for in a practical sense. The Journal of the AAUW worried, 'The peace, too, has to be won; and this is more difficult because there is no longer the singleness of purpose and the obvious goal that we have in time of war.'<sup>25</sup> To rally people and organizations to activity in the cause of peace, it had to be defined in an assertive, active and specific way. Margaret Hyndman, President of the Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women's' Clubs, explained:

It is not enough for us merely to yearn for peace. It is not enough to talk about peace, or to make speeches about peace --- although all these things have some value. We must be ready to work for peace and even to fight for peace. By fighting I don't mean using bombs, atomic or

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25 Mabel Newcomber, 'A Signpost towards International Co-operation: Significance of Bretton Woods Conference,' Journal of the AAUW, Vol 38:1, Fall 1944, p. 20

otherwise; I mean fighting with words and with ideas.<sup>26</sup>

As early as May 1947, American women's organizations were questioning the relationship between an abstract commitment to peace and the reality of Cold War tensions. An editorial entitled 'Wanted: Adult Citizens' in Action, the journal of the League of Women Voters, explained that women needed a sophisticated understanding of world affairs if they were to be responsible citizens:

We need a general goal upon which we can agree --- one which is more explicit than simply 'peace'. For example, is our goal a co-operative international framework in which individual nations may develop politically, economically, culturally, as they see fit, provided their policies are peaceful? Is it our goal to strengthen the non-communist world against the possibility of conflict with the communist world? Is the second goal an alternative if the first fails? By having the second

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26 Independent Woman, Vol 27:4, April 1948, p. 110

as an alternative do we make the failure of the first more likely?<sup>27</sup>

The League of Women Voters and other American women's organizations were to find no answers to these vaguely rhetorical questions, and 'peace' remained a general aim for American women, rather than a concerted plan of action. The vacuum in meaning behind women's commitment to peace became a vulnerability, however, when the US government identified a Soviet propaganda campaign to assure the people of the world that they wanted nothing more than world peace but were constantly thwarted by US warmongering. The Soviet 'peace offensive', as the US Government called it, had a major effect on the relationship of American women's organizations to peace.

The most famous of the US-Soviet confrontations over the 'peace issue' was the March 1949 conference of the National Committee of Arts, Sciences and Professions at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City. The meeting sparked an immediate response from the US Government, with the State Department and the House on Un-American Activities Committee denouncing the Soviet 'peace

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27 'Wanted: Adult Citizens,' Action, Journal of the National League of Women Voters, May 1947. p. 23

offensive' as a propaganda trick.<sup>28</sup> Sidney Hook, one of the founders of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, an organization which brought together intellectuals in defence of Western politics and culture, described the communist 'peace offensive' as a deliberate, orchestrated and meticulously planned campaign:

In September 1947, at the 1st formal meeting of the Cominform in Poland under the leadership of Zhdanov, the directives and strategy of the world campaign against the democratic West were laid down. Soon in various countries of the West, committees approved resolutions, ostensibly in the defense of peace against the machinations of American imperialism, in actuality in furtherance of the aggressions of the Soviet Union. The distinctive feature of this round of "non-partisan" peace front activities was the concentration of their appeals to the intellectuals of the West...to rally to

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28 The Waldorf Conference, whilst the most notorious, was not the only peace conference. It was preceded by the World Congress of Intellectuals for Peace in Wroclaw, Poland in August, 1948 and was followed by the World Peace Congress in Paris in April 1949 and the Stockholm Peace Congress in March 1950.

the defense of peace and to the exposure of the 'American warmongers'.<sup>29</sup>

The Stockholm peace petition launched at the meeting of the World Peace Council in Stockholm in March 1950, was further evidence to the US government of a concerted propaganda campaign in the name of 'peace'. In July 1950 the House Un-American Activities Committee responded, condemning the 'peace campaign and its manifestation in the form of petitions' which, they asserted, were designed to 'confuse and divide the American people'.<sup>30</sup>

Whether the tactic of launching peace campaigns was a symptom of Soviet duplicitousness or whether it represented a genuine desire for peace depends on one's ideological perspective. In any event, the effect of the Soviet 'peace campaign' on any group or individual working for peace in the United States was devastating. Robbie Liebermann has documented how a commitment to peace was liable to be interpreted as a commitment to communism.<sup>31</sup> As E.

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29 Sidney Hook, 'The Communist Peace Offensive,' Partisan Review, Vol 51, 1984, p. 696

30 Gerald Horne, Black and Red: W.E.B. Dubois and the Afro-American Response to the Cold War 1944-1963 (New York: State University of New York Press, 1986), p. 132

31 Lieberman cites the example of the shelving of a planned movie by Monogram in 1950. The movie, which was to have been based on the life of Hiawatha, who had played an important role in ending the fighting among the Indians. It was cancelled, a spokesperson from Monogram claimed, because 'bringing out a movie

P. Thompson asserts, 'Those who worked for Peace in the West were suspected or exposed as pro-Soviet "fellow-travellers" or dupes of the Kremlin.'<sup>32</sup> In her 1951 novel, author Mary McCarthy described the lengths to which identification with the cause of 'peace' had come to be seen as dangerously un-American. The character Maynard Hoars, President of the fictional Jocelyn College 'genially asserted' at a party, 'that he could as soon in these times, as president of a small, struggling college, appear at a "peace" rally as be found playing strip poker on Sunday in a Whorehouse'.<sup>33</sup>

A clear example of this process occurred on 15 March 1951 when a 'peace pilgrimage' from the American Peace Crusade, including African-American entertainer and activist Paul Robeson, called on Congress and was greeted by Francis Russell, Director of the Office of Public Affairs in the State Department. At a time when preliminary talks for a Foreign Ministers meeting between the US, the USSR, the UK and France were underway in Paris, the

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praising a peacemaker would be playing into the hands of the communists since their propaganda was peace-centered.' [Robbie Lieberman, '"Does that Make Peace a bad word?": American Responses to the Communist Peace Offensive 1949-50,' Peace and Change, Vol 17:2, April 1992, p. 203

32 E.P. Thompson, Beyond the Cold War (London: Merlin Press, 1982) p. 8

33 Mary McCarthy, The Groves of Academe (London: George Weidenfeld and Nicolson Ltd, 1951) p. 13.

APC urged the State Department to co-operate with the Soviet Union to ensure the success of the negotiations. In response, Russell attacked the APC with a letter from Secretary of State Dean Acheson to Representative Carnahan:

From the membership of the group, and the general tenor of its pronouncements, it is obvious that this 'American Peace Crusade' is merely a continuation or regrouping of the spurious Partisans of Peace movement, which, as you know, has been the most concentrated and far flung propaganda effort of the International Communist Movement in the post-war period.<sup>34</sup>

Russell urged the APC to consider 'whether you are not allowing yourselves to be exploited, if you are not, in fact, engaged in behalf of a foreign totalitarian regime in exploiting honest differences of opinion'.<sup>35</sup>

American women's organizations were not exempt from this suspicion. Despite letters in 1952 and 1955 from the House Un-American Activities Committee verifying that the Women's International

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34 'Transcript of Remarks made at the visit of the "American Peace Crusade" to the State Department,' Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Box 3261

35 Ibid.

League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) had not been cited as a 'Communist front' or a 'subversive' agency, WILPF was continually harassed by those, including the FBI, suspicious of their antiwar stance.<sup>36</sup> Inspiration for these attacks undoubtedly came in part from the WILPF's espousal of causes all too similar with those asserted in communist propaganda. The WILPF demanded:

We must insist that because we are espousing a cause which the Communists are also working on, does not mean that we are communists, fellow travellers, communist infiltrated, etc. Our work must be judged by what we stand for, and the reasons for this stand. Not by who else is also working for a similar purpose.<sup>37</sup>

Less established women's organizations lacked the credibility to make this insistence. The Congress of American Women (CAW), for example, collapsed in 1950, unable to withstand the effects of being cited as subversive.

The WILPF, besieged by anti-communist paranoia at home, was undermined by the Soviet-

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<sup>36</sup> See Alonso, Peace as a Women's Issue.

Alonso documents the infiltration of the Denver branch of the WILPF by the FBI.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 169

sponsored 'peace offensive' abroad. Gertrude Bussey and Margaret Timms, historians of the WILPF, assert:

It must be acknowledged as a matter of history that the activities of the [Soviet-backed] World Peace Council and its subsidiaries --- Partisans for Peace and the Women's International Democratic Federation --- often constituted as great a handicap to the established peace movement in the West as the Atlantic Pact. It was difficult, and sometimes painful, to cast doubts on expressions of solidarity in the cause of peace, freedom and democracy that claimed a mass following in the Eastern-bloc countries and sought to extend this following to the West.<sup>38</sup>

Bussey and Tims argue, 'The attempts of the Women's International Democratic Federation to use the older organization for its own partisan aims, even though unsuccessful, were a considerable embarrassment to WILPF national sections.'<sup>39</sup>

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38 Gertrude Bussey and Margaret Tims, The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom 1915-1965 (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1965), p. 196

39 Ibid.

E.P. Thompson has argued that, during the Cold War, 'the causes of "peace" and "freedom" broke apart, with the Soviet Union claiming "peace" and the United States "freedom"'.<sup>40</sup> This argument is grossly simplistic. Whilst it is true that Americans championed the cause of freedom, they did not entirely abandon the rallying cry of peace. Despite the US government's disparagement of peace movements as politically suspect, such appeals had a deep appeal both at home and abroad. The 1950 Stockholm Peace Pledge, for example, gained some 1,350,000 signatories in the US and within five months of its launch had received 273,470,566 signatories worldwide.<sup>41</sup> A memorandum to Local State and League Presidents from Mrs John G. Lee of the League of Women Voters urged that women not be unwittingly drawn into support for what she called a 'misleading peace campaign' but recognized that such a campaign had a tremendous appeal: 'There is no reason to believe that League members themselves will subscribe to the Propaganda underlying the Peace petition, but the campaign for signatures may become active in your community and many people, sincerely

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40 E.P. Thompson, Beyond the Cold War (London: Merlin Press, 1982) p. 6.

41 Lawrence S. Wittner, Rebels Against the War: The American Peace Movement 1941-60 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969) pp. 204-205

wishing to do something personally to bring about peace, may sign or be drawn into the effort.'<sup>42</sup>

In recognition of the undeniable international appeal of 'peace', it would have been impossible for the US government simply to abandon the cause. Rather they sought to re-define 'peace' in such a way as to illustrate the difference between what the Soviet Union and the US meant by 'peace'. As Francis Russell wrote to Assistant Secretary of State Edward Barrett in February 1951: 'The Communist "Crusade for Peace" represents an opportunity for the State Department and for private citizens to point out the kind of peace for which we stand, i.e. a peace with freedom, liberty and justice.'<sup>43</sup>

The American insistence on retaining a claim to both the rhetoric and ideology of 'peace' is vividly illustrated in Eisenhower's 1953 announcement of 'Atoms for Peace'. Ostensibly a programme to share with the world peaceful and socially-useful developments stemming from atomic power, the presentation of the US as a peace-loving nation was an important propaganda coup. Gerald

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42 Lee to Local and State League Presidents, undated, League of Women Voters Papers, Box 744  
43 Russell to Barrett, 28 February 1951, US National Archives, Records of the Department of State, Miscellaneous Records of the Bureau of Public Affairs 1944-1962, Box 126

Clarfield and William Wiecek, historians of American nuclear policy, explain: 'American policymakers were also looking for some dramatic gesture to offset the Soviet achievement of developing nuclear weapons, particularly some accomplishment that would enhance America's sought-after reputation as a peace-loving nation facing an aggressive and militaristic U.S.S.R.'<sup>44</sup>

President Eisenhower's seeming obsession with defining 'peace' continued throughout his term in office and afterwards. A collection of his speeches is titled Peace With Justice and the second volume of his autobiography is Waging Peace. Eisenhower told the National Council of Catholic Women in November 1954, 'Preserving peace in the world, international peace, is not a static, is not a negative thing. It is a positive thing, of preparing the world, the conditions in the world, where people may live honourably and upright and at peace.'<sup>45</sup> Yet Eisenhower was quick to attach qualifications for the search for peace, asserting, 'Far better to risk a war of possible annihilation than grasp a peace

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44 Gerald H. Clarfield and William M. Wiecek, Nuclear America: Military and Civilian Nuclear Power in the United States 1940-1980 (New York: Harper and Row, 1984), p. 182

45 Eisenhower speech to the National Council of Catholic Women, 'The Desire to Be Free,' 8 November 1954 in Peace with Justice (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), p. 72

which would be the certain extinction of free man's ideas and ideals.'<sup>46</sup>

This American conception of 'peace', connected with the idea of 'freedom', can be understood as 'positive' rather than 'negative' peace. Peace theorists Robert Elias and Jennifer Turpin have described this difference:

[The] long standing notion of peace is 'negative' peace --- the absence of war and other direct violence. 'Positive' peace includes the presence or promotion of social justice. Under this conception, a peaceful society or world requires the absence of war and other direct violence but also requires the protection of human rights.<sup>47</sup>

American description of Soviet peace as 'negative' and their own peace as 'positive' was an important, if overlooked, manifestation of US Cold

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46 Eisenhower address at Columbia University, 'World Peace: A Balance Sheet,' 23 March 1950 in Peace with Justice, p. 3

Reading this collection of speeches, no one could accuse Eisenhower of lacking a commitment to peace. The other speeches include, 'Toward a Golden Age of Peace', 'Peace begins with the Individual', 'The Art of Peace', 'The Ideal of Peace', 'The Force for Peace' and 'First Steps toward Peace'.

47 Robert Elias and Jennifer Turpin, 'Introduction: Thinking about Peace,' in Elias and Turpin (eds.), p. 4

War policy in the early 1950s. American adoption of 'negative' peace, i.e., an end to the threat of violence with restrictions on military power, would have entailed an acceptance on their part of the Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe. Furthermore, acceptance of this type of peace depended upon the Soviet Union to agree to abide by the same rules, a level of trust towards Moscow which was conspicuously lacking in Washington.

By defining peace as a 'positive' and active force, linking it with issues such as human rights, democracy and a nebulous 'freedom', the United States continued its general opposition to the Soviet Union and its specific attempts to restrict and reduce Soviet spheres of influence. The difference between positive and negative peace in this context was expressed as the difference between a peace worth fighting for and a peace which allowed the Soviet Union to call the (entirely metaphorical) shots.

To justify its rejection of the laudable-sounding calls for peace emanating both from the Soviet Union and from seemingly innocuous, non-partisan, media-friendly groups of concerned world-citizens, the US Government needed to discredit the Soviet campaign and any spontaneous call for peace which challenged the American position of military

preparedness. Rather than denigrate 'peace' itself, the American government and those Americans who supported its agenda instead accused the Soviets of being insincere in their use of the term, manipulating into a political weapon the genuine desire of individuals for peace. As Robbie Lieberman has commented, 'The way in which one defined peace had implications for the way on which one worked to achieve it.'<sup>48</sup>

A vivid example of the efforts of Americans to distance their definition of 'peace' from Soviet use of that word can be found in a speech by Eleanor Roosevelt, broadcast on radio, in Paris on 14 April 1949. Roosevelt asserted that people in Western Europe were in a difficult position: 'They are faced with the choice of peace at any price, a peace of compromise and appeasement, of submission to an aggressor who believes in control of men's minds. On the other hand they think that to preserve their freedom they must risk war.' She warned, however, that the suffering of war should not mean that people were led to believe that 'the value of freedom has lessened and that to obtain peace we are willing to sacrifice freedom'. Waxing lyrical, she described freedom as a 'fresh and running stream in

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48 Robbie Lieberman, 'Communism, Peace Activism and Civil Liberties: From the Waldorf Conference to the Peekskill Riot,' Journal of American Culture 21:3. p. 61.

which there is refreshment for the soul', but 'peace without freedom is a stagnant pool. It may look alluring at a distance, the lily pads may gleam white in the sun, but underneath the water is foul.'<sup>49</sup>

Mainstream women's organizations participated in this wider campaign to delineate and define an American peace. Mrs Theodore Chapman, the President of the General Federation of Women Clubs, told her organization:

It is our collective responsibility, as the largest women's organization in the world, to raise our united voice in support of the forces at work for a lasting peace based upon justice and freedom for all mankind. And peace is more than the absence of war --- it is the presence of creative forces --- forces that will help us evolve some pattern of getting along together.<sup>50</sup>

If American women shared their government's suspicions towards the belligerent and expansionist

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49 Roosevelt broadcast, 14 April 1949, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Box 3055

50 Chapman address to the 63rd Annual Convention of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, 4 June 1954, National Council of Negro Women Papers, Box 7, File 12

ambitions of the Soviet Union, they had to limit their 'natural' feminine desire for peace so as to give no support for disarmament. Margaret Hickey, a former President of the National Federation of Business and Professional Women, wrote in Independent Woman:

I am sure that many women have not thus far insisted upon full participation in military preparedness because they felt such a step was in some way at odds with peace. Nothing could be further from the truth. Our best chance for avoiding a third major war is in building the recognition of all our people that they must take part in total defence. Every step forward represents increased security for ourselves and for the world that desires peace.<sup>51</sup>

American 'peace', linked to freedom, justice and opportunity, was assertive, proactive, positive, and 'masculine'. Peace on Soviet terms, which was inactive, permissive of social injustice, and tolerant of repressive systems, was passive, negative and 'feminine'. Robbie Leiberman is correct

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<sup>51</sup> Margaret A. Hickey, 'Total Defence: Our Best Chance for Peace,' Independent Woman, Vol 29:8, August 1950

in his assumption that the US response to the Soviet Peace campaign was to view all peace movements, whatever their origin, as deeply suspicious and potentially communist;<sup>52</sup> however, women's peace campaigns, because of their alleged 'natural' predisposition to passivity and therefore 'negative' peace, were particularly suspect.<sup>53</sup>

This concern intensified as elements within the US government increasingly worried about the effect of communist propaganda, particularly accusations of germ warfare in Korea, upon women across the globe. Mary Cannon, Chief of the International Division of the Women's Bureau at the Department of Labor, wrote to Marion Sanders and Herbert McGushin of the State Department. She enclosed a copy of 'Korea We Accuse', a report claiming to have uncovered the use of chemical weapons by the US in Korea:

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52 Robbie Lieberman, '"Does that Make Peace a bad word?": American Responses to the Communist Peace Offensive 1949-50,' Peace and Change, Vol 17:2, April 1992, pp 198-228, p. 224.

53 Cynthia Enloe, explaining the unpopularity of peace as an area of theorization, has argued that this stems in part from, to use Elias and Turpin's phrase, the 'long standing notion of peace [as] negative/feminine'. Enloe argues, 'Peace has lacked adequate theoretical attention from patriarchal intellectuals because it has been defined in negative, often feminine terms. When war is seen as active, heroic, and masculine, then peace becomes merely the absence of all these stirring qualities.' [Cynthia Enloe, The Morning After: Sexual Politics at the End of the Cold War (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 64]

The United States Women's Bureau is concerned that such a distorted picture of America's character is being circulated to women's organizations and leaders throughout the world....This kind of propaganda will probably be an effective weapon in gaining support among women for the Communist 'peace offensive'.<sup>54</sup>

Organizations identified by the US Government as tools of the Soviet 'peace offensive' appealed to women in essentialist terms, citing their 'special interest' in peace. The report of the World Assembly for Peace, held in Helsinki in June 1955, pronounced:

There is no doubt that mothers will everywhere prove among the most active workers for peace, with the object of changing the present ruinous atmosphere of fear and uncertainty into an atmosphere of confidence and security; maternal love is undoubtedly one of the most powerful forces for peace represented at the Helsinki Assembly....Many women who have

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54 Cannon to Sanders and McGushin, 24 September 1951, US National Archives, Records of the Women's Bureau, Office of the Director, General Correspondence File 1948-1953, Box 25

never before dared to take part in the fight for peace, who previously hid themselves behind the old argument that they did not wish to be political, today understand that they must act in order to protect their children from death and from all the physical and moral suffering which follows wars.<sup>55</sup>

Initially the US government's policy towards international peace organizations which targeted women was similar to their tactics for dealing with the rest of the 'peace offensive'. This included strategies such as denying individuals travelling to peace conferences permission to enter the US. In March 1950, for example, the US refused entry to 12 people, including Pablo Picasso and the Dean of Canterbury, acting for the World Congress of Partisans for World Peace. Similarly, the US occupation authorities in West Germany arrested Lily Waechter, a German woman who had been invited by the International Democratic Women's Federation to speak at the World Peace Congress in London in 1951.<sup>56</sup> Waechter had been a representative on the WIDF

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55 Report of The World Assembly for Peace, Helsinki, 22-29 June 1955 (Stockholm: Secretariat of the World Council of Peace, 1955)

56 Office of Land Commissioner for Wuerttemberg-Baden, Intelligence Division report, 7 September 1951, Ruth Woodsmall Papers, Box 52, File 6

Commission which had visited Korea and was scheduled to address the Congress on the topic. The move was not a particularly astute one, sparking protests in Wuerttemberg-Baden.<sup>57</sup>

The obvious impact of these actions upon 'free speech' and 'freedom of movement' were not lost on critics of US policy, and even those who supported the government's hostility towards such 'peace' organizations were not enamoured of the strategy of exclusion. Government restrictions on women's rights to speak about the issue were even less popular. Women's claim to a 'special' interest in peace was a hard one for men to challenge, since as historian Harriet Hyman Alonso has argued, the 'maternal' claim gave 'women a unique position that men cannot share and therefore cannot really argue against'.<sup>58</sup> In 1962 the Government's tactics of confrontation failed miserably. When the House Un-American Activities Committee issued subpoenas to 13 peace activists with the intention of discovering 'the extent of Communist Party infiltration into the Peace movement, in a manner and to a degree affecting national security', the Women's Strike for

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57 Office of Land Commissioner for Wuertemberg-Baden, Intelligence Division report, 18 September 1951, Ruth Woodsmall Papers, Box 52, File 6  
58 Alonso, Peace as a Woman's Issue p. 12

Peace invoked maternal constructions of womanhood.<sup>59</sup> WSP defended their activities through women's interest in peace and, as Amy Swerdlow concludes, demolished HUAC along the way:

In their organizational response to the HUAC summons and in their testimony to the hearings, the women of the WSP were so effective and witty in evoking traditional assumptions regarding a woman's role that they succeeded in holding the committee up to public ridicule and damaging its image and reputation with the President, the Public and Congress.<sup>60</sup>

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59 Quoted in Swerdlow in Elshtain and Tobias (eds.), p. 8. In addition to organizing the walk-out of an estimated 50,000 women from the workplace and the kitchen in a one-day peace strike on 1 November 1961, WSP also sent telegrams to the White House and the Soviet Embassy urging Jacqueline Kennedy and Nina Khrushchev to appeal to their husbands to 'stop all nuclear tests'.

60 Ibid. p. 8. Swerdlow credits WSP for helping to change 'the image of the good mother from meek to militant, from private to public.' Swerdlow argues, 'By stressing global issues and international co-operation among women rather than private family issues, WSP challenged the key element of the feminine mystique: the domestication and privatisation of the middle-class white woman.' [Ibid., p. 24]

Whilst I agree with Swerdlow's interpretation of the significance of WSP's actions, I would argue that American women's associations had been using these tactics since 1945, albeit in a less confrontational manner. WSP may have been effective in its ultimate aim: President Kennedy claimed WSP affected his decision to negotiate an above-ground nuclear test ban with the Soviet Union. [Nancy E.

In the 12 years between HUAC's persecution of the Congress of American Women and its humiliation at the hands of WSP, the US Government's strategy to avoid criticism was to delegate the problem of 'peace' and women to American women's organizations. These organizations therefore took a prominent role as by presenting the international community with their brand of pacifism. The first collective example of this was the 1951 Memorial Day Statement. This statement, presented to the Honourable Warren Austin, the US representative to the United Nations, and broadcast to countries abroad by the Voice of America, was drawn up in the hope 'that this positive declaration may help to refute Soviet Propaganda against American Women and their organizations'.<sup>61</sup> The statement, signed by 10 'leading national women's organizations', asserted:

The women of the United States have long worked for peace. They know that peace, to endure, must be accompanied by freedom and justice and must be founded on law and order. They know that law, to be respected, must be based on spiritual and

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McGlen and Meredith Reid Sarkees, Women in Foreign Policy: The Insiders, (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 3]

<sup>61</sup> 'Winning the Peace: A Statement from Women's Organizations,' Journal of the AAUW, Vol 44:4, Summer 1951

moral values....We realize that winning world peace may be more difficult than winning a world war, but we believe that women, informed, determined and united in purpose, can move nations towards this high goal.<sup>62</sup>

The statement was a response to accusations from the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) and the report 'We Charge Genocide' that the US Government was using germ warfare in Korea. In an open letter to Eleanor Roosevelt, the WIDF called on the former First Lady to raise awareness of this amongst American women and to rouse them to action to put an end to such atrocities. The germ warfare letter from Korea triggered a concerted effort by the leaders of American women's organizations, spearheaded by Rose Parsons of the National Council of Women, to launch international opposition to the Soviet women's peace offensive. When the Memorial Day Statement did not initially receive widespread publicity,<sup>63</sup> the lacklustre response convinced some

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62 Ibid.

63 The Statement was re-circulated in the following year, backed by a systematic and more successful public relations campaign. Its objective when it was re-released, however, was less a general definition of peace and support of the UN. Instead it was specifically targeted at discrediting the claims of 'less reputable' American women's organizations to represent women's views on peace. See Chapter 8.

American women that a more focused campaign against the Soviet peace offensive was necessary. The Committee of Correspondence, established as a direct result of the germ warfare accusations, served for fifteen years as a CIA-funded channel of propaganda, challenging Soviet assertions about American women's betrayal of their essentialist loyalty to the cause of peace.

Of equal importance were efforts to ensure that the position of American women on 'peace' was uniform and uncontentious. Women's groups whose interpretation potentially challenged the hegemonic viewpoint were subject to considerable restriction. Because the US government did not wish to challenge or limit the connection between women and peace directly, they encouraged American women's organizations to fulfill gender-typing as the guardians of peace whilst expressing that interest in such a way to favour US foreign policy and castigate the Soviets.

These campaigns met with mixed success, as combatting the Soviet 'peace campaign' internationally proved difficult. In 1962, after a decade of work by the Committee of Correspondence, Rose Parsons enlisted the help of her friend Eleanor Roosevelt. Parsons asserted:

The WIDF is trying to get women all over the world to combine for peace, love, etc. It is of course their way of infiltrating into international women's organizations. If they were voluntary organizations, the picture would be quite different as you well know, but so many do not realize that the whole communist machine is behind this and is making hay while we in the free world are still bickering over tiny differences. How can we get the gals in the free world to have a dynamic program and take the lead? You could do it!<sup>64</sup>

Roosevelt agreed that 'the "serious" and "well-ordered" women's organizations must do something positive about Peace and disarmament' and sympathized, 'It is of course terribly hard to think up exciting rabble rousing activities when they have to be realistic and possible and unemotional.' She was concerned that 'unclean' organizations (such as 'Women Strike for Peace and the Communists') 'are the ones arousing people to do things and catching those who are really anxious to do something for Peace'.<sup>65</sup>

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64 Parsons to Roosevelt, undated [1962], Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Box 3612

65 Roosevelt to Parsons, 19 September 1962, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Box 3612

Parsons' frustration is understandable. After more than a decade of efforts to limit and define closely the consequences of American women's commitment to peace, it was disconcerting to see newer groups seize the political moment and mount a successful campaign to challenge the aims and methods of their own government. Ironically, though, this pointed to the success of 'mainstream' groups throughout the 1950s in ensuring that they were the authoritative voice of American women. Organizations which did not share the approach of the US government had been effectively silenced and denied access to the international stage. Typical of that 'silencing' was the undermining of journalist Dorothy Thompson's World Organization of Mothers of All Nations.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### W.O.M.A.N.

In February 1946, celebrated journalist Dorothy Thompson wrote an article for the Ladies Home Journal entitled 'A woman says you must come into the room of your mother unarmed'. Thompson 'came from Mary Doe' to address the 'Gentlemen of the United Nations Security Council'. As the universal woman, Thompson described a vision of motherhood in which women have served the statesmen to whom she addressed herself:

Housekeeper, homemaker, wife, mother. You, gentleman, have often called us the pillars and preservers of civilization. You have pinned golden stars upon our bosoms and laid Purple Hearts in our hands. You have asked us to give our sons, our children "to save the world." You have asked us to endure the crucifixion of our sons, that the sins of nations might be wiped out and all people everywhere live out their lives in freedom from want and fear. We have given you are sons. Some are dead, and some are blind, and some gibber behind bars, and some walk without feet and work without hands, and

each of those is as precious to us as all  
the world we gave them to you to save.<sup>1</sup>

Thompson warned the Security Council that women represented 'the greatest international in the world [sic]. We speak a common language from Chungking to Moscow, and from Berlin to New York.' She invoked images of maternal influence and authority to remind the statesmen, 'I am pushed forward by the host of the mothers, for whom you first groped in the dark.' This was a demand for peace: 'You must lay aside your guns. You cannot talk to the mothers with bombing planes and atomic bombs. You must come into the room of your mother unarmed.'<sup>2</sup>

Thompson's article was the beginning of a personal campaign to convert the supposed desire of mothers for peace into a political organization to challenge the Cold War status quo. She posited the existence of an 'international' of women whose first loyalty was to a peaceful environment for their children and not to the interests of their respective nations. Yet Thompson's campaign and the World Organization of Mothers of All Nations (WOMAN) would not be able to mobilize her constituency into

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1 Dorothy Thompson, 'A woman says, "You must come into the room of your mother unarmed", ' Ladies Home Journal, February 1946. [Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 5, Box 4]

2 Ibid. [Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 5, Box 4.]

a meaningful campaign. In part this failure can be ascribed to problems and rivalries which continually hampered the work of the organization; however, even with the best organization in the world, WOMAN would have faced overpowering opposition from both the government and American women's organizations. Dorothy Thompson's call for peace, however genuine and heartfelt, immediately became part of the Cold War battle over the discourse of peace in which pacifist ideas were perceived as harmful to the American cause.

The restrictions placed upon WOMAN were not primarily achieved through the direct opposition of the US government. The repression of WOMAN was achieved, through the efforts of the 'official' network of 'legitimate' American women's groups. This was an important example of how voluntary organizations, rather than providing the dissenting voice for which theorists lauded their existence, were instead so tied into government networks as to operate as semi-official agents of policy.

WOMAN was founded in September 1947 in response to the flood of letters which Dorothy Thompson received following the publication of her articles in the Ladies Home Journal.<sup>3</sup> 'You Must Come

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3 The exact date of the founding of the organization appears variously as August or September 1947.

into the Room of Your Mother Unarmed' had been followed in July 1947 with 'If No One Else, We, The Mothers'.<sup>4</sup> Thompson was inspired to action by the depth of feeling shown in these letters. One response berated the journalist, 'You have no right to write as you do, to move us all as you do, unless you do more than write articles.'<sup>5</sup> Thompson responded to her correspondents with a form letter, telling them of her plans to establish WOMAN and assuring them:

I cannot erase from my mind the conviction that in all countries, of whatever political and economic composition, the mothers --- and the maternal instinct --- are working, hitherto silently, for the total abolition of war and violence as instruments for the furthering of national aims or theoretical ideas, and that among women there is an enormous and as yet untapped power, that can be released to dispel the present nightmare, which

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4 Thompson claimed that she received approximately 2,700 letters in response to 'You must come into the room of your mother unarmed' and 4,200 letters from American women in response to 'If No-one Else, We The Mothers'. [Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 31]

5 Citizen's Committee for United Nations Reform Bulletin, November 1947, Vol 1:4, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 31

neither the political leaders, the theoretical ideologists, nor even the scientists have been able to do.<sup>6</sup>

Thompson launched the organization with an article in The Ladies Home Journal in November 1947 entitled 'A Woman's Manifesto'. Setting out her belief in women's special interest in peace and drawing upon essentialist notions of womanhood, Thompson asserted:

Despite our historically recent enfranchisement, and despite the opening for us of economic opportunities outside the home, we recognize our primary function, it is still our primary occupation, to be the reproduction and nurture of children to adulthood and the maintenance of the home, as the basic unit of all civilizations.<sup>7</sup>

Thompson contrasted the experience of human society as 'a perpetual state of naked or veiled war', with 'the condition of the home' that is 'peace [and]...harmony between all its members'. She then

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6 Form letter from Dorothy Thompson, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 31.

7 Dorothy Thompson, 'A Woman's Manifesto,' Ladies Home Journal, November 1947. [Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 5, Box 4.]

described how the separation of the home and the organization of society was mirrored by women's separation from economic life:

Men work for gain expressed in money, the convertible value. This gain goes in large part to the support of the family and the home. But the woman's contribution finds no recompense in, nor is it measurable by, such values....She, the homemaking, home-serving woman belongs in no organized body or category of workers or employers, operates under no recognized economic codes or laws, and falls into no economic class.<sup>8</sup>

Thompson's point was that a woman owed no loyalty to either systems of government or economic/class groupings, for 'she is bound less to organized class, and less to the force of state than her mate'. Instead women's loyalty was tied to something which had a primacy over these systems: the 'natural' and 'organic' life of the earth. Thompson wrote, 'As she first recognized the soul as the source of sustenance, so she is cosmically tied in other ways , her very reproductive system being part of the rhythm of seasons and tides responsive

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8 Ibid. [Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 5, Box 4.]

to nature.' The outcome of women's relationship to these 'natural processes' was, Thompson argued, a solidarity and commonality between women:

There is on this earth, and would be wherever in this universe organic life exists, a solidarity which has hitherto been largely silent. It needs no governments, nor unions, nor organized associations to bring it into being. It needs no flag to raise. No boundaries delineate it, whether they be boundaries of nation, or race, or class. It is the solidarity between women as mothers. It is the solidarity of a function and vocation transcending all ephemeral patterns of organized society --- the function and vocation of protecting, through nurture, the human race.<sup>9</sup>

Ironically, given Thompson's insistence that women needed no organization or association, the Woman's Manifesto sought to rally support for WOMAN. The Manifesto was shortened and simplified for distribution to established women's organizations and to individuals who had responded to Thompson's previous articles, along with a pamphlet entitled

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9 Ibid. [Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 5, Box 4.]

'WOMAN's Demands' setting specific aims for the organization. Katherine Kent, the first director of WOMAN, argued to Thompson, 'The solution is to have one very specific pamphlet [WOMAN's demands] for really intelligent people who won't join any vague movement, and to have a much vaguer and briefer set of demands for the average person who isn't willing to read anything difficult.'<sup>10</sup> The pamphlet listed three main requirements: the strengthening of the United Nations and the abolition of the power of veto, held by five countries including the US and the Soviet Union, control of the atomic threat, and the establishment of an effective World Police Force.<sup>11</sup> A supporting letter from Thompson asked that 'in garden clubs, political societies, peace organizations or home economics groups, wherever women are gathered for any purpose, allegiance to this statement of women's view could be secured'.<sup>12</sup>

Thompson had no history of involvement with women's organizations; instead it was her weekly column in The Ladies Home Journal that gave her tremendous influence with many American women. Her status as an 'expert' in international relations had

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10 Kent to Thompson, 3 November 1947, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 31.

11 'WOMAN's Demands, Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 31

12 Form letter from Dorothy Thompson, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 31

been enhanced by her pre-war reports from Nazi Germany, which expelled her in July 1934. With this role as a journalist, she maintained an independence of thought and opinion outside the 'mainstream', illustrated by her support in the 1948 election of the socialist Norman Thomas.<sup>13</sup>

From the start, Dorothy Thompson was unenthusiastic about becoming involved in the day-to-day organization of WOMAN.<sup>14</sup> Thompson's personality and reputation, however, inevitably played a large role in the success or failure of the initiative. Because of her personal reputation, the appeals of WOMAN to American women's organizations met with some initial enthusiasm. Ruth Karr McKee, a member of the Federation of Women's Clubs in Washington State, wrote to Katherine Kent enthusiastically pledging herself to collect signatures for the 'Woman's Demands'. McKee

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13 Lawrence S. Wittner, Rebels against War: The American Peace Movement 1941-1960 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), p. 194

14 WOMAN's first director, Katherine McElroy Kent, a one-time professor at Wellesley College and President of Pierce College, was quickly replaced by Jane Hayford, a successful businesswoman. Thompson saw her role as a spiritual and intellectual leader, who would inspire the movement rather than direct it. Initially WOMAN was conceived as a sister organization to the Citizens Committee for United Nation's Reform (CCUNR), which was run by Thompson's friends Ely and Dorothy Cuthbertson. The aims of the organization were the reformation of the United Nations as an elected Congress established along federal principles.

complained that a speech by Thompson at Spokane had been sold out and wrote, 'We are willing to make the trip if there seems to be any chance to meet Miss Thompson.'<sup>15</sup> Mrs Norman Whitehouse of the Women's Action Committee for Lasting Peace wrote to Thompson to commend the campaign, claiming her own organization had failed because 'as our older workers retired, worn out, we failed to arouse the interest of younger women'.<sup>16</sup> There was also a positive reponse internationally. The President of National Federation of Women's Clubs of the Philippines sent \$5.00 to join WOMAN, declaring, 'We hail this Crusade for Peace as a vital activity of the women today in a world fraught with political, economical and spiritual disturbances.'<sup>17</sup>

Not every response to WOMAN was so enthusiastic. Mrs Ruth Moffat wrote to Dorothy Thompson about her son and grandson --- 'Are there any more wholesome, un-neurotic reasons for woman to be peace-minded?' --- but then warned Thompson about the limited potential of WOMAN:

I entertain few illusions as to  
womankind's destined role in bringing

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15 McKee to Kent, 14 January 1948, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 31

16 Whitehouse to Thompson, 20 May 1949, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 31

17 Legarda to Thompson, 31 January 1950, Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 31

about a more creative, peaceful world. Teachers use the term 'Busy-work' for harmless, insignificant activities used to keep little fingers and minds out of mischief. From my viewpoint, Miss Thompson, much women's clubs activity is 'Adult Busy-work'. Meeting of thoughtful minds is practically non-existent.<sup>18</sup>

'Mainstream' women's organizations were even more suspicious about WOMAN. In February 1948 Eleanor Roosevelt enquired of Dorothy Thompson, 'I have been asked about an organization called "Woman" which you are alleged to be starting. Will you be good enough to let me know about it if this is true?'<sup>19</sup> Thompson, unaware of Roosevelt's concerns, warmly told her about the history and aims of the organization and assured her:

I welcomed your note as we would heartily welcome your help. I should have gone to you, had I not known how over-burdened you are and feared, also, that your connections with the United Nations might make it difficult for you to associate

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18 Moffat to Thompson, 19 February 1950, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 31

19 Roosevelt to Thompson, 16 February 1948, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 25

yourself with those who are certain that U.N. as presently constituted is far from enough.<sup>20</sup>

The initial years of WOMAN focused on enlisting membership and funds. By November 1948, WOMAN could boast 665 members, with 105 clubs with a membership of 46,744 offering their support.<sup>21</sup> Good intentions, however, lacked funds, plans and leadership. Jane Hayford, the new director of WOMAN, wrote despairingly to Thompson, 'For over a year, as a lone voice, I have battled for WOMAN and you as chairman using every moment of my time and every cent I could snatch from the budget of my family.... I can go no further without an organization and funds.'<sup>22</sup> Her frustration continued throughout 1949, leading her to write in exasperation 'We have everything --- a definite plan --- an irresistible appeal --- and the women of all nations vitally interested --- everything except organization and money.'<sup>23</sup> WOMAN drifted aimlessly for two years, issuing lofty pronouncements about

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20 Thompson to Roosevelt, 8 March 1948, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 2, Box 3

21 Statistics on WOMAN, 30 November 1948, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 31

22 Hayford to Thompson, (Not Dated), Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 31

23 Hayford to Thompson, 30 July 1949, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 31

the power of mothers but doing nothing to harness that power in a meaningful way.

In 1951 all this changed with WOMAN's proposal for a pilgrimage of women from all nations culminating in a Congress in Berlin. The planned trip coincided with personnel changes at WOMAN which would have significant effects on the smooth operation of the organization. In April 1950 Jane Hayford asked for Thompson's endorsement for the title 'American Mother of the Year'. Hayford had already been named the New Jersey Mother of the Year and felt that Thompson's endorsement would be vital in securing her the national title, especially since Thompson's 'great admirer, Mary E. Hughes, whom I met in your home, is the Director [of the sponsoring body]'.<sup>24</sup>

The American Mother of the Year was awarded by the American Mother's Committee, an organization established in 1933 under the leadership of Mrs Sarah Delano Roosevelt, Franklin D. Roosevelt's mother. The ideology of the organization in 1950, based on the views of Mary Hughes, was the celebration of motherhood and the potential force of mothers to foster peace. Hughes's letter to State

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24 Hayford to Thompson, 23 April 1950, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 31

Chairs in 1950 announced the award of 'Mothers of the Year' on a worldwide basis, arguing:

In view of the world-wide implications of the status of women in today's world, the American Mother's Committee recognizes an international responsibility. It was logical that this committee should evolve to help unite mothers of the world --- certainly the mothers of the United Nations. Mothers want peace. United Motherhood will be invincible against the forces of destruction.<sup>25</sup>

Hughes' vision was not to be restricted to the selection and awarding of the title of 'Mother of the Year'. Seeking a more active role, Hughes wrote to Thompson:

There are 40 countries and others looking to us for a future program. They are evidently thrilled by the idea of a united motherhood in the interest of world peace. I might as well tell you this has been a 1 girl job. I have an international Association of Mothers on my hands and

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25 Hughes to State Chairmen, 1950, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 31

actually I don't know what to do with it  
 --- unless you and I could somehow join  
 forces?<sup>26</sup>

Thompson was amenable to the coalition, and Mary Hughes joined WOMAN as an executive director.

Hayford, the permanent director, had become somewhat disappointed by the inactivity of WOMAN. She complained to Thompson:

It is pitiful what has been accomplished with WOMAN and its wonderful program... unknown, no money, no staff. Yet about 3,000 Clubs with a supporting membership of over 600,000....But what is that? A drop in the bucket, in the sea. I'm down to the last of my resources --- not even literature to distribute.<sup>27</sup>

To resuscitate the lagging fortunes of WOMAN, Hayford acted decisively. She took up a suggestion from Ilse Bentler, Chairman of the California State Division of WOMAM, that the United Nations recruit a volunteer army: 'This seems to me to be the moment we have been waiting for. Now, let us take the

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26 Hughes to Thompson, 1 June 1950, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 31

27 Hayford to Thompson, undated, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 31.

leadership in the International Crusade. Let us have our Convention in Berlin.'<sup>28</sup> At the same time Hayford received a statement from Vilma Monckeberg-Kollmar, Chairman of WOMAN in Hamburg, encouraging the pilgrimage to Berlin.

Inspired by the ideas and 'frustrated by lack of funds and the feeling of impotence',<sup>29</sup> Hayford called a conference with Thompson and Hughes, at this point still representing the National Association of Mothers. Tentative plans for the pilgrimage were sketched. At Thompson's suggestion, it would involve playwright Carl Zuckmayer and a professional producer 'to put on this Congress with all the fanfare of parades, music, speeches'.<sup>30</sup> Hayford requested that Thompson write a letter to peace organizations explaining the objectives of the Berlin Congress and updating her Mary Doe article.<sup>31</sup>

Hayford's plan was to enlist the support of top women, including former cabinet member Francis Perkins, Rose Parsons of the National Council of Women, Marian Anderson, Pearl Buck, and Claire Boothe Luce and to meet with them, followed by a conference in September 1951. The next two weeks

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28 Bentler to Hayford, 15 March 1951, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series I, Box 31

29 Hayford to Monckeberg-Kollmar, 29 May 1951, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series I, Box 31

30 Ibid.

31 Hayford to Thompson, 29 May 1951, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series I, Box 31

would then be dedicated to intense activity and planning for the pilgrimage to 'establish a "do or die" atmosphere'.<sup>32</sup>

Thompson's letter to the 'top women' invited them to join the Board of Directors of WOMAN, 'at least for one momentous year'.<sup>33</sup> She opened dramatically:

It is my profound conviction that the present foreign policies of the great Powers, including the United States, are heading the peoples of the world, with or without a general war, toward a disaster unparalleled since the dark age following the fall of Rome: that these policies --- based ironically enough on universal appeals to Peace, Progress, Liberation and Democracy, and upheld, where they are upheld, largely through the appeal of such words --- are totally unrepresentative of the world's peoples, who are listening in despair for the voice that does not speak.<sup>34</sup>

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32 Hayford to Thompson, 29 June 1951, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 31

33 Suggested letter for Dorothy Thompson, undated [1951], Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 31

34 Thompson to Parsons et al, 9 July 1951, Women United for the United Nations Papers, File 22

Thompson argued that the voice had an obligation born of 'the function of nurturing and conserving human life'. She recognized the symbolic importance of Berlin as 'the spot where the two conflicting powers met each other, in most dangerous tension --- the ruined, battle-scarred city of Berlin'.<sup>35</sup> Inviting women from both sides of the Curtain to be present at the climax of the pilgrimage, Thompson assured, 'I do not imagine anything loud, coarse, agitational, or demonstrative in the usual sense - for its purpose will be to create a new platform altogether, in a new atmosphere and mood.'<sup>36</sup>

Washington Post journalist Malvina Lindsay noted approvingly that WOMAN was 'a group of American Women of intellectual standing and unquestioned patriotism'. Lindsay entertained high hopes regarding the potential of WOMAN to rise above the 'red-tagging' of peace activists, enthusing:

Originating in the United States, it should help to counter the Communist chant about American warmongers. If, as planned, the world flight of its leaders ends in a Congress of Women in Berlin at which sincere and feasible disarmament proposals are made, a big step will be taken at a

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35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

strategic spot towards grabbing the peace offensive.<sup>37</sup>

However, amidst American anxieties regarding Soviet attempts to target women, particularly with the 'peace campaign', Thompson's plan aroused some scepticism. Not everyone shared Thompson's optimism that an emotive demonstration would be able to distinguish itself from Soviet-sponsored activities. A significant dissenting voice was that of Thompson's personal friend, playwright Carl Zuckmayer. Since Thompson had planned to make one of his plays central to the pilgrimage, it was somewhat disheartening to discover that he was less than enthusiastic. Whilst Zuckmayer wrote in admiration of Thompson's 'imaginative and honesty and deep appreciation for truth and right...[and] your passionate will to act and not only to talk for the good cause', he doubted the wisdom of the Berlin Scheme.<sup>38</sup> Zuckmayer feared that 'any group-statement in public would rather contribute and add to the general confusion in our world instead of light it up'. He warned Thompson, 'The policy of the East... is a cold icy-cold, calculated and enormously shrewd cunning, a way of turning everything to their

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37 Malvina Lindsay, 'Dramatizing Peace Aims', Washington Post, 10 June 1951

38 Carl Zuckmayer to Dorothy Thompson, 10 August 1951, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 31

advantage.' Recognizing that a group of Americans criticising all governments could be represented as a group of Americans criticising their own government, Zuckmayer urged caution:

You are certainly right when you say that there is no government in the world which really represents the people. But there are governments which represent it even less than the others altogether....I'm afraid we cannot deal with them by the true and honest means of 'going there and speaking it out' --- without weakening our own position.<sup>39</sup>

Zuckmayer suggested to Thompson that the best way for her to contribute her voice in opposition to the prospect of war and violence was as an individual, not as a member (or leader) of a group.

The plan for the Berlin Congress was especially alarming for the US government. Concern over the activities of WOMAN in Germany had surfaced as early as May 1949, when a paper investigating the organization was sent to Ruth Woodsmall, Chief of the Woman's Affairs section of the Office of Military Government of the United States (OMGUS), from two of her staff, Miss Joy Evans and Mrs

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

Elizabeth G. Holt. The report recorded that WOMAN was functioning in several cities in the British zone and was particularly active in Hamburg. In the US zone, the activity centred in Frankfurt. Arguing that the rhetoric of the organization was 'emotional and similar to the Frauenbewegung sponsored by the National Socialists,' Evans and Holt criticized WOMAN on the basis that...

...the program puts little emphasis on civic education for women, for the necessity for women to assume thoughtful political responsibility, to correct social conditions in the community or to inform them of constructive social programs to improve conditions. It is unconstructive in that it draws the attention of women away from their role as responsible citizens with specific tasks in their community....Its principal danger is that it can become a peace movement which through an emotional appeal lead women aside from the serious task of being informed citizens.<sup>40</sup>

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40 Evans and Holt to Woodsmall, 26 May 1949, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 31

Evans and Holt recommended that Thompson be informed that 'the organization in Germany is taking on its own character with aspects foreign to the developments she envisaged when she founded it'.<sup>41</sup>

Evans and Holt's fears that WOMAN in Germany was developing as a political pressure group were not without foundation. In April 1950, Vilma Monckeberg-Kollmar, Chair of the Hamburg branch of WOMAN, wrote about her belief in the importance of a united Germany and her role in the 'Society for Re-Uniting Germany' to Thompson.<sup>42</sup> Monckeberg-Kollmar described her feelings about Berlin:

I now often have the chance to go to Berlin and I'm terribly upset to see what this unnatural separation leads to. Berlin is a smouldering volcano, occidental mentality and mode of life in the east section is full of anxiety and fear, shy and ever hungry, the same as ourselves before the currency reform....They are anxious lest people in the western zone

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41 Ibid.

42 Vilma Monckeberg-Kollmar was very much a leading influence upon WOMAN in Germany. Her personal commitment to the cause can be explained by the death of her husband in World War I and of her son in World War II. [Letter from 'A Friend in Germany' to Parsons, 16 October 1951, Women United for United Nations Papers, File 22] It seems likely that Parson's informer on WOMAN in Germany was Gabrielle Strecker.

should drop them and leave them to the mercy of the Russians. For this reason we have started a big 'East Welfare Movement' We members of WOMAN have made a proclamation asking people to take care of whole families in the East.<sup>43</sup>

Further concern about the intent and potential effect of any women's demonstration in Berlin was raised by Gabrielle Strecker, whose expenses-paid trip to the United States in 1946 was clearly paying rich dividends. Strecker wrote to Rose Parsons in October 1951 with her concern about WOMAN. She warned:

It is exactly the least of all we need, it is exactly the unrealistic type of organization which we must get rid of. It will offer large possibilities for communist infiltration. The types of women who run WOMAN are apt to spoil sound activities of good organizations and will bring mischief and confusion in the German women's movement.<sup>44</sup>

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43 Monckeberg-Kollmar to Thompson, 8 April 1950, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 31

44 Strecker to Parsons, 16 October 1951, Women United for the United National Papers, File 22

Strecker's animosity towards WOMAN was not improved by a personal encounter with Monckenberg-Kolmar during a meeting of women's organizations in Bavaria. Strecker and the wife of the US High Commissioner, Mrs John McCloy, spoke about 'the communist danger...[and] the big fallacy of peace slogans' but were interrupted and angrily denounced by Monckenberg-Kolmar. Strecker reported that she 'kept my sense of humour' but reflected, 'A mass of ignorant un-political women in the hands of such dangerous demagogues! It's terrible!'<sup>45</sup>

The State Department became increasingly concerned with the possible effects of the Congress. On 2 September 1951 Chester Williams, a member of the United States Delegation to the United Nations, wrote to the State Department with his comments on the plan. Williams explained Mary Hughes' background as Director of the International Committee of Mothers, 'whose main activity seemed to be the designation of "Mothers of the Year" in various countries and the convening of an international banquet in New York on the occasion of Mother's Day'.<sup>46</sup> He added that, even before her move to WOMAN, Hughes had been talking of 'her idea of

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Williams to Underhill, 12 September 1951, US National Archives, Records of the Department of State, Miscellaneous Records of the Bureau of Public Affairs, 1944-67, Box 118

taking a group of American mothers and some from other countries around the world'.<sup>47</sup>

Williams was worried that '[Hughes] and Dorothy Thompson have now launched themselves upon an enterprise which could produce very disruptive and confusing results'. Furthermore, he indignantly reported, 'The State Department (especially the International Information and Educational Exchange of Persons Office) will be called upon to facilitate her plans.' Williams' personal assessment of Hughes was scathing:

Miss Hughes is a voluble, energetic, optimistic, sentimental, presuming woman with very wide contacts among the elite in various countries. She has a greeting-card mind which, at least in her activities, avoids concern with political issues or controversial subjects. She has a flair for display and pageantry --- an orchid approach with a touch of Whistler's Mother.<sup>48</sup>

Hughes' 'flair for display and pageantry' led her to describe the pilgrimage of mothers to Williams with 'many details in uninterrupted flow of enthusiastic,

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47 Ibid.

48 Ibid.

though disconnected, narrative'. She assured Williams that the world tour of 'flying mothers' would be greeted at each port of call by 'the most prominent people, kings and queens and prime ministers --- already her Mother-of-the-Year in England assured her that the King and Queen and Churchill would receive the group'.

Williams concluded his report with the restrained comment that 'Miss Hughes is not an easy person to talk to on a practical basis'. He expressed concern that, whilst Hughes' plan did not have the backing of the leaders of 'the large women's organizations,...she may have considerable influence with a coterie of prominent women who appreciate being in the limelight of international society in the company of queens and lady bountifuls'. Williams was also critical of Dorothy Thompson, warning, 'It should be remembered that Dorothy Thompson has a strong emotional antagonism towards the State Department dating back to the Dumbarton Oaks days...She [has a] vituperative attitude.... dividing her invectives equally between the State Department and the Kremlin.'<sup>49</sup>

Williams believed that 'it would be impossible to guide this group of women into safe and useful channels', but he was wary of expressing

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49 Ibid.

outright opposition since 'it would be most difficult, if not impossible, to discourage them from going ahead with their idea'. He had a two-fold solution. Firstly he suggested that Doris Cochrane of the Public Liaison Office of the State Department 'discuss the matter with responsible women leaders' and find ways of 'bringing the influence of the Non-Governmental Organizations to bear on WOMAN and discourage the scheme'. Ultimately it would be this governmental influence of the 'responsible' women's organizations which put a decisive end to the 'Pilgrimage to Berlin'.

Secondly Williams recommended that someone in the State Department 'categorically disabuse Miss Hughes of the notion that the Department would facilitate such a plan'. Williams also wanted to convince Mary Hughes that Dorothy Thompson was dragging her into a dangerous political scheme. Williams felt 'this might conceivably cause a controversy between the two which would put the quietus on the whole affair'. Again, William insisted that this strategy be carried out by 'non-governmental people'.

Williams' strategy of 'divide and rule' within WOMAN was not destined to be one of the labours of Hercules, given the suspicion and distrust evident between Mary Hughes and Jane

Hayford. Hayford, who had enjoyed almost total control of the direction of WOMAN for three years, quickly became unhappy with what she saw as Hughes' intrusion into 'her' organization. Not unnaturally Hayford resented the fact that whilst she had subsidized WOMAN to the tune of \$6554, Hughes was brought in (or, in Hayford's words, 'ensconced') as Executive Vice-President with a salary of \$100 a week.<sup>50</sup>

Hayford's indignation at the situation, and what she perceived as Hughes' high-handed treatment of her, led her to contact Mrs Milligan, Chairman of the American Mother's Committee. Milligan's report, passed to Thompson via Hayford was that Mary Hughes had involved the Mother's Committee in a \$50,000 lawsuit. Milligan passed on the comment of the wife of the minister of Hughes' church that Hughes was 'a wild, dangerous woman --- neurotic, irresponsible, selfish --- [who] will finally destroy herself. The church has considered taking away from her the two children she adopted at the age of two weeks to protect them from her.'<sup>51</sup> Hayford informed Thompson that she would take care of the matter by terminating Hughes' employment.

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50 Hayford to Thompson, undated [1951], Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 31

51 Ibid.

Hughes' view of Hayford were no more flattering. Hughes inundated Thompson with letters describing the impossibility of working with Hayford, who was 'entirely too erratic, abrupt and lacking in diplomacy in dealing with people'.<sup>52</sup> Hughes concluded, 'I don't know what is wrong with Jane as I am not a psychiatrist.'<sup>53</sup> On 19 September 1951 matters came to a head when Hayford sacked Hughes and demanded she leave the office, threatening to change the locks on the doors. Hughes insisted on staying on until the Board meeting on 28 September.

The irony of these events during the planning of the Berlin pilgrimage was noted by Hughes: 'We cannot hope to bring about better understanding and peace if in our personal lives there are unlovely qualities, discord, jealousy, greed, dishonesty.'<sup>54</sup> On 28 September Hughes resigned her position in WOMAN, citing Dorothy Thompson's distance as the cause of the problems of the organization. Hughes advised Thompson, 'Because your time is so occupied with your writings and lecturer...you cannot give enough supervision to really be in control of the

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52 Hughes to Thompson, 20 September 1951, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 31

53 Hughes to Thompson, 21 September 1951, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 31

54 Hughes to Thompson, 4 October 1951, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 31

situation which you have termed "fraught with grave danger".'<sup>55</sup>

Thompson demanded a complete rethink of the activities of WOMAN. Writing to Hayford, Thompson now criticised the focus on the pilgrimage. She questioned both the amateurish method of organization and the ideological point of making an expedition at all. Thompson asked Hayford, 'One question is --- The question is --- is it possible to make a peace demonstration which will not play straight into the hands of the Russians and communists?'<sup>56</sup> Thompson had apparently begun to realise how much was being done without her knowledge or approval and how haphazardly it was being done. She was aghast at the women who had agreed to join the new Board of Directors, pointing out, 'Nine-tenths of the women...have no clear idea of what we are up to. I myself knew none of them personally, had no idea why they were selected, what groups they had behind them.'<sup>57</sup> The composition of the new board was a consequence of the 'completely indiscriminating' nature of the list of women used as the basis for rallying women to the cause of WOMAN --- a list which included women who 'by no

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55 Hughes to Thompson, 28 September 1951, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 31

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid.

stretch of the imagination' could be expected to support or even understand the aims and objectives of the organization. Another unhelpful section of the list were those women who, as Thompson pointed out, were dead.

Losing nothing of the original idealism of WOMAN, Hayford replied, 'In one generation the statesmen of the world have led us into two tragic wars and now we are careening toward a third an infinitely greater calamity.'<sup>58</sup> She acknowledged, 'There is some divergence of opinion on the Board...regarding the course of action which WOMAN should take.'<sup>59</sup>

This confusion and lack of direction was exploited to the full by the 'private' allies of the US government. On 26 November 1951, Rose Parsons wrote to Gabrielle Strecker to explain what she and others were doing to obstruct WOMAN. Referring to WOMAN as a 'movement that has almost a psychopathic feeling about it', Parsons described Hayford as 'a very neurotic and excitable person...apt to go off the handle'.<sup>60</sup>

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58 Form letter from Jane Hayford to Board Members, 4 October 1951, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 31

59 Ibid.

60 Parsons to Strecker, 26 November 1951, Women United for United Nations Papers, File 22

Parsons also referred the cooperation between herself and the State Department, describing a visit paid by Hayford, Parsons, and another (unnamed) woman to the State Department. Parsons reported that the Department representative was 'of course...very disturbed about this pilgrimage to Berlin'. However, 'he felt it would be wrong for the State Department to discourage this cock-eyed plan, so he told [Hayford] the great expense it would be, and how it had to be planned down to every detail etc.' After the meeting the representative told Parsons that 'he thought it was up to the women's organizations to discourage this rather than the State Department'.<sup>61</sup>

The divisions between Hughes and Hayford were exacerbated by Thompson's disillusionment. In September 1950 Thompson, weary of the burden of involvement, tried to resign from WOMAN. Thompson outlined her fears to Hayford that involvement in an organization was compromising her intellectual freedom and argued that 'WOMAN needs a chairman less apocalyptic than I.'<sup>62</sup> She said her position emerged from self-described 'mental sufferings...[that were] acute' and was mired in 'doubts, hesitations and questions'.<sup>63</sup> It was a typical quandary for the Cold

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61 Ibid.

62 Thompson to Hayford, 30 August 1950, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 2, Box 3

63 Ibid.

War liberal, interested in the establishment of peace.

Thompson also complained of her need to function as a writer and a journalist independent of any organization. She wrote to Ely Cuthbertson, her original co-worker on WOMAN:

The dichotomy between independent writer and organization chairman is real. [It] seems irrelevant to debate the other issues of opinion and policy....I do not want to engage in argument, fearing that such argument would involve matters irrelevant to the real issue.<sup>64</sup>

Cuthbertson was not prepared to accept Thompson's polite excuses. Taking a 'brutally frank' tone, he warned Thompson that she was 'embarking on a road that can only lead you into a tragic blind-alley, equipped with fallacies and half-truths that are bound to wreak you as a public personality. In so doing you believe that you are being apocalyptic; actually you are apoplectic.' Cuthbertson accused Thompson of 'moral defeatism' and responded to Thompson's accusations of his belief in the necessity of a 'preventative war':

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64 Thompson to Cuthbertson, undated, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 31

My inner thought, and, I am convinced, that of the overwhelming majority of Americans, is to mobilize under a proper world authority, the forces of peaceful nations, thereby making them irresistible. And having so mobilized them, confront the aggressor Russia with a choice: to renounce effectively designs for aggression and atomic armament for aggression, or to face the lawful punishment of the indignant world, meted out to gangsters in any community. If this be a preventative war, then the American people will bless it....It is a matter of survival that we meet the Communist aggressor now and in every part of the world, until he is either destroyed or militarily neutralized.<sup>65</sup>

Cuthbertson implied that Thompson's version of peace accepting coexistence with the Soviet Union lacked both the force and the logic of his vision:

All thinking Americans know that any attempt for a negotiated peace with Soviet Russia on the basis of let's-kiss-and-

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65 Cuthbertson to Thompson, 26 September 1950, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 31

forget, reflects either Communist propaganda, or moral cowardice, and demagogically seeks to appeal to the lowest stratum of the American nation --- the ignorant and selfish Moms and Pops who will buy peace at any price.<sup>66</sup>

Comparing Thompson's approach to that of '[Walter] Lippman and other pseudos', Cuthbertson concluded his letter 'affectionately'; 'patronizingly' might have been more accurate.<sup>67</sup>

The response of non-government organizations to the publication of Thompson's Manifesto was to re-publish the Memorial Day Statement, the response to the claim of the Women's International Democratic Federation that US women, through their tolerance of alleged germ warfare in Korea, demonstrated their lack of interest in issues of peace. It was reissued after correspondence between Rose Parsons and Ruth Woodsmall about the 'confusion in the minds of German women' regarding WOMAN. Parsons reported Woodsmall's fears 'that German women were told that

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> The disagreement between Thompson and Ely Cuthbertson continued to drag on. Cuthbertson and his wife, founder members of WOMAN, evidently saw it as much their organization as it was Thompson's. Mary Hughes wrote impassioned letters to Thompson, begging her, 'You will have to do something about the Culbertsons.' [Hughes to Thompson, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 31]

thousands of American women belonged to this organization, and therefore thought it must represent the most popular sentiment in the United States'. Thus Woodsmall was 'thrilled' with the idea of the re-publication of the Memorial Day Statement:

It would be a great help to her if there could be more of this kind of thing from the representative U.S. Women's organizations. It would help her in the building of constructive and positive attitudes among Germany women.<sup>68</sup>

Parsons enlisted the support of a further 30 American women's organizations, and the Statement was presented to Ambassador Gross, the acting chief of the US delegation to the United Nations, on 23 June 1952. After initial discouragement, with Parsons complaining, 'We left the publicity arrangement up to the State Department, which perhaps was a mistake because we got practically none,' she asked Eleanor Roosevelt to publicize the statement representing the views of 'at least 26,000,000 women'.

Parsons and Roosevelt not only organized maximum publicity for the re-released statement but

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68 Ibid.

also included an exchange of letters between the signatories and Roosevelt and Anna Lord Strauss. The organizations explicitly offered the statement as both a response and an alternative to Thompson's manifesto:

In view of the recent publication of a full-page advertisement in the New York Times and elsewhere of a 'Woman's Manifesto' under the auspices of Dorothy Thompson's group known as WOMAN....We believe it is appropriate to bring to your attention the carefully drafted statement in support of the United Nations, officially presented on Memorial Day 1951 to Ambassador Austin by ten of the most influential women's organization in the United States.<sup>69</sup>

Boasting that the statement 'expresses the realistic position of millions of American women who stand for collective security and insist upon linking peace with freedom and justice', the organizations asked if Roosevelt and Strauss could bring it to the attention of other members of the United States delegation to the UN.

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69 Text of communications regarding 'Women's Manifesto', 21 December 1951, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 31

The Statement was vital in constructing an identity for American women which could claim a solidarity with women across the globe. However, the Statement defined peace in specifically *American* terms:

The women of the United States have long worked for peace. They know that peace, to endure, must be accompanied by freedom and justice and must be founded on law and order....Because it seems to us that peace, without justice and without freedom, is being promoted in an effort to undermine the unity of the free world, it seems wise at this moment for our organization to reaffirm our desire for a just and lasting peace, and for the preservation of human values everywhere.<sup>70</sup>

This was a statement on behalf of 'a combined membership of more than 26,000,000' who had 'co-operated with each other many times to support genuine efforts to bring the nations of the world together to secure peace and to promote freedom among all nations'. In implicit contrast to WOMAN,

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70 Memorial Day Statement, 1951, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 31

the organizations who signed the statement described themselves as democratic and representative:

Each of our organizations arrives at its policies separately through democratic procedure. Each woman in her organization can have a part in electing the leaders....Each member can have a voice in influencing positions on questions of national and international policy.<sup>71</sup>

Unsurprisingly, Roosevelt's reply supported the Statement. In a strong allusion to WOMAN and its possible effect, Mrs Roosevelt warned:

At a time when Soviet-inspired and directed 'peace-movements' are seeking to infiltrate and manoeuvre women's groups in various parts of the world, and especially in Germany, it is essential for all women's organizations to be on guard and to be precise in the positions they take in order to avoid being used in behalf of false peace propaganda.<sup>72</sup>

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71 Ibid.

72 Roosevelt reply to 'Women's Manifesto', 21 December 1951, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 31

Instead, peace had to be constructed to negate Soviet claims to that word:

Support of aggression by the Soviets in Korea and in their imposition of Communist minority domination on Eastern Germany, the Baltic states, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Rumania and Albania should convince all of us that their use of the word 'peace' has nothing in common with our aspirations and struggles for a real peace with freedom and justice under the United Nations Charter.<sup>73</sup>

Roosevelt then turned to Thompson. Whilst 'presuming' that Thompson had 'no intention of promoting Soviet objectives', Roosevelt nevertheless accused her of 'reflecting' the approach of Communist-front organizations. Roosevelt sternly rebuked, 'It shocks me to think that any American women would bracket our country with the Soviet Union in the light of their record.' In contrast, the former First Lady congratulated the organizations for a statement which 'can reassure women in other parts of the world that this ill-considered expression of WOMAN is not really

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73 Ibid.

representative of any substantial group'.<sup>74</sup> It was these organizations, wrote Roosevelt, which bore 'a heavy responsibility to inform their sisters around the world on where American women really stand in the common pursuit of peace.'<sup>75</sup>

Roosevelt's argument was that the ten organizations who signed the Memorial Day statement were the true voice of American women, representative bodies 'proven' by reference to their democratic methods. On the other side, WOMAN, which was not organized along these lines, could not claim to speak for a constituency. The point was reiterated by Anna Lord Strauss in her response to the Memorial Day Statement:

One of the significant points made by the group of women's organizations in this statement is contained in the description of how these organizations truly represent large membership who participate in the formation of policy. This statement, unlike the "Woman's Manifesto", was drafted by the responsible, elected heads of established women's organizations in consultation with each other, and reflects the official policies adopted in

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74 Ibid.

75 Ibid.

national conventions. These policies and opinions reflect discussion in local and state bodies in which the membership as a whole participates. They are not the mere literary expression of a small group of individual women, presuming to speak for a great body of American women....The cause of Peace can be harmed by well-intentioned people who release statements with the intention of getting them accepted abroad as the considered expression of the great body of American women.<sup>76</sup>

Roosevelt sent Thompson the text of these letters and the Memorial Day statement, explaining, 'The Representatives of a number of important women's organizations who are here at the General Assembly as observers have disowned the approach you are making through WOMAN.'<sup>77</sup> The result was a bitter correspondence. In particular Thompson resented Mrs Roosevelt's insinuation that Thompson's actions risked confirming her as a misguided 'fellow-traveller':

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<sup>76</sup> Strauss reply to 'Women's Manifesto', 17 December 1951, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 31

<sup>77</sup> Roosevelt to Thompson, 21 December 1951, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 25

I deeply regret that in your reply to the memorandum apropos the Women's Manifesto, signed by ten American women's organizations, in liaison with the U.N., you found it proper to 'presume' that 'Miss Thompson has no intention of promoting Soviet objectives'. I think, Mrs Roosevelt, that you need not 'presume' it, but that you absolutely know it.<sup>78</sup>

Thompson expressed to Roosevelt the central dilemma posed to Americans advocating peace. She reasoned:

If all popular peace demonstrations are to be confined to communist or communist-inspired groups, we are handing them the greatest weapon of psychological strategy that exists, and one which cannot be answered by the mere official accusation that they are 'fraudulent'. In all countries which I have recently visited, in Europe and the Middle East, I found many persons, positively anti-communist, who had signed the Stockholm Manifesto simply because they wanted to go on record

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<sup>78</sup> Thompson to Roosevelt, 7 January 1952, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 2, Box 4

for peace and no one else had offered them a chance.<sup>79</sup>

Thompson's analysis of the Memorial Day Statement was incisive. The linkage of 'peace' with other issues such as the 'Freedom and Justice' and 'Law and Order' proposed in the Statement was deeply problematic, as she noted:

Philosophical considerations are involved --- considerations of whose concepts of freedom, order and justice, and what moral and spiritual values. Even within the western world there is no unanimity regarding those, and *the achievement of such objectives is inconceivable without the overthrow of the communist and many other regimes, which cannot be imagined without war.*<sup>80</sup> (my emphasis)

Thompson's point that 'spiritual and moral values cannot be divorced from cultural and religious and historic experience'<sup>81</sup> was the central criticism that could be made of American responses to the peace offensive. American propaganda had diluted the meaning of and commitment to peace until it was not

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79 Ibid.

80 Ibid.

81 Ibid.

only weakened but actually inverted into a commitment to military preparedness.

Like Roosevelt, Thompson saw the role of the US in the Cold War as confronting the Soviet Union in a battle of ideals:

The notion of a world with one concept of freedom, justice, order, law and spiritual and moral values is, in fact, the communist concept, nor do I anticipate success from trying to rival it with our own concept of the same values, but that we will do better to limit our aims and leave universal salvation to the millennium.<sup>82</sup>

Thompson's solution, through the founding of WOMAN, was not an attempt to end the Cold War hostility between the US and the Soviet Union. Such a detente was not realistic. Instead, Thompson attempted to separate support for peace and disarmament from any political position in the Cold War. WOMAN merely urged disarmament so that the consequences of inevitable disputes would not be so devastating:

Total disarmament would not remove communism from the world, nor even through

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82 Ibid.

total disarmament would a millennium of freedom, justice, law, order, and universal spiritual and moral values be established. Envy, hate, greed, and exploitation would not therewithin be removed. There would still be disagreeable neighbors. The spirit of the Sermon on the Mount would not reign even by establishing one prohibition of the decalogue. There would still be a struggle of classes and ideology. All that would be removed would be the possibility of governments launching vast organized masses of men and weapons at other vast organized masses of men and weapons, whether in the name of liberty or of equality, or for any other ideal.<sup>83</sup>

In a sense, Thompson's arguments against the Memorial Day Statement had become peripheral since she realised that the Berlin Pilgrimage could not succeed. The organizational difficulties of WOMAN and opposition of the 'official' American women's organizations were insuperable obstacles. In January 1952 Thompson wrote to Vilma Monckeberg-Kollmar,

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83 Ibid.

head of the Hamburg division of WOMAN, explaining why the pilgrimage could not proceed:

The attitude of the Occupation Authorities and women's groups represented by Mrs Roosevelt makes it all but certain that our demonstration would play into communist hands. For it could not escape being known that we held the demonstration counter to American policy and desire, without even benevolent neutrality, and this fact, by itself, would give the communist peace groups every opportunity to attack the U.S.A.<sup>84</sup>

Thompson's assessment of the women who had opposed her was not generous:

These women...are not accustomed to independent thinking, along the lines of rigorous intellectual disciplines. They are women of more good will than hard thought. And women are not very courageous, as you know. Here, as in Germany, we have been subjected to hard pressures, most of them veiled. Women who

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84 Thompson to Monckeberg-Kollmar, 7 January 1952, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 2, Box 4

have joined us with enthusiasm, and apparently after careful thought and long discussion, have afterward faded away and withdrawn their promised and greatly necessary funds.<sup>85</sup>

This, however, was a passing swipe. Thompson's most significant observation was her conclusion, 'There is therefore a clear connection between US policy...and these very powerful women's groups.'<sup>86</sup>

WOMAN was in a shambles. Financially and administratively, the state of affairs was so bad that in January 1952 Jane Hayford invited Mary Hughes back into the office to 'straighten out' office affairs and employed a secretary to help her.<sup>87</sup> Thompson was in despair, her disillusionment evident in the proposal that the Manifesto, 'together with whatever other assets we have', be handed over to the Women's League for Peace and Freedom.<sup>88</sup> Responding to Hughes' appeal to her to impose some order on WOMAN, Thompson complained plaintively, 'When I resigned two years ago from the

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85 Ibid.

Thompson continued that the two advertising men who had offered their services on a pro bono basis to WOMAN had been forced to withdraw due to 'pressure of other clients of their agency'.

86 Ibid.

87 Hughes to Thompson, 29 January 1952, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 32

88 Ibid.

Chairmanship of WOMAN, I did so on the grounds which are valid at this time, namely that I could not participate in organizational matters, not only because of lack of time but because of lack of talent. I am simply no good at it, and never have been.'<sup>89</sup> This confusion was exacerbated by the fact that 'Jane [Hayford] has always wanted to spare me, but she has spared me to the extent that I have no idea what we have to go on'.<sup>90</sup>

Hughes' response to this opening was to tell Thompson that WOMAN had 'absolutely nothing...to go on --- neither money nor responsible people'.<sup>91</sup> Hughes asserted that the 'constituents' of WOMAN were not 'very thinking or responsible persons. Many of the letters [from them] indicate illiteracy and most of them reveal grudges against society or the administration or the world in general.'<sup>92</sup> Furthermore, those letters which were intelligent or even intelligible revealed a grave reservation about the Berlin Congress while those favouring the Manifesto's publication led Hughes to believe that the writers were 'definitely leftists, if not Communists. Most of these letters should be thrown

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89 Thompson to Hughes, 30 January 1952, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 2, Box 4

90 Ibid.

91 Hughes to Thompson, 12 February 1952, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 2, Box 32

92 Ibid.

into the waste-basket. They are tirades against our government, our military leaders, the United Nations, etc.'<sup>93</sup>

Hughes advised Thompson that her only option was the dissolution of WOMAN. Resignation alone would not suffice since 'as long as [WOMAN] exists, your name will be associated with it'.<sup>94</sup> Hughes bluntly continued, 'Your best protection would be to dissolve the corporation and devote one of your syndicated columns to some statement of this sort so that you will be completely cleared of the stigma which has arisen and not necessarily through any fault of your own.'<sup>95</sup>

In a last attempt to rally support for WOMAN, Thompson called a meeting of the representatives of the ten organizations who had signed the Memorial Day Statement. The move only encouraged those seeking to show Thompson the error of her ways. After the meeting, Rose Parsons pointed out the dangers inherent in the maternalistic view of peace offered by WOMAN. She warned of the activities of the Soviet-sponsored Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) and the 'National Assembly of Women' called by the WIDF in London for 9 March 1952. The call to the Assembly was 'every

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93 Ibid.

94 Ibid.

95 Ibid.

woman in the world wants peace....An International Woman's Day -let us make our voice heard.'<sup>96</sup> In this light, Parsons wrote to Thompson, 'You can see, I am sure , why the peace demonstration in Berlin would play directly into the Communist hands, as it is exactly their technique.'<sup>97</sup>

Parsons did concur with Thompson's main criticism of American responses to 'peace' campaigns: 'I agree with you that the Communists have left us far behind with their propaganda and their demonstrations. We appear to be completely impotent and apparently have no imagination in trying to speak up for the free democracies and for a united voice for Peace.'<sup>98</sup> However, she insisted that WOMAN and the Woman's Manifesto were not the right way to take the initiative from the Soviets and informed Thompson, 'We would all be most grateful to you if you would consider dissolving WOMAN, Inc.'<sup>99</sup> Thompson replied that she was going to Germany to see for herself the situation, leaving WOMAN in a 'state of suspended animation'.<sup>100</sup> Parsons, unsatisfied, wrote to Thompson again, telling her, 'You will be glad, I hope, to know that

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96 Parsons to Thompson, 4 March 1952, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 32

97 Ibid.

98 Ibid.

99 Ibid.

100 Thompson to Parsons, 10 March 1952, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 2, Box 4

a few of us are now meeting together to lay a constructive plan --- as to how we can publicise what the women of the western world are doing.'

Parsons was undoubtedly referring to the establishment of the Committee of Correspondence, a CIA-funded organization whose mission was to counter Soviet propaganda aimed at women. Of the founding members of the Committee, three (Rose Parsons, Mrs Arthur Forrest Anderson and Julie d'Estournelles) were present at the 25 February meeting with Thompson. A fourth, Anna Lord Strauss, was Eleanor Roosevelt's partner in the 'official' response to the Memorial Day Statement. The network of American women's organizations, having quashed the dangerous and 'irresponsible' voice of WOMAN, had begun to formulate their own response to Soviet 'Peace' propaganda.'

There was one more chapter for WOMAN. Hayford's devotion to the cause was steadfast, and she remained unconvinced, uncontrite and hostile to Hughes:

WOMAN is a movement --- a crusade. From the very beginning, Mary Hughes has attempted to destroy it as such --- has wanted to make it another innocuous organization such as the American Mothers'

Committee formed through her --- and since they would no longer employ her she sought to destroy even what she had done there by taking their files and weaning their mothers away under her domination to WOMAN....She is strongly attached to the State Department.<sup>101</sup>

Hayford obtained Thompson's agreement to continue distribution of the Manifesto, if it could be done inexpensively.<sup>102</sup> Thompson, however, was finished with her movement. On her return to the US, she explained to Parsons that WOMAN was not being dissolved but seemed, in her absence, to have been taken over by Ely Cuthbertson's re-assertion of leadership. Thompson assured Parsons that Cuthbertson's perspective was 'in closer harmony with those of the Citizen's Committee for United Nations reform...and will more closely approach your own views and those of most organized women's groups'.<sup>103</sup> Thompson was sure that the revised Manifesto would be one that she would be unable to 'conscientiously support.'<sup>104</sup> Because of this,

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101 Hayford to Thompson, 3 March 1952, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 32

102 Thompson to Hayford, 3 March 1952, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 32

103 Thompson to Parsons, 9 August 1952, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 2, Box 4

104 Ibid.

Thompson explained, she had tendered her resignation and would not return to WOMAN, insisting, 'This time [I] will not be re-persuaded, even assuming that the Executive wished to try to do so.'<sup>105</sup>

In 1955 Dorothy Thompson wrote to General Douglas MacArthur to support a speech he had made. Detailing the fate of WOMAN, Thompson described how Eleanor Roosevelt had most of the women's organizations 'on the string' through their 'unofficial association with the U.N.'<sup>106</sup> This was far from paranoia. Throughout the history of WOMAN, 'official' American women's organizations and their influential leaders had, with the prompting of the US government, done their best to discredit and demolish WOMAN. Aided by the divisions and organizational chaos that marked much of WOMAN's history, the official network of American women's organizations ensured that its voice was the only one which would be heard overseas as the 'representative', 'responsible' and 'official' outlet for American women. Roosevelt's denial, expressed in an admonishing letter to Thompson, rang hollow:

The fact that your advocacy so far has not won any substantial support from the

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105 Ibid.

106 Ibid.

organized American women, should not, however, be blamed upon the governmental authorities, who have, so far as I know, not restricted in the slightest your freedom of expression.<sup>107</sup>

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107 Roosevelt to Thompson, 23 January 1953, Dorothy Thompson Papers, Series 1, Box 25

## CHAPTER 9

## THE COMMITTEE OF CORRESPONDENCE

In January 1967, the left-wing periodical Ramparts published an expose of the CIA funding of the National Student Association. The allegations were quickly taken up by the mainstream press and provoked a widespread outcry about the covert activities of the Agency. Ramparts proclaimed its expose was a 'case study in CIA corruption'.<sup>1</sup> The New York Times concurred that the revelations of covert funding had not only been hugely damaging to America's reputation abroad, but threatened the very essence of American democracy: 'Faith in American institutions has been besmirched in a way that would have evaded the reach of any foreign enemy.'<sup>2</sup>

In the general rush to both expose and condemn the level of the CIA's covert and sinister behaviour, one group escaped the intense media scrutiny. In February 1967 the New York Times announced, 'A fourth fund with apparent CIA connections, the J. Frederick Brown Foundation of Boston, Mass. has been making contributions to a New York based women's group called the Committee of Correspondence.'<sup>3</sup> Indicative of the lack of real

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1 Ramparts, March 1967, p. 38

2 New York Times, 20 February 1967, p. 36

3 New York Times, 16 February 1967, p. 26

concern produced by the Times article was a letter written by the Metropolitan Editor of the Times to the Committee of Correspondence. Requesting the home telephone numbers of the members of the Committee, the letter, addressed 'dear Gentlemen', met with no response.<sup>4</sup>

The Committee of Correspondence was established as a direct response to the Soviet peace campaign and the activities of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF), notably their charges about US militarism and the use of chemical weapons in Korea. A report by the National Council of Women entitled 'Information on the Communist dominated WIDF' that the organization 'directs its appeal to women by championing Child Welfare, Peace and Women's Rights. The implication is that the USSR and other communist countries are the originators and sole supporters of these causes, which in fact have long been the active concern of the free world.'<sup>5</sup> McCalls magazine publicised these fears in an article, 'The Soviet Attack on Women's Minds'. McCalls asserted:

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4 Metropolitan Editor, New York Times, to Committee of Correspondence, 17 February 1967, Committee of Correspondence Papers, Financial File, Unnumbered Box

5 National Council of Women report, 'Information on the Communist dominated WIDF,' undated, Records of the National Council of Women, Fiche 695

The Communists have carefully calculated the influence of women on the next generation as well as on this one and have devoted an immense proportion of their world war to capturing the hearts and minds of women all over the world. Moscow regards women second only to youth as the most highly sought after ally in the struggle for communism.<sup>6</sup>

Some way had to be found of informing women in other nations of the peaceful nature of American women. Doris Cochrane of the Division of Public Liaison in the State Department, wrote to Mr Fierst, head of the United Nations Association:

Do you think it would be helpful for some women's organizations to issue comments on the WIDF report? It is possible that one or more of the other organizations which has consultative status with Economic and Social Commission might be interested in preparing statements on the WIDF report --- or that the American Secretary of one

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6 'The Soviet Attack on Women's Minds,' McCalls, August 1953, p. 28.

of these international organizations might take the initiative.<sup>7</sup>

Fierst's contacts with international women's organizations, or at least their US representatives, was through Women United for the United Nations (WUUN). WUUN had been set up in 1947 after an informal meeting at the Women's City Club in New York called by Rose Parsons. Parsons had served as an American Regional Director of the Red Cross during World War II and had become involved in the National Council of Women following the war.<sup>8</sup> The purpose of the meeting at the Women's City Club was to find out what each of the women's groups was doing in disseminating material to their members about the United Nations. Concluding that it would be best to have a clearing house for this activity, the meeting set up WUUN in May. Within two years, 30 American women's organizations were involved with WUUN, which had enlisted the support of Eleanor Roosevelt, a friend of Rose Parsons, after a meeting between the two women.<sup>9</sup>

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7 Cochrane to Fierst, July 1951, US National Archives, Records of the Department of State, Miscellaneous Records of the Bureau of Public Affairs 1944-62, Box 118

8 NCW had grown out of the old National Women's Suffrage Association.

9 For details of the history of WUUN, see Records of the National Council of Women, Series 7, Fiche 965

So it was that on 16 April 1952, Rose Parsons, head of the Women's Liaison Committee of the United Nations, called a meeting in her New York apartment of leaders of prominent women's voluntary associations. Parsons presented a report, 'What steps should be taken to Rally the women of the Free World to counter-act Communist Propaganda'. She described the 'intensive propaganda campaign which is being waged by Communists', pointing out 'that women of the free world are for the most part unaware of these tactics.' She identified the Cold War battlefield in which communist organizations were assaulting that women's voluntary associations:

[The communists were] holding large conferences, organizing letter-writing campaigns, and using other mass communications media which in many cases appeared above reproach on the surface, yet were really only clever disguises for their communist aims.<sup>10</sup>

The Committee, which took the temporary title 'The Anonymous Committee', agreed that it was vital that women around the world be alerted both to the techniques of the Communist women and to the true nature of American women. By the time of the second

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10 Report of 1st meeting of Anonymous Committee, 16

meeting of the Committee on 20 May, all connections had been severed with the Liaison Committee of the UN and with the various organizations to which the members of the Anonymous Committee belonged. The Committee members were now acting as individuals in order, in Parsons' words, to 'get along faster'.<sup>11</sup>

Anne Hester, a member of the Committee, reported on the implications of the WIDF's letter on germ warfare. Hester claimed that the picture the rest of the world received of the United States through Soviet propaganda was one of...

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April 1952, Lena M. Phillips Papers, Box 7  
11 Parsons to Phillips, 8 May 1952, Lena M. Phillips Papers, Box 7

The lack of affiliated branches was seen by the members of the Committee as an advantage to their work. Mrs Arthur Forrest Anderson noted in a report on her trip to Asia, 'The Committee of Correspondence as a "committee of fifteen United States women", with no branches or affiliates is in a unique position in that it is not furthering new organizations of local units and is in truth only seeking to help women do a better job in the organization of which they are already members or in which they may serve.' [Anderson memorandum, 'General Report on Asian Trip,' January-February 1960, Anna Lord Strauss Papers, Box 13, File 275]

Until December 1955, the Committee remained in a loose affiliation with the National Council of Women, which allowed them to use NCW office space, and channel funds through NCW accounts. However, on 21 December 1955, Julie d'Estournelles wrote to Mrs Leydon at the NCW, telling her that the Committee wished to become autonomous and suggesting, 'Would it also be easier for the Council if our funds came directly to us instead of through your account?' [d'Estournelles to Leydon, 21 December 1955, Records of the National Council of Women, Series 7, Fiche 411]

...a depraved, immoral country, where the few rich imperialistic warmongers are preparing a new war to exterminate women and little children and that they are deliberately corrupting the poor, hungry masses of Americans by means of brutal comic books, gangster films and pornographic literature to soften them up for cannon fodder. Our God is the dollar.<sup>12</sup>

Therefore, the purpose of the Anonymous Committee should be to 'assume the role of a catalytic agent. We should be a kind of planning committee where ideas originate and be put into effect through many different channels.' Suggestions for action included requesting information about the WIDF through the CIA, persuading the Saturday Evening Post to publish an article on Soviet propaganda, and supporting a more extensive information service by the US government.

Julie d'Estournelles, member of the Committee and an executive director of the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, then drafted a response to the WIDF's letter vehemently denying the use of germ warfare by US troops. It was impossible that this could be happening without the knowledge of American women.

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12 Comments and suggestions by Anne Hester, undated, Lena M. Phillips Papers, Box 7

since 'in our country every citizen can express his views through newspapers, organisation and government, and thereby, assert his influence in public affairs. Therefore, no official act such as germ warfare could take place without its becoming known.'<sup>13</sup> The women of America, the Committee's response asserted, 'want peace and are working for peace in every possible way. We resent this spreading of false accusations because it creates hate and does not help towards a peaceful solution.'

Following the advice of the State Department, the letter was signed by Eleanor Roosevelt, Anna Lord Strauss of the League of Women Voters, and Edith Sampson, the first African-American woman to serve on the US Delegation to the United Nations.<sup>14</sup> It was well publicised, with reports in the New York Times, New York Herald Tribune and Washington Post. Two hundred copies were distributed to US information services abroad through the State Department, and it was broadcast to south-east Asia on Radio Free Asia and to Eastern Europe on Radio Free Europe. Parsons sent a further 75 copies to the heads of various women's organizations.<sup>15</sup>

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13 Draft reply to WIDF, read at 2nd Meeting of Anonymous Committee, 20 May 1952, Lena M. Phillips Papers, Box 7

14 See Helen Laville and Scott Lucas, 'Edith Sampson, the NAACP and African American Identity,' Diplomatic History, Vol 20:4, Fall 1996.

15 Parsons report at meeting of the Anonymous

The initial campaign of the Committee of Correspondence centred on direct opposition to the 'peace offensive' and its attack on women. The second letter produced by the Committee attacked the Peace Congress in Vienna in December, 1952. Counter-measures included a plan to send a letter to the six American women who had just gone to Germany at the expense of the German government, suggesting that they might stress in their press interviews the 'constructive work that women are doing in the U.S. on Peace and Child Welfare'.<sup>16</sup> It was further suggested that Dorothy Thompson might be encouraged to write to the leaders of the German organization of WOMAN 'warning them off the Vienna Conference'. However, this suggestion met with a conspicuous lack of enthusiasm, since 'a great deal of scepticism was expressed on what she [Thompson] might write'.<sup>17</sup> The Committee contented itself with writing its own letter to prominent women in other countries about Vienna.

This letter was typical of American women's counter-offensive in the campaign over 'peace'. Opening with the traditional linkage of 'peace' with other values, the letter stated, 'No woman believes

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Committee, 22 August 1952, Lena M. Phillips Papers, Box 7

16 Minutes of Committee of Correspondence meeting, 24 October 1952, Lena M. Phillips Papers, Box 7

17 Ibid.

that peace can be gained where hate is encouraged, whether it be in a family or in a nation, and it is for this reason that we are addressing this letter to you.'<sup>18</sup> The letter defined the Soviet campaign as one of hate, rather than peace, arguing that 'if [Vienna] follows the same pattern as the last four of the so-called peace conferences, we can expect the same theme of violence and hate for the United States and the Free World'.<sup>19</sup> The letter informed its readers of the many ways in which American women were making genuine efforts for peace, including education about the United Nations, celebration of UN Day, and the contribution by the United States and its private agencies of \$80,750,000 to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), some 70 percent of the total contributions to that organisation. The letter then pointed an accusing finger at the Soviet Union:

In contrast to our efforts to create understanding and to give tangible aid, there was the theme of 'hate' for the United States in particular and the free world in general expressed at the conference on 'Defence of Children' held in Vienna in April 1952 and sponsored by

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<sup>18</sup> Form letter from Parsons, Mahon, and Bauman, 24 November 1952, Lena M. Phillips Papers, Box 7

the Communist-controlled Women's International Democratic Federation. If the Communist Controlled countries are so interested in the welfare of children, we would ask why they are not participating in the great co-operative work being done by the United Nations. They have not contributed a penny to UNICEF.<sup>20</sup>

Advertising the commitment of American women to peace, the letter informed its readers:

Women's organizations in the United States with a combined membership of over twenty-six million have re-affirmed their belief in the work of the United Nations and their Specialized Agencies and are working to achieve peace. We can, and will, send you specific details of the vigorous and practical programs in the United States and the Free World to promote Peace and advance the welfare of children, if you so request. Find out the facts and join with us in protesting the spread of false

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19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

accusations all in the name of Peace and the Welfare of children.<sup>21</sup>

The aims of the Committee were not limited to the issue of peace. In a memorandum for members in December 1952, Parsons consolidated the ideas and motivations behind the foundation of the Committee. Its purpose was to strengthen the women of the free world against communism by 'stating affirmatively, persistently and widely the principles and practices of democracy'.<sup>22</sup> Parsons explained:

The policy of the Committee will be to emphasize the favourable position of women in the free world, insofar as it effects their political, economic, social religious and domestic life. Further, it proposes to exchange constructive information on women's efforts to attain peace and their efforts to support the United Nations and to child welfare and health service. When it is deemed advisable, it will answer directly the

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21 Ibid.

22 Parsons memorandum to members of the Committee of Correspondence, 19 December 1952, Lena M. Phillips Papers, Box 7

charges so recklessly made by Communist groups.<sup>23</sup>

Whilst many women's organisations were prepared to launch their own 'private' campaigns to counter Soviet propaganda, the Anonymous Committee would become a small but effective agent of the US government. Rose Parsons had complained in a letter to Eleanor Roosevelt of the drawbacks of self-financing women's organisations:

This whole problem of finances is very bothersome to me because we, in the voluntary agencies in this country, especially the women's organisations spend at least half our time trying to raise money, whereas the communist women have only to put out their hand and money is poured in from the government. This, of course is why they can so easily do such a terrific propaganda job.<sup>24</sup>

In the case of the Committee, Parsons sidestepped this problem by simply not bothering to attempt to secure private funds and relying instead on government money. At the first meeting of the

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Parsons to Roosevelt, 19 June 1958, Records of the National Council of Women, Fiche 707

Committee, it had been suggested that 'maybe the Government could subsidize the enterprise (though this would have to be done secretly to achieve the desired results)'.<sup>25</sup>

All mention of government funding was quickly dropped after an anonymous grant of \$25,000 set up the Committee. This money allowed the aptly-titled 'Anonymous Committee' to operate as a private, non-governmental organization, but the gift coincided with an interest in the initiative by individuals connected with the US Government. Dorothy Bauman, following a tour of Europe sponsored by the State Department, had drafted a plan for the CIA to counter communist propaganda aimed at women. In Bauman's words, the plan envisaged 'a group of very competent women who would form a nucleus and then start doing some constructive work with women'.<sup>26</sup> Bauman then met with her friend, Rose Parsons, who told her about the Anonymous Committee. Bauman recalled, 'She thought it was a fine idea so I went back to the government and said that she was willing to get this small group of women together and start this thing with me.'

At this stage the Anonymous Committee had met only informally and was, in Bauman's words, 'just a

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25 Report of 1st meeting of the Anonymous Committee, 16 April 1952, Lena M. Phillips Papers, Box 7

26 Dorothy Bauman oral history, Committee of

committee that had met once or twice to see what they could do in answering these attacks'.<sup>27</sup> Bauman first attended a meeting of the Committee in August 1952 when the situation had changed and the newly-titled Committee of Correspondence, was operating.<sup>28</sup> Within six months the committee was corresponding with 1200 women in 73 different countries.<sup>29</sup>

The original focus of the Committee fell on countering Communist propaganda through a combination of personal letters and a newsletter to individual contacts of the Committee's members. This list quickly grew and split into two sections --- personal friends (A category) and 'friends of friends' (B Category). Initially the tone of the letters was anti-Communist in the extreme, such as a circular letter from Parsons, Bauman, and Mrs Burnett Mahon which vilified 'the present Hate campaign of the Soviet Union against the Free World and the U.S. in particular'.<sup>30</sup> In December 1952, the

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Correspondence Papers, Box 54, File 888

27 Ibid.

28 The Committee was named after the committees established by individuals such as Thomas Jefferson and Samuel Adams in the early American colonies. Other names that the Committee of Correspondence considered in its first year included Committee on Constructive Action, Blank Committee, and, referring to its work in countering Communist propaganda, the Wreckers Committee.

29 Personal views and recommendations of the Executive Director for the program and activities of the Committee of Correspondence, Lena M. Phillips Papers, Box 7

30 Form letter from Parsons, Mahon, and Bauman, 24

plan for the Committee presented to the members outlined the need for a campaign to strengthen the position of women in the 'free world' as 'protagonists of the principles of the free world and against the onslaught of communism'.<sup>31</sup> This campaign was necessary since...

...Communist proselytising and infiltration of women's organisations is not new, but their expansion of activities and their use of every available means to press their attack on the United States is an emphasis which was not so obvious a few years ago. Therefore it seems reasonable that the answers to these attacks, as well as constructive information about women's efforts, should be provided by American women leaders.<sup>32</sup>

The newsletters produced by the Committee were just as strident. The Bulletin for 15 April 1953, for example, criticized the Soviet government for paying lip-service to the ideals of family life, whilst at the same time putting into practice a 'clever device...to disrupt family life', namely

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November 1952, Lena M. Phillips Papers, Box 7  
 31 Minutes of the Committee of Correspondence,  
 December 1952, Lena M. Phillips Papers, Box 7  
 32 Ibid.

'forcing the mother to work outside the home'.<sup>33</sup> This, argued the Committee, resulted in the removal of the mother's influence over her children, a deliberate tactic to 'give the Communists absolute control over the child with the opportunity to mould him into the pattern of well-disciplined little robots'. This approach was contrasted with the findings of the International Study Conference on Child Welfare, held in Bombay in December 1952. The Conference had concluded by calling upon all countries 'to do everything you can to preserve and strengthen family life, since a happy home life is essential to the greatest growth and development of every child'.<sup>34</sup>

The tone of these communications was a little too vehement for the non-American market to swallow. Bauman complained that 'Europeans think we are...too hysterical on the subject of Communism'.<sup>35</sup> Parsons' visit to Belgium and Holland resulted in similar conclusions: 'I felt at once a certain distrust and resentment of our communications. The criticisms were too much U.S. Propaganda, too obvious a campaign against the USSR.'<sup>36</sup> So in August 1953 Anne

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33 Committee of Correspondence Bulletin, 15 April 1953, Lena M. Phillips Papers, Box 7

34 Ibid.

35 Hester to Phillips, undated, Lena M. Phillips Papers, Box 7

36 Report of the Committee of Correspondence, 13 August 1953, Lena M. Phillips Papers, Box 7

Hester, the Executive Director of the Committee, recommended a new approach. Hester argued that the Committee had begun its work with the assumption that 'mis-understanding of the U.S., hostility towards us, was primarily caused by Communist propaganda. The Committee itself felt that combating Communist propaganda would help correct the situation.' After six months, however, the time had come to re-appraise the situation 'in the light of cold realism and realize that every great foreign power, especially when it has only recently achieved such power, is bound to arouse envy, hatred, resentment and misunderstanding'. Hester's analysis of the situation focused on the 'rising tide of

Neutralism and anti-Americanism throughout the world':

Europe is afraid the U.S. is going to push her into a war against the USSR. She resents us. There are many other causes for resentment, including the natural psycho-logical reaction against the donor of financial help on the part of the recipient. Resentment in Asia, South America and the Middle East likewise result from U.S. foreign policy --- economic, social or political.

Hester concluded, 'The Committee has a great deal more to do than counteract communist propaganda. It must try to contribute to the restoration of confidence in the U.S., the leader of the free world.'<sup>37</sup>

The Bulletin began to concentrate on putting forward a positive image of the United States rather than relying on attacks on the Soviet Union. Issues were published on topics such as 'The Negro in the U.S.' and 'Atomic Power for Peaceful Purposes'. Bulletin 18 was devoted to showing 'Typical Days in the Lives of Five American Women' to 'counteract Hollywood publicity and anti-American propaganda which depicts American women as selfish idlers'.<sup>38</sup> Other changes in emphasis reflected an increasingly sophisticated recognition of the appeals of Communist propaganda to a shared gendered identity. Henry Loomis, Director of the Office of Research and Intelligence at the US Information Agency stressed to a meeting organized by Parsons in April 1957, 'The mutual interest of women is being increasingly exploited by the Communists to serve their own ends and this latent energy is being turned into hatred

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37 Personal views and recommendations of the Executive Director for the program and activities of the Committee of Correspondence, 27 August 1953, Lena M. Phillips Papers, Box 7

38 Committee of Correspondence Bulletin, February 1955, Committee of Correspondence Papers, Box 2, File 20

of the West.'<sup>39</sup> Actions such as the celebration of 'International Women's Day' in Iron Curtain countries emphasised the idea of commonality of identity amongst women.

The Committee did not limit itself to correspondence.<sup>40</sup> Eight conferences were organized from 1956 to 1963, starting with 'The Responsibility of Freedom' for 13 correspondents from South and Southeast Asia. The effect of the workshop on participants was, in one instance at least, beneficial to American policy. Mrs Le-thi-An, a participant of this first conference, returned to Vietnam inspired to action. She reported back that she had founded the Association of Children's Friends which took care of working people's children 'with the purpose of preventing the spread of Communist propaganda'.<sup>41</sup> She also joined the National Revolutionary Committee of South Vietnam, becoming President of the women's section of the Party. Le-thi-An was responsible for a programme to train and send out hundreds of female 'cadres to work among the people to prevent communist propaganda'.<sup>42</sup> The

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39 'Remarks of Henry Loomis,' 3 April 1957, Records of the National Council of Women, Fiche 700

40 For greater detail on the programmes of the Committee see Jacqueline Van Voris, The Committee of Correspondence: Women with a World Vision (Northampton, Ma: Interchange, 1989).

41 Le-thi-An to the Committee of Correspondence, 6 May 1956, Louise Backus Papers, Box 1, File 3

42 Ibid.

Committee also produced a great deal of educational material such as the 'Community Action Series' to help voluntary organizations. Fieldworkers were sent to Africa and South America to encourage women's participation in public life.

These praiseworthy efforts were almost entirely bankrolled by the CIA from the first Anonymous Grant of \$25,000 in 1953 until the revelations about funding in 1967. The first grant of money to the Committee in January 1953 was made through Dorothy Bauman on behalf of a 'donor, representing a group of people, [who] prefers to remain anonymous'.<sup>43</sup> Jean Picker claimed that the source of the money was Parsons' friend, CIA director Allan Dulles.<sup>44</sup>

By the next year funding became a more complicated affair. From 1954 to 1958 the Committee was supported almost entirely through grants from the Dearborn Foundation. Unusually for a charitable foundation, Dearborn wrote to the Committee of Correspondence on 23 February 1954, soliciting an application from them for funds. Subsequently the foundation made a grant for 1954 of \$25,000. In 1955 this grant increased to \$34,000, as the foundation wrote to the Committee asking them to consider making a bigger application next year for the

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43 Quoted in Van Voris, p. 26

44 Jean Picker and Harvey Picker oral history, Committee of Correspondence Papers, Box 54, File 901

purpose of 'non-administrative activities'. A special grant of \$17,750 was made in 1956 to cover the expenses of the Conference for Southeast Asia.

In all, the Dearborn Foundation contributed \$587,500 between 1954 and 1966. Whilst not named in the 1967 allegations, the Dearborn Foundation was undoubtedly a CIA front. Oral histories confirm that the CIA supported the Committee from the start and Dearborn was the only contributor to the Committee from 1954 to 1957, remaining their chief contributor until 1965.<sup>45</sup> The foundation is not listed in the Foundation Directory and has no tax records.

As the activities, and therefore the budget, of the Committee of Correspondence grew, the CIA developed an increasingly complex method of channelling funds. The Agency established fronts which would make grants to foundations, which would then fund the Committee of Correspondence. The McGregor Educational Institutions Endowment Fund, for example, described its purpose in the third edition of the Foundation Directory as 'endowment grants for higher educational institutions, including technical schools, located exclusively in Vigo County (Indiana)'. In 1964 it made grants of \$8051. Of this sum, \$8000 was a grant to the

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45 Foundations which have supported the Committee of Correspondence, 1 March 1967, Committee of Correspondence Papers, Financial File

Committee of Correspondence, which had never expressed a particular interest in Vigo County, Indiana. The Florence Foundation served a similar purpose, receiving \$15,000 in gifts in 1964 and making a grant of exactly \$15,000 that year to the Committee of Correspondence. The Hobby Foundation also channelled \$20,000 into the Committee. On being named as a recipient of CIA money, trustee William Hobby admitted to channelling 'substantial amounts' and declared, 'I'm glad to have co-operated with the CIA.'<sup>46</sup>

This complicated system of funding made it impossible, when news of the funding scandal broke, to assess the extent of the subsidy.<sup>47</sup> A February 1967 memo from the then Executive Director of the Committee, Anne Crolius, considered the allegations made in the press regarding CIA funding. Crolius pointed out that the Brown Foundation, which had been accused of being a CIA front and which had given the Committee of Correspondence a total of \$25,000, had also made grants to organizations such as 'Notre Dame Law School, Urban League and the New York Zoological Society'.<sup>48</sup> The implication is that a

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46 New York Times, 21 February 1967

47 Susan McKeever claimed that in the years 1953-1968 the Committee spent more than a million dollars. It is impossible to assess how much of this came from the CIA. [Minutes of meeting, 21 October 1968, Louise Backus Papers, Box 11, File 241]

48 Crolius to Picker, 27 February 1967, Committee of

Foundation which gave money to the harmless New York Zoological Society could not be a CIA front but had to be a legitimate organization. In fact, it was probably both.

The confusion over the source of funding, however, allowed the 'witting' members of the Committee (those who were aware of the CIA's involvement) to hide their complicity in CIA support from the other members of the Committee. Crolius insisted, 'Regardless of whether the foundations mentioned did receive CIA funds and pass these same funds on to us, the Committee of Correspondence was not aware of any connection of these foundations with the CIA.' The press statement reluctantly released by the Committee argued, with some plausibility, 'We, with other educational organizations, have evidently been caught up in a situation of which we were not aware. Our policy has always been to seek funds for our program from private sources. The Committee of Correspondence have never sought or received direct support from the CIA, nor has it knowingly received CIA support indirectly.'<sup>49</sup> The statement was prefaced with a note to Committee members, 'This is a statement only to be used when needed. It is still our understanding

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Correspondence Papers, Box 4, File 32

49 Statement drawn up by Jean Picker, Committee of Correspondence Papers, Box 1, File 8

that the less attention we bring to ourselves, the better.'<sup>50</sup>

However, as the Committee faced increasing disarray, witting members were forced to acknowledge their complicity in the funding to unwitting colleagues. A meeting of the witting members of the group on 3 April 1967 acknowledged that the lack of funding was likely to lead to difficult questions from the unwitting participants. Since legitimate foundations would know of the CIA funding, they would not believe denials by the Committee's staff and would be unlikely to make grants to a group that was dishonest with them. The minutes of the meeting summed up the dilemma of the witting members: 'If the knowing members acknowledge to a foundation our past connections, we run the risk of this information reaching our unknowing members as well as others in the U.S. and abroad; if we do not acknowledge, we will get no money.'<sup>51</sup>

In an emotionally-charged special meeting on 24 July 1967, Spencer Arnold, introduced coyly as 'a representative of our past donors', came from Washington to speak to the Committee. Arnold was at pains to assure the women that they had not been the front of a propaganda campaign, like that of the

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Minutes of meeting, 3 April 1967, Committee of Correspondence Papers, Financial File

Soviets, but rather a policy of 'orderly development, avoiding the Soviet approach...and at the same time building to insure that in the future these countries would not be susceptible to propaganda'. The work of the Committee was genuinely important and constructive and 'the propaganda was icing on the cake if and when it came'. Arnold emphasised the idea that the CIA and the Committee had had common interests:

In working with groups like the Committee of Correspondence, it came down to the fact that we had the same goals, methods, techniques, and experience to do the same thing that the government wanted to see done for long-range United States policy.

Arnold attempted to soothe the feelings of the unwitting members of the Committee, explaining, 'You keep the circle of knowledgability as small as you can as long as you can.'<sup>52</sup>

Members argued whether the Committee would be able to carry on and if it would be ethical to do so. In fact, without CIA support, funds quickly dried up. An emergency donation of \$5000 was made in 1967 by Committee member Jean Picker. Its purpose was more to avoid the embarrassment of folding

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52 Notes on Special Board Meeting, 24 July 1967,

immediately after the revelations rather than to ensure the long-term future of the Committee. In February 1969 the Committee sent its last correspondence. Since many of the readers were still unaware of the CIA funding, the letter made no reference to the agency and instead attributed the Committee's retirement to the huge growth in the number of concerned women and the variety and range of their interests. This, the letter argued, made it impossible for the Committee to continue in its pattern of person-to-person relationships.<sup>53</sup>

The last months of the Committee were fraught with tension and recriminations. The minutes of the July special meeting recorded, 'Someone said that some of the members of the Committee let the rest of them stick their neck out.' Rosemary Harris complained, 'We have set ourselves up as an example of what an organization that is private can do. We couldn't have done it without government help.' A statement in the files of the Committee went further in its disapproval of the way in which the unwitting members had been used. Its signatories, Eleanor Coit, Elizabeth Jackson and Alice Clark, wrote:

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Committee of Correspondence Papers, Financial File  
53 Letter to be sent to correspondents, February  
1969, Committee of Correspondence Papers, Box 1,  
File 3

It is not in keeping with our philosophy to have CIA funds used for an organisation with a goal such as that of the Committee of Correspondence which was to strengthen the free world by encouraging citizen responsibility and democracy.<sup>54</sup>

The differences in outlook between the witting and unwitting members of the Committee mirror the important contradictions in the relationship between private groups and the public sector in Cold War America. While many of the unwitting members of the Committee felt that, if they were to retain any significance, the distinctions between private and public must be maintained, the witting members did not recognize any boundaries between the sectors. Amidst the confusion of the funding revelations in 1967, many commentators argued from the moral high ground that the blurring of distinctions between the private sphere and the realm of government was unacceptable and had caused irreparable damage to the American ideal of voluntarism. Covert CIA funding destroyed the strength of American voluntary organizations,

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54 Statement by Coit, Jackson, and Clark, December 1970, Committee of Correspondence Papers, Box 19, File 9

which was according to the New York Times in 'their freedom from government domination'.<sup>55</sup>

Such distinctions were not always as clear-cut to members of the Committee since it was impossible to separate their public and private roles. The Committee worked through a combination of their own private contacts and liaison on various levels with the Government. The first Annual Report of the Committee established that members travelled extensively overseas on behalf of their own organizations. However, the report continued, 'On these trips, they have created new contacts and had the opportunity to sound out "correspondents" on their reaction to the work of the Committee.'<sup>56</sup> For example, Parsons had travelled to France, Germany and Italy in her role as the Chairwoman of the American branch of the International Council of Women, as well as touring in Japan, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East. On both occasions, Parsons provided the Committee of Correspondence with detailed reports on the conditions in the countries, the strength of communism and opportunities for the Committee. Other members of the Committee travelled not as direct representatives of their organizations but at Government expense as a result of their

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Committee of Correspondence Annual Report, 1 March 1953-1 April 1954, Lena M. Phillips Papers,

affiliations. For example, Anna Lord Strauss, head of the League of Women Voters, visited Japan, Burma, Indonesia and the Philippines under the auspices of the State Department's Leader Exchange program.

Liaison with various government agencies was common. All material produced by the Committee was made available to the US Information Agency, who awarded the Committee a Certificate of Merit in 1954 in recognition of its help in developing 'world understanding of American concepts and purposes'.<sup>57</sup> USIA Public Affairs Officers cooperated closely with the Committee, 26 of them sending in 'carefully selected' lists of women in their communities whom the Committee should add to its mailing lists.<sup>58</sup> Minutes of a Committee meeting on December 9th 1958 recorded a discussion 'concerning sharing confidential information received from our correspondents with the U.S. Department of State. There was a general agreement that this would be done.'<sup>59</sup>

To the witting members of the Committee, attempts to make distinction between their roles as private citizens and public servants were

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Box 4

57 Streibert to Parsons, 16 April 1954, Lena M. Phillips Papers, Box 4

58 Hester to Members of the Committee, 12 August 1954, Lena M. Phillips Papers, Box 4

59 Minutes of meeting, 9 December 1958, Committee of Correspondence Papers, Box 2, File 2

meaningless. Experience of voluntary work during World War II and with the crisis atmosphere of the Cold War made redundant the distinction between the individual as private citizen and as government employee. Working for America was the important thing, not squabbles over funding. The CIA's Donald Jameson explained in a television interview:

It's hard, I think, for people, particularly of a younger generation, to understand the degree to which the Government and its activities had the confidence of its people. It was almost nobody that I couldn't go to in those days and say I'm from the CIA and I'd like to ask you about so-and-so and at the very least get a respectful reception and a discussion.<sup>60</sup>

Amid the bitter debates that ended the Committee, Rose Parsons felt the need to rescue this motivation from the more squalid arguments and recriminations. Somewhat pathetically, she reminded members, 'It was important to remember that when this started it was a real emergency and there was a great need for this kind of program. We knew it would be impossible to

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60 Donald Jameson interview in Channel 4 Television, Hidden Hands: A Different History of Modernism, 1995

raise money. We tend to forget now that it was a patriotic thing.' <sup>61</sup>

As experts, the leaders of women's organizations were frequently called upon to lend their expertise to the US government. The 'private' contacts of these women through their work in international women's organizations were invaluable, as few government officials had any knowledge of international women's organisations. Arguably, few cared. Dorothy Bauman complained, 'It was amazing to me how little interest and how little knowledge our government had about women's effectiveness and certainly not abroad.'<sup>62</sup> It was probably a relief for these officials to hand much of the responsibility for propaganda aimed at women to a competent, enthusiastic outside group. Thus the relationship was based on shared goals and an understanding on the part of the government that the members of the Committee were the experts in the field. A letter from the Dearborn Foundation stated:

We believe the Committee has the stature and competence to propose and develop means by which American women can make a responsible, co-ordinated contribution to

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61 Notes on Special Board Meeting, 24 July 1967, Committee of Correspondence Papers, Financial File  
62 Dorothy Bauman oral history, Committee of Correspondence Papers, Box 54, File 888

non-communist Women's organizations....We want to assist you in your program but feel you have the specialized and detailed knowledge not available to us, to provide the necessary leadership.<sup>63</sup>

It is clear that the members of the Committee who were aware of the source of their funding thought it unimportant. Connie Anderson, for example, argued there was little pressure from the CIA, 'Just a little bit, not very much...they told us some people to see and some people not to see in other lands. But that really amounted to very little. It was mostly our own selves.'<sup>64</sup> In this view, Anderson was joined by the official historian of the Committee of Correspondence, Jacqueline Van Voris, who interjected into her interview with Ezzat Aghevi, an Iranian correspondent of the committee:

I don't think it made any difference in the work they did. People like Susan McKeever and Jean Picker and the rest were sincerely working hard and knew later, but not all the time. I'm not sure who knew when and I don't think it made any difference because the work they did was

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63 Dearborn Foundation to Parsons, 7 March 1955, Lena M. Phillips Papers, Box 7  
 64 Connie Anderson oral history, Committee of

done with s genuine feeling of helpfulness  
and working together and learning from  
their correspondents.<sup>65</sup>

Van Voris considered the matter of funding to be important only in that it was 'something that comes up and was responsible for the final dissolution.' She argued that the outrage of the unwitting members of the Committee on learning of the funding was due to indignation at being 'out of the loop'; they were upset 'just because they hadn't been told, but on the other hand it didn't really matter'.<sup>66</sup>

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Correspondence Papers, Box 54, File 887

65 Ezzat Aghevli oral history, Committee of  
Correspondence Papers, Box 54, File 886

Van Voris's sympathy to the witting members of the Committee is perhaps explained by the fact she was commissioned to write the history of the Committee by Interchange, a publishing company owned by Jean and Harvey Picker. Her book is dedicated to the Pickers. (Jacqueline Van Voris, The Committee of Correspondence: Women with a World Vision (Northampton, Ma: Interchange, 1989). Van Voris's angle on the story of the Committee is explained in her musing to Anne Crolus, 'How do you tell a story about something that happened 30 years ago that was an interesting experiement in international goodwill and understanding and towards education and peace and all those good things?' [Anne Crolus oral history, Committee of Correspondence Papers, Box 54, File 892]

66 Ibid.

The belief in the peevishness and jealous of the unwitting members of the Committee as the motivation for their concern regarding the source of the funding was shared by the Director, Alison Raymond Lanier. When Van Voris told her, 'I just don't think it's so horrendous [the funding] and I didn't know why everybody reacted as they did,' Lanier agreed, 'It's only horrendous because they felt cheated... and jealous too, why wasn't I one? All those reasons. It wasn't because it was C.I.A. so much as

Van Voris's interviewee Aghevli felt differently about the funding, asserting, 'I think it would have made a lot of difference for the people who were participating....I didn't know then. It would have made a difference.'<sup>67</sup> Aghevli elaborated:

I didn't know what the expectation of the CIA was then. It would have made the difference for me. I think just the idea they were funded by the CIA would make their job much more difficult because they would loose their credibility with a lot of people because everybody would think, 'Why does the CIA fund it? They want some sort of information. So where all these things we are sending going? How are they going to be used?'<sup>68</sup>

The witting members of the Committee did not share this view on the inevitability of the principle that he who pays the piper calls the tune, rejecting the argument that inevitably direction and control came hand-in-hand with financial assistance.

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because they'd been made a fool of, or they thought they had.' Lanier noted that if Eleanor Coit had been told of the funding, she 'would have had a fit.' [Alison Raymond Lanier oral history, Committee of Correspondence Papers, Box 54, File 895]

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid.

They were not the only CIA-funded organization to protest their independence. In his examination of the CIA-backed Congress for Cultural Freedom, Christopher Lasch points to the continued insistence of the Congress that they had been 'independent'. Lasch argues:

To point to their independence from overt official control did not necessarily prove their independence from the official point of view....Even when subsequent disclosures had made their complicity, in the larger sense, quite clear, they continued to protest their innocence, as if innocence in the narrow and technical sense were the real issue in the matter.<sup>69</sup>

Evidence of the CIA's intervention in the running of the Committee is rare, although this may be because of the destruction of such evidence or of the failure to commit directions to paper. Thomas Braden, who supervised the cultural activities of the CIA, admitted that one of the editors of Encounter, the magazine of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, was a CIA agent. This meant that the other editors, ignorant of his connections, would remain

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69 Christopher Lasch, 'The Cultural Cold War: A Short History of the Congress for Cultural Freedom,' in Barton Bernstein (ed.), Towards a New Past (New

unaware of any direct intervention by the CIA.<sup>70</sup> It is not inconceivable that a similar method of operation was in place at the Committee of Correspondence, leaving many members of the Committee unaware of the real extent of CIA involvement. For Braden the usefulness of agents was that they 'could not only propose anti-communist programs to the official leaders of the organization but they could also suggest ways and means to solve the inevitable budgetary problems. Why not see if the needed money could be obtained from "American Foundations"?'<sup>71</sup> It is interesting to note that this was a function remarkably similar to that performed by Dorothy Bauman.<sup>72</sup>

Further evidence of the confusion between the 'public' and 'private' sphere in the Cold War was the fact that direction (or advice) when it occurred was as likely to come from unofficial sources as from the State. In January 1952, for example, Paul Hoffman wrote to Anna Lord Strauss with a list of countries which he, 'off the record', considered to

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York: Pantheon Books, 1968), p.332

70 Ibid., p.350

71 Ibid., p. 349

72 It is also interesting to note the speed at which Anne Crolius left the country following the disclosure of CIA connections. In June 1966 Crolius left for Vietnam, travel expenses being paid by the Agency for International Development but 'acting solely on the behalf of the the Committee of Correspondence'. [Minutes of meeting, 28 June 1966, Louise Backus Papers, Box 11, File 19]

be 'most likely to break through into being economically pliable in the next ten years'. Strauss endorsed the list to the Committee, 'It seemed to me that in our various activities with women it would be wise to work in these countries so that the women developed along with the other facets of society.'<sup>73</sup> Hoffman was a private businessman, President of the Studebaker Automobile Company. He had worked in government as head of the European Recovery Programme.

If advice and direction from non-governmental contacts was informal, so were any directives issued by the CIA or other government agencies. Connie Anderson asserted that review of the Committee's work was exercised through personal meetings between her and two men who would visit her apartment once a month and 'talk about things, and what we should do and so on'. She insisted, however, that the control was of a limited nature, 'It was a simple thing, there was never any direction, there was just hearing about what we were doing rather than any direction on their part.'<sup>74</sup> Anne Crolus concurred,

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73 Strauss to the Committee of Correspondence, 22 January 1960, Anna Lord Strauss Papers, Box 13, File 275

The countries Hoffman listed were: Mexico, El Salvador, Columbia, Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Argentina, Venezuela, India, Burma, Ceylon, Ghana, Nigeria, Liberia, Iran and Turkey.

74 Connie Anderson oral history, Committee of Correspondence Papers, Box 54, File 887

'It was a good program and as far as I know there was no hanky-panky, no underhanded, no influence on the committee to do anything other than what it intended to do.'<sup>75</sup>

To a certain extent, direction or control was a moot point, since the members of the Committee did not see themselves as opponents to their government but as accessories and 'helpers'. In December 1966 Anna Lord Strauss reported to the Committee on a trip she made to Vietnam at the request of the President and in the company of Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker and Eugenie Anderson.<sup>76</sup> When asked by another member of the Committee what the President wanted her to do now, Miss Strauss replied, 'The President hasn't said what he wants us to do now. He took a chance on what our reactions would be.' Jean Picker's response is perhaps indicative of the kind of 'chance' the President had taken. Somewhat predictably, rather than call for an end to the war, Picker suggested, 'An interview of Miss Strauss might be a good Bulletin Article....We have to be careful because of the war, but on the citizen level, what Anna Lord Strauss saw would be most valuable.'<sup>77</sup>

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75 Anne Crolius oral history, Committee of Correspondence Papers, Box 54, File 892

76 Strauss remarks at Board Meeting, 11 December 1967, Anna Lord Strauss Papers, Box 13, File 264

77 Ibid.

Some allowance must be made for the willing suspension of reality on the part of these committee members with their assertions of independence; no one likes to think he/she is being used as a puppet. It is important to recognize, however, that the issue of funding is important in and of itself regardless of the level of control the CIA actually exercised. The very fact that the CIA funded the dissemination of information through the efforts of a 'private' group, rather than operating on their own, demonstrated the importance they placed upon the attachment of the 'private' tag on information.

By masquerading as a private organization, the Committee was able to present itself as living proof of the vitality of the voluntary organization in American life. As Committee member Louise Backus pointed out, the Committee wound up exploiting this ideal:

We say we are an example and this is a democracy. You can have enough voluntary interests to carry the load. In other countries it is truly impossible for organizations to exist without government help. Now we discover that individual

organizations just don't seem to be able to exist without government help.<sup>78</sup>

If it was, as Bauman, Anderson, Picker and others argued, unimportant that the money came from the CIA, why go to the trouble to hide it? Bauman claimed in her article 'Right or Wrong?':

From my observation, it would have made little difference to most participants had it been said that government funds were involved, for they were accustomed to having their own governments control most delegates to international meetings and provide transportation.<sup>79</sup>

In an oral history, however, Bauman was more realistic about the importance of being private. Jacqueline Van Voris asked her, 'Why did you not want to be identified with the government? Were you more effective?' Bauman readily admitted, 'Oh much, yes...The moment you put the government's label on it that would have caused suspicion and resentment. ...I think it was the only way they could do things and it was so obvious that the communists controlled

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78 Notes on Special Board Meeting, 24 July 1967, Committee of Correspondence Papers, Financial File  
79 Dorothy S. Bauman, 'Right or Wrong?', Committee of Correspondence Papers, Box 54, File 890

organizations, they were all underwritten by their government.'<sup>80</sup>

By presenting itself as a 'private' group, the Committee was able to influence people who would have been hostile to governmental, 'public' propaganda. The Committee had quickly found how hostile many of its correspondents were to any suggestion of state influence. Rose Parsons, in her report to the Committee on a trip to Japan in 1954, wrote of the Japanese people's fear of propaganda. She described how the Committee for Free Asia had offered Japanese women a free room for their meetings, 'which they had enjoyed very much and were most grateful for until they found that CFA propaganda was so exaggerated in favor of the U.S. and against the USSR that they refused to meet there any more'.<sup>81</sup> Parsons noted, 'They [the Japanese women] agreed with our European friends that U.S. Propaganda was just as abhorrent to them as Communist propaganda and they hope our bulletins will be free from it.'<sup>82</sup> Information from a 'private' group was 'purer' than that which was disseminated by a government.

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80 Dorothy Bauman oral history, Committee of Correspondence Papers, Box 54, File 888

81 Parsons report, 28 August-6 November 1953, Lena M. Phillips Papers, Box 7

This pro-American bias is perhaps explained by the fact that the Committee for Free Asia was also supported by the CIA.

Committee Bulletins were at pains to point out that the Communist women's organisations were funded by their government and therefore were mere mouthpieces of the Soviet system. Referring to the WIDF's call for the Congress of Women in Copenhagen in June 1953, Parsons declared in a letter to correspondents: 'The Committee of Correspondence feels very strongly that when a congress is called in the name of all women in the world, women should be able to obtain accurate information as to the sponsorship, aims and purposes of that Congress.' Since, according to a WIDF bulletin, 'expenses for the delegates visits to Copenhagen are being provided', Parsons worried that 'many women, unaware of the Communist sponsorship of the "World Congress of Women" and of the tactics used to attract them there will no doubt be tempted to avail themselves of this opportunity to travel'.<sup>83</sup> The difference between this situation and the Committee of Correspondence's convening of a Conference of Women's Non-governmental Organizations in 1962, where delegates were paid travel and living expenses, lay entirely in the Committee's assumption of a double standard.

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82 Ibid.

83 Parsons letter, 6 May 1953, Lena M. Phillips Papers, Box 4

If the Committee symbolized the infiltration of the public world into the private sphere, it was also an important example in the willingness of private groups to cooperate with the government. By the time the revelations of CIA funding were made in 1967, public hostility and suspicion towards government involvement in private groups were rife. CIA involvement could only be a bad thing, a threat to the 'free society'. Thus the editorial in Ramparts proclaimed moralistically:

The spectre of CIA infiltration of domestic institutions --- and the covert creation of co-ordinated leadership among them --- must horrify those who regard unfettered debate as vital to representative democracy.<sup>84</sup>

However, in their attempt to vilify the shady agents of the CIA as instruments of corruption, such accounts failed to take into account the willingness of the private sector to be 'corrupted'. In her account of the activities of the Committee, Right or Wrong?, Bauman clearly implies that the acceptance of CIA funding was 'right':

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84 Ramparts, March 1967, p. 38

With today's questioning of all of CIA's activities, it seems to me only fair to tell of one operation that was highly constructive and successful and where no overt pressure from the CIA was ever used on a group of competent, individualistic women.<sup>85</sup>

Bauman's argument is that, rather than being a corrupting influence in their private organization, the CIA merely facilitated what the group would have done anyway, given sufficient funds. Bethke Papanek, who had worked harder than any other member to secure private funding, told the Committee that 'she couldn't understand why the exposure of the fact in Ramparts has made the CIA evil. We were asked to do a job we were considered fit for.'<sup>86</sup>

Members' perception of the relationship of their organization to the government may best be understood through the description the Committee

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85 Dorothy Bauman, 'Right or Wrong?', October 1974, Committee of Correspondence Papers, Box 54, File 890

86 Notes on Special Board Meeting, 24 July 1967, Committee of Correspondence Papers, Financial File

The unwitting Bethke Papanek's search for funding was described in sympathetic terms by director Alison Raymond Lanier: 'Bethke was the treasurer and...she worked like a dog to raise money and then we would tell her, "Write this foundation" or "write that Foundation". Then she would get some money and she was absolutely thrilled and everyone congratulated her. It was such a farce, it was a terrible thing to do to anybody.' [Alison Raymond Lanier oral history, Committee of Correspondence

wrote for the 1962 conference of Women's International Non-governmental Organizations. The Committee explained:

Although traditionally voluntary organizations have prided themselves on their independence of government 'control' of 'interference', changing conditions have modified this attitude to some degree. The emergence, since 1945, of many new independent countries and the enormous sudden increase in demands and desires of their people for rapid social, educational and economic progress have resulted in necessary changes in earlier methods of handling organization programs. It has been discovered that voluntary organizations can co-operate with governments and still maintain their independence; equally, governments have discovered that they can co-operate with private groups in mutual trust without assuming full responsibility for the activities of the group. Support from and co-operation with governments enables voluntary organizations to undertake

specific projects which they would otherwise be unable to do.<sup>87</sup>

One-dimensional interpretations of the covert funding of private organizations which cast the CIA as the Machiavellian puppet-masters of simple-minded, if well-intentioned, citizens overlook the willingness of these 'private citizens' to accept funding. As Richard J. Barnet has commented on the CIA funding of the Committee for Cultural Freedom, 'There may have been CIA money even at the outset, but the intellectuals were not pawns of the government; they were enthusiastic volunteers in the ideological war.'<sup>88</sup> The frustration of people such as Rose Parsons at the difficulties in opposing Soviet state-funded organizations with the meagre resources of the private sector was genuine. However, protests of an 'uneven playing field' in terms of funding

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87 Report of the Conference of Women's International Non-Governmental Organizations, 3-16 March 1962, Committee of Correspondence Papers, Box 19, File 196

Ironically the report went on to note, 'Although the participants took a positive attitude towards possibilities of voluntary organizations cooperating with government on specific projects and activities, they recognized that circumstances could arise in this relationship which would jeopardize the independent and voluntary character of the private groups. This situation could arise in any of several ways such as government decree of law requiring inspection of organization administration, apathy of the organization or the public towards government interference, *too great a reliance on government funds.*' (my italics)

88 Richard J. Barnet, By the Rockets' Red Glare: War, Politics and the American Presidency, (New

were disingenuous. Elizabeth Wadsworth, an unwitting member of the Committee, commented:

There were those on the Committee who thought that, if we got any government money, it would be impossible for us to continue our job because too many women we were writing to out there wouldn't approve. And perhaps they were right. If so, then the worst thing we could do was to take government money and lie about it because that put the lie to the whole integrity which was supposed to underlie the organization....You cannot do everything to give the impression that you don't take government money and take it. If it's important that you not take government money, then you don't take it. If it's not important that you not take government money, then take it. That's the point. It's not a question of whether you take government money or not. *It's whether you make an issue of it.* We did make an issue of it and then we took it. Dumb.<sup>89</sup>  
(my italics)

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York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), p. 307

89 Elizabeth Wadsworth oral history, Committee of

The oft-repeated assertions by the Committee of Correspondence that they were private served an important purpose in advertising their detachment and independence from 'official' American policy and allowing the Committee to represent itself as an example of the disinterested altruism of the American people. Connie Anderson's report on her trip to Asia in 1960 noted this effect in commenting, 'Our efforts received as proof of the concern of American women and so of the United States, but we demonstrate the uniqueness of our country in caring to carry out a program of this sort without any ulterior motives.'<sup>90</sup> When the truth was painfully exposed, the effect on the *genuinely* private sector was devastating. The New York Times editorialised:

The disastrous effects of the systematic penetration of American educational, cultural and labor organizations by the Central Intelligence Agency daily becomes more apparent. The strength of these organizations, both in the structure of American Society and in their relations with their opposite numbers in other

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Correspondence Papers, Box 54, File 902  
90 Anderson memorandum, 'General Report on Asian Trip', January-February 1960, Anna Lord Strauss Papers, Box 13, File 275

nations, always has been their freedom from government domination. Now, through the deviousness of C.I.A. operations, thousands of scholars, students, unionists and professional leaders discover long after the fact that they have performed unwitting and undesired duty as secret agents. The integrity of Pro-American positions, honestly taken by groups and individuals in the worldwide battle of ideas, has been undermined. The independence of America's private foundations has been brought into question. In short, faith in American institutions has been besmirched in a way that would have evaded the reach of any foreign enemy.<sup>91</sup>

Members of the Committee were not the unthinking lackeys of the U.S. Government. The original motivation behind the Committee was a response by concerned, informed citizens to a perceived problem rather than an initiative by scheming government officials. Many of the members of the Committee, far from working at the direction of the CIA, contributed their voluntary effort

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91 New York Times, 20 February 1967, p. 36

completely unaware of the source of their funding. In the end, however, covert government funding of the organizations was a direct contradiction of the Committee's message of what voluntary, concerned women's organizations could achieve. The notion of an independent private sector in the US campaign against the Soviet Union was an illusion.

## CONCLUSION

International Relations has not been overly concerned with investigating the activities of women. In their study of Gender and International Relations, Rebecca Grant and Kathleen Newland have concluded, 'It would be hard not to conclude that international relations as an academic discipline more or less consciously ignored women as actors from the start.'<sup>1</sup> However, throughout the 1990s there has been a growing body of work by feminist scholars, Grant and Newland amongst them which has approached International Relations with methodological tools informed by issues of gender.

These attempts have focused on a strategy, described by Joan Scott, of using 'gender as a category of analysis'.<sup>2</sup> In her exposition on the potential of this strategy, Scott writes of the subject of 'war, diplomacy, and high politics,' as an academic stronghold against the acceptance of the usefulness of applications of gender. Scott explains that in fact, relationships between nations, are constructed in gendered terms:

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1 Rebecca Grant and Kathleen Newland, Gender and International Relations (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991) p. 3.

2 Joan Wallach Scott, Gender and the Politics of History (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988) pp.29-50.

Power relations among nations and the status of colonial subjects have been made comprehensible (and thus legitimate) in terms of relations between male and female.<sup>3</sup>

Useful as this approach is, it does little to challenge the absence of women in traditional accounts of international relations. It is entirely possible, using Scott's model of gender as a category of analysis, to construct a case study of international relations which is dominated by issues of gender, yet still fails to include any women.

This failure is perhaps not something many feminist historians would be overly concerned with. Contemporary debates over the stability of the category of women might be deeply suspicious of a history that focuses upon women as a subject group. History which focused on 'women' rather than 'gender' has become a problematic exercise, viewed at best as an old-fashioned and dated form of 'consciousness-raising' and, at worst as a dangerous assertion of essentialist gendered identities.

The aim of exploring the role of American Women's Organizations in International Relations is not simply to discover the presence of women in a field which has traditionally overlooked their contribution. As Scott argues, 'It has not been enough for historians

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p.48.

of women to prove that women had a history or that women participated in the major political upheavals of Western Civilization.'<sup>4</sup> Whilst it is important to offer a corrective to the now cliched description of post war American women forced into domestic inactivity, examination of the work of American women's organizations in the international sphere has more far-reaching consequences. Investigation of the presence of women in international relations results in a series of challenges to the traditional disciplinary concepts.

Firstly, the co-operation between women's organizations and the US government suggest the need for historians to look more carefully at the connections between the 'public' realm of government and the 'private' realm of the governed in the conduct of international relations. In other words, historians perhaps need to focus more on the concept of foreign relations rather than just foreign policy, accepting that in an era of global communications, it was no longer possible to focus on relationships between governments as if populations were both deaf and dumb outside of their national boundaries. Recognizing this fact, the American government sought to include the efforts of private groups in the conduct of foreign relations in the wider sense of the term. Historians need to find a way to account for the involvement of

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4 Ibid. p.30.

private groups, and their co-operation with their government in a way which moves beyond narrow models which define such co-operation purely in term of co-option.

Secondly, the activities of American women's organizations suggests the possibility of investigating foreign relations not just through categories of national identity, but through other aspects of identity. Within America, constructions of group identity, whilst they were informed and limited by national factors, drew upon international commonalities. Thus, American women conceived of themselves as being situated within an international category. Similarly, American intellectuals spoke of a commonality with intellectuals across the world. The multiple claims on individual identity preclude the crude and over-simplistic definition of people purely through national identity which dominated the structure of many studies of international relations. Rather than simply studying international relations on national lines, therefore, group identities which cross national boundaries need to be taken into account.

Finally, focusing on a group of women is important to the extent to which it exposes the processes by which gendered identity is defined and constructed by women themselves. American women's organizations did not simply accept rigid and

externally imposed gendered roles. They developed and extended popular conceptions of women's appropriate behaviour. Whilst asserting themselves as representatives of all American women, the leaders of American women's organizations were in fact engaged in a constant effort to suppress groups of women who challenged that assertion. Rather than re-enforcing the notion of 'women' as a stable category, investigation of the international activities of American women's organisations exposes the processes of contesting, authenticating and restricting gendered identity.

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