

PEACE IN PROGRESS

No 22 - FEBRUARY 2015

Pacifist feminism

ICIP

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INTRODUCTION

The role of women in peace research

Rafael Grasa

President of the International Catalan Institute for Peace

This issue of Peace in Progress dedicates its main articles (Cockburn, Zajović, Moreno, Blasco and Magallón) and the interview (with Adilia Caravaca, president of WILPF, the organization honored with the 2014 ICIP Peace in Progress Award) to pacifist feminism, the role of women in practice on the ground and in peace studies. Unfortunately, the central thesis continues to be one that has been repeated for decades: one hundred years after the International Women's Congress for Peace and Freedom at The Hague, which mobilized thousands of European women to try to stop World War I – after an important contribution in practice, social mobilization and collective action, as well as in peace research and peace studies – there is still a persistent lack of attention and recognition regarding these initiatives. And, nevertheless, as the articles demonstrate, the contributions have been significant, such as the idea and practice of transversal politics which, in the mid-nineties, was created by a group of feminist activists from Bologna.

Women still do not have a room of their own or full equality, either, in the world of peace studies and peace practice. In other words, the invisibility of the role of women continues to be the statistical norm, even within the peace movement and the peace studies community. And it is certainly not due to a lack of role models: from Bertha von Suttner, Virginia Woolf, Alva Myrdal or Betty Reardon to Petra Kelly, the women of Greenham Common, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) or Cynthia Cockburn herself. Nor is it due to a lack of will, at least rhetorical. Women continue to be a majority at the grassroots level and a minority at the decision-making level. The essence of the problem, or rather the solution to the problem, is not a matter of will, but, as feminist theory has claimed all along, a matter of the rules of the game

and the general social structures that are also reproduced – at least partially – in the realm of the commitment to peace despite explicit efforts to avoid it.

“ Women still do not have a room of their own or full equality, either, in the world of peace studies and peace practice ”

For instance, let's look at the United Nations, which has launched a specific program on the issue on the basis of Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, with activities on a global, regional, sub-regional, and national level. [The UN Peacekeeping website](#) literally states: “Women are deployed in all areas – police, military and civilian – and have made a positive impact on peacekeeping environments, both in supporting the role of women in building peace and protecting women's rights. In all fields of peacekeeping, women peacekeepers have proven that they can perform the same roles, to the same standards and under the same difficult conditions, as their male counterparts. It is an operational imperative that we recruit and retain female peacekeepers.”

Certainly, according to UN data, there has been progress: in 1993, women made up 1% of deployed uniformed personnel, while in 2012, out of approximately 125,000 peacekeepers, women constituted 3% of military personnel and 10% of police personnel. And it is not due to a lack of efforts and advocacy, both by the UN and several member states, which, in the end, are responsible for making the final decisions. In a few months, we will be able to assess “The Global Effort” initiative launched by the UN Police Division with the goal of having 20% of female police around the world. We will see.

What must be done, then, in the social world and in the world of research, apart from insisting, denouncing, creating incentives and advocacy programs, various constraints and follow-up mechanisms? We must be radical; we must get to the root of the problem, to the structures that perpetuate inequality, reveal them and try to destroy

them. To do so, we should listen to what Petra Kelly said in the 1980s, speaking as a generation committed to change: "If we don't do the impossible now, in the future we will have to face the unthinkable." And the impossible concerns us all, but especially men. Virginia Woolf dared to say in her book *Three Guineas*: "As a woman, I have no country. As a woman, I want no country. As a woman, my country is the whole world." What will the men of the world of peace dare to say to really put an end to the deficit in the presence of the thought and practice of women in our field? One thing, however, is certain: daring is a prerequisite for empowerment.

Photography : RAWA / CC BY / Desaturated. - *Demonstration of the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) in Peshawar* -

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Transversal Politics: A practice of peace

Cynthia Cockburn

Feminist researcher and writer

In the mid-1990s, a group of feminist activists living in Bologna, Italy, began travelling to war-riven countries, seeking to support women there. They called their programme 'Women Visiting Difficult Places'. They began using the term '*politica trasversale*' to describe both their own border-crossing practices and the efforts they witnessed of women in conflict zones to work co-operatively across conflictual divisions. Nira Yuval-Davis then translated the Italian term as 'transversal politics' and, in her book *Gender and Nation*, published in 1997, introduced it into English usage (Yuval-Davis 1997: 125 et seq.).

The following year, acknowledging these sources, I took up the concept when writing up research on three women's organizations in contexts of ethno-national armed conflict, each of them an alliance across national differences. They were Bat Shalom, in the north of Israel; the Women's Support Network in Belfast, Northern Ireland; and Medica Women's Therapy Centre in central Bosnia-Herzegovina¹. The women of these three organizations were not themselves using the term transversal politics to describe their activity. I wrote that my aim had been to try 'to fill the container "transversal politics" with content. I wanted to see what exactly is involved in the doing of it' (Cockburn 1998: 9). My project eventually developed into a series of international border-crossings, as we raised funding to enable representatives of each organization to visit the others, further applying their communication skills in making understandable to each other the challenges of working across conflict lines in their particular contexts. My action research process culminated in a conference at Gresham College in London in January 1999, titled *Transversal Politics and Translating Practices*. Here women from the case study organizations in Northern Ireland, Bosnia and Israel Palestine were able to compare experiences not only with each other but also with women engaged in cross-communal activism in the UK².

“ Transversal politics is a model of feminist politics which takes account of national difference without falling into the trap of identity politics ”

It will be clear, then, that towards the end of the nineteen-nineties there had been developing among certain feminist women, concerned politically and theoretically with violent conflict in relation to gender and ethno-national identities, a practice in search of a name. Lynette Hunter and I understood that practice to be one of ‘creatively crossing (and re-drawing) the borders that mark significant politicized differences’. We said of the term ‘transversal politics’, ‘It seems as if it has fallen, clunk, upon a meaning that has been waiting for a signifier’ (Cockburn and Hunter 1999:88)³.

Practising transversal politics

So what exactly is involved in the practice of ‘transversal politics’ (TP)? It has been summarized by Nira Yuval-Davis, drawing on the accounts of the Italian activist women, as ‘a mode of coalition politics in which the differential positionings of the individuals and collectives involved will be recognized, as well as the value systems which underly their struggles’ (Yuval-Davis 1997: 25). Elsewhere she calls it ‘a model of feminist politics, which takes account of national as well as other forms of difference among women, without falling into the trap of identity politics’ (ibid: 5). Furthermore, she writes, it is ‘based on knowledge acquired by dialogue carried out by people who are differentially positioned’ – adding that transversal politics should be ‘the political guidelines for all political activism, whether at the grass-roots level or in state and supra-state power centres’ (ibid: 92).

Let us take as an example the activities of the Women’s Support Network in Belfast, one of the three organizations studied in the project *The Space Between Us* (Cockburn 1998). As I observed them sustaining their difficult alliance across conflictual differences of “name” in a situation of armed conflict I noted a number of strategies in play.

“ The women of the Network saw that it was necessary to recognize injustices done to all sides in the conflict. Wrongs had to be admitted, but without ascription of collective guilt ”

First, they carried out what I came to call ‘identity work’. Rather than denying or disassembling significant historic, cultural, religious and political differences between them (between Catholic/Republican and Protestant/Loyalist), they acknowledged and affirmed them. However, they were at pains not to ‘jump to conclusions’ from given ‘names’, inferring too readily an individual’s sense of herself. Instead they delayed ‘closure’ on identity, remaining open to hearing, over a period of time, the account of ‘self’ given by the ‘other’, individual or group. Thus a ‘Protestant’ might reveal she actually means by that ‘name’ a practising church-goer, or on the contrary a secular member of the Protestant community. It might be a name she feels ‘stuck with’, or one she has actively substantiated, culturally or politically.

Secondly, the women tended to transcend dichotomization and polarization between the primary conflictual identity groups by stressing a multiplicity of differentiations – thus a ‘Catholic’ might not only ‘be’ a nationalist or otherwise, she might also be ‘from the South’ of Ireland, ‘from the North’, or even from Britain. Besides, in Belfast live other ‘ethnic minorities’, migrant Chinese for example, and African communities. The women included these in their thinking about community.

Third, the participants in the Women’s Support Network did careful work to establish shared values, because it is only on such a basis that differences can be transcended. Such a value might be non-violence, perhaps, or equality. One was certainly justice: the women of the Network saw that it was necessary to recognize injustices done to all sides in the conflict, but particularly the injustices currently impeding its peaceful resolution. Wrongs had to be admitted, but without ascription of collective guilt – no blame by ‘name’.

Fourth, the women intelligently limited the agenda of their working alliances to what could currently be agreed upon at any given moment.

And, finally, I observed them to have developed skilled group processes, ways of relating, speaking and writing, especially where decisions and strategies were concerned, that facilitated clear and confident expression of differences, yet careful negotiation of identities and values. None of these strategies was easy to accomplish, and the Women's Support Network did not always achieve the cohesion its members sought. But its participants were conscious and articulate about what they were attempting, even when they failed.

Values, power and the uses of imagination

The practice and the theory of transversal politics, by definition progressive (i.e. not 'conservative'), are both predicated on a notion of developmental change. And perhaps, more than in other forms of politics, the potential for change is understood not as dependent upon macro historical processes but rather as involving the subjective sense of self. Marie Mulholland is a Republican nationalist feminist, a colleague and friend, whom I had the privilege to watch 'doing' transversal politics in the Women's Support Network in Northern Ireland.. I asked her how she stayed in a working relationship, not just with women of different 'name' ('Protestant', 'Catholic') but of names distinguished by differential power (ruling, ruled), and, albeit with some shared values, nursing some pretty sharply opposed concrete political aspirations. Her answer was that it was possible, and only possible, because she and they could believe that at some future time, beyond some dimly perceived horizon, she and they will have become different. She meant, I believe, that, moved on from today's rocky places, they might have a subtly different standpoint and perspective, might have constituted each other freshly, reshaped in each other a slightly new sense of self. So transversal politics is a politics of the future perfect tense, 'will have become'. It envisages a place in the future from which one will have looked back and seen that change has happened. But it also contains a cautious conditional tense: if. We 'may have become'.

“ Transversal politics has to involve shifting, standing on the Other’s standpoint ”

The belief that you and I will be different ten years from now, and that our circumstances will allow different practices, demands imagination. So we cannot do transversal politics, we cannot even make the first steps, without a leap in the dark. Our politics must not just allow space for, but actively generate, flights of fantasy, dreams of possibilities. The traversing is thus not only lateral, it is also traversing into the future (yours and hers).

This recognition of the mobility of imagination helps overcome what is an apparent contradiction in transversal politics. The Italian women activists, and those who have adopted their language, talk of ‘rooting’ and ‘shifting’. Transversal politics has to involve, first, a rooting in one’s own subjectivity. I understand this to mean fully recognizing, reflexively acknowledging, being comfortable with our own sense of self, and understanding its relation to the names with which we are hailed. At the same time it has to involve shifting, to see from the Other’s perspective. This I take to mean getting right into the other’s embodied self, standing on the other’s standpoint (in her shoes), listening carefully to her account of self, seeing with her eyes. But this has clearly never been a ‘real’ possibility. It would be facile to attempt to ‘go and live as one of them’, because we cannot do so without negating our own identifications. Identities, belongings, are more intractable and more dangerous than this implies. The differences transversal politics deals with are differences for which we kill, torture and die – on British housing estates, on Irish streets, in Bosnian villages and Palestinian refugee camps. But the imagination can enable us to travel – in space (between standpoints) and in time (between moments in a trajectory).

Imagination, then, becomes itself a political practice. Indeed, the imaginary may be the strong card, the joker in the pack. Perhaps the potential of small groups, such as the Belfast Women’s Support Network, Medica in Bosnia, or Bat Shalom in Israel Palestine, inventing and practising their transversal politics, is to release imagination and spark

off new possibilities, putting them into play more widely. Perhaps they can change the popular sense of what is possible and lift the vision of politicians beyond their bounded horizons, so that failed political mandates are withdrawn and rewritten, and new routes open towards peace.

1. The book *The Space Between Us: Negotiating Gender and National Identities in Conflict* was my reporting of what had been a project of action research, involving studies of the communicative practices within each organization, theorizing about the way they handled conflictual identities and 'situatedness' in the social 'space' they had knowingly chosen to inhabit together (Cockburn 1998).

2. The proceedings resulted in a thematic issue of the journal *Soundings*. In that volume, Nira Yuval-Davis explained the concept succinctly in her piece 'What is "transversal politics"?' (Yuval-Davis 1999).

3. I went on to carry the concept of transversal politics into further research. In 1999 and 2000, with Bosnian colleagues I explored the difficulties encountered by local cross-ethnic women's projects in post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina, and their potential contribution to an emergent women's movement and to the pursuit of democracy in the new state (Cockburn 2001). I then went on to observe transversal politics in action in a women's bi-communal initiative across the partition line that divides the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot populations of the island of Cyprus (Cockburn 2004).

Photography : Cynthia Cockburn - *Jewish and Palestinian women of the Bat Shalom Project, residents of northern Israel, cooperating for equality and rights for Palestinians in the Israeli state, as well as justice and statehood for Palestinians in the Occupied Territories* -

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Always disobedient

Staša Zajović

Co-founder and coordinator of Women in Black of Belgrade

On October 9, 1991, Women in Black took to the streets of Belgrade for the first time. This was the beginning of our nonviolent resistance against the war and the Serbian regime's politics. We are still in the streets. So far, we have organized about 2,000 street actions with common objectives: the rejection of all forms of war and violence, especially those carried out by the state or the community where we live; creation of bonds of solidarity, alliances and coalitions with women regardless of borders or state limitations, national or any other divisions; a policy of peace among women on a global scale based on denouncing local, regional, and global militarism and on the inextricable link between feminism and anti-militarism.

During the first ten years of our existence we lived in a country where state- organized crimes were committed: the regime's war campaign aggressions, largely responsible for the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia. Unfortunately, the overthrow of Slobodan Milosevic in October 2000 did not bring about the desired changes. In recent years, here in Serbia we have been living the race for "European integration" without facing up to our criminal past, accountability for the war and war crimes; criminal privatization projects, increased poverty and every imaginable form of discrimination existing. Elections held in May 2012 and March 2014, saw the perpetrators and the creators and/or accessories to the policies of the 1990s being allowed to return to the political scene in Serbia.

Not in our name!

The Belgrade Network of Women in Black is a feminist, anti-military, anti-nationalist, anti-fascist, alter-globalization network made up of women, as well as men, from different generational and ethnic groups, levels of education, social status, lifestyles

and of different sexual preferences. From this perspective we apply the principles of a policy for peace and solidarity and we defend three clearly-defined slogans:

1. *Not in our name!:* In reference to non-violent, clear and unequivocal public resistance against the system which exercises aggression and declares wars in our name and against those who, once the wars have ended, have denied, minimized, relativized or glorified crimes committed in our name.
2. *We will not be tricked by our own people:* Feminist ethics of responsibility impel us to oppose nationalists, militarists and all those patriarchal forces, primarily in the country where we live but also in all other countries.
3. *Always disobedient.* We exercise disobedience in war and any other imposition on behalf of the patriarchy because we are responsible citizens, independent women and free thinking human beings.

Challenges facing our feminist and anti-militarist policy

The feminist and anti-militarist internationalism has helped us to survive the most difficult times but this policy faces significant challenges ahead. First, proliferation of the NGO sector creates divisions within the feminist movement and leads to depoliticization of all issues by dispensing with the analysis of the political and social context. Secondly, policy mainstreaming of the gender perspective, or so-called “state feminism”, sparks conflict between feminist activists and women represented by the institutions. Thirdly, the international aid policy is very often conditioned by cooperation with the State, which threatens solidarity and exacerbates the rivalry between NGOs.

In this context, the Network of Women in Black works to offer solutions and alternatives in different areas, from encouraging grassroots activities through feminist activism, creating spaces for feminist reflection, constantly agitating the State through challenging their demands, building coalitions based on solidarity at a regional, European and international level, to being accountable to the women we work with and developing feminist ethics of responsibility, care, and solidarity.

“ We exercise disobedience in war and any other imposition on behalf of the patriarchy because we are responsible, independent and free thinking beings ”

Justice and security

Since the end of 2010 we have been involved in the creation of a Women's Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, scheduled to be in operation by May 2015. The aim of the tribunal is to create alternative forms of justice and exert pressure on the institutional legal system both nationally as well as internationally. The court will address the silenced, forgotten or unacknowledged forms of violence against women: violence on ethnic grounds, military violence, rape as a war crime, economic and social crimes, etc. It will therefore become a space where women who have suffered injustice, both in wartime and in peacetime, will be given a voice.

The scope of this initiative means that we are working with several thousand women from over a hundred cities. There is no doubt that this is a complex process and one that faces many challenges in the intricate role of the court whose scope will cover seven states of the former Yugoslavia.

“ The Women's Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia will address the silenced, forgotten, or unacknowledged forms of violence against women ”

Facing up to our past and punishing war crimes, freeing ourselves from the fear of being different and to define our identity, strictly applying the principles of transitional

justice to include women in the peace talks and negotiations between Kosovo and Serbia in compliance with United Nations resolution 1325... These are just some of the challenges we currently face, always grounded in a feminist and anti-militarist approach, questioning the concept of traditional militarized security.

As outlined in the Women in Black Safety Charter, the feminist concept of security is defined in the following way:

- Women's solidarity, mutual support, joint work of women against militarism, regardless of the state and beyond the limits of national borders, to create a world free of military violence and all other forms of violence.
- The absence of violence against women. The absence of fear, poverty and all forms of discrimination and injustice.
- Freedom from the fear of being different and to define one's own identity, breaking down the imposed ethnic, state, and cultural consensus.
- Strict application of the principles of transitional justice, in other words, confronting the past and punishing war crimes.
- Resources should be allocated entirely to peace, health and the spread of knowledge, and on the other hand, nothing should be spent on weaponry. The higher the military budget and military spending, the lower the level of security.
- The inclusion of women in peace negotiations ensuring their influence in all segments of the implementation of United Nations resolution 1325.
- Women's right to self-determination, in other words, resistance to social control over women. This means enjoying full sexual and reproductive rights. Our slogan is: my body is my country and it is my right to choose who is going to protect me.

Photography : Simran Sachdev / CC BY / Desaturated. - *Women in Black holding a solidarity banner at the Srebrenica Genocide Commemoration* -

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Neither a destructive war nor an oppressive peace

Vicky Moreno

Member of Dones x Dones (Women for Women)

The group that would eventually become the current Dones x Dones (Women for Women) was created by women coming from a variety of feminist backgrounds (antimilitary, solidarity, etc.). We did not even know these women before this or have contact with them. It was after the war in the Balkans and especially when we began to discover the number of women who had been systematically raped during the war that we decided to come together and form a group whose principal aims were to take action against war and the rape of women in armed conflicts.

The first step as a group was contacting women who were victims of armed conflict in the region previously known as Yugoslavia. One of the first contacts we made was with Stasa Zajovic, from Women in Black in Belgrade. This was to be the beginning of what would be the guiding thread for our work: spreading information, raising awareness and implementing initiatives regarding the systematic rape of women.

One of our first actions was to organize a major demonstration against the war in the Balkans and specifically against the rape of women in war. At the head of the protest march was our banner bearing the slogan "We demand that rape be considered a war crime." The demonstration took place in late 1992 and then we were referring to our group as *Women supporting women in the former Yugoslavia*.

Catalonia demonstrated great solidarity during the war and many Bosnian families fleeing the horror were welcomed as refugees in our country. Contact with the Bosnian families who were refugees in Catalonia was something completely new for us, was an extremely vivid experience and one that was felt intensely for three years. From the relationship we established with them we became aware that we had to continue as an

antimilitarist and feminist group and we set about defining our goals, using the name we use today, Women for Women.

“ Throughout history, the rape of women, assault and sexual slavery have undergone the construction of a process of naturalization ”

We began liaising with other groups and social movements as well as with Bosnian women living as refugees. Several proposals and initiatives were the result of this coordination. One, perhaps the one that attracted most media attention, was the “Europe for Bosnia”, which was able to move forward thanks to the work and efforts of the network of feminist women, including Women for Women. It was gruelling work, exhausting at times, but the results were evident. We managed to mobilize civil society to take to the streets and protest against the war in the Balkans.

Feminist and antimilitarist

Over the years we have built a platform to deal with rape and the specific acts of violence against women in armed conflict. These considerations have led us to comprehend how throughout history women have been used as the spoils of war for the conqueror; a bonus prize for the victorious soldier, and how rape, assault and sexual slavery have undergone the construction of a process of naturalization.

Systematic rape is part of a strategy of war and, in many cases, a policy of ethnic cleansing. However, in peacetime violence against women continues to be wielded as a strategy of power, in order to cause and strike terror into women, particularly those who are most vulnerable as a result of poverty, lack of education or other reasons.

We believe that these facts respond to an imbalance in power relations between men and women. An imbalance in a context of heightened insecurity undermines the democratic rule of law and, of course, the rights of those who are most vulnerable in our societies, among whom are women and children.

We wish to stress the fact that this happens in wartime as well as in peacetime, and therefore we use the slogan “No rape either in peacetime or in wartime”.

Faced with the different situations of violence against women, both in times of peace and war, we continue to work towards:

- Ensuring that people see and understand that this violence is the result of the imbalance in power relations between men and women. This feeds on a deep rooted image in the patriarchal system that continues to produce stereotypes and beliefs based on the depersonalisation of women's bodies. They make the body of women into conquerable territory, something to be conquered and colonized by force of arms and the legitimacy granted by the patriarchal system.
- The denouncement of rape and sexual assault.
- The denouncement of human rights violations in countries such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, Palestine, Colombia, Chechnya, Russia, etc.

**“ Violence against women continues into
peacetime; wielded as a strategy of power, in
order to strike terror into women ”**

International networks

For us the main learning and strengthening experience we have had over the years has been the relationship we forged with women and women's groups we have met and with whom we maintain those links and contacts. This is the real wealth of our group.

We are part of the International Network of Women in Black against War made up of women from many countries who have organized international meetings, discussions and actions, and who share the same principles. In all this complex network we have learned from the Women in Black of Belgrade, Croatian women, women from Ruta Pacifica (Peaceful Way of women), from the *Organización Femenina Popular of Colombia*

(Colombian Popular Feminist Organisation), Women Memorial in St. Petersburg, the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan, the American women of Code Pink, not to mention of course all we have learned from our colleagues and friends at Israel – Palestine Coalition of Women for Peace, and the Shalom Bath women.

It is not always easy to maintain contact but we rely on personal relationships, friendships, i.e., on personal ties. We try to invite each other to come to our houses, either to explain the situation in their country or simply to have a place where they can relax and unwind from the pressures of their situation. Maintaining these contacts is a priority for us and we need to continue to strengthen the relationship that allows us to forge ahead and give meaning to our way of engaging in politics.

What we do and what we advocate

Our work as feminists and antimilitarists also includes efforts to expand and strengthen networks among women and women's groups here at home.

One of our main commitments is to continue our efforts in the area of prevention of violence. In order to do this, we work together with our colleagues employed in primary and secondary education who strive to prevent violence against children, adolescents and women within a coeducational system. In addition, every year we publish our accounts and tax returns under the slogan "Don't pay war taxes" and we suggest collaboration with an antimilitarist association. One of the principal days in the calendar when attentions and action are focused on these issues is on May 24th, the International Women's Day for Peace and Disarmament. Apart from this day, there are occasional calls to organize events when it is deemed necessary to monitor specific developments. In 2006 we published the book "Feminists Against War" which explains our experience.

Women for Women demonstrate in favour of preventing armed conflict. We support campaigns targeting the eradication of defence policies based on militarism, the enrichment of weapon's producing industries, and maintaining standing armies. We speak out against policies that favour nuclear energy and nuclear weapons, against the politics of fear and terror based on fundamentalist religious ideas; against the patriarchal political system that produces and reproduces violence against women and

against civilization.

Above all, Women for Women works towards feminist sorority¹ between female human rights defenders in all conflict-torn countries.

1. Term used by feminists to express sisterhood between women

Photography : Dying Regime / CC BY / Desaturated.

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IN DEPTH

First International Congress of Women, La Haya, 1915

Sandra Blasco / Carmen Magallón

Sandra Blasco, researcher with the Seminary for Investigation for Peace (SIP) in Zaragoza / Carmen Magallón Portolés, president of WILPF Spain and director of the SIP

As we approach the 100th anniversary of the break out of what would become known as The Great War, World War I, it would be remiss of us not to celebrate what was one of the most important, creative, and admirable initiatives against war and in favour of a different world order: the International Women's Congress held in The Hague from April 28 to May 1, 1915. Organized by a group of suffragettes, and from which would spring the International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace, an organization of women for peace which in 1919 renamed itself the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF).

It must be admitted that the First World War divided the suffragette movement, a fact which supports our claim that defence and working for peace is not something inherent in women but instead it is an option¹. In fact, the *International Woman Suffrage Alliance* as such, did not support the congress of The Hague which took place due to the efforts of a small group who decided to appeal to women of all nations. Hosted by Aletta H. Jacobs, the first female doctor of medicine in the Netherlands, a meeting was held in Amsterdam in February 1915. In attendance were four Belgians, four Germans and five British women, including the German Anita Augsborg, Chrystall MacMillan from Scotland and Kathleen Courtney and Catherine Marshall from England. At that meeting a preliminary program was developed and it was decided to set up a committee to raise awareness, send invitations and organize the congress². The call became an appeal to human solidarity that extended beyond Europe, becoming a symbolic milestone

worldwide.

The Hague Congress was attended by over 1,300 women representing one hundred and fifty associations from twelve countries; there were suffragettes and trade union members from various countries, members of the British labour party and women from such diverse organizations as Hungarian Agrarian Workers, the League for the Protection of the Interests of Children from Holland or the American Women Lawyer's Association³. The invitation letters sent out required those attending to agree their support of the preliminary proposals which involved two basic principles: 1) that conflicts should be resolved by peaceful means and 2) that women should have the right to vote⁴.

“ The determination of women and the great lengths they went to just to reach The Hague Congress was in itself an act of heroism, especially for those coming from warring nations ”

Reaching The Hague was no mean feat. The majority of participant countries were at war and their governments as well as public opinion did not approve of the meeting between women from both sides of the conflict. The French and Russians delegates had not been given permission from their governments to attend. The British failed to reach the mainland due to the closure of the North Sea and the Belgians had to make the last part of the journey on foot. The first point stressed by the President of the Congress, Jane Addams⁵, during the opening speech was that the determination of women and the great lengths they went to just to reach The Hague Congress was, in itself, an act of heroism, especially for those coming from belligerent nations. Addams also highlighted the strength of spirit shown in defending civilization as a universal heritage, a strength which has sparked them to meet at a time at which the concept of internationalism was being called into question⁶. Aletta Jacobs encouraged attendees to firmly defend

human rights and took a stance against war, grieving the senseless waste of knowledge which should no longer be used to kill, destroy and annihilate the achievements of previous centuries⁷.

A good move by the organizers, which undoubtedly contributed to the success of the Congress, was to narrow the debate itself, and put certain limits in place. As far as content of the debates was concerned, delegates were not allowed to argue about who had the responsibility for the present war, nor about regulating future wars. As regards procedure, except for those presenting resolutions, no one could speak for more than five minutes.

The Congress adopted 20 resolutions, from which we have selected some of the major proposals:

Protest against the war: “We women, in International Congress assembled, protest against the madness and the horror of war, involving as it does a reckless sacrifice of human life and the destruction of so much that humanity has laboured through centuries to build up”⁸.

It also opposed the assumption that women can be protected under the conditions of modern warfare, protesting vehemently against the wrongs of which women are the victims in time of war, and especially against the horrible violation of women.

Proposals for peace and mediation: the Congress urged the governments of the world to put an end to bloodshed, and to begin peace negotiations for a permanent peace, and based on the principles of justice; a resolution to ask the neutral countries to immediately convene a conference to offer continuous mediation for reaching an agreement between belligerent nations.

The resolutions clearly set out the conditions for achieving a permanent peace: respect for nationality; that the right of conquest not be recognized; that all people possess autonomy and democratic parliaments; that foreign policy is subject to democratic control; that the world’s governments agree to resolve future disputes through arbitration and conciliation and that international, moral and economic pressure be brought to bear upon governments that resort to arms, instead of referring their case to

arbitration and conciliation. This was to be a real program for building an international policy to guarantee peace and justice.

“ The Congress urged the governments of the world to put an end to bloodshed, and to begin peace negotiations for a permanent peace ”

The final report of the Congress, including the interventions of the founding mothers, an account of the proceedings and agreed resolutions, was drafted in the three official languages: English, French and German. Also included were the names of all the delegates, grouped by country and the acknowledgments sent by organizations around the world. In keeping with the wish of the Congress, the report was sent to the governments of the European countries which took a stand against the war and were in favour of the reconstruction of Europe, as well as libraries in the United States and Europe, thereby resulting in widespread international media coverage.

Rosika Schwimmer's proposal to send delegations to the belligerent and neutral countries to implement the Congress resolutions and try to bring an end to the war sparked controversy and lively debate, but was finally approved. While these women did not have the right to vote in their own countries, their conviction and drive enabled them, in practice, to become ambassadors of peace, and they were received and listened to with respect by the leaders of 14 capitals, prime ministers and ministers of foreign affairs; including the King of Norway, the Pope and the President of the US⁹. Jane Addams led one such delegation and was in charge of meeting with the President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, who took careful note of what was said: the basic philosophy, as well as some of the proposals of the women from The Hague Congress influenced peace proposals that the President made in 1918 and are known as the “Wilson's Fourteen Points”.

“ The women from The Hague positioned themselves defiantly on the stage of international politics, even becoming active subjects thereof ”

Those behind The Hague Congress and those who answered their call refused to follow the patriotic and bellicose path which had led their countries to a bloody confrontation. They wished to forcefully express their rejection of war and a negotiated solution. The neutral countries failed to convene the much desired peace conference, but the influence of these women, who, in practice, overcame the stigma of having been deprived of their citizenship rights, extended beyond the Great War. Despite being excluded from the public sphere, the women from The Hague positioned themselves defiantly on the stage of international politics, even becoming active subjects thereof. After the war they continued to criticize the bad policies that excluded the vanquished from negotiations and encouraged others to continue working, just as they had done as precursors for human rights and internationalism. The organization which came into being at the Congress, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom will soon celebrate a hundred years of working for freedom and peace through justice.

1. For peace as a free choice for women, please see chapter 5 of Carmen Magallón's work (2012) *Contar en el mundo. Una mirada sobre las Relaciones Internacionales desde las vidas de las mujeres. (Counting in the world. A look at International Relations from the lives of women).*

2. Invitations were sent out to women's organisations, mixed organisations and to individual women throughout the world. Even though delegates could only be female, the congress was also attended by men acting as observers. Each organisation was allowed to send two delegates.

3. Nash, Mary (2004) *Women in the World. History, Challenges and Movements.* Madrid, Alianza.

4. Report de WILPF 1915, p. 33

5. North American social reformer and Nobel Peace Prize winner 1931.

6. Speech by Jane Addams. Report WILPF 1915, p. 18

7. Aletta Jacobs at the International Women's Congress. Report de WILPF 1915, p. 7

8. WILPF Resolutions: 1st Congress, The Hague, Netherlands, 1915.

9. Carmen Magallón (2006) *Mujeres en pie de paz*, Madrid, Siglo XXI.

Photography : Press photograph from the George Grantham Bain collection / CC -
Female delegates to the 1915 Women's Peace Conference in The Hague, aboard the MS Noordam.
April 1915. -

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RECOMANEM

Materials and resources recommended by the ICIP

Documentary

Living Along the Fenceline

The 65-minute documentary *Living Along the Fenceline* tells the stories of seven women who have seen how the presence of US military bases at their doorsteps affects their lives. Their individual experiences are representative of many silenced stories of communities around the world that live alongside US bases and endure the hidden costs of this fact on their land and on their culture.

The film, co-directed by Lina Hoshino and Gwyn Kirk, connects the stories of women from Texas, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, Guam, the Philippines, Korea and Okinawa (Japan) and their efforts to create real security in their local communities. Through the narration of each personal story, this documentary tells a much greater story that describes in detail the negative impact US bases have on the local communities that house them. It also shows the strength and creativity of women's activism that defies the predominant conceptions of military security. By following the work of women leaders of grassroots movements who act according to their visions and beliefs, the film provides us with alternative ideas of peace and security.

Book

Intelligent compassion, by Catia Cecilia Confortini

The long life of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), which commemorates its 100th anniversary in 2015, has been possible, among other things, because of its capacity to revise its own proposals and change its policies and activism.

This capacity for change and the methodology used in the process are the objects of study of this book by Catia Cecilia Confortini, published in 2012 and based on her doctoral thesis. Confortini argues that the changes in the policies and ideas regarding peace that WILPF experienced between the years 1945 and 1975 were made possible by critical feminist methodology.

In an initial phase, WILPF framed its political discourse within the liberal order and believed that peace and, as a result, disarmament would be achieved with the help of laws and agreements between states. It trusted that science and technology, guided by reason and rationality, would guide humanity toward progress, creating a situation in which peace would be established.

In a second phase, WILPF began to understand peace as a result of the disarmament that would be achieved with the establishment of an economic order based on human needs and justice. It was during this phase that WILPF began to consider that disarmament and economic justice was of special interest to women; that they had developed skills that were useful to work for peace and that the objectives and principles of feminism were incompatible with militarism and the arms race. They therefore began to consider feminism as a political movement in favor of equality, the welfare of people and, ultimately, peace.

According to Confortini, WILPF's vision of peace was transformed thanks to a methodology that promoted self-reflection on its ideas and practices, and a more participatory and inclusive decision-making system. The critical feminist methodology practiced by WILPF incorporated reflections on world visions, on knowledge and on methods that corresponded with values of peace. The interaction between these elements allowed the organization to break free from the trap of the context that gave it origin and shape, transforming and revitalizing itself, and preparing it for a century of history.

Book

***Antimilitarisme. Dinàmiques polítiques i de gènere dels moviments per la pau*, de Cynthia Cockburn**

In this book, Cynthia Cockburn's analysis of social movements, the result of conscientious case studies, reflects an image of their internal dynamics and the different ways they carry out and propose actions and campaigns. The vividness she transmits comes from the way she deals with social movements, as collective forms of action that are always under construction by people who reflect on what they are doing. It should also be pointed out that Cockburn always focuses on the experience of women and is therefore particularly sensitive to the way in which the relationships between men and women develop within the social movements she discusses.

Documented with reliable information, mainly through in-depth interviews, the author reveals the coherence and contradictions in the speeches and practices of movements that share the common objective of making peace possible; this despite their divergence regarding their analysis of the causes of militarism and the strategies defended to eradicate it. Thus we are introduced to initiatives as diverse as the women's peace movements in Britain at three moments of the 20th century, the antimilitarist and conscientious objection movements, the initiatives of Korean women to achieve the reunification of the two Koreas, the campaigns against US military bases in Okinawa and in the rest of Japan, a citizen's initiative of solidarity with Palestine, or a transnational campaign against NATO.

The uniqueness of the book, which is based on a combination of rigorous research and a vital approach to the aforementioned movements, is probably related to the author's academic career and personal options. Cynthia Cockburn combines her academic career in the Department of Sociology at City University London and the Centre for the Study of Women and Gender, University of Warwick, with her commitment and participation in pacifist and feminist networks such as Women in Black against War and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Her experience in these two environments surely improves her academic knowledge – which connects with the reality she studies – and the rigor in the analysis and information about a reality that the social movements want to transform.

TRIBUNA

Islamic State and the Kurds, new heavyweight players in the Middle East

David Meseguer

Journalist

Summary executions, slavery of women, religious and ethnic cleansing... the list of crimes against humanity committed by the terrorist organization Islamic State (IS) is typical of bygone days, of conflicts very distant in time. With the 100th anniversary of the start of the Armenian genocide and the 20th anniversary of the end of the war in Bosnia, the emergence of a regional actor with the moral and ethical principles and the methods used by IS is undoubtedly another failure for humankind. Still in a state of shock, the international community and the culture of peace movement must find our bearings once again and look for alternatives to the, thus far, ineffective military strategy.

Islamic State was born of the expression that violence breeds more violence. The military invasion of Iraq in 2003 by an international coalition led by the United States forced a regime change in Baghdad with the consequent marginalization of the Sunni community and the implementation of systematic torture in prisons like Abu Ghraib. This situation has brought about the ideal conditions necessary for the emergence of armed radical groups armed to the teeth with reasons to legitimise their operation as the new territorial leaders among specific sectors of the population who are disappointed with, and feel abandoned by the Iraqi state.

Chaos and anarchy, mainly resulting from the war in Syria, have allowed IS to grow in strength, extend their domains and gain a share of power to become one of the key players in the region. The Syrian regime and the rebels have blood on their hands having committed crimes against humanity, but they also share a willingness to negotiate and

to find a solution that will bring an end to the conflict. Despite the failure of the two rounds of talks held in Geneva, both sides have political interlocutors who have put specific demands on the table and have achieved some local truces. The fact that the Islamic State has no interlocutors with whom to negotiate is the main differentiating factor with other current conflicts such as Ukraine and Colombia, where despite the confrontations, there is a willingness to negotiate. .

“ Chaos and anarchy have allowed IS to grow in strength, extend their domains and gain a share of power to become one of the key players in the region ”

While there is no possibility of bringing Islamic State to the negotiating table, and bearing in mind that military action only makes the conflict worse, what is needed is a strategy that allows them to deactivate gradually. Firstly, Sunni discontent must be appeased through forming a government in Baghdad that is inclusive of minorities. Secondly, joint efforts are required to cut financing channels of IS, extreme border surveillance to stop the arrival of jihadist fighters and increase the control over social networks used as an instrument of propaganda and recruitment. Moreover, it is necessary to improve relations with the Islamic communities living in non-Muslim countries to address social exclusion; the principal factor responsible for pushing many young people into joining SI and favouring the appointment of Imams who promote a message to counter radical Islam teachings in mosques.

In the context of a much troubled Middle East, another actor marginalised and forgotten by the international community since the end of World War I has also reappeared with greater strength than ever: the Kurds. The Sykes Picot Agreement of 1916 and the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 dashed all aspirations of fulfilling the promise of a Kurdish state by the colonial powers and forced this thousand year old Mesopotamian people to live divided amongst territories that would become the states of Turkey, Iran, Armenia, Syria and Iraq. Subjected to the yoke of theocratic regimes, and

supposedly secular democracies, the Kurds have yet to have their linguistic or rights of identity even recognised.

The last chapter of this ignorance towards the Kurds took place in January 2014 during the Geneva II peace talks. Only the Syrian regime and the opposition were seated at the table, while Syria's leading political force had not been invited. Since the beginning of the war in Syria, Syrian Kurds, which number around 2.5 million in total, have adopted a defensive attitude and have tried to remain uninvolved in the struggle between the government of Bashar al -Assad and the Syrian opposition. While the government of the Syrian Arab Republic has maintained an assimilating and repressive attitude towards the Kurds in recent decades, the opposition has a distinctly Arab and Islamist agenda that ignores the integration of ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities.

“ The international community cannot repeat past mistakes or ignore them. There will be no peace in the Middle East without resolving the Kurdish question ”

Since July 2012, the Kurdish people have been operating self-government outside of Damascus and the Syrian opposition. Taking the war situation into account, this administration has created a strong executive force, teaching Kurdish in schools, ensuring the rights of women and minorities and creating certain state structures such as an army and a police force. This administration's guarantor is a Constitution that has declared that the official languages are Kurdish, Arabic and Aramaic, spoken by Assyrian Christians. To maintain harmony and avoid ethnic and religious conflicts, the self-governing Kurds have established electoral quotas for the different nationalities and religions and equal representation of men and women in the administration. Moreover, the Syrian Kurdish government has the obligation to guarantee political pluralism and avoid becoming a one-party project.

The emergence of the Islamic State and its fixation on ethnic and religious minorities, especially the offensive in the Kurdish city of Kobane has situated the Kurds as a key player in both the Syrian and Iraqi conflicts. Kurdish commitment to peace has been stated time and again throughout these past months. Moreover, the Kurds are the only faction that has allowed access to organizations like Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and several other diplomatic delegations into the territories under its control. These NGOs have denounced the repression of the main political party in Syria towards its political opponents and the use of child soldiers to fight. In this regard, the Syrian Kurd self-government admitted its mistakes and has tried to address the situation by signing a commitment with the NGO Geneva Call. Witnessing the increasingly decisive role of the Kurdish people, the international community cannot repeat past mistakes and must avoid them. There will be no peace in the Middle East without resolving the Kurdish question.

Photography : Montecruz Foto / CC BY / Desaturada. - *Demonstration of the Kurdish community against Islamic State. September 2014 -*

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TRIBUNA

Reflections on Peace Education

Alicia Cabezudo

International Association of Educators for Peace

Education for peace and respect for human rights is particularly important in this period, if we compare the values this education promotes with the daily violence, the horrors of war and the gradual destruction of values such as solidarity, cooperation and respect for others: all of them problems that assault us every day.

Indiscriminate persecution, massacres and ethnic cleansing are difficult to explain when our shocked and surprised students ask us about them; perhaps they are even incomprehensible in the context of education. It is harder still to clarify these processes when the possible solution for acts such as these is, in fact, the continued bombing of cities and of a desperate civilian population.

We also come across extreme everyday situations when we analyse the inequality and injustice of our socio-economic surroundings and the brutal violence of our “ideal” modern societies... in which it is the state itself that attacks the population, where individualism and self interest are promoted and where whatever is considered “different” becomes “dangerous”. These are all wars, of a different type, but with the same ingredients of injustice, violence and destruction.

Here the responses of educators become drained of content and their explanations no longer work. The practice of building knowledge through research, reading, the analysis of information, interviews, genesis of conflicts, systematisation of what has been learnt, the development of critical thinking, etc, should lead us to rethink the educational model applied until now. This model is perhaps slightly naive, despite its apparent progressive pedagogical nature, and it is one with which educators ourselves have come to be unhappy.

I believe that Peace Education, although considered a transversal element in many educational curriculum models around the world, has in fact been conceived as a secondary matter. Something necessary but accidental, important but not essential, present but “absent”. A view of the curriculum which dignifies it without modifying it, without designing new alternatives for a humanitarian, ethical, civic education – something increasingly necessary in the world we live in.

Because Peace Education means developing a critical, serious and profound approach to the current situation of which we form a part and the historical epoch in which we find ourselves, an undeniable reality that does not always appear in the plans of the Ministries, of educational institutions nor of many principals and teachers.

“ Peace Education has been conceived as a secondary matter; something necessary but accidental, important but not essential, present but “absent” ”

“Peace is not defined only by the absence of war and conflict, it is also a dynamic concept that needs to be grasped in positive terms, such as the presence of social justice and harmony, the possibility for human beings to fully realise their potential and respect for their right to live with dignity throughout their lives. Sustainable human development is not possible without peace. And without just, equitable, ongoing planning, peace cannot be maintained.”¹

These concepts, particularly relevant in the context of the analysis we are currently trying to develop, should influence all imaginable pedagogical proposals for Peace Education, giving it a multidimensional character, able to reach into different areas.

We are witnessing today a reworking of our models and our vocabularies and we understand that there are major changes in the concept of peace, above all as it relates to the opposite term, “war”. This conceptual modification should be integrated, along

with the methodology for teaching it, into the learning of teachers and students.

Indeed, after many years the idea of peace has evolved and a broader and more complex understanding of it now relates it to the concepts of fairness, justice, respect for human rights, the rights of peoples and tolerance. Alongside this process, teaching practices in Peace Education have also been modified, taking on a clear commitment to the principles of democratic participation along with the implementation of educational activities which include issues of nonviolence and conflict transformation by peaceful means, with a view to building a more compassionate, juster and fairer society.

“ Peace, as an individual, social, national and international value must be analysed in depth from an interdisciplinary and multidimensional perspective ”

Armed conflicts in other parts of the world now make us more open to a cognitive, systematic and up to date treatment of the miseries and cruelties of war and also to the analysis of its terrible consequences, using the multiple resources that the media allow us, bringing it closer to us. Peace, as an individual, social, national and international value must be tested and analysed in depth from an interdisciplinary and multidimensional perspective.

The geographical and historical treatment of the subject is necessary but not sufficient. Concepts and issues such as nationalism, sovereignty and the state; the role of the UN in the world of today; the reality of different ethnicities and their complicated coexistence; intercultural dialogue; solutions and disagreements within conflicts; the situation of refugees and their terrible defencelessness before the attacks of “friends” and enemies; crime related to drugs and prostitution; the dangers of nuclear war; the arms race and the arms trade as a profitable global business are urgent and important issues.

All of these issues desperately need to be the subject of reflection, debate, research and criticism by both teachers and students in an ongoing exercise of deepening knowledge, developed both individually and collectively on the basis of obtaining information from many sources, promoting the exchange of different opinions, developing critical judgment and the respect for diversity².

But even this is not enough if we isolate the international problems that distress us so much from the everyday “wars” of the society in which we live. Marginalisation, social exclusion, violence and persecution are not things that we can only find in news reports about Mexico, Colombia, Syria, Crimea, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan...

“ An obligatory task of education is to link direct open conflicts with those “wars” which have other features ”

There are other “wars” much closer to home, right next to us. Social inequality, lack of vital resources for much of the population, unemployment and poverty create hopelessness and distrust of democratically elected governments. Authoritarian mechanisms, the control of information, crimes, delinquency and impunity are part of our political life.

In this sense, war is not so far away... and not only because of the globalisation of the arms trade or the information that we receive from the transnational media. It is a daily war to survive in terrible conditions of housing and health, of education and employment, of the insufficiency of essential public services and insecurity, with basic inherent principles of human dignity being trampled on every day in many countries and continents.

It is an obligatory task of education to link these two aspects: the direct open conflicts with those “wars” which have other features but are no less intense. Only through a comprehensive analysis of the roots of violence, its characteristics, forms and consequences can we make it possible to achieve a critical reflection, at the levels of

both the individual and society, so as to generate possible changes that may lead towards a lasting peace in today's world.

This is the great educational challenge for the coming years and for our pedagogical work in the field of Peace Education. Let us dare to face up to it.

1. Iglesias Díaz, Calo (2007). *Educar pacificando: Una pedagogía de los conflictos*, 1a edición, Madrid, Fundación Cultura de Paz Editorial.

2 Bazán Campos, Domingo (2008). *El oficio de pedagogo. Aportes para la construcción de una práctica reflexiva en la escuela*, Rosario, Argentina, Ed. Homo Sapiens.

Photography : United Nations Development Programme in Europe and CIS / CC BY / Desaturada. - Kids celebrate peace, friendship and tolerance on United Nations day -

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SOBRE L'ICIP

News, activities and publications about the ICIP

ICIP

International Catalan Institute for Peace

ICIP awards the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

The Governing Board of the International Catalan Institute for Peace has unanimously decided to grant the 2014 ICIP Peace in Progress Award to the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) 'for its century-long involvement in the work of women for peace, its commitment to disarmament, the defense of human rights and the persistence to obtain the recognition of the role of women in the building of peace'.

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom was a pioneer in the creation of an internationalist pacifist feminism and is a model for all initiatives of women for peace.

ICIP's Peace in Progress Award is granted annually and consists of public recognition, a sculpture created by the Nobel Peace Prize winner, artist and activist Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, called Porta del Sol, and a financial prize of 4,000 euros. The award ceremony will take place during the first trimester of 2015 in Barcelona.

Peace Capsules Project launches new website

The Peace Capsules Project aims to show the diversity of visions and expectations projected on the word "peace". It is a co-production of the International Catalan Institute for Peace (ICIP) and the Contrast Collective, with the collaboration of Digital Dosis.

Fifty-two people from around the world answer the question: *What is peace to you?* in connection with their experience in countries in conflict or with their commitment against war and in favor of the building of peace.

Each one of these reflections, produced in video format with subtitles in Catalan, Spanish and English, are called capsules and are compiled on the website www.capsulesdepau.com. The different capsules are organized by name, date and country of origin.

Film series on Colombia

ICIP and Taula Catalana per la Pau i els Drets Humans a Colòmbia are organizing a film series to give visibility and promote reflection on situations – often unknown – of violence and violations of human rights in Colombia documentaries and films will be screened at 8pm at the Méliès Cinemas in Barcelona.

The next screening is:

Thursday, February 5, 2015:

Screening of the documentaries '[Perdimos y seguimos perdiendo](#)' and '[Desplazados](#)' by Josep Lluís Penadès. The director of the documentaries will participate in the event.

Latest publications

The following essays and books have been recently published in the ICIP collections:

[*The EU Regional Security Complex between 2001 and 2011 in relation to the threat from Islamic terrorism and weapons of mass destruction*](#), ICIP Working Paper by Alessandro Demurtas

[*Spanish Provincial Reconstruction Team \(PRT\) in Badghis \(Afghanistan\), 2005 - 2013*](#), ICIP Working Paper by Carme Roure

[*The "Caucasus Knot": a new lap of violence*](#), ICIP Working Paper by Sergey Sukhankin

[*El arma de moda: el impacto del uso de los drones en las relaciones internacionales y el derecho internacional contemporáneo*](#), ICIP Research

Escenarios postconflicto en Colombia. Agenda, oportunidades y hoja de ruta, proceedings of the Seminar that took place on May 2014 in Barcelona (in Spanish)

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INTERVIEW

Interview with Adilia Caravaca, President of WILPF

Eugènia Riera

International Catalan Institute for Peace

Adilia Caravaca, a Costa Rican lawyer, has a long record as a peace activist.

Adilia Caravaca, a Costa Rican lawyer, has a long record as a peace activist. She has worked in numerous social organisations in Latin America, mainly in the fields of social development, human rights, indigenous people's rights, conflict resolution and food security. She is currently the President of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), which was recently awarded the ICIP Peace in Progress Award 2014 for its century long history of work with women for peace and disarmament. In this interview, Adilia Caravaca weighs up these 100 years of WILPF and reflects from the point of view of gender on the current challenges on the road to peace.

First, congratulations on the ICIP Award. A prize that recognises, no more and no less, a hundred years of women's struggles for peace and disarmament. You must feel very proud of this century-long record...

Of course, we are very pleased and grateful. Above all in this very difficult period where wars go on and sometimes you feel that you're not getting anywhere, when suddenly they give you recognition it encourages all WILPF members all around the world.

WILPF will be a hundred years old in 2015. Of everything that the organisation has achieved over this time, what do you feel most proud of?

You have to remember that when the WILPF started in 1915, women still didn't have the right to vote in many parts of the world, and there was an important resolution on this

matter. Also in the interwar period many of our members were active in favour of civil rights, particularly in the United States. For example, two Nobel Peace Prize winners in the USA, Jane Adams and Emily Green, were very involved. This was also a very important fight. We do not mean to claim ownership of its achievements, but it is important to remember that many of our members were in those movements, on Martin Luther King's marches from Alabama to Washington... the women of the WILPF were there.

Throughout the twentieth century, the role and involvement of women in the cause of peace has been seen in numerous initiatives (groups such as Women in Black, the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, the mothers of El Salvador, the Women's Pacific Route in Colombia, Bat Shalom in Palestine, women's groups in the north of Ireland...). However, this intense activity at the level of civil society has not always managed to influence governments in the seat of power. Why do you think that is?

I think it could be due to the dominant patriarchal culture, which makes it very difficult to change things. Even when women have managed to get into positions of power they have often done so taking on roles that are not very different from the traditional patriarchal discourses and structures. The fight for another way of exercising power and promoting new forms of organisation is a task that remains to be done. There are significant efforts and initiatives, such as women's participation among the Zapatistas in Mexico, but we still need to have a broader consensus, we have to aim for a political platform run by women – with the participation of men also – which poses substantial programmatic questions about how power is exercised and why.

How can that be achieved? Is political will lacking in this regard?

It's not just a question of political will, because we can not depend on the will of those who are in power and have not understood what is needed. We need greater political organisation by those of us who want change, by all the social sectors that agree with women's groups on the basic questions. We need to connect the different social movements (movements of indigenous peoples, for land, for food security, etc.) so as to promote a political agenda that includes us. Time after time, women support different social struggles but when we women mobilise – particularly in the whole movement against gender based violence – we often don't find the same support and solidarity

from other social movements. Within the peace movement in general you don't find that reaction of saying 'that issue has to do with us.' The different movements still mobilise separately (for example, the International Day of Peace on 21 September and the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on 25 November...) There is a pending issue of greater coordination and solidarity, we have to join forces.

**“ The fight for another way of exercising power
and promoting new forms of organisation is a
task that remains to be done ”**

WILPF played a major role in the adoption of UN Resolution 1325, which recognises the contribution of women to peacebuilding. The resolution will be 15 years old in 2015. What is your assessment of its application? Has it been effective?

Here we definitely haven't seen any political will on the part of those who have the power to take decisions. It has always required a big struggle by women ourselves to obtain the spaces we should have as women in the debates and at the negotiating tables. How can it be that this hasn't been taken seriously? The resolution was adopted, but because they are so used to leaving women out of things, it's all very difficult, isn't it? You can see that in the processes of negotiation around Syria, Colombia, and so on.

What call would you make to the international community so as to change this situation?

We are already monitoring this, we are asking for it to be a permanent item when rendering accounts before the United Nations and in the different human rights committees. But the NGO sector and also the media play a very important role in reminding people and calling people to account. It is a question of rights; they have to comply with the rules and it is important that as women we continue to be effective in this regard.

WILPF carries out work of activism and mobilisations, and also that of influencing decision-making, of lobbying. In which of these areas can you achieve most?

Over the years, one major achievement has been to influence and change certain narratives at the United Nations, particularly on the Security Council and on the Human Rights Council, where we've worked systematically. It has been a significant step to have many women, especially from areas of armed conflict, getting their voices heard and getting their demands into different UN agencies. We have had a significant impact as an organization at the level of the international bodies but this is an ongoing task. In terms of social movements, there have been achievements in national campaigns, for example in the field of the Arms Trade Treaty or in the campaign to abolish nuclear weapons. Our disarmament program, "Reaching Critical Will", has been very consistent in informing and being present at the committees.

“ Resolution 1325 hasn't been taken seriously. We haven't seen any political will to guarantee spaces for women participation at the negotiating tables ”

Disarmament is one of main lines of work of WILPF. You call for a shift from a war economy to a peace economy, where state security is based on human rights and not on arms. This could seem utopian, couldn't it?

This was one of the organisation's first resolutions and what we want to reaffirm it on our 100th birthday. You have to have utopias if you want to move forwards. The war economy is extremely powerful and the ideology behind it is also very strong, with huge economic interests at play. So the accusation, if you want to call it that, that we are utopian shouldn't lead us to give in or reduce our efforts to achieve disarmament. Centuries back, the struggles for the abolition of slavery and for equal rights for women also seemed utopian and we managed to reach those goals, achieving things that before had seemed impossible.

And in what way is progress being made?

There is progress in terms of awareness about the uselessness of weapons to achieve peace and about the threat they pose to the survival of the planet and of humanity. It's not a matter of one class or race against another, it is a matter of survival. Although it is slow, I like to maintain my hopes that we are moving towards a different consciousness. Keeping our utopia, or whatever you want to call it, motivates us to continue struggling, even if the short-term results seem scarce or limited. But there's no way that we are going to be frightened off.

“ You have to have utopias if you want to move forwards even if the short-term results seem scarce or limited. We can't give in nor reduce our efforts to achieve disarmament ”

On receiving the ICIP award, you said that the road to peace continues to be difficult. What challenges are pending?

I don't want to sound fatalistic, because we've made significant progress. Now there are a lot more people involved in the work for peace, we have peace studies, there are masses of organisations working for peace and human rights... But although the wars are fewer, they are very intense. To this we must add the nature of the weapons, the use of drones, the levels of what they call “collateral damage”... the number of civilian deaths in these attacks is tremendous and disproportionate. In the field of respect for human rights, for example, we sometimes see progress and then suddenly we have a situation like what is going on now in Mexico, where once again we see disappearances of students and the reappearance of mass graves and torture, and these things are very worrying. There are still many challenges: how can we convince the people at the top, those in the strongest centres of military power, that these increasing wars that we are seeing are harmful and useless? And above all, we need to change minds and make politicians accountable: no one must be exempt from international justice, because

there is an issue of responsibility. How can an industry as destructive as the industry of war – what they call “security” – grow while so many human needs are left unattended, needs whose fulfilment could bring enormous economic progress?

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