

# 1 Women in Europe and the United States

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Despite the huge burden that the war brought to their lives, women's entry into jobs left by men during World War I and the political rights women acquired during or after the war have long been considered as evidence of their "emancipation." However, the changing roles of men and women during the war years were reversed quickly after the war with the emergence of pronatalist politics, authoritarian-conservative states, and the demand by society to return to "normalcy." According to Françoise Thébaud, the lack of studies on countries other than the United States and those in western Europe also enforces the idea that the war liberated women as a whole.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, reaching a more realistic picture requires comparing the situation of women in these countries with that of Ottoman women. However, it is necessary to know first of all the distinct nature of World War I.

## **The First "Total War"**

Many historians consider World War I to have been the first "total war."<sup>2</sup> Unlike the "limited wars" of the nineteenth century, which required smaller armies, World War I was almost limitless in terms of its destructiveness, social impact, and mobilization of economic sources and human power.<sup>3</sup> All of the powerful imperial countries and all of the European countries, except for Spain, Holland, Switzerland, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, entered into the war.<sup>4</sup> Whereas the social impact of previous wars was much more limited to the battlefield, at the onset of the twentieth century, war became "total" and brought about a new concept of "home front" as a civilian sphere upon which the combatants fought. It was on this front where other sorts of battles for propaganda, mobilization, and maintenance of social order occurred.<sup>5</sup>

The development of new weapons, transportation vehicles, and communication techniques in the nineteenth century transformed World War I into a mass warfare.<sup>6</sup> New military technology changed the nature of war

and made it longer and more brutal.<sup>7</sup> Machine guns killed hundreds of thousands of soldiers in trench warfare campaigns like those of Somme and Verdun. Poison gas was used extensively for the first time.<sup>8</sup> Starting from the autumn of 1916, tanks were introduced.<sup>9</sup> Airplane technology and air attacks made World War I the first three-dimensional war, occurring on land, on sea, and in the air.<sup>10</sup>

Consequently, the human loss was enormous. To continue the war, France mobilized 8,000,000 soldiers, Britain 5,700,000, and Germany 13,000,000.<sup>11</sup> About 1,397,000 French soldiers died during World War I.<sup>12</sup> Likewise, about 2,040,000 German, 1,800,000 Russian, 1,100,000 Austro-Hungarian, 700,000 British, and 114,000 American soldiers died.<sup>13</sup> Out of more than 331,000 Australian men conscripted by 1918, 60,000 soldiers never returned home.<sup>14</sup> Even though the number of casualties was higher among the rich belligerent countries, the percentage of casualties was greater in poorer ones, which could not finance new war technology, like Serbia, Romania, and Bulgaria, and in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>15</sup>

Worldwide, the soldier and civilian losses of World War I reached up to 42 million people due to epidemics and other factors.<sup>16</sup> The bombardment of cities changed the definition of the concept of front.<sup>17</sup> Civilians also experienced violence since the battlefield in many cases was very close to settlements.<sup>18</sup> Germany's occupation of Belgium and the northern and eastern regions of France, and its raping and killing French women and deporting them from Lille to use as forced labor in other occupied regions were some examples.<sup>19</sup> Civilian deaths were even worse in eastern Europe, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the Ottoman Empire, where disintegration due to internal national and religious clashes was common.<sup>20</sup> More civilians died than soldiers in countries like Bulgaria, Russia, and Serbia.<sup>21</sup> The adverse impact of the war on the demography of France and Germany persisted long after the war.<sup>22</sup>

The economy was the main actor of World War I. Wealthier combatant powers could send more ammunition to their soldiers over very long distances. Poorer countries, in contrast, had to rely much more on human power and intensely exploited their civilians. Mobilization policies caused hunger in poorer countries more frequently. Consequently, the war ended mainly because the belligerents' economies could no longer support the war effort.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, the Allied powers used blockade as an effective tool to exhaust German society and to force German political leaders to stop the war.<sup>24</sup> Likewise, shortages and hunger in Russia paved the way for the Bolshevik Revolution and Russia's subsequent withdrawal from World War I.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, all war governments used propaganda to support economic warfare. Their regulation of the

everyday life of civilians became as important as their military efforts.<sup>26</sup> For this purpose, governments exploited communication and publication facilities and used strong censorship.<sup>27</sup> Women Red Cross members worked actively for war propaganda.<sup>28</sup>

Women's social and economic roles increased with conscription of men. Women worked in arms production factories as munitions workers.<sup>29</sup> They also played active roles in paramilitary forces.<sup>30</sup> Consequently, people started questioning the traditional gender roles. World War I was constructed as a "men's war." The depiction of war as "a school to teach manhood" was dominant, while women's agency was restricted to more passive roles, such as those of nurses or prostitutes.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, in some stronger Western societies, women performed several duties and jobs that only men had done before, while many men, as soldiers, learned tasks regarded as feminine in peacetime and suffered combat-related physical or mental disability.<sup>32</sup> Soldiers were more anxious about household affairs than ever before.<sup>33</sup> In men's absence, soldiers' families were vulnerable to impoverishment, sexual harassment, and violation of their rights. The void of men at home was to be partly filled with the welfare state.

### **Wartime Welfare Measures for Women**

From the late nineteenth century onwards, industrial states introduced welfare measures for the poor. However, with only World War I these states replaced liberal economic policies with more interventionist ones.<sup>34</sup> Before, nineteenth-century militant feminists had urged the development of "maternalist policies."<sup>35</sup> However, poor women, as well, had actively demanded certain welfare rights these feminists asserted.<sup>36</sup> World War I accelerated the introduction of similar welfare measures, especially due to the demographic problems the war unleashed. Both philanthropic women's organizations and the state took greater initiative in the welfare of poor women, particularly in terms of providing food, pensions for soldiers' families, and social assistance to refugees and mothers.<sup>37</sup>

Most women's demands and protests were related to food. Hunger was more severe in some countries. During the war, the municipality of Berlin had to provide food to 3.6 million people, the municipality of Paris to 4 million people, and the municipality of London to about 7.2 million people. Although less people needed food in Berlin, the Allied blockade created a black market and inflation. Certain products were lacking in Britain as well, but British people ate better. Despite soaring food prices in London and Paris, it was Berlin that suffered from inflation the most. Seven hundred thousand German civilians died due to hunger. In the

later years of the war, food deprivation grew so serious that in Berlin some women exchanged sex for food.<sup>38</sup>

Housework also became more complicated in Germany because of shortages.<sup>39</sup> Working women waited in long food-rationing lines after work. They often returned home with no bread for their hungry children.<sup>40</sup> In Berlin, poor housewives and women workers especially protested the dual-price system, which continued the privileges of the rich.<sup>41</sup>

Food shortages in items such as bread and milk caused civilian rebellion. The first serious food rebellion in Berlin happened in October 1915. The protestors soon realized that their demonstrations forced the municipalities to provide more food. A growing number of protests by poor German women eventually played an important role in the revolution of November 1918. In Austria-Hungary most wartime strikes were due to hunger. Crowds of Austrian women and children pillaged fields of potatoes in 1918. Poor French women rioters, too, forced their government to control food distribution.<sup>42</sup>

Wartime social policy often created further inequalities and mistrust of the government among ordinary women. The German public detested the state's war propaganda and attacked those classified as "soldier's wife," "mother of many children," and "munitions worker's wife," who acquired state aid. People protested the War Profiteering Office (Kriegswucheramt) in which the officials themselves were part of the hoarding process. The government's public kitchens also caused dissatisfaction, which resulted in their closure by August 1917.<sup>43</sup>

Monetary assistance distributed by the state caused further problems. During the war, the number of war widows was about three million and of war orphans between seven million and ten million in the belligerent countries.<sup>44</sup> Germany and France each had about six hundred thousand war widows, while in Britain their number exceeded two hundred thousand.<sup>45</sup> In Australia more than eight thousand women were left without breadwinners.<sup>46</sup> All governments devised allowance and pension programs for soldiers' families and war widows, though in different amounts and using varied means of payment.<sup>47</sup> The need was so acute that in Germany the number of people who received government assistance reached eleven million in 1915.<sup>48</sup>

The allocation of pensions created tensions due to unsuccessful distribution. In Germany, the government did not calculate widows' pensions according to the economic situations of their deceased husbands. Furthermore, despite the wartime inflation, the pensions allocated to war widows did not increase, whereas the allowances paid to living soldiers' families were raised twice during 1916. The French

government also discriminated among war widows, and women whose husbands died on the battlefield received more money.<sup>49</sup>

Some conservative Germans criticized women's new economic "independence" by using these pensions. However, beneficiary women protested the unequal practices inherent in the pension programs. Only German women in the countryside were able to survive with government assistance, while women in the big cities needed more money.<sup>50</sup> Likewise, in France, the government aid was very low compared to the money men had brought home before the war. To close this gap, French philanthropic institutions, municipal administrations, and charitable organizations at the local level helped widows and children, thereby creating a kind of "fictive kinship."<sup>51</sup>

While helping these soldiers' families, the war governments' main goal was to ensure social order and morality. Therefore, pension payments were linked closely to women's moral behavior or contribution to war effort. For instance, the French state cut the pensions of women seen drinking alcohol. In Austria-Hungary as well, the pension distribution commissions refused supporting women without small children to push women into working in the war industry. Nevertheless, these pensions' sanction power was limited, because they primarily served to boost the morale of soldiers anxious about their families. Thus, although German beneficiary women were unwilling to work in the war industry, the government feared cutting their pensions since this could demoralize soldiers. In contrast, many German women, unable to survive on such pensions, preferred working to receiving state assistance.<sup>52</sup>

Other than by getting pensions, women survived by leaving one job for another, selling household goods, getting married again, or moving to another house. In France, about 37 percent of all war widows remarried until 1927–28. Before World War II this increased to 42 percent. In Germany, too, one-third of six hundred thousand widows remarried by 1924. However, this was not an option for many British widows, since in 1914 there were already 1.3 million British women with little chance of getting married due to a shortage of men.<sup>53</sup>

In addition to war widows, refugee women also needed assistance. After the German occupation of Belgium, about 1.4 million Belgians fled to Britain and France, and half a million of them stayed abroad until 1918. Furthermore, due to different campaigns on the Western Front, about 3 million civilians migrated.<sup>54</sup> Refugee women suffered the most from rape by soldiers or gangs, extreme poverty, and hunger. Therefore, in addition to war governments and the Red Cross, elite and middle-class women organized associations that more effectively dealt with refugee women's problems.<sup>55</sup>

In addition, wartime demographic concerns increased social policies for mothers. At least 80 percent of pregnant French women gave birth in newly founded maternity hospitals.<sup>56</sup> The French government expected women both to give birth to future soldiers and to produce arms in the war industry. Nevertheless, throughout the war, French women lacked favorable working conditions, except for the facility of the nursing rooms in the factories. At the end of the war, even these rooms were closed down.<sup>57</sup>

Poor mothers, too, requested social aid. After the British government accepted universal conscription in 1916, concerns about demographic losses increased remarkably. Despite its financial cost, social assistance to mothers and children was augmented. Women officials of the Women's Cooperative Guild were particularly active in informing the government about poor mothers' needs. Working-class women wrote letters to their local government boards requesting help with their problems concerning pregnancy, giving birth, and childcare.<sup>58</sup>

After the war, these pronatalist policies gained more importance. There was a negative trend in French birth rates from the nineteenth century onwards that deteriorated with the war. Therefore, the French government started intensive propagandizing to encourage childbearing and introduced family-assistance programs. Georges Clemenceau, considering French babies as future soldiers, declared in 1919 that the government had to support families with many children.<sup>59</sup> In July 1920 a law prohibited the sale of contraceptives other than condoms and the diffusion of information about contraception. In 1923 another law criminalized abortions. French mothers with five, eight, or ten children received medallions and premiums. Likewise, in Britain the Maternal and Child Welfare Act in 1918 and in the United States the Sheppard-Towner Act in 1921 aimed at population growth. Furthermore, in 1920 Mother's Day became international. However, no law improved mothers' or pregnant workers' conditions. The French pronatalist measures also failed at persuading women to give birth.<sup>60</sup>

In Europe, despite the low birthrates, the number of unwanted pregnancies increased remarkably. Wartime poverty forced more women to engage in prostitution, lead sexually immoral lives, and resort to abortion. In France, illegitimate children constituted 8.4 percent of all births before the war and 14.2 percent in 1917. In Britain, involuntary motherhood was an important problem. In Germany, the percentage of illegitimate children also increased from 10 to 13 percent. Working mothers left their children uncared for and without adequate food or heat. Therefore, children either worked in factories or competed against adults on the streets for food.<sup>61</sup>

The state's assistance to children also changed in content and amount according to their fathers' status. Raped women who became impregnated suffered particular discrimination and resorted to infanticide. Some French doctors supported infanticide if the child was the result of rape by German soldiers.<sup>62</sup> Surely, not all rape victims killed their babies. Yet it is unknown how many of the 410,000 French children registered in 1919 were illegitimate or children of the enemy. In contrast, the French government especially protected war heroes' children. Just like the widows' different pension amounts, the aid to war orphans also varied. Of the six million war orphans in France, the government accepted only one million as *Pupilles de la Nation* (wards of the nation) because their fathers had died in battle, rather than in hospital beds. Consequently, only one-sixth of orphans received free education.<sup>63</sup>

### War and Working Women

The conscription of millions of men facilitated women's replacing them even in sectors that had been accepted as masculine. The female workforce in munitions factories had particularly strategic importance for the war and was accepted as a turning point in the working life of many European women. However, women mostly had temporary job opportunities, a situation that continued the traditional gendered division of labor, unfavorable work conditions, and short-term income.<sup>64</sup>

Before the war British female workers were far fewer than French or German workers. World War I increased their percentage in all employment sectors from 26 to 36 percent. From July 1914 to November 1918, British women munition workers spectacularly augmented from 82,589 to 1,587,300. More women workers emerged especially at the end of the war. In Britain and the United States, they multiplied two and a half times from 1917 to 1918.<sup>65</sup> Munitions work provided in all these countries more jobs to working-class women than any other form of employment. In Germany the percentage of women munitions workers was lowest. Therefore, the German state spread propaganda to encourage women's entry into war factories and founded new associations for this purpose. Eventually, German women constituted 50 percent of munitions workers and from mid-1917 to the end of the war their number increased from about 3.5 million to 6 million.<sup>66</sup> In France, from January 1916 to September 1917, women workers' percentage increased from 14 to 25 percent in the war industry and in public offices. By 1918, 420,000 French women were munitions workers. However, in Australia the war did not bring about any dramatic change in women's working life.<sup>67</sup>

In contrast, many existing jobs for women and girls in the service sector were lost. Large numbers of British domestics and dressmakers were dismissed when the upper classes cut back on their luxuries. As the war progressed, many of them found new jobs. In 1917 about six thousand British women worked as tramway ticket sellers and conductors. French women, too, started working in metallurgy, chemistry, electronics, and the food industry, as well as in public offices and administrative departments.<sup>68</sup>

Before the war, women had fought for not only the right to vote but also equal access to education, improvement of working conditions, and new work opportunities. Women left traditionally feminine sectors like domestics, textiles, tobacco, food processing, agriculture, and mining for male-dominated fields. In 1870 about 50 percent of all American working women had been domestics. In 1920 about 40 percent of women worked in public and private offices. By 1892 French women had already started to work in the PTT. In 1906 they occupied 40 percent of all white-collar jobs.<sup>69</sup> The war reinforced the idea that upper- and middle-class women also needed a professional education to work in the absence of their men. Consequently, French women started having commerce education in 1915 and engineering education in the following years.<sup>70</sup>

Women also did noncombatant army work. British women were welcomed to the army in order to send more men to battle. Both of them founded in 1917, the Women's Land Army employed twenty-three thousand women and the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps about forty thousand. Throughout the war, between eighty thousand and ninety thousand British women served in the army in the auxiliary services as clerks, storekeepers, cleaners, cooks, waitresses, mechanics, telephone operators, and drivers. Their salaries were higher than what was earned in traditionally feminine jobs.<sup>71</sup> Likewise, more than eleven thousand women enlisted in the American navy. Women were only accepted as soldiers in Russia, where Maria Bochkareva became the commander of the First Russian Women's Battalion of Death. From spring 1917 to fall of that year, more than five thousand Russian women volunteered to fight in all-female combat units.<sup>72</sup>

Women's other option was working as military medical personnel. The French army employed 120,000 women, mostly as nurses. By 1918, of about 100,000 French nurses, 30,000 were paid and 63,000 were voluntary. Lower-income nurses got their education in municipal or departmental schools without registration fees, while those from the upper class took private or Red Cross nursing courses.<sup>73</sup>

A greater number of women with no qualifications became factory workers since Taylorism had divided tasks into easy parts. From 1913 to 1917 the percentage of women metallurgy workers changed from only 5 to 26 percent. In the Seine region their percentage was 30 percent in 1918. Middle-class French women also found jobs in factories as welfare supervisors, work inspectors, social workers, and security guards to control these women workers.<sup>74</sup>

An advantage that war brought to women workers was comparatively higher wages in munitions factories, enough to provide them some economic autonomy. British women munitions workers received roughly three times the wages they had earned before the war.<sup>75</sup> In July 1918, 1,302,000 of them worked in government establishments and the metal, chemical, textile, and clothing industries due to higher salaries. "Traditionally female" industries with lower wages lost most of their workers to the munitions factories. In the United States, too, munitions factories, rather than textile production, attracted women workers. In France, because employers in other sectors feared that their workers might shift to munitions factories, their women workers earned higher wages than prewar levels.<sup>76</sup>

However, women's salaries were still low compared to those of men. French women munitions workers earned up to 600 percent of what they had earned in garment making. But since they were considered second-class workers with less education, their salaries were half of men's. Even after the amendments in 1917, women's wages were lower. In July 1918, while a French woman munitions worker earned 7.5 to 12 francs a day, a man doing the same job received 8.5 to 18 francs.<sup>77</sup> In Britain the unions ignored wage inequality, as long as men's wage rates were not in danger. In Germany, even after wartime adjustments, women's wages were about 47.7 percent of what men earned. In Russia women received between 30 and 50 percent of men's wages. Throughout the war these wage inequalities persisted.<sup>78</sup>

Dangerous working conditions and extreme exploitation also caused health problems, disability, or death in women workers. In munitions factories women were subjected to hard work at night, explosions, and serious poisoning by TNT and other lethal chemicals. Despite such danger, British women munitions workers needed certificates of permission to change the factory they worked. In France they suffered accidents, TNT poisoning, lung diseases, and serious skin burns. The unsanitary rooms they slept in at the factories caused tuberculosis and venereal diseases. German women workers also suffered from ineffective protection laws and regulations.<sup>79</sup>

Like munitions workers, nurses, too, worked in danger. About 10 percent of all French nurses who worked in the mobile operating rooms near

the front died in military attacks. Similarly, the Australian nurses on the Western Front were under the threat of bombing raids and gas attacks since the medical stations were near the frontline.<sup>80</sup>

Women's entering new jobs, as well, created resistance from society and male colleagues. Working women suffered from moral expectations, various forms of harassment and rumors. British men verbally and physically harassed women conductors in trams, claiming that they were inexperienced. British women munitions workers, too, became the target of rumors: they were said to spend their money on fur coats, silk dresses, jewelry, and gramophones; drink excessively; eat delicacies; and be licentious. In France as well, women munitions workers who lived in the factories away from their families and close to male workers were feared to be promiscuous.<sup>81</sup>

Women army workers encountered similar problems. Seen as a threat that could "emasculate" warfare, American women were only accepted in the army as civilian employees. British women, too, remained in civilian status in the army, while being subject to military laws and regulations. Hundreds of Australian women wrote to the military authorities volunteering to work in the army as ambulance drivers, cooks, hospital orderlies or office workers in vain. French feminist activist Marguerite Durand, in her journal *La Fronde*, demanded the establishment of a women's army auxiliary corps but could not persuade the French government.<sup>82</sup>

Despite the urgent need, women had difficulty in becoming army medical staff. The British commanders refused a British woman doctor in 1914, claiming that they "did not want to be troubled with hysterical women." American female doctors were only hired as civilians. Consequently, many of them chose to work in the American Women's Hospitals they founded in Europe. During the first year of the war, Red Cross volunteer nurses were not allowed to work in hospital service on the front. After they were allowed in 1915, they were so desperately needed that their number reached 500,000.<sup>83</sup>

The army nurses, too, were both eulogized and found suspicious since they threatened the masculine military culture. Consequently, in the US army, they suffered deliberate work sabotage, unwanted sexual attention or threats of assault. Rumors alleging that they were spies of the enemy, spreading German propaganda were common. About 1,800 black women nurses who had been certified by the Red Cross for military duty were not called up until the flu epidemic of 1918–19 made their contributions inescapable.<sup>84</sup>

The Voluntary Aid Detachment nurses of Britain, mostly from upper-class families, also had problems. The army propagated the idea that patriotism alone should be accepted as a reward for a "lady" and

reimbursed only their out-of-pocket expenses. Likewise, French army nurses could not receive nursing-degree diplomas until 1922.<sup>85</sup>

Furthermore, the clothing and morality of the female military staff was strictly observed. British women wearing military uniforms heard derogatory statements, such as that they were “aping men.” When American navy women first used military uniforms, army authorities suspicious of women’s proper usage of their uniforms ordered them to wear “no fur neckpieces, muffs, spats or other adornment.” British women working in the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps suffered from rumors about their promiscuity, as a result of which some were sent back home. In order to protect themselves from similar attacks, British middle- and upper-class women who worked for the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry as ambulance drivers, frequently emphasized their privileged social upbringing; in other words, their aristocratic and moral status.<sup>86</sup>

To counter the negative wartime working conditions, more women became union members or participated in strikes. From 1914 to 1918 the number of British women trade-union members rose from 437,000 to 1,209,000. About 12 percent of French women munitions workers became union members – great progress compared to the statistics before the war. Marguerite Durand proposed that a Women’s Labor Bureau be opened officially in order to defend women workers’ interests.<sup>87</sup>

Male workers regarded women as competition since they received lower wages. French and German male unionists demanded equal wages for women, not for egalitarian reasons but to protect male workers from dismissal due to cheaper female labor. British unions reinforced the idea that women were essentially deficient workers since they had family responsibilities, were physically weaker, and lacked work expertise.<sup>88</sup>

Despite such prejudices, women were active in wartime strikes. In 1915 and 1916, French women workers initiated seventeen strikes. In the spring of 1917, women textile workers who produced army clothing went on strike to improve their low wages with low purchasing power. This was the first big strike of 1917, a year known for frequent strikes in France.<sup>89</sup> Eventually, women realized the national importance of their labor in war conditions and negotiated their working conditions. French women reduced their working hours to an average of ten and received weekly time off as a result of strikes in 1917.<sup>90</sup>

Likewise, American women took advantage of war conditions to force the Congress to more rapidly pass regulations improving women workers’ conditions, which had stagnated before the war. In strategically important military sectors, women obtained new work standards, such as an eight-

hour workday, lunch and rest breaks, no night work except with special permission, no industrial home work, higher wages and equal payment with men for the same work, safer working conditions, and protection from hazardous chemicals. However, these conditions did not cover women workers in all sectors, and the implementation of them was problematic.<sup>91</sup>

Women's everyday self-protective strategies also partly improved their conditions or minimized their losses. To avoid dismissal, British women workers concealed their pregnancies and used contraception more effectively.<sup>92</sup> Austrian women without small children worked in munitions factories since the government cut their pensions and separation allowances. However, German women insisted on working at home since wartime housework was complicated and many of them were single parents. This forced the authorities to create new welfare policies to make factory work more attractive to women.<sup>93</sup>

Furthermore, women workers used absenteeism as a strategy. On average, French women were absent during 5 to 7 percent of their total workdays as a way of refusing bad work conditions or redressing weak social measures. Another method of survival was resorting to crime. From 1913 to 1917 antiproperty crimes committed by German women between 18 and 50 years old increased by 82.2 percent. Larceny, embezzlement, fraud, receiving stolen goods, and falsifying documents were women's survival methods. From 1911 to 1917 the number of German women convicted for petty larceny jumped from 19,803 to 37,735; for receiving stolen goods, from 2,269 to 7,734; and for falsifying documents, from 1,102 to 3,337.<sup>94</sup>

Quitting one munitions factory to go to another with better wages was another strategy. To make such transfers harder, the British government devised a system of leaving certificates, documents to be shown while applying for new jobs. In addition, some munitions workers refused to work with dangerous products like amatol. In an industrial tribunal, they were prosecuted and fined 15 shillings. Despite such punishments, to avoid working with TNT, women often resorted to absenteeism or changing jobs.<sup>95</sup>

With the armistice, the need for a female workforce ended abruptly. Women in administrative departments mostly secured their jobs, while those in industry suffered from dismissal. About five hundred thousand of six hundred thousand French women workers in the war industry were fired. The number of French working women was nearly the same in the statistics of 1911 and 1921, despite the rapid wartime increase.<sup>96</sup>

In 1920 two-thirds of all British working women were dismissed. Unemployed before the war, 150,000 women received no unemployment

compensation. Even tram conductors or typists were fired. In 1921 the British women labor force was 2 percent lower than it had been in 1911. Dismissed women had no unemployment compensation if they refused new jobs offered to them, often their prewar low-paid domestic work. However, even when they returned to such positions, they resisted exploitation better thanks to the wartime self-confidence they had gained. Against the massive dismissals, women also sent complaint letters, which were published in the press.<sup>97</sup>

### Women's Response to War Mobilization

During World War I women were at the center of war propaganda. Vulnerable women became an indispensable part of the militarized imagery to motivate soldiers. Stories of the rape and sexual mutilation of Belgian and French women by German soldiers created a nationalist mythology and a common theme of British war propaganda. In reality, women were also under threat of attack by their male compatriots. American women even took up arms against such attempts.<sup>98</sup>

Wartime nationalist and religious propaganda was also widespread. In Britain, France, and Germany, the nationalist education of children became a political priority. In the United States, popular nationalism emerged as a remedy to the problem of citizenship and nationalization of migrants. American suffrage leaders worked on the Americanization of immigrant families by scrutinizing their mothering practices. Likewise, French women experienced Catholic religious propaganda through prayer books or sculptures against partly Protestant Germany.<sup>99</sup>

Militant women authors, too, produced war propaganda. Before 1916 British men volunteered to enlist in the army rather than being universally conscripted. Therefore, the government supported female propaganda writers like Mrs. Humphry Ward, author of *England's Effort* (1916) and *Towards the Goal* (1917). War propaganda was even implicitly found in women writers' romance novels, influencing ordinary people. Women shamed unconscribed men with patriotic words and actions, as well as posters with images of patriotic women. An advertisement promoted the idea that unconscribed British men could someday neglect their wives. British and American nationalist women protested ununiformed men on the street by distributing white feathers. In Russia, stories of the Battalion of Death, made up of female soldiers under the commandship of Maria Bochkareva, served to shame civilian men.<sup>100</sup>

However, ordinary women frequently challenged the war effort. They were against government policies regulating women's sexual lives and prostitution, though lawmakers considered such policies a crucial

component of war mobilization. Similar regulations had emerged from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries onwards. The Contagious Diseases Act of 1864 in Britain was primarily intended to prevent the spread of venereal diseases to soldiers. During World War I, as well, prostitution was either regulated or suppressed altogether.<sup>101</sup>

Moreover, the wartime governments wanted to ensure soldiers that they fought for their faithful wives and fiancées. However, prostitution was common among destitute women. The interventionist state policies paradoxically resulted in clandestine prostitution. Having no luxury for years to mourn over their deceased men, women often resorted to prostitution or remarriage. To boost the soldiers' spirits, the German government increased the moral pressure on soldiers' wives. Nevertheless, even in the countryside, peasant women had sexual intercourse with war captives.<sup>102</sup>

Quickly, wartime regulations became an issue of disciplining women rather than of ensuring public health. In November 1914 the British government enacted the Defense of the Realm Act, which prohibited women from appearing on the streets between the hours of 7 p.m. and 8 a.m. The Criminal Law Amendment Bill of 1917 raised women's age of consent from 16 to 18, introduced imprisonment with a hard-labor penalty for women who deliberately spread venereal diseases, and criminalized advertisements for abortion methods or alleged cures for sexually spread disorders. In March 1918 Regulation 40D prohibited women with venereal disease from having sexual intercourse with British soldiers. In Australia, police arrested girls in the company of soldiers and sailors at a late hour. Girls were charged with the crime of infecting soldiers with venereal diseases, although this sometimes proved not to be true. In Germany, the measures against venereal diseases only protected men, since contraception was banned and women suspected of carrying a disease were forced to have medical examinations.<sup>103</sup>

A law recognized German women who were reported to have had sex with more than one man as prostitutes. German secret agents abused this law, forcing women to have sex with them by threatening to report women as unlicensed prostitutes. Consequently, many women and girls who were not prostitutes were sent to military brothels.<sup>104</sup> British middle-class women, too, tried to control working-class women, arguing that they were better equipped than men for this purpose. Likewise, in the United States, in cities where army camps were located, middle-class women acting as "social workers" strictly policed prostitutes.<sup>105</sup>

Pacifist women suffered similar surveillance since they threatened war mobilization. The war governments suppressed universal ideals such as feminism and socialism while they elevated patriotism and

manhood. With the US government's declaration of war, all immigrants, labor leaders, and political radicals of all affiliations became suspect. Among the criminalized were pacifist women doctors and schoolteachers against military training in public schools, socialist women leaders who promoted an antimilitarist motherhood, and immigrant working-class women.<sup>106</sup>

American pacifist feminist Jane Addams, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931, was labeled a traitor after 1917 because of her opposition to the war. French pacifist schoolteachers Hélène Brion, Marie Mayoux, and Lucie Colliard were imprisoned for similar reasons. Many other countries prosecuted women, charging them with political crimes, for pacifist activities.<sup>107</sup>

But despite their political importance, pacifist women constituted only a small group. The war challenged the idea that women universally supported peace. Many suffragists rejected pacifism, believing that they could win their citizenship rights by supporting their governments' war efforts. In 1915 pacifist suffragists like Helena Swanwick and many other leading figures resigned from the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies,<sup>108</sup> and created the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Pacifist women organized important conferences in which many suffragists refused to participate. Shortly after the international peace conference organized by socialist feminist Clara Zetkin in Berne on 25–27 March 1915, the International Council of Women organized the Women's Peace Congress at the Hague from 28 April to 1 May 1915.<sup>109</sup> The same year British nationalist feminists renamed their journal *The Suffragette* as the *Britannia*. Likewise, Mrs. Humphry Ward celebrated the war, claiming that it created the “world of the new women,” who had recently become women policemen, chauffeurs, and militant suffragists.<sup>110</sup>

Receiving little support from other women, pacifist women's attempts failed. French pacifist Marcelle Capy believed that women munitions workers could end the war by stopping arms production. However, for women munitions workers, this meant losing their jobs. British women munitions workers, too, supported the war for their own survival. Russian radical feminist Alexandra Kollontai, who believed that World War I was “no more than an instrument of bourgeois oppression,” criticized the working-class woman Maria Bochkareva, founder of the Women's Battalion of Death.<sup>111</sup>

During the war or its aftermath, many governments recognized women's suffrage. They promoted the idea that women's political rights were granted as recompense for their war efforts and ignored women's earlier attempts to attain greater rights. Emphasizing women's wartime

sacrifices was rather a strategy of gaining popular support for male enlistment. For instance, during the war, Canadian and Belgian governments gave suffrage to soldiers' mothers before most other women.<sup>112</sup>

War work did not bring political rights to all women either. On the one hand, it helped British women to dismiss the previous arguments against women's citizenship rights. On the other hand, French women who performed similar service were denied suffrage and had a suspension of their struggle for it with World War I. Furthermore, many suffragists later realized that voting was not sufficient to achieve equality in other spheres of life. Russian women, who obtained suffrage earlier than many other European women, struggled for civil and socioeconomic rights long afterwards.<sup>113</sup>

In reality, women's wartime services and their resistance to the war mobilization were equally significant politically. In particular, rebellions and strikes of working-class women due to wartime poverty and shortages eventually paved the way for the revolutions in Russia and Germany. German women workers took an active part in the Revolution of 9 November 1918. In Russia, as well, women workers' strikes and poor women's riots contributed to the Bolshevik Revolution. Russian soldiers had about fifteen years of conscription, and about one-third of peasant families had no financial supporters since 14.5 million men had become soldiers by 1916. In these conditions, many peasant women did not trust the war propaganda and rebelled against the conscriptions.<sup>114</sup>

Poor French women also were active in antiwar demonstrations and protested conscription, activities for which they were sentenced to three months' imprisonment. From January to May 1918, to prevent conscription, they lay down on the railway lines to stop trains carrying young soldiers. As wives, female pen friends, or prostitutes, women became the nightmare of the French army since they could demoralize the soldiers. Indeed, many of the mutinies in the French army in 1917 stemmed to some extent from their families' problems.<sup>115</sup>

Peasant women were another group that bore the burden of the war the most. Their resistance to the war mobilization was very important, although it was more covert and appeared mostly in everyday struggles. The British and German governments both expected peasant women to help the war mobilization by producing more crops. In Italy and France, too, peasant women were exploited in farming.<sup>116</sup>

In order to survive in such conditions, French peasants hid some of their wheat or animals from tax collectors. In this way they minimized their losses or earned some extra money by selling their goods in the cities. Tax evasion could also be a method to pay their increasing debts. Indeed,

many French peasant women had difficulty surviving financially due to decreased agricultural production, although the government forced war captives to work on their lands.<sup>117</sup>

Likewise, Italian peasant women and girls at very young ages worked beyond their strength. Many of them stole food out of hunger. In the absence of their men, Italian women dealt with bureaucratic problems by themselves, and they suffered sexual and other forms of harassment by government agents and other men. Finally, despite the moral and nationalist expectations, Italian peasant women willingly hid deserters who helped them farm.<sup>118</sup> Peasant women's covert resistance to the war mobilization was as effective as the open antiwar demonstrations of other women.