

THE RISE AND FALL OF LEFT-FEMINISM IN POST-WORLD WAR II NORWAY:

The Case of Kirsten Hansteen (1903–1974)

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Abstract

This thesis offers an amendment of the political history of Norway through a left-feminist perspective. It explores the political work of the first woman in a Norwegian government, Kirsten Hansteen (1903–1974), who, despite her pioneering role, is all but absent from Norwegian historiography. Based on archival research and feminist content analysis, the thesis uncovers the history of the left-feminist movement in Norway as well as Hansteen's political activities in the years 1945–1949, during which she was a representative in the Norwegian Government and the Parliament for the Communist Party of Norway. The thesis's main question is: Which role did Kirsten Hansteen play in the post-World War II Norwegian left-feminist movement?

Through writing a partial political biography about Hansteen, this thesis explores how the World War II-context led to a left-feminism in Norway that perceived social inequality, gender inequality and fascism as intertwined. The larger women's movement in Norway was characterised by a strong *spirit of cooperation* coming out of the war, which gradually crumbled as Cold War anti-communism increased, and the initially influential left-feminist movement became the target of hostility. This thesis shows how the anti-war position of left-feminists implicated them in the debate about Norway's accession to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1949, shedding light on the Norwegian women's movement as a Cold War arena. It further illustrates the ways in which processes of anti-communism and misogyny impacted Hansteen's political work and the organisations she was involved in, shaping the Norwegian political landscape and women's movement with long term effects. Such conflicts and discourses are a part of broader historical processes which have also affected how left-feminist women such as Hansteen have been remembered. This thesis argues that Hansteen personified the Norwegian left-feminist movement, and because she did not perceive women's oppression as a gender-only issue, Hansteen has been neglected in the historiography of Norwegian women's movements and feminisms.

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Thank you to my professor and supervisor Francisca de Haan for teaching me all I know about women's and gender history, and helping me realise its feminist impact and potential. Thank you for sharing your seemingly endless knowledge about the history of women, feminisms, gender and women's organisations, and for pushing me to make this thesis something to be proud of. And thank you to Kiera for helping me interpret my material, formulate my arguments, teaching me about Scottish history and in general making the process of writing one hundred pages a less daunting experience.

Thank you to all my friends and comrades in Szabad Egyetem and Hallgatói Szakszervezet, for the fight for academic freedom, which is intertwined with democracy, social equality and gender equality, much in the same way that this thesis shows anti-fascism and feminism to have been for the 1940s left-feminist movement.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research; it contains no materials accepted for any other degree in any other institution and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

I further declare that the following word count for this thesis are accurate:

Body of thesis (all chapters excluding notes, references, appendices, etc.): 29,515 words

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Signed _____ (Lauritz Guldal Einarsen)

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List of abbreviations

DNA: *Det norske Arbeiderparti*, the Norwegian Labour Party

IAW: International Alliance of Women

ICW: International Council of Women

IKFF: *Internasjonal kvinneliga for fred og frihet*, the Norwegian name for WILPF. Used in this thesis for the Norwegian section of WILPF

KDV: *Kvinnenes Demokratiske Verdensforbund*, the Norwegian name for WIDF. Used in this thesis for the Norwegian section of WIDF

NAT: North Atlantic Treaty, the founding document of NATO

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NKF: *Norsk Kvinnesaksforening*, Norwegian Association for Women's Rights, the Norwegian branch of IAW

NKN: *Norske Kvinners Nasjonalråd*, the Norwegian branch of ICW

NKP: *Norges Kommunistiske Parti*, the Communist Party of Norway

NKS: *Norske Kvinneorganisasjoners Samarbeidsnemnd*, the Cooperation Council of Norwegian Women's Organisations

WIDF: Women's International Democratic Federation

WILPF: Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

I. Introduction

We know that there can be no lasting peace before fascism is definitively eradicated from the world. It is no overstatement to say that the world cannot be liberated, and that darkness will stand in the way of hope and happiness, until the day when every man and every woman builds his and her life on an unwavering belief in the political responsibilities of individuals and the fraternity among humans, and children of all nations grow up with this belief.¹

These were the concluding remarks of a speech given by Kirsten Hansteen to the 850 delegates who had congregated late November 1945 in Paris for the International Congress of Women to discuss the road to peace and women's rights, and Hansteen's words carry the essence of her political career.

This thesis explores the development of post-1945 left-feminism in Norway through studying the political career of Kirsten Hansteen. Kirsten Hansteen was a communist politician, editor, peace activist and avid proponent of left-feminism. She had been active in the resistance during the World War II (WWII), and became part of a larger movement promoting women's cooperation and political mobilisation at the end of the war. As a prominent communist woman, she subsequently fell victim to anti-communist accusations and rhetorics.

In June 1945, Hansteen became the first woman to enter a Norwegian Government, as consultative Cabinet minister in the Ministry of Social Affairs, and after four months in government, she became a representative in the *Storting*, the Norwegian Parliament, until 1949. Hansteen's period in national politics was framed by the end of the German occupation of Norway on 8 May 1945, and the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty (NAT)² on 4 April 1949, which marked Norway's unambiguous entry into the Cold War.³ Uncovering a part of Hansteen's political career in these years is an amendment to the historiography of Norwegian political history, and offers a new perspective on the Norwegian women's movement as a Cold War arena.

¹ Fédération Démocratique Internationale des Femmes, "Congrès International Des Femmes: Compte Rendu Des Travaux Du Congrès Qui s'est Tenu à Paris Du 26 Novembre Au 1er Decembre 1945," 79. My translation, LGE. All translations of quotes and titles in this thesis are mine unless otherwise noted.

² The North Atlantic Treaty, also known as the Washington Treaty, is the legal basis for the subsequently formed North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

³ Westad, *The Cold War*, 3. In line with historian Odd Arne Westad, I do not imply that the "Cold War" was just a period of tense peace. On the contrary, with episodes of violence and war such as the Vietnam War from 1955 to 1975, the Suez Crisis and failed Hungarian revolution in 1956, the massacres in Indonesia in 1965/1966 and the 1973 coup in Chile, the period was much "hotter" than the name implies.

1.1. Kirsten Hansteen's early life

Kirsten Landmark Moe was born on 5 January 1903 in Lyngen in the north of Norway to Gerda Sophie Landmark (1871–1934) and doctor Ole Christian Strøm Moe (1866–1907). She was four years old when her father died and Gerda moved to Kristiania, now Oslo, with five children.⁴ The mother wanted to provide her children with an education, and found a job in the Directorate of Health to support the family.⁵ Kirsten and her one-year-younger sister, Gerda⁶ (1905–1985), first became active in political organising at their gymnasium,⁷ at a time where the World War I and the Russian Revolution shaped and politicised the young generation in Norway.⁸ At age 18, in 1921, Kirsten started her academic studies in history and philology, and combined them with teaching at the Workers' Evening School.⁹ She altogether had a politically active youth, participating in a bustling student scene, and she soon joined the radical organisation *Mot Dag* (Towards Today).¹⁰ Together with her sister, Kirsten was among the first women there, and she was the first woman on *Mot Dag*'s executive committee.¹¹ Through *Mot Dag* she entered the Norwegian branch of *Clarté*, an international network of magazines run by socialist intellectuals,¹² which might have prompted her later career as an editor.

After a short marriage with her school friend, Johan Schreiner (1903–1967), she married the lawyer and communist Viggo Hansteen (1900–1941) in 1930.¹³ The story of their

⁴ Halvorsen, "Kirsten Hansteen," September 28, 2014, para. 3.

⁵ Nordby, *Karl Evang*, 29.

⁶ Born Gerda Sophie Landmark Moe, later married Evang.

⁷ Kirsten and Gerda attended *Kristiania Katedralskole*, an old and prestigious Norwegian gymnasium.

⁸ Nordby, *Karl Evang*, 29–30. Together with the other Scandinavian countries, Norway declared its neutrality during WWI. In the years 1914–1916, the economy boomed in Scandinavia, when the countries profited from trading more freely than the European states that were directly implicated in the war. In the last two years of the war, however, the limited production further south in Europe also affected the Norway, and there was food shortage and rationing. Although WWI battles did not reach Norway geographically, 2,000 Norwegian sailors lost their lives when trading ships hit mines or were attacked. At the exit of the war, the labour parties in all Scandinavian countries were strengthened, and the Norwegian Labour Party was more radical than before the war (Derry, *A History of Scandinavia*, 304–6.).

⁹ Berntsen, *To Liv - Én Skjebne: Viggo Hansteen Og Rolf Wickstrøm*, 118; Bie Lorentzen, "Kvinnen og tiden 1945–1955," 109.

¹⁰ Berntsen, *To Liv - Én Skjebne: Viggo Hansteen Og Rolf Wickstrøm*, 118–19.

¹¹ Halvorsen, "Kirsten Hansteen," September 28, 2014, para. 3; Bull, *Mot Dag og Erling Falk*, 262–63. *Mot Dag* was from the beginning in 1921 meant to exclusively consist of men. The leader, Erling Falk, ran the organisation with a misogynist backbone. When confronted with the absence of women, he supposedly replied that "[t]heir brains weigh less" (Bull, 259.), and continued to keep an eye on women when they after a while started entering the organisation, first as wives of other members (Bull, 259–61.).

¹² Hagtvet, "Clarté," 24.

¹³ Halvorsen, "Kirsten Hansteen," September 28, 2014, para. 4. Between 1923 and 1979, married women were required by law to take their husband's last name, however the law was not strictly followed, especially from the 1960s (Noack and Aarskaug Wiik, "Likestillingens siste skanse?," 3.). Consequently, for one year of her life

union is an indication of Kirsten's feminist orientation. She approached Viggo because she wanted to write the thesis for her master's degree about his great aunt, the Danish-Norwegian painter and feminist Aasta Hansteen (1824–1908).¹⁴ Kirsten and Viggo led a financially comfortable life in the 1930s, as they were both used to from their family backgrounds. In periods they had one or two maids living with them, and during the summers they traveled to the countryside with their three sons born between 1932 and 1934.¹⁵ Kirsten and Viggo had both joined the Communist Party of Norway (NKP) in the late 1920s, and Kirsten worked for the Association for Norwegian-Russian Cultural Relations,¹⁶ where she led delegations travelling to the Soviet Union.¹⁷ During these years together with Viggo, Kirsten developed what she later called her main interest: "To observe and try to understand part of what goes on in the world."¹⁸ Her curiosity was never stifled, and she picked up her academic studies in the latter half of the 1930s.¹⁹ Then came the Second World War.

1.2. Relevance of the study

The study of the post-WWII women's movement is a burgeoning field, and there is little knowledge about this topic in the Norwegian historical context. Kirsten Hansteen herself is largely left out of Norwegian historiography, and when she is mentioned, she is mostly presented as a communist who is a woman, but not particularly invested in feminism, women's issues or women's movements.²⁰ I would argue that the perception of her as a lone wolf in a woods of ministers and party comrades, all of whom are men, has curbed the feminist curiosity for her as a subject of historical research. As this thesis shows, it is also a

from 1928, her name was Kirsten Schreiner.

¹⁴ Berntsen, *To Liv - Én Skjebne: Viggo Hansteen Og Rolf Wickstrøm*, 119. Kirsten never finished the thesis, but one result was an article in the *Norwegian Biographical Encyclopaedia*, appearing in 1931: Hansteen, Kirsten. 'Hansteen, Aasta'. In *Norsk biografisk leksikon*, edited by Edvard Bull, Anders Krogvig, and Gerhard Gran, B. 5 : Grosch-Helkand:428–32. Oslo: Aschehoug, 1931. http://urn.nb.no/URN:NBN:no-nb_digibok_2014102724007.

¹⁵ Berntsen, 147; 151. Ole Edvard was born in 1932, and the twins Viggo and Harald were born in 1934.

¹⁶ My translation, LGE. In Norwegian: *Norsk-Russisk Kultursamband*. Unlike for quotes and titles, I will for the remainder of this thesis indicate when I give a translation for names of organisations. I have strived to employ the most frequently used translations whenever organisations do not have official English names, but in cases where none exist, I give my own translations. I point out these cases, so that the reader can be aware that I might be mistaken, and that the reader might know the same organisation under a more correct name.

¹⁷ Halvorsen, "Kirsten Hansteen," September 28, 2014, para. 4. I have not been able to find any substantial information about these travels. Presumably they had educational purposes.

¹⁸ Bie Lorentzen, "Kvinnen og tiden 1945–1955," 109.

¹⁹ Berntsen, *To Liv - Én Skjebne: Viggo Hansteen Og Rolf Wickstrøm*, 151.

²⁰ An exception being her role as the editor of two women's magazines, a fact which is difficult to overlook. However, I argue that the importance of these magazines (and Hansteen's role as co-editor of them) is underestimated, as they are not adequately situated in their historical and political context, as I will develop in section 4.1.

false perception since Hansteen had at times both strong and complex relationships with several women's movements.

In order to study these relationships, it is necessary to identify and analyse relevant groupings, organisations and individuals who together constitute a movement. The act of naming is crucial to this process, because it is by giving the movement a name that it becomes recognisable as an entity, or as part of a larger movement. To this end, this thesis uses left-feminism as a theoretical lens, for naming, understanding and contextualising the political current Kirsten Hansteen was a part of.

The main method of this thesis is political biography, meaning that the scope and themes are largely guided by Kirsten Hansteen's political career, and one goal is to piece together a picture of her as a political figure. However, my biographical approach encompasses far more than the perspective on one individual. Not only is naming and attaching the left-feminist movement to Hansteen indispensable for understanding her political life, but by combining perspectives on individual actors, organisations, national politics and transnational dynamics, this thesis offers a reading of Kirsten Hansteen's political life as an exemplification of the post-WWII Norwegian left-feminist movement itself.

The primary research question this thesis seeks to answer is: *Which role did Kirsten Hansteen play in the Norwegian left-feminist movement?* This question prompts other secondary research questions. *How did Norway get its first woman member of government? How did Cold War dynamics play out among, and permanently affect, Norwegian women's organisations? What does Kirsten Hansteen's omission from the historiography on Norwegian women's movements and political history illustrate?*

Chapter II provides the theoretical framework and methods used in this thesis. Chapter III is a historiographical overview laying out the limitations of the scholarly literature of recent Norwegian political history and history of women's movements. The lacking overlap between these two bodies of literature and the neglect of communist historical actors from them provides the background for my analysis of primary and secondary sources in the ensuing part of the thesis.

Chapter IV explores the rise of the post-WWII left-feminist movement, both on the national and a global scale. Pacifism and the struggle for women's rights had already been combined, most notably when the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

(WILPF) was established as a protest against World War I in 1915.²¹ In the post-WWII left-feminist context, women's rights became intertwined with peace activism in a more pronounced manner, also seen as intrinsically connected to social rights and economic equality. Kirsten Hansteen became a central proponent of this position, and promoted it in a "spirit of cooperation," which led to an evolution in the landscape of Norwegian women's organisations. In addition to thematising the continuity between war- and peace-time, this chapter uncovers Hansteen's way into government, as well as her work in institutionalised politics in relation to the left-feminist movement.

Chapter V subsequently analyses the resistance faced by the left-feminists in the anti-communist climate of the developing Cold War. Kirsten Hansteen experienced a backlash against her political movement. A majority of the political spectrum refused to cooperate with individuals and groups they perceived as communist, hoping to isolate them from the political community. This trend had negative implications for the development of left-feminism in Norway. Particularly strong manifestations of these implications were fragmentation of the women's movement, and the emergence of misogynist anti-communism. The political conflict around left-feminism peaked before Norway's accession to the North Atlantic Treaty (NAT) in 1949, during a large scale women led campaign against Norway's signing of the NAT. By analysing this Cold War event as a pivotal moment in the history of Norwegian women's movements, this chapter sheds critical light on the (scarce) historiography of the post-WWII left-feminist movement, and Kirsten Hansteen as a part of it. In the thesis conclusion, I will reiterate and answer my research questions, indicate why these findings matter, and suggest areas for further research.

²¹ Haslam, *From Suffrage to Internationalism*, xxii–xxiii. First established as the International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace.

II. Theory and method

In June 2018, I visited the memorial site of Ravensbrück concentration camp for women, located by the town Fürstenberg north of Berlin in Germany. I discuss the importance of Ravensbrück to the history of left-feminism in more detail in Chapter IV, but mention it here for its relevance to my research process. On the site of the former Ravensbrück concentration camp, I learned about the history of women, women's sufferings, women's deaths, women's resistance and women's crimes against humanity. I also saw the traces of forgetting, from the five decades when the area was not designated to remembrance, but was used for military purposes by the Soviet Army until 1993. The outdoor area inside the camp is now filled with emptiness. Where there used to be prisoner barracks, there are large empty rectangular grooves. The Ravensbrück memorial is one example of untold women's history, which when it is finally recovered is best told by including silences. In this chapter, I will expand on the concept of silences, and lay out the theoretical concepts and methodology that have guided my research since my visit to Ravensbrück.

2.1. Left-feminism

To the best of my knowledge, Kirsten Hansteen never described herself as a feminist. In Norway, the word *feminism* was not popularised as a descriptor of political movements and actors fighting for women's rights until the 1970s, during what is commonly known as the second wave of feminism.²² Instead, a woman fighting for the women's cause would simply be called *kvinnesakskvinne*, a "women's cause-woman." Kirsten Hansteen and her comrades largely refrained from using the term "*kvinnesakskvinne*" about themselves which was first and foremost associated with the organisation *Norsk Kvinnesaksforening* (NKF, Norwegian Association for Women's Rights), traditionally dominated by conservative and liberal women from the upper class.²³

In her article "Women's Suffrage and the Left," historian Ellen DuBois asserts that although *socialist-feminism* has claimed its space and position since the 1960s, the political

²² I do not know the genealogy of the word feminism in the Norwegian context. This description of the use of the word is based on a search in the digitised newspaper database from the National Library of Norway, which shows that the use of the word *feminisme* (Norwegian for feminism) and terms derived from it exploded in the year 1970.

²³ Lønnå, Stolthet og kvinnekamp, 18.

strand can be traced back at least to the mid-19th century.²⁴ She therefore employs the term also for the past, in an effort to reconstruct the movement. Using such a term allows us to expand our understanding of the history of feminisms and women's movements, and gives a more complete picture of the origins of ideas of oppression and equality, as well as gender and womanhood. Importantly, it also challenges the notion that feminism went into hibernation between the so-called first and second waves of feminism.²⁵

The validity of socialist-feminism as a term has been contested by historians, claiming that socialism and feminism are incompatible ideologies, in other words, that socialism in its nature represents an obstacle to women's rights. Important arguments for this position are that socialist or communist²⁶ states have showed themselves as patriarchal "top-down" institutions that prevent women from critiquing them,²⁷ and that socialist or communist movements have instrumentalised "feminism," supporting women's emancipation only inasmuch as it could promote the communist revolution.²⁸

On the opposing side, historians such as Charles Sowerwine have traced the shared history of socialism, broadly defined as the workers' movement, and feminism, broadly defined as the women's movement, back to the late 18th century when both groups started fighting for their democratic rights.²⁹ According to Sowerwine, "[s]ocialism helped give birth to modern feminism, and now, as the twentieth century draws to a close, socialist political movements have often distinguished themselves in giving women formal political structures."³⁰ I hope that this thesis about Kirsten Hansteen can contribute to the recent strand of historical research analysing communism and feminism as compatible and intertwined.³¹

²⁴ Dubois, "Woman Suffrage and the Left - an International Socialist-Feminist Perspective," 22–23.

²⁵ Women's and gender historians have increasingly been challenging the wave metaphor as a conceptual framework in the history of feminisms and women's movements. Laughlin et al. explore this in a 2005 article on women's and gender history in the USA, and write that the wave metaphor implies that there is one singular feminism that is defined by white middle class women who fronted women's issues in a particular way in the 1960s and 1970s, "in essence [washing] away much of feminist history" (Laughlin et al., "Is It Time to Jump Ship?," 78).

²⁶ Without implying that communism and socialism are identical, I use the terms interchangeably for this argument. The terms are often not clearly distinguishable, for example as when historian Daskalova insists to use the term "state socialism" for what another historian calls "communism," because communism refers to the ideal the socialist state strived for (Daskalova, "How Should We Name the 'Women-Friendly' Actions of State Socialism?," 214).

²⁷ For a critique of Nanette Funk's use of this argument, see: Haan et al., "Ten Years After," 104.

²⁸ As argued for instance in Miroiu, "Communism Was a State Patriarchy, Not State Feminism," 199. For an example of the debate on communist/socialist feminism, see the two forums hosted in *Aspasia* yearbook, volume 1 and 10 (Miroiu et al., "Forum: Is 'Communist Feminism' a Contradictio in Terminus?"; Haan et al., "Ten Years After").

²⁹ Sowerwine, "Socialism, Feminism, and the Socialist Women's Movement from the French Revolution to World War II," 358–59.

³⁰ Sowerwine, "Socialism, Feminism, and the Socialist Women's Movement from the French Revolution to

I have chosen to use *left-feminism*, another term employed by DuBois, as a lens through which I read and analyse the women's movement around Kirsten Hansteen. DuBois defines 'left feminism' as "a perspective which fuses a recognition of the systematic oppression of women with an appreciation of other structures of power [...] (what we now most often call 'the intersections of race, class and gender'),"³² and upholds that this implies a notion of equality that includes all women, and that this goal requires fundamental social change.³³ Hansteen was a self-proclaimed communist, but as this thesis shows, a main goal of her feminism was to reach beyond those who would use such a label for describing themselves, and mobilise these for a radical change to the betterment of women's situation. Among these people were women Kirsten Hansteen worked with and relied on, and by using the more inclusive *left-feminism*, I capture this reality, and at the same time describe the sort of radical changes the women envisioned. When I hyphenate left-feminism, unlike DuBois, it is with the same reasoning she gives for her hyphenation of *socialist-feminism*. With the hyphenated term socialist-feminism, DuBois wishes to emphasise the inseparability of the two political aspects for its adherents, and challenge the perception that there is a fundamental antagonism between socialism and feminism.³⁴ Similarly, in the left-feminist movement, leftism and feminism were and are intrinsically linked.

2.2. Women's biography, gender history

There is no official statistics on the gender balance in Norwegian biographies, but in her survey of biographies published between 2000 and 2018, author Helene Uri found 79 % to be written about men.³⁵ Writing about the lives of women is a way of acknowledging their contributions, which have been systematically devalued, both during and after their lifetime.³⁶ As historian Karen Offen phrases it, "[r]estoring women to history remains a vital task to women's history."³⁷

When women's history emerged as an academic field, two strands of research appeared. Some historians researched "elite" women within fields that were already

World War II," 384. The book containing this chapter was published in 1998.

³¹ For more on this historical research, see the above mentioned forums in *Aspasia*, as well as section 3.2.3.

³² Dubois, "Eleanor Flexner and the History of American Feminism," 84.

³³ Dubois, 84.

³⁴ Dubois, 22.

³⁵ Dietrichson, "Ny satsing skal styrke kvinners plass i museet"; Mauno, "«Å, skjønneste, fineste du!»."

³⁶ For the ways in which the discipline of history itself is gendered, see: Smith, *The Gender of History*.

³⁷ Offen, "History of Women," 464.

considered important, whereas others prioritised the most silenced subjects by writing history “from below.”³⁸ The second approach can be said to more thoroughly reject measurements of historical relevance centered on men and masculinity, by developing new criteria for who they chose as historical subjects. Kirsten Hansteen cannot be said to fall under this category, and the current biographical project is more in line with the former strand of research. I consider this to be part of the limitations of my project, in the sense that it might simplify the workings of a women’s movement to an active centre with a passive periphery. This issue is particularly salient in my thesis in terms of geography, where I to an extent have reduced Norwegian women’s activism to what took place in and around the capital Oslo. I have also omitted material that indicates more complex class relationships than those I present in the thesis,³⁹ because these perspectives appear peripheral to the subject I have chosen to study. At the same time, the history of women in/and institutional politics appears to me as a necessary step in the advancement of Norwegian women’s and gender history, both to be built on further with the aforementioned critical perspectives, but also to bring a gender perspective into the political history that already exists.

Applying Joan W. Scott’s definition of gender from her influential 1986 article “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” as “a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power,”⁴⁰ I see the value of women’s biography as exceeding the visibilising “women” project. Because gender is relational, the study of women in traditionally masculine contexts can be a direct way of challenging the hegemonic position of men in power hierarchies, and as Offen maintains, women’s history shifts the perspectives of conventional narratives.⁴¹

By approaching the political biography of Kirsten Hansteen as the history of a women’s movement built on personal relationships, this thesis also troubles the distinction between politics, activism and the private, and is a way of valuing Hansteen’s relevance as a biographical subject based on her ability to serve as an example and witness of certain

³⁸ Offen, “History of Women,” 464–65.

³⁹ Documents I have studied in NKP’s archives bring to light a conflict in the latter half of the 1940s between the Women’s Secretariat of NKP and *Norsk Husmorlagsforbund* (Norwegian Federation of Housewife Guilds), where *husmorlag* (Housewife Guilds) were a form of trade unions for housewives with close connections to NKP. It appears that the Federation perceived the Secretariat as arrogant and detached from the working class movement. The development of this conflict also seems highly relevant to the history of the Norwegian Section of the WIDF, which merged with *Norsk Husmorlagsforbund* in 1954 (Archive location of the documents in mention: AAB/ARK-1110/D/L0009).

⁴⁰ Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” 1067.

⁴¹ Offen, 464.

structures and relations, in line with a critical approach to the biographical genre.⁴² Moreover, employing gender as a category of historical analysis in this thesis means not assuming the conceptualisation and relevance of gender and womanhood in the left-feminist movement I am studying. I rather aspire to explore this relevance underway, and hope with this thesis to contribute to the understanding of these categories in the historical context of post-WWII Norway.⁴³

2.3. Archival research

The primary research of this thesis has been archival research. As critical history developed in the 1960s and 1970s, one of the assumptions that were challenged was that of “the archive as an objective, neutral, and disinterested institution.”⁴⁴ Hierarchical constructions of knowledge and power have meant that only certain types of people have been considered legitimate subjects of history. Women are found to generally not be considered relevant, and will often not have the stories of their lives conserved through archived documents, especially not organised in one place.⁴⁵

This was also the case with my subject of study, Kirsten Hansteen, and a considerable part of my research work has therefore consisted of locating relevant archival documents regarding her life and work.⁴⁶ The bulk of my archival finds are from the archival institution of the Norwegian labour movement, *Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek*, and I have also used the National Archives of Norway (*Riksarkivet*) and the archival collections of the National Library of Norway, as well as the digitised collections of the National Library of Norway; Women and Social Movements, International - 1840 to Present; and Atria - Institute on gender equality and women's history.⁴⁷ In order to discover relevant documents, I have used a form of “snowball sampling,” a method used in qualitative research in social sciences which relies on personal referrals from research subjects to obtain a sufficient sample.⁴⁸ Instead of asking research subjects for new respondents, finds in one archive have led me to

⁴² Caine, *Biography and History*, 23.

⁴³ Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” 1065.

⁴⁴ Chaudhuri, Katz, and Perry, “Introduction,” xiv.

⁴⁵ Chaudhuri, Katz, and Perry, xiv.

⁴⁶ Hagemann, *Kvinnehistoriske arkiver*, 138 Kirsten Hansteen is listed as having a personal archive, unorganised and kept by a private person in this catalogue of archives relevant to women's history. I have however not been able to locate it, and the author of the catalogue has no further information about its whereabouts (e-mail correspondence with Gro Hagemann, September 2018).

⁴⁷ These digitised collections can be found on <https://www.nb.no/>, <https://search.alexanderstreet.com/wasi> and <https://institute-genderequality.org/> respectively (7 May 2019).

⁴⁸ Biernacki and Waldorf, “Snowball Sampling,” 141.

explore the next, and I have been able to retrieve a considerable collection of (more and less) relevant archival documents. I have gone through around 700 physical documents spread across approximately 20 archives in three different archival institutions, as well as an estimated 300 digitised documents, most of which were issues of NKP's party organ *Friheten* from the National Library of Norway's newspaper collection.⁴⁹ Searchable digitised collections as well as *Arkivportalen*, a searchable online catalogue of over 60,000 archives distributed among 85 Norwegian institutions, have been crucial for the snowball sampling, and my archival research in general.⁵⁰

This thesis presents a feminist qualitative content analysis of these documents. Although I only refer directly to a small fraction of them, the selection I have made is informed by the documents I exclude, which have all contributed to my understanding of the historical context and left-feminism in Norway. As defined by gender scholar and sociologist Shulamit Reinharz, feminist content analysis has at least three typical characteristics, which have guided my analysis. First, it is concerned with meaning as mediated, placing the production of the text as well as the text itself under scrutiny.⁵¹ Second, it does not only pay attention to what is said in a text, but also what is not said, and the meanings behind the silences.⁵² Third, it includes text related to the so-called private life as a way to challenge elitist and masculinist approaches to history.⁵³

Depending on my material, I have applied these guiding principles to varying degrees. I have for instance found only one private letter written by Hansteen,⁵⁴ and have therefore mostly looked for her "personal" life in documents of "public" character. In certain cases the silences in the sources are an invitation to interpretation,⁵⁵ particularly when pertaining to more and less severe forms of conflict. In other cases, using the method of "researching around [the] subject,"⁵⁶ I have actively sought out related sources in order to reconstruct and

⁴⁹ Among these are also five audio files, the only documents in my research that are neither written materials nor images (photos or drawings). Two of these audio files are discussed in sections 4.2.1 and 4.3.2 respectively.

⁵⁰ Arkivportalen can be found on <http://www.arkivportalen.no/> (7 May 2019). The printed content in the National Library of Norway's digitised collection is searchable not only in terms of keywords and metadata, but also in terms of the actual text in the documents.

⁵¹ Reinharz, *Feminist Methods in Social Research*, 145.

⁵² Reinharz, 162.

⁵³ Reinharz, 156.

⁵⁴ The letter in question addressed to Magli Elster is discussed in section 4.1.1.

⁵⁵ As discussed in Arnold, "Voices and Silences," 75–79.

⁵⁶ Chaudhuri, Katz, and Perry, 'Introduction', xix.

interpret the chosen period of Kirsten Hansteen's life, trying to cover some of the large gaps in the primary material I have collected.⁵⁷

The theme that led me through my archival research was the hunt for information about Kirsten Hansteen's political life during and after WWII, wanting to restore lost information about her important activities. This amounts to a particular form of content analysis which the pioneering women's and gender historian Gerda Lerner has named "feminist intellectual archeology."⁵⁸ I scoured letters, articles, minutes from meetings and conference papers in the search for Kirsten Hansteen's name, her comrades' names, or information about organisations and events I knew or suspected her to be involved in. As my research progressed, I organised my findings according to the emerging themes of (non-)cooperation, anti-communism and peace activism. The results of my archival research also led me to limit the scope of my research to the years 1945–1949 which eventually stood out to me as a decisive period for left-feminism in Norway.

⁵⁷ Chaudhuri, Katz, and Perry, xix This method was developed by historian Sherry J. Katz when researching the activism of radical women in early 20th century California who had left few documents behind. By using documents that do not explicitly mention or involve the subject of research, but involving what can be assumed to be similar experiences, the researcher can piece together a coherent image despite the lack of sources.

⁵⁸ Lerner in Reinhartz, *Feminist Methods in Social Research*, 158.

III. Historiography

In this chapter I will review existing bodies of literature on the Cold War and on Norwegian women's movements that I draw upon in my thesis, and ultimately aim to contribute to. As a left-feminist in the Communist Party of Norway (NKP), Kirsten Hansteen occupied both of these domains in a certain manner. This chapter establishes her almost complete absence from these respective historiographies and explores the mechanisms behind this exclusion.

In the Cold War historiography I start from the global, and then move to the national perspective. I identify a debate about and alternative approaches to studying the period as defined by two superpowers and high level global politics from the two sides of an Iron Curtain. This approach overlooks political dynamics that play out on different levels, and almost by default excludes women's political activities which only rarely happened on the "highest levels" of national and global political institutions during the Cold War. Moreover, the conceptualisation of two blocs dictated by their respective superpowers tends to ignore the dynamics happening within smaller nations, such as Norway, whose adherence to one or the other ideology is taken for granted. With a national perspective, I broaden the scope of literature to include political historiography, and the historiography of Norwegian post-WWII foreign politics, and explore patterns in how NKP has been (under)represented.

The second body of literature discussed in this chapter is the historiography of Norwegian women's movements. Firstly, I investigate the development of women's and gender history as a field in Norway, and how the shifting approaches and interests might have contributed to the overseeing of the post-WWII left-feminist movement. Then I review the ways in which women's movements and organisations have been treated in the historiography of Norwegian women's movements. A class perspective has often guided this research, but as I will show there is an almost consistent blind spot concerning communist women. Finally, the historiography on Norwegian women's movements tends to limit itself to a national or regional (Scandinavian) approach at the expense of transnational perspectives. I see the omission of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) in light of this, and include a short review of the recently emerging English-language historiography of the WIDF.

3.1. The Cold War⁵⁹

3.1.1. The Iron Curtain and small states in Europe

Since the turn of the millenium, the Iron Curtain metaphor has been increasingly challenged culminating in Poul Villaume and Odd Arne Westad *perforating* it in 2010.⁶⁰ Examples of this approach can be found in *Reassessing Cold War Europe* (2011) edited by Sari Autio-Sarasma and Katalin Miklóssy, which looks at meetings and transnational communication through different case studies, and introduces the “multileveled-multipolar interaction” paradigm.⁶¹ It is not by chance that the anthology includes a chapter by Melanie Ilic on cultural exchange and the Women’s International Democratic Federation (WIDF)—the rejection of the superpowers as the only defining political actors opens the possibility for the study of transnational connections and the large-scale women’s political activities which took place within the WIDF. I will get back to the place of WIDF in the historiography later in this chapter.

Another level of perforations in the Iron Curtain is that of small states. Autio-Sarasma and Miklóssy point out that only major powers have been assumed to influence the international system, and the smaller states have therefore been deemed irrelevant.⁶² This is reflected in the exclusion of Norway from works on international Cold War history.⁶³ The Norwegian literature that exists on the topic is informed by political realism, and therefore largely overlooks the internal political developments and dynamics in Norway. The historiography starts in 1971 with a study ordered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs after critique⁶⁴ of the process of Norway’s accession to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).⁶⁵ Much of the literature from the following three decades is situated in the realist tradition focusing on the state as actor, tends to present communism as the danger of the Cold

⁵⁹ I owe much of my understanding of international and Norwegian Cold War historiography to the following historiographical study and essay: Eriksen, *Norsk sikkerhetspolitikk som etterkrigshistorisk forskningsfelt*; Leffler, “The Cold War.”

⁶⁰ Villaume and Westad, *Perforating the Iron Curtain*.

⁶¹ Ilic, “Soviet Women, Cultural Exchange and the Women’s International Democratic Federation,” 2.

⁶² Ilic, 8.

⁶³ Norway is lacking from works such as Smith, *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Communism*; Westad, *The Cold War*; Jarausch, Ostermann, and Etges, *The Cold War*; A notable exception is the following article, which engages with the developing relations between Norway and the USA as well as internal national dynamics in a meaningful way. Interestingly, it is left out of Eriksen’s recently mentioned historiographical analysis. Værnø, “The United States, Norway, And the Atlantic Pact, 1948–1949.”

⁶⁴ A main source of this critique was renowned feminist Torild Skard, who at the time was a representative in the Parliament. In 1967, she included parts of her critique in a book chapter: Skard, “Strømninger.”

⁶⁵ Skodvin, *Norden eller NATO?*.

War,⁶⁶ and assumes a teleological approach to Norway's turn to the West. The historians Helge Øystein Pharo, Geir Lundestad and Knut Einar Eriksen have dominated the field.⁶⁷ A notable work in this tradition is *Kald krig og internasjonalisering, 1949–1965* (Cold War and Internationalism, 1949–1965) published in 1997 as a part of the 6-volume-series *Norsk utenrikspolitikk historie* (The History of Norwegian Foreign Policy).⁶⁸ Before 1990, there were a few works written in opposition to the realist tradition, notably *Bak fasaden* (Behind the Facade) by Kari Enholm published in 1987, which analyses public and political discourses.⁶⁹

In 1996, the Norwegian public was shook after the Lund Commission published a report demonstrating extensive illegal surveillance starting around year 1950 lasting until the 1980s, primarily of groups and individuals considered 'communist'.⁷⁰ Some books have followed in light of these revelations,⁷¹ but the Cold War historiography stagnated after the publication of the aforementioned volume. A slight shift took place, and the work produced after the 1990s with a similar realist framework is better described as International Relations with a more contemporary perspective than History.⁷² What Eriksen and Pharo call consensus about the "underlying continuity of Norway's relationship to the Western Powers,"⁷³ some historians now also see in light of a continuity of *russophobia*⁷⁴ as Roald Berg in *Norsk*

⁶⁶ A recent illustrative example is the title of the book from 2018 that indirectly covers Cold War dynamics in Norway through its discussion of the Norwegian communists: Sørensen and Brandal, *Det norske demokratiet og dets fiender* (The Norwegian Democracy and its Enemies).

⁶⁷ Pharo, *Norge og Marshallplanen*; Pharo, "Together Again"; Pharo, Eriksen, and Bergh, *Vekst og velstand*; Pharo, "Utenriksøkonomi og europeisk integrasjon"; Pharo, "Ekspansjon i isolasjon?"; Lundestad, "Empire by Invitation?"; Lundestad, "The Evolution of Norwegian Security Policy"; Geir Lundestad, *America, Scandinavia, and the Cold War, 1945-1949*; Berg and Eriksen, *Selvstendig og beskyttet*; Eriksen, *Storbritannia, NATO og et skandinavisk forbund*; Eriksen, *Norway and the Early Cold War*; Tamnes, "Et Lite Land i Stormaktspolitikken"; Cole and Tamnes, "The United States and the Cold War in the High North."; Tamnes, *Svalbard Mellom Øst Og Vest*.

⁶⁸ Eriksen and Pharo, *Kald krig og internasjonalisering, 1949–1965*.

⁶⁹ Enholm, *Bak fasaden*. Other critical works include Enholm, *Natobasen Norge*; Enholm, *Norge - en Nato-base*; Enholm, *Ført bak lyset*; Åmlid, *Ut av kurs*.

⁷⁰ Lund Commission, Rapport til Stortinget fra kommisjonen som ble nedsatt av Stortinget for å granske påstander om ulovlig overvåking av norske borgere (Lund-rapporten).

⁷¹ For example: Alf R. Jacobsen, *Iskyss*; Galtung, *Hva var det du prøvde å få til?*; Titlestad, *Fortielsen*. Although these are historical works, they are written for a broader audience and have a hint of sensationalism, two of them portraying Norwegian spies, and the third is about a profiled communist.

⁷² Because the relationships to the Cold War superpowers are still relevant, with Russia through a shared border and with the USA through NATO, most literature in the last decade is consecrated to these as contemporary issues rather than historical ones. The simplification of these relationships is not to suggest that nothing has evolved since the mid 20th century, to the contrary, I suggest that the novelty of these shifting international relations and global militarised conflicts take the focus at the expense of historical analyses. Examples include: Widerberg and Hilde, "Norway and NATO. The Art of Balancing"; Gullestad Rø, *Fokus: Nato 70*; Tamnes, "I. The Significance of the North Atlantic and the Norwegian Contribution."

⁷³ Eriksen, *Norsk sikkerhetspolitikk som etterkrigshistorisk forskningsfelt*, 21:17.

⁷⁴ This term, my translation from the Norwegian *russeskrekk*, has been employed about a disproportionate fear

utanrikspolitik etter 1814 (Norwegian Foreign Policy after 1814).⁷⁵ This is in line with Odd Arne Westad's transformative approach to the Cold War as much exceeding both the narrow time frame 1947–1989, and the between-states field of political activity.⁷⁶

3.1.2. Norwegian national party politics to the left

Another branch of the Cold War historiography about Norway focuses on the Communist Party of Norway (NKP). NKP broke away from the Norwegian Labour Party (DNA) on 3 November 1923 when the latter decided to leave the Communist International. The NKP was perpetually losing influence until WWII, when its members were active in the resistance, and in the first election after the end of the war, NKP received almost 12 % of the votes and eleven representatives. This number fell to zero in the next election in 1949, and since 1949, the Party has had only four representatives in the Storting in total.⁷⁷

Norwegian political historiography of the post-WWII period is focused on DNA. Because DNA was the dominating party in Norway from the end of the war until 1963, this literature overlaps with the Cold War historiography on foreign policy and international relations. The main example is a comprehensive 6-volume-series about the history of the Norwegian labour movement which came out in the 1980s. The volume *Storhetstid (1945–1965)* (Glory Days [1945–1965])⁷⁸ published in 1987 covers the period I research, but discusses NKP primarily in its relation to DNA. It is also an expression of the same tendency I previously discussed, to not pay attention to transnational relations beyond those with Western powers, and the national communist opposition, though *Storhetstid (1945–1965)* gives much more room for national dynamics missing from the more explicitly Cold War related literature.

In the 1970s and 1980s historians also did research on NKP in the first half decade after WWII, but this work would become less influential.⁷⁹ These were turbulent years for the

for Russia and Russians. It was notably employed by King Haakon in 1944 after the Soviet soldiers had liberated Finnmark region from the German occupation (Halvorsen, *Ført bak lyset*, 5.). Berg uses a modern version of the word, *russofobi*.

⁷⁵ Berg, *Norsk utanrikspolitik etter 1814*.

⁷⁶ Westad, *The Cold War*. Although Westad is Norwegian, I do not count this work as a part of the Norwegian Cold War historiography, both because the author is a long time professor and resident in the USA and because the book does not pay particular attention to Norway, but very much has a global approach.

⁷⁷ Three representatives from 1953 to 1957, and one representative from 1957 to 1961.

⁷⁸ Bergh, *Storhetstid (1945-1965)*.

⁷⁹ For examples, see: Halvorsen, "Fra Motstandskamp Til Partistrid - Oppgjøret Med „Det Annet Sentrum” i NKP 1949/50"; Halvorsen, *NKP i krise - om "oppgjøret med det annet sentrum" 1949-50*; Selle, "The Norwegian Communist Party in the Immediate Postwar Period"; Selle, *Norges Kommunistiske Parti 1945-1950*; Hans I. Kleven, *Parti i flammer*.

Party, especially 1948–1949. Two opposing camps developed within the Party, and a central figure, Peder Furubotn, was finally excluded in 1950 along with around 20 other party members.⁸⁰ The literature is very focused on the internal workings of the Party, like in the retrospective analysis by NKP member Hans I. Kleven, *Parti i flammer*, Party in Flames (1990).⁸¹ This book turns the focus to NKP's international involvement and a debate about this topic ensued in the 1990s.⁸² It was generally “limited to the political relationship between the national [Norwegian] communist party and the centre of world communism in Moscow,” as historian Terje Halvorsen describes a part of this historiography.⁸³

After the year 2000 there was a surge in political biography about DNA politicians.⁸⁴ Common to both the DNA- and the NKP-centric historiography is a rampant lack of attention to gender dynamics and the women's movement. Two exceptions are the biography about Johanne Reutz and a 100 year history of DNA's women's movement both appearing in 2001,⁸⁵ but neither of them go much beyond a DNA perspective. In this way, the lack of attention to women and gender combined with the dominance of DNA at the expense of NKP, leads to a complete sidelining of the communist feminist perspective from the Norwegian political historiography.

The master's thesis *Fra samling til splittelse* by Andreas Røseth (2014)⁸⁶ is a welcome contribution, again taking up the history of NKP post-WWII, but with a more integral perspective, focusing on the dynamics with DNA and the time's anti-communist political discourse. This thesis also analyses anti-communism as a continuous, not discrete,

⁸⁰ Halvorsen, “Fra Motstandskamp Til Partistrid - Oppgjøret Med „Det Annet Sentrum” i NKP 1949/50,” 121; 239.

⁸¹ Hans I. Kleven, *Parti i flammer*.

⁸² Two differing views appeared, one side emphasising central international involvement from (the informal remnants of the Communist International, the Communist Information Bureau and) Moscow in NKP's political “purges”, represented by Titlestad, *I Stalins skygge (om korleis ein politisk leiar byggjer og taper makt. Peder Furubotn, NKP og SUKP 1945-49)?*; and the other side emphasising the dynamics and specificities within the national party: Halvorsen, “Stalinist Purges in the Communist Party of Norway 1948–1949?”; Halvorsen, “Peder Furubotn, the Norwegian Communist Party, and International Communism, 1939-1950.”

⁸³ Halvorsen, “Peder Furubotn, the Norwegian Communist Party, and International Communism, 1939-1950,” 219.

⁸⁴ Nyhamar, *Einar Gerhardsen*; Lahlum, *Haakon Lie*; Njølstad, *Jens Chr. Hauge*; Lahlum, *Noen av oss har snakket sammen*; Aas, *Mellom frontene*.

⁸⁵ Arbeiderpartiets kvinnebevegelse, *Arbeiderpartiets kvinnebevegelse 1901-2001*; Aas, *Mellom frontene*. The book *Storhetstid (1945-1965)* includes a six page sub-chapter on the women's movement (“A Sidelined Women's Movement,” pp. 69–75), which displays a complete lack of insight into the women's political interests and activities, and presents the remaining political activities from a man's perspective.

⁸⁶ Røseth, “Fra Samling Til Splittelse Norges Kommunistiske Parti Sitt Forhold Til Det Norske Arbeiderparti Fra 1945 Til 1950.” (From Unification to Division the Communist Party of Norway's Relationship to the Norwegian Labour Party from 1945 to 1950). This thesis also offers further notes on the Norwegian political historiography.

phenomenon.⁸⁷ I see my thesis as contributing with a similar perspective, in addition amending the lacking focus on women and gender analysis.

I identify a gap in the political historiography regarding women's movements in general, and in particular Kirsten Hansteen's pioneering role and the resistance against the North Atlantic Treaty led by the Norwegian Section of WIDF in 1949. An illustrative example of this gap is the book *Samling om felles mål: 1935–1970* (Unified for a Common Goal: 1935–1970) from 1998. The volume discusses the North Atlantic Treaty, and has a picture of women from the Norwegian Section of WIDF protesting against it, but fails to even mention the organisation by name.⁸⁸ Instead, it implies that the organising against NATO starts in 1953, and names Kirsten Hansteen's brother in law, Karl Evang, as its leading figure.⁸⁹ By ignoring the left feminist peace work in the second half of the 1940s, the historiography also disregards the negative impact anti-communism had on the emerging women's movement.

3.2. The Norwegian women's movements

3.2.1. Women's and gender history in Norway

In 1972, Elisabeth Colbjørnsen wrote that Norway was an underdeveloped country in terms of women's history.⁹⁰ She referred to the lack of women-specific archives and research in a field dominated by men, and her article represented the beginning of Norwegian women's history as an academic discipline. Important contributions were made by a surge of women students, and an important anthology *Kvinner selv - sju bidrag til norsk kvinnehistorie* (Women Themselves - Seven Contributions to Norwegian Women's History) edited by Ida Blom and Gro Hagemann was published in 1977.⁹¹ In the seminal article that opens *Kvinner selv*, Blom raised the necessity to look for women within decision-making structures,⁹² and

⁸⁷ In line with my comment on the aforementioned Cold War works Berg, *Norsk utanrikspolitikk etter 1814*.

⁸⁸ This picture is almost identical to figure 4 in section 5.3.1 where I discuss this protest, taken from a slightly different angle and printed with much better quality than figure 4 in this thesis which is the scan of a newspaper.

⁸⁹ Lange, *Samling om felles mål*, B. 11:143; 151. I do not imply that Karl Evang did not have a leading role from 1953 onwards, and this is beyond the scope of my research. My research has indicated that he also participated in the movement before this year, but as this thesis shows, the movement was initiated long before 1953 as a women's movement. Kirsten Hansteen was also a leading figure in the Norwegian Peace Committee in the early 1950s and is not mentioned. I have also chosen to exclude this from this thesis, and further research should be done on her continued peace activism.

⁹⁰ Colbjørnsen, "Norge, et kvinnehistorisk u-land."

⁹¹ Blom and Hagemann, *Kvinner Selv* -.

⁹² Blom, "Kvinnehistorie Som Forskningsområde," 14.

thereby predicted the focus on political history that would characterise the following decade. Students produced a large part of the contributions between 1975 and 1985, and many researched women's political organising from the late 19th century until the Second World War.⁹³

Towards the 1980s, historians began to show more interest in the WWII- and post-WWII period, with a sense that this particular field had been neglected. The important message of their research was that women had proven themselves as capable political subjects in positions and situations strongly associated with masculinity, and that their participation had been ignored based on gendered assumptions.⁹⁴ As such, these works were typical contributions to the 1970s feminist project of disproving women's inferiority to men. Finnish journalist Harriet Clayhills stands out by making particular contributions to the historiography of left-feminism as a contributor to *PaxLeksion* in topics pertaining to left-feminism, and with *Kvinner og klassekamp* (Women and Class Struggle, 1972).⁹⁵ *Kvinner og klassekamp* briefly introduces the topic of women's cooperation after WWII, a core theme of my research.

In her historiographical chapter "Kvinne- og kjønnshistoriens fortellinger" (The Stories of Women's and Gender History) from 2013, historian Eirinn Larsen analyses Norwegian women's and gender historiography from 1970 to 2007.⁹⁶ She points out that historians in the field have actively engaged with feminist theory as it developed, and as such women's and gender history has become marked by postmodernism leading to a larger focus on language, discourse and power.⁹⁷ When historian Joan W. Scott's groundbreaking article "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis" was published in 1986,⁹⁸ the Norwegian historiography consequently developed from women's history to gender history.⁹⁹ In parallel, however, interest tapered off, and fewer students and researchers entered the field from the

⁹³ Lønnå, "Etableringen av kvinnehistorie som fagfelt." The research in this period covers many different topics, much related to women and labour (rights). For a bibliography, see Nordrik and Gulbrandsen, *Oversikt over humanistisk forskning om kvinner*.

⁹⁴ For examples, see Skjøsberg, *Hvor var kvinnene?*; Wormdal, *Kvinner i krig*; Wiig, *Kvinner selv*. Kari Skjøsberg's anthology (Where Were the Women?) contains eleven stories from eleven active women from 1945 to 1960. Birgit Wiig's *Kvinner selv: den skjulte Norgeshistorien fra vår nære fortid* (Women Themselves: The Hidden History of Norway from our Recent Past, 1984) is more of an overview or introduction, and has few historical analyses.

⁹⁵ Clayhills, *Kvinner og klassekamp*; Clayhills, "PaxLeksikon." Her encyclopaedia article "Kvinnes Demokratiske verdensforbund" (Women's International Democratic Federation) (and its later versions) is the only Norwegian language literature consecrated to the transnational organisation.

⁹⁶ Larsen, "Kvinne- og kjønnshistoriens fortellinger."

⁹⁷ Larsen, 15.

⁹⁸ Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis."

⁹⁹ Larsen, 152–53.

1990s.¹⁰⁰ The subsequent stagnation in research on the post-WWII period might have been due to the disappearing connection between the highly politicised feminist movement in the 1970s and the academic field, as well as to new critical insights on the construction of the “private” as irrelevant, consequently broadening the perspective on women’s and gender history far beyond political history.

Together with the broadened perspective came broadened ambitions, manifested in complete works of history. The three volume series *Cappelens kvinnehistorie* (Cappelen’s Women’s History) edited by Ida Blom published from 1992 to 1993 attempts to make a comprehensive global history of women since the Australopithecus female individual “Lucy.”¹⁰¹ Ida Blom also edited the work *Med kjønnsperspektiv på norsk historie: fra vikingtid til 2000-årsskiftet* (A Gender Perspective on Norwegian History from the Vikings to the Year 2000¹⁰²) together with Sølvi Sogner, published in 1999.¹⁰³ This was a result of a cooperation between the most central women’s and gender historians in Norway.¹⁰⁴ Historian Eirinn Larsen highlights Blom and Sogner’s work from 1999 as an example of the project of integrating women’s and gender history as a perspective into the wider field of history.¹⁰⁵ Whereas its magnitude remains unchallenged, I would argue that *Norsk likestillingshistorie 1814–2013* (History of Norwegian Gender Equality 1814–2014)¹⁰⁶ from 2013 has taken over the place as the most important work in the field, precisely for leaving the project of integration behind and re-centering feminist struggles.

3.2.2. Leftist women in the historiography of the women’s movement in Norway

The history of women’s movements has been a core part of Norwegian women’s and gender history since the emergence of the field, and even before. In 1937, Anna Caspari Agerholt published the first book about the Norwegian women’s movements, with discrepancies between the bourgeois and working class movements as one of the themes.¹⁰⁷ She covers the struggle for universal suffrage obtained in 1913, and the debate regarding

¹⁰⁰ Lønnå, “Etableringen av kvinnehistorie som fagfelt.”

¹⁰¹ Blom, *Cappelens kvinnehistorie: 1*, 1992; Blom, *Cappelens kvinnehistorie: 2*, 1992; Blom, *Cappelens kvinnehistorie: 3*, 1993. The editor discusses the difficulties and ultimate impossibility of her undertaking in the following essay: Blom, “Global Women’s History: Organising Principles and Cross-Cultural Understandings.”

¹⁰² Translation from *Historisk tidsskrift*, 2000 79(2), 243.

¹⁰³ Blom and Sogner, *Med kjønnsperspektiv på norsk historie*.

¹⁰⁴ The historians behind the work were Ingvild Øye, Hilde Sandvik, Gro Hagemann, Kari Melby and Ida Blom.

¹⁰⁵ Larsen, “Kvinne- og kjønnshistoriens fortellinger,” 157–58.

¹⁰⁶ Hilde Danielsen, Larsen, and Owsen, *Norsk likestillingshistorie 1814-2013*.

¹⁰⁷ Agerholt, *Den Norske Kvinnebevegelsens Historie*.

maternal and abortion rights, issues that separated the two camps. When Agerholt's book was republished in 1973, it is arguably partially because of its class perspective, which was prevalent in the research of this decade.¹⁰⁸ Many projects were centered on leftist women's organisations, two master's theses from 1976 and 1978 cover post-WWII topics,¹⁰⁹ and have proved to be important works for my thesis. Their distant publication dates provide an appropriate indication of the level of attention since the 1970s given to this period in women's and gender history, which is understudied.

From the 1980s until the turn of the millenium, two characteristics are worth noting. Firstly that the interest in women's movements persists, forefronting women as contributors to society, generally defined as the nation. The most important examples of this are the aforementioned publication by Blom and Sogner, as well as Elisabeth Lønnå's *Stolthet og kvinnekamp: Norsk kvinnesaksforenings historie fra 1913* (Pride and Women's Struggle: The History of the Norwegian Association for Women's Rights since 1913, 1996).¹¹⁰ Lønnå writes about the Norwegian branch of the International Alliance of Women, and includes a considerable amount of information about other actors than the association itself, making it the most comprehensive work in Norwegian women's movements' history. However, the association itself was dominated by middle- and upper class women, and the book ends up leaving out left-feminist perspectives in its portrayal of the Norwegian women's movement(s).

Secondly, the emphasis on the Labour Party discussed in the previous section to have overshadowed NKP in political historiography has similarly affected the historiography of women's movements. Adding to the biography about Johanne Reutz and the history of the Labour Party's women's movement both published in 2001, is Vera Espeland Ertresvaag's research on working-class women's organising around 1900, all three centering DNA at the expense of the communist segment of the leftist women's movement.¹¹¹ Without knowing the precise numbers of women members in the two parties, I can establish that they were both important in the 1940s. According to the accounting in *Norske Kvinneorganisasjoners Samarbeidsnemnd*, both organisations paid the maximum membership fee in 1946, indicating

¹⁰⁸ For examples, see Blom and Hagemann, *Kvinner Selv* - (all chapters); Hernes, "Norske kvinneorganisasjoner: Kvinner som maktgrunnlag eller kvinners maktgrunnlag?"

¹⁰⁹ Lundby, "Norsk Kvinneforbund 1948-1960"; Løvik, "Norske kvinneorganisasjoners samarbeidsnemnd 1945-1952," 1976.

¹¹⁰ Lønnå, *Stolthet og kvinnekamp*; Blom and Sogner, *Med kjønnsperspektiv på norsk historie*.

¹¹¹ Arbeiderpartiets kvinnebevegelse, *Arbeiderpartiets kvinnebevegelse 1901-2001*; Aas, *Mellom frontene*; Ertresvaag, "Arbeiderkvinnernes Faglige Og Politiske Organisering 1889-1901."

that they had at least 7500 members each.¹¹² In total number of members, DNA was considerably larger than NKP right after the war, with 191,000¹¹³ versus 34,000 members,¹¹⁴ meaning that if the two parties had equal gender balance, there were approximately six times as many social democratic women as communist women. Many women were not members of any of the parties, but were organised in other groups or were sympathetic without ever joining an organisation. That being said, regardless of the probably relatively lower number of communist women than social democratic women, the communist women should have a place in the historiography of Norwegian women's movements.

The silence about a communist women's movement in Norway was broken in the 2000s, for example by Eva Marie Mathisen's two articles about the NKP women in the 1920s.¹¹⁵ Mathisen seems to draw on Kari Melby's characterisation of the former half of the 20th century as the era of the housewife,¹¹⁶ with a curiosity for the construction of the housewife as a category in the intersection of class and gender. Mathisens contributions are crucial to an integral perspective on the development of the Norwegian left and working-class women's movement and they focus on women's politics and negotiations within and outwith the party without falling into the trap of characterising the communist party as a top-down masculinist institution.¹¹⁷

It is worth noting here that in the *History of Norwegian Gender Equality 1814–2013* by Danielsen et al. published in 2013, Kirsten Hansteen as the first woman in the Norwegian government is not even mentioned by name, and the organisations and projects she was active in are not paid much attention.

3.2.3. Transnational perspectives and the WIDF

In her historiographical analysis, Larsen reads Blom and Sogner's *A Gender Perspective on Norwegian History* to argue that the prevalent national perspective in Norwegian women's and gender history often is accompanied by a positive value judgement

¹¹² Norske Kvinneorganisasjoners Samarbeidsnemnd, "Kassabilag"; Løvik, "Norske kvinneorganisasjoners samarbeidsnemnd 1945-1952," 1976, 116.

¹¹³ Det norske Arbeiderparti, *Beretning 1945*, 13. Number of members in DNA in 1945.

¹¹⁴ Rønning, "Stalins elever," 324. Number of members in NKP in 1946.

¹¹⁵ Mathisen, "Husmorkommunisme; kvinnepolitikk i Norges kommunistiske parti i 1920-åra"; Mathisen, "Kvinnepolitikk og kvinnearbeid i Norges Kommunistiske Parti (NKP) 1923-1930."

¹¹⁶ Blom and Sogner, *Med kjønnsperspektiv på norsk historie*, 257–331.

¹¹⁷ The trope of communist parties and institutions being top-down and authoritarian is absent from the historiography of the Norwegian women's movement simply because communist perspectives are understudied.

of the Norwegian gender regime.¹¹⁸ It is not uncommon to present Norway and Scandinavia as more “gender equal” than other countries and cultures, as in this quote from Blom: “There is no doubt that the Nordic countries exceed in developing the political democracy to comprise both genders [*sic*].”¹¹⁹ Larsen’s historiographical analysis ends in 2007, and I suggest that her analysis holds true for the *History of Norwegian Gender Equality 1814–2013* published in 2013, as an indication of the dominant national methodology also in the most recent Norwegian literature.

Historian Francisca de Haan has with Chandra Talpade Mohanty’s expression argued that there is an “overwhelming silence” in the majority of English-language historiography about the transnational women’s organisation WIDF.¹²⁰ According to de Haan, there are various interrelated reasons for this omission, which relate back to the anti-communism facing the WIDF in the West. These attacks are epitomised by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) which persecuted the US American branch of the WIDF as a communist “front organisation,” a term used to stigmatise leftist activism as communist propaganda. Anti-communism led both to the invisibilisation of WIDF’s activity, and to a disconnection in the historiography between WIDF and feminism.¹²¹

The WIDF as a key actor in the post-WWII left-feminist movement has in these ways been left out of the historiography. Recent research about the WIDF has since the 2000s challenged dominant narratives about transnational women’s organising as politicised at the expense of feminism, and dictated by the wishes of communist parties dominated by men.¹²² There is still no such research in the recent Norwegian historiography. The most informative recent literature on the WIDF from a Norwegian perspective in terms of references is a study about the connections between the post-WWII Norwegian peace movement and international communism appearing in a book published by the Norwegian Institute for Defence Studies in

¹¹⁸ Larsen, “Kvinne- og kjønnshistoriens fortellinger,” 172–73.

¹¹⁹ Blom and Sogner, *Med kjønnsperspektiv på norsk historie*, 389; quoted in Larsen, “Kvinne- og kjønnshistoriens fortellinger,” 172–73.

¹²⁰ de Haan, “Continuing Cold War Paradigms in Western Historiography of Transnational Women’s Organisations,” 548.

¹²¹ de Haan, 149; 151–52.

¹²² In addition to Francisca de Haan’s already cited work and ongoing research, the following work can be mentioned: McGregor, “Indonesian Women, the Women’s International Democratic Federation and the Struggle for ‘Women’s Rights’, 1946-1965”; Armstrong, “Before Bandung”; de Haan, “Hoffnungen auf eine bessere Welt”; Donert, “Women’s Rights in Cold War Europe”; Ilic, “Soviet Women, Cultural Exchange and the Women’s International Democratic Federation”; Laville, *Cold War Women*; Mooney, “Fighting Fascism and Forging New Political Activism: The Women’s International Democratic Federation (WIDF) in the Cold War”; Poulos, “Transnational Militancy in Cold-War Europe.”

2002.¹²³ The study presents the WIDF as one of many puppet actors whose primary function was pro-Soviet propaganda.

A master's thesis from 2007 studied the Norwegian section of WIDF as one of three women's organisations against nuclear weapons in post-WWII Norway, where the author remarks that the word "Democratic" appears to be out of place in the Federation's name, since it had strong ties to the Soviet Communist regime, a regime the author does not associate with democracy.¹²⁴ The author's confusion seems to stem from her employing a limited and ahistorical definition of "democracy," illustrating the prevalence of misinformation about the history of communism and left-feminism. Another article from 2013 exploring "cultural diplomacy" between Norwegian and Soviet Russian women during the Cold War published in *Nordisk Østforum* (The Nordic Review of Eastern European Studies) applies a promising curiosity for transnational exchanges and touches upon the Federation, but is not in dialogue with the existing scholarship on the WIDF.¹²⁵ From these three examples, I infer that there is a need for renewed knowledge and perspectives on the WIDF and its Norwegian branch.

3.3. Conclusion

This chapter has shown that because of the overshadowing conceptualisation of the Cold War as a conflict between two superpowers, Norway as a small state has been excluded from Cold War historiography with a global perspective. Similarly, the historiography about Norway in the Cold War focuses on Norway's foreign politics and relations with the two superpowers, and consequently fails to consider Norway as a Cold War arena. Secondly, the dominance of the Norwegian Labour Party (DNA) in national politics in the post-WWII era is mirrored in the political historiography centered on men in institutional politics, and in the historiography centered on women regarding leftist women and women's movements. The anti-communism that especially DNA directed towards communists in Norway hence had a double effect, first by making political activity difficult for the party and other actors framed as communist, and a second time when historians fail to analyse and account for anti-communism, thereby invisibilising these same actors in the historiography. Thirdly, I argue

¹²³ Rowe, *Nyttige idioter*.

¹²⁴ Westgaard, "Kvinner mot atomvåpen - Norske kvinners organiserte atommotstand de tjue første årene etter andre verdenskrig," 43.

¹²⁵ Kasiyan, "Kulturdiplomati under den kalde krigen." The author mistranslates the name of WIDF into Norwegian and appears to be largely ignorant about the WIDF as a transnational federation, when she discusses the Russian branch of it. To be sure, the WIDF is not the main topic of this article.

that the transnational perspective is largely ignored in the history of Norwegian women's movements.

A strong emphasis on researching women as political actors outside of institutional politics has resulted in a varied historiography of Norwegian women's movements, but a perspective on individual women's lives in their contexts is rather lacking. Norwegian women's and gender history saw an initial interest in the women's labour movement which then tapered off. When the interest in leftist women's organising returned in the 2000s, it was focused in particular on housewives doing communist activism and organising outside of "high" political institutions. Whereas I do not regret this perspective, I argue that a step is missing, and that women's political biography is apt to lay a necessary basis in the historiography of the Norwegian women's movement. Researching Kirsten Hansteen's political life and work from 1945 to 1949 has made visible the extent of left-feminism in Norway, the existence of transnational relations on a non-state level, and Cold War tensions within the Norwegian women's movement. I hope that by discussing these elements, my thesis will contribute to filling out the gaps I have identified in this chapter.

IV. A Spirit of cooperation

This chapter explores the emergence of the immediate post-WWII left-feminist movement in Norway. It will do so by examining how this historical context of WWII shaped the way left-feminists built their political project, and their very conceptualisation of a community of women.

I will start by discussing the two magazines Kirsten Hansteen edited in the time period 1945–1955, *Kvinnefronten* (The Women’s Front) and *Kvinnen og tiden* (Women and Current Affairs)¹²⁶ and how they were embedded in Norwegian women’s resistance work. Next, I will examine Kirsten Hansteen’s representation of left-feminism in national politics, both through her entry as the first woman into a Norwegian government, and as a central member of *Norske Kvinneorganisasjoners Samarbeidsnemnd* (NKS, Cooperation Council of Norwegian Women’s Organisations), which she helped establish as a groundbreaking cooperative platform for women’s politics. In both of these instances, I will explore women’s will to gain political influence, and argue that they regarded their struggle for emancipation as inseparable from the reconstruction of the country.

Lastly, I will turn to the international context, by looking at how Kirsten Hansteen related to global left-feminism, and urged the emerging Norwegian women’s movement to follow suit. I specifically discuss the Norwegian participation in the 1945 founding congress of the Women’s International Democratic Federation (WIDF), and Hansteen’s initiatives to promote transnational solidarity, as well as the ways in which emerging anti-communism affected her relationship with other parts of the women’s movement in Norway.

4.1. Traces of WWII

The establishment of a new women’s movement in Norway in 1945 as well as Kirsten Hansteen’s participation in it need to be traced back to women’s participation in the resistance against the German occupation of Norway. Many Norwegian women’s experiences with the war and German occupation were related to the household, and this also defined Hansteen’s participation in the resistance. She was a part of illegal networks providing material aid to help sustain life under occupation, as well as the main editor of the women’s resistance organ *Kvinnefronten*.

¹²⁶ Translations from: Rokkan, “Women in World History.”

Women were brought together in shared struggle and suffering during WWII, epitomised in Ravensbrück concentration camp for women. This section explores how Hansteen's cooperation with Ravensbrück prisoner Henriette Bie Lorentzen led to the creation of the women's magazine *Kvinnen og tiden*, which aimed to unite and politicise women in the newfound spirit of cooperation to fight for peace and women's rights.

4.1.1. Kirsten Hansteen and the resistance

In the early hours of 9 April 1940, when the sirens alerted Oslo's citizens that the capital was under attack, Kirsten Hansteen and her husband Viggo Hansteen were busy burning documents which would implicate themselves and others if they fell in the hands of the Nazi occupiers. They had an extensive archive in their house in Bernhard Herres vei, and information about both of their lives was lost in the smoke.¹²⁷ Their archives most likely contained documents from their time in the Marxist group *Mot Dag* (Towards Today) and in *Norges Kommunistiske Parti* (NKP, the Communist Party of Norway) which they both entered before the war.¹²⁸

Viggo worked in *Landsorganisasjonen i Norge* (LO, the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions), and as the occupation progressed LO developed into a locus for resistance as the strongest political organisation.¹²⁹ The hostility from the Reichskommissar for Norway grew in parallel, and in September 1941, the so-called "milk strike" became the pretext the Nazis were waiting for to hurt LO. Industry workers in Oslo were dissatisfied with the rationing of food, and when their daily milk ration was discontinued, a strike erupted, soon involving close to 25,000 workers.¹³⁰ The strike was seen as a protest against the occupation, and Viggo was held responsible together with trade unionist Rolf Wickstrøm (1912–1941). In the early morning of 10 September, Viggo was detained in his and Kirsten's home. The same evening, Kirsten received a few of her husband's belongings, alongside the message that she

¹²⁷ Berntsen, *To Liv - Én Skjebne: Viggo Hansteen Og Rolf Wickstrøm*, 197.

¹²⁸ Kirsten Hansteen's friend Henriette Bie Lorentzen as well as several historians claim that she never became a member of NKP, see: Wiig, *Kvinner selv*, 39; Berntsen, *To Liv - Én Skjebne: Viggo Hansteen Og Rolf Wickstrøm*, 22; Bie Lorentzen, "Kvinnen og tiden 1945–1955," 112; This might not be true, and is contestable through the following newspaper article stating that she was a member: "Kirsten Hansteen Blir Norges Første Kvinnelige Statsråd. - Og Strand Johansen Rykker Inn i Arbeidsdepartementet," 1. In either case, her lacking membership would only have been a question of formality, and her activity within and for the party indicate that in all practical aspects of the words, she was a member. Viggo Hansteen joined NKP in 1927 (Scheen, "PaxLeksikon," 29), and I assume that Kirsten Hansteen's involvement started around this time.

¹²⁹ Berntsen, 322–31. There were conflicting views within the organisation on whether to discontinue all work to avoid all cooperation with the occupier, or to negotiate with them and keep the benefits of an existing organisational structure that had some level of independence. For this history from the perspective of a social democratic woman, see Aas, *Mellom frontene*.

¹³⁰ Berntsen, 347.

had become a widow.¹³¹ Hansteen and Wickstrøm were the first to be executed for resistance work during the German occupation of Norway, and their deaths brought about a wave of shock in the population.¹³² Kirsten's name would from this point be associated with the sacrifices of the communist resistance.

After the execution, the leadership of the civil resistance in *Hjemmefronten* (the Home Front) advised Kirsten Hansteen to lay low, fearing that her late husband's prominent position put her at heightened risk. According to her later friend Henriette Bie Lorentzen, Hansteen did not participate actively in the resistance until the two last years of the war, in part due to ill health.¹³³ I suggest contrarily that despite her ill health, she was active in the resistance beginning on the very first day of her widowhood. On that Thursday, 11 September 1941, Sigrid Helliesen Lund (1892–1987) came to visit her.¹³⁴ Helliesen Lund was from the civil resistance, and had been ordered to present Hansteen with flowers from the Norwegian Government in exile. Helliesen Lund writes in her autobiography *Alltid underveis* that the two women soon established a relationship of trust that many would later benefit from.¹³⁵

The main tasks the civilian resistance was charged with were transport of refugees, collection and dissemination information, and assistance to those with close ones in prisons and camps. Helliesen Lund was responsible for providing financial aid for the latter group,¹³⁶ and she made good use of her connection to Hansteen – during the last year of the war, Hansteen had single handedly collected 20,000 NOK monthly, distributing it to relatives of prisoners.¹³⁷

As Helliesen Lund's comment about her closeness to Hansteen illustrates, personal relationships were indispensable for successful resistance work. Including the creation and maintenance of such relationships in a broader definition of "resistance" allows for a more accurate description of the scope of the resistance performed by women like Hansteen who did not participate in the armed resistance. In my understanding, and applying such a definition, Hansteen's resistance work started when she met Helliesen Lund, if not before. Further investigation through a feminist lens into communities of war widows and wives of

¹³¹ Berntsen, *To Liv - Én Skjebne: Viggo Hansteen Og Rolf Wickstrøm*, 352–58.

¹³² Berntsen, 9–10.

¹³³ Bie Lorentzen, "Kvinnen og tiden 1945–1955," 108.

¹³⁴ Helliesen Lund, *Alltid underveis*, 89.

¹³⁵ Helliesen Lund, 89.

¹³⁶ Helliesen Lund, 88–89.

¹³⁷ "Kirsten Hansteen Blir Norges Første Kvinnelige Statsråd. - Og Strand Johansen Rykker Inn i Arbeidsdepartementet.," 1.

prisoners might reveal an even larger scope of Kirsten Hansteen's resistance work.¹³⁸

It is also in collaboration with other women that Hansteen created the newspaper *Kvinnefronten* (The Women's Front) which was first published in April 1945.¹³⁹ In the same time period that she was fully occupied with the illegal work for *Kvinnefronten*, Hansteen addressed a letter of gratitude on 6 April 1945 to her friend Magli Elster (1912–1993) who had fled to Sweden.¹⁴⁰ Elster had sent some clothes and contributions to Hansteen and her children.¹⁴¹ The letter shows how Hansteen's resistance work went hand in hand with the challenge of handling the everyday life during the occupation.

Noticing this overlap puts into question the supposed clear distinction between 'war' and 'peace,' which has been rejected by feminist security and International Relations scholars. In her book chapter "Women and Wars: Towards a Conceptual Framework," Carol Cohn writes that looking at war through the lense of women's lives brings out the fact that "war is neither spatially nor temporally bounded."¹⁴² She argues that war should not be seen as a distinct event that suddenly breaks out, and ends equally swiftly when a peace treaty is signed. Rather, war is created gradually, and part of a "continuum of violence."¹⁴³ This analysis highlights that the effects of violence that permeate daily life during war will persist also after the war is declared to be over. When Hansteen reported to Elster that "[t]he boys are growing to my great pleasure, and fill up the house quite well," it was a mundane celebration of the fact that they were not in desperate need, and could experience a large sense of normalcy. At the same time, her three children could never fill the house completely, and the emptiness left after their father's death would not disappear when peace arrived.

¹³⁸ After the war, Hansteen was involved in an association for war widows (Berntsen, *To Liv - Én Skjebne: Viggo Hansteen Og Rolf Wickstrøm*, 13), which may have been based on relationships formed during the occupation; Helliesen Lund also mentions an organised group of communist women whose husbands had been imprisoned (Helliesen Lund, *Alltid underveis*, 89). It is not unlikely that Hansteen was also involved with such groups, and that their activities can be considered as contributions to the ongoing resistance against the German occupation of Norway.

¹³⁹ Bie Lorentzen, "Kvinnen og tiden 1945–1955," 107–8. I have not managed to determine when Hansteen started planning and making this newspaper. *Kvinnefronten* was printed in Drammen, on a press that drastically increased its capacity from January 1945. Maybe the new and larger press was what prompted her project, or maybe *Kvinnefronten* had been planned for a longer time period, but not prioritised due to the limited printing capacities.

¹⁴⁰ Hansteen to Elster [Björk], "No title, letter of gratitude."

¹⁴¹ Berntsen, 151.

¹⁴² Cohn, "Women and Wars: Towards a Conceptual Framework," 21.

¹⁴³ Cohn, 21; Cohn cites Cynthia Cockburn's concept, discussed further among other places here: Cockburn, *The Space Between Us*, 44–45.



Figure 1: Memorial ceremony for Viggo Hansteen and Rolf Wickstrøm. Kirsten Hansteen is seated in the middle of the first row, between her three sons on one side and Signe Wickstrøm on the other.¹⁴⁴

4.1.2. *Kvinnefronten* – an organ for women’s resistance

The northernmost part of Norway was liberated by Soviet troops in the autumn of 1944, and in the winter of 1945, the liberation of Norway was expected. *Norsk Kvinnesaksforening* (NKF, Norwegian Association for Women's Rights), the Norwegian branch of the International Alliance of Women (IAW), was one of three women’s organisations which had their archives seized in a raid that also targeted the Communist Party.¹⁴⁵ NKF’s activities were banned during the occupation, but the organisation continued to work illegally. Under the leadership of Margarete Bonnevie (1884–1970), NKF was able to carry out discussion groups in a coordinated way through pre-existing women’s networks. From the winter of 1944, a popular topic of discussion for these groups was women’s position after the war.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ Picture from the newspaper article “Minnestenen over Hansteen Og Wickstrøm.”

¹⁴⁵ On 16 August 1940, after a longer period of surveillance, the Nazi German *Einsatzkommando* searched and closed the offices of three women’s organisations as well as several communist organisations, including the NKP, the party newspaper and a communist youth organisation. The women’s organisations were NKF, *Yrkeskvinnens Klubb* (Professional women’s Club) and *Internasjonal Kvinneliga for Fred og Frihet* (IKFF), the Norwegian section of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). All organisations were taken by surprise and had their archives seized, of the women’s organisations only IKFF had been foreseeing enough to destruct membership lists and important documents. According to historian Lønnå, the women’s organisations were not targeted in this raid because they were perceived as communist, other women’s groups would be targeted for being “marxist” only later, but rather because their feminism was a threat to Nazi ideology. NKF never got its documents back, a fate the other targeted women’s organisations presumably shared (Lønnå, *Stolthet og kvinnekamp*, 128–30.)

¹⁴⁶ Lønnå, 135.

It was in this same anticipation of peace and liberation that leftist women came together and created the illegal newspaper *Kvinnefronten*.¹⁴⁷ The name was a clear allusion to the organised resistance *Hjemmefronten*, the Home Front, implying a call for active participation from women against the occupation, not only for the nation, but also for their own sake as women. *Kvinnefronten* was one of the last in a long line of illegal magazines and newspapers in Norway, around 250 in total, and one of two specifically written for women.¹⁴⁸ The illegal press was an important part of the resistance, and a large part of it was organised under the Communist Party of Norway,¹⁴⁹ which printed both women's organs.¹⁵⁰ The three women who were on *Kvinnefronten*'s editorial board led by Kirsten Hansteen were Eva Rønnow (1919–1976), Ellen Gleditsch (1879–1968) and Aaslaug Aasland (1890–1962).¹⁵¹ Historian Elisabeth Lønnå describes it as a “leftist magazine transcending party lines,”¹⁵² a profile that fits the four editors.

The first issue of *Kvinnefronten* was illegally published and distributed in April 1945, one month before the liberation of Norway on 8 May. After the occupation had ended, five more issues were printed before the magazine was discontinued in August of the same year.¹⁵³ The first eight-page-long issue was a call for women's participation in the struggle for peace.¹⁵⁴ In addition to inspirational war poetry, the issue featured an article contesting Nazi propaganda about food production during the occupation, as well as practical suggestions regarding how women can respond to the Home Front's call for resistance. The connection between *Kvinnefronten* and the Home Front was thus reinforced beyond the similarity in name, making it clear that the editors saw the magazine, and by extension their audience of

¹⁴⁷ Lønnå, *Stolthet og kvinnekamp*, 136. Certain authors present Hansteen as the editor in singular, or main woman behind the publication (Hagerup, *Alt er så nær meg*, 104; Luihn, *Den frie hemmelige pressen i Norge under okkupasjonen 1940-45*, 1:86; Stanghelle, *Nini Haslund Gleditsch*, 243.), while others name four editors (Wiig, *Kvinner selv*, 40; Bie Lorentzen, “Kvinnen og tiden 1945–1955,” 107; Berntsen, *To Liv - Én Skjebne: Viggo Hansteen Og Rolf Wickstrøm*, 21–22; Lønnå, *Stolthet og kvinnekamp*, 136.). The reality is possibly that Hansteen was the editor, and Eva Rønnow, Ellen Gleditsch and Aaslaug Aasland were members of an editorial board, as author and journalist Tom B. Jensen's list of illegal publications during the war suggests (*Det frie Norges periodiske skrifter 1940-1945*, 62.)

¹⁴⁸ Sveri, *Kvinner i norsk motstandsbevegelse 1940-1945*, 1991, 37. I have no conclusive evidence to say that there were only two, but it is suggested among others by Sveri. The other one was *Den norske Kvinne* (The Norwegian Woman), see Halvorsen and Aslaksen, *De Trykte illegale avisene*, 134–35.

¹⁴⁹ Halvorsen and Aslaksen, *De Trykte illegale avisene*, 7–8.

¹⁵⁰ Luihn, *Det fjerde våpen*, 1981, 90.

¹⁵¹ Lønnå, 136; A short description of the newspaper by the University of Bergen also indicates that in addition, Laila Røhne (dates unknown) worked as a full time secretary and that Mimi Sverdrup Lunden (1894–1955) contributed, but this remains unconfirmed (UiB, “Kvinnefronten”).

¹⁵² Lønnå, 136.

¹⁵³ Berntsen, 22; Bie Lorentzen, “Kvinnen og tiden 1945–1955,” 114.

¹⁵⁴ Hansteen et al., *Kvinnefronten*, 1945. I have only been able to obtain and read this first issue. Bie Lorentzen calls this the historically most important issue of *Kvinnefronten*, and offers an overview of the content in the other five ‘Kvinnen og tiden 1945-1955’, 112–14.

women, as a part of the Norwegian resistance to the Nazi occupation.

Historian Kari Melby has called the first half of the 20th century in Norway the “era of the housewife,”¹⁵⁵ referring to the dominant ideal for women of the period and the reality for a growing group of women. Both the Labour Party and the Communist Party constructed housewives as a central part of the working class, and the Communist Party actively mobilised housewives from the 1920s.¹⁵⁶ The thematising of everyday topics such as clothing and food in *Kvinnefronten*, already highly relevant in the context of war, was a way of continuing this politicisation of the part of society and the economy that many women as full-time or part-time housewives were most engaged with. The editors invited the readers to connect the everyday economy to national politics, and think critically about the propaganda from the Nazi occupiers.¹⁵⁷ In this way, *Kvinnefronten* deconstructed the private/public dichotomy, proving their claim that women’s supposed lack of interest in and disposition for politics was a misconception.¹⁵⁸

Kvinnefronten’s creators intended the magazine to be for “women of all statuses, positions and political convictions”¹⁵⁹ who supported democracy and respect for human life and worth, regardless of “colour, race and gender.”¹⁶⁰ As I will further show in this thesis, this transgression of political boundaries was characteristic for the Norwegian women’s movement of the late and post-WWII period. *Kvinnefronten*’s conviction that women should congregate against war and actively participate in constructing peace is also indicated by a report from the International Women’s Congress in London which took place in Albert Hall on 8 March 1945, and according to *Kvinnefronten* gathered thousands of women from 20 different countries.¹⁶¹ In addition to indicating that the editors embraced an all-encompassing spirit of cooperation that also included ambitions for the transnational level, *Kvinnefronten*’s inclusion of this report shows that they were already working with international networks which had allowed them to access information about this large congress.

Historians have shown minimal interest in *Kvinnefronten*, and it is mostly mentioned

¹⁵⁵ See her section about the period in Blom and Sogner, *Med kjønnsperspektiv på norsk historie*, 227–98.

¹⁵⁶ Mathisen, “Husmorkommunisme ; kvinnepolitikk i Norges kommunistiske parti i 1920-åra,” 189–90.

¹⁵⁷ Particularly in the following article: Hansteen et al., “Propaganda og virkelighet [Propaganda and Reality].”

¹⁵⁸ Hansteen et al., “Kvinnefronten,” April 1945.

¹⁵⁹ Hansteen et al.

¹⁶⁰ Hansteen et al., 2.

¹⁶¹ Hansteen et al., “Internasjonal kvinnekongress i London [International Women’s Congress in London].” The congress combined the issues of peace and women’s rights, and the most concrete result that is reported in *Kvinnefronten* is that the congress decided to push for women delegates to the San Francisco conference where the United Nations (UN) would be founded.

in passing as one of the illegal newspapers the NKP produced.¹⁶² The lack of interest is made explicit by historian Tore Pryser, who mentions *Kvinnefronten* as one of the “specialised” publications in the illegal press, implying its irrelevance, and states that it was irrelevant compared to the larger newspapers, and by Birgit Wiig who calls the publication “modest.”¹⁶³ When Pryser writes that *Kvinnefronten* is less important, and other historians demonstrate the same position by omitting it, that is likely to be because of specific ideas about what resistance looks like, which audience matters, and who are political actors, which all privilege men’s established political apparatus. The issues raised by *Kvinnefronten* can all be framed as “less important” by making the distinction between what allegedly is relevant for the war, and what is not. In this way, daily life is pushed to the background of the narrative of war, and the preparation for peace time and reconstruction becomes less important than “fighting the war.” An interesting overlap occurs between the dichotomies private versus public, peace versus war, and feminine versus masculine. However, for many women, the daily life and the struggles it brought *was* the war, and actively engaging in peace was a way to fight war. In economical householding and self-education, these two processes come together, and it is in this intersection that *Kvinnefronten* is positioned.

Hansteen was not unique as a woman in the illegal press, although she was one of few women editors. Approximately one fourth of the women who engaged in the resistance worked for illegal newspapers.¹⁶⁴ Henriette Bie Lorentzen, who came to work closely with Hansteen as a co-editor for a decade after the end of WWII, was also involved in the civil resistance. She was a courier, and was arrested when the Gestapo found an illegal newspaper in her home.¹⁶⁵

4.1.3. Henriette Bie Lorentzen’s and Ravensbrück

After losing her job as a teacher because of the German occupation of Norway, Henriette Bie Lorentzen¹⁶⁶ (1911–2001) and her husband joined the resistance where she was

¹⁶² For examples, see: Luihn, *Den frie hemmelige pressen i Norge under okkupasjonen 1940-45*, 1:86; Luihn, *Det fjerde våpen*, 1981, 90; Tom B. Jensen, *Det frie Norges periodiske skrifter 1940-1945*, 62; Bakken, *Død over de tyske okkupanter*, 82; Pettersen, *Illegale Aviser i Drammen 1940-1945*, 24; Sveri, *Kvinner i norsk motstandsbevegelse 1940-1945*, 37; Værnø, *Kvinnernes forsvarshistorie*, 50; Halvorsen and Aslaksen, *De Trykte illegale avisene*, 135; Rønning, “Norges kommunistiske partis presse,” 98.

¹⁶³ Pryser, *Klassen og nasjonen*, 4:385; Wiig, *Kvinner selv*, 40. The two newspapers Pryser holds up as important are Friheten (Freedom) and Radio-Nytt (Radio News).

¹⁶⁴ Jonassen, *Alt hva mødrene har kjempet*, 16.

¹⁶⁵ Bie Lorentzen, “Hver av oss kan gi sin skjerv til lyset,” 123.

¹⁶⁶ Also known as Henriette Haagaas before marriage.

a courier.¹⁶⁷ After the death of Viggo Hansteen and Rolf Wickstrøm, members of the resistance in Norway became increasingly wary. In July 1943, one of the members of Bie Lorentzen's resistance group was caught, and her husband went into hiding. The group assumed that Bie Lorentzen was safe, especially because she was two months pregnant with her second child, and pregnant women were not being kept imprisoned. Three days later, they turned out to be wrong, when Bie Lorentzen was arrested and tortured.¹⁶⁸

Bie Lorentzen was kept in her cell for months, and gave birth under military guard. Her child only barely escaped being sent to Germany as an "aryan" addition to the Third Reich, and was taken care of by her father and sister. The rest of the war after her arrest, Henriette stayed in prison under Gestapo, before she was sent to Ravensbrück on 4 April 1944.¹⁶⁹ The largest concentration camp for women was one of the deadliest concentration camps. It was originally built for under 7000 prisoners, but at one point housed more than 40,000.¹⁷⁰ Over 130,000 women passed through the camp during the six years it was operational, well over half of them died.¹⁷¹ Ravensbrück was not an extermination camp, but the slave labour and inhumane conditions were not designed to be survived. This was also true for the Nacht und Nebel (NN) prisoners, political prisoners from different resistance groups to be arrested under the cover of Night and Fog. In Henriette's own words, they were to be "exterminated through labour," and arrested for her resistance work, she was one of them.¹⁷²

As an NN prisoner she was not allowed to receive post herself, but helped by the parcels her Norwegian fellow prisoners received through the Red Cross, Bie Lorentzen survived the forced labour in Ravensbrück, and was finally released on 7 April 1945, a few weeks before the camp's liberation.¹⁷³ The Swedish diplomat Folke Bernadotte (1895–1948) and the Red Cross were able to coordinate an evacuation of Scandinavian prisoners from German territory with characteristic white buses.¹⁷⁴ This is one of the examples showing how prisoners were treated unequally in Ravensbrück, and for many of the Scandinavian women, their perceived racial superiority in the eyes of the Nazis meant life over death, since they could receive parcels, get "favourable" treatment from guards, and ultimately be saved by the

¹⁶⁷ Bie Lorentzen, "Hver av oss kan gi sin skjerv til lyset," 120.

¹⁶⁸ Bie Lorentzen, 123.

¹⁶⁹ Bie Lorentzen, 124–26. I do not know the exact date of her arrival to Ravensbrück, but she reports to have arrived mid April, together with about 400 others, among whom were four other Norwegians.

¹⁷⁰ Ottosen, *Kvinneleiren*, 11.

¹⁷¹ Helm, *Ravensbrück*, xvii–xviii. Estimations vary from 30 000 to 90 000, or even higher Ottosen, *Kvinneleiren*, 12.), which means up to a 70 % death rate.

¹⁷² Bie Lorentzen, "Hver av oss kan gi sin skjerv til lyset," 128.

¹⁷³ Bie Lorentzen, 131.

¹⁷⁴ Ottosen, *Kvinneleiren*, 296–302.

white buses. Out of the 103 Norwegian women who were deported to Ravensbrück, seven died there or in other concentration camps, and two died shortly after liberation, making a death rate of under 10 %.¹⁷⁵ This is vastly lower than the death rate of the general prisoner population.

In two essays, Bie Lorentzen gives great insights into her experiences during and after the war, and into how she perceived them. In many ways, Bie Lorentzen presented herself as an observer to the sufferings of the war. She saw children dying in Ravensbrück, and could think of her own children who were safe back home.¹⁷⁶ She watched as her cellmate in Oslo tried to avoid interrogation to no avail by swallowing broken glass, before being tortured and beaten.¹⁷⁷ She saw her husband and others participate in the resistance, while she was, in her own words, “only a messenger.”¹⁷⁸ From this short account of what happened to Bie Lorentzen during the war, it should be clear to any audience that she was in no way just an observer, but highly implicated in all of the war’s sufferings and feats.

The Norwegian historian Mari Jonassen writes about the resistance of Norwegian women in the World War II in the book *Alt hva mødrene har kjempet* (All the Fights Mothers Have Fought). She argues that the gendered ways in which resistance work was constructed and remembered keep women out of the historiography. In addition to women’s own systematic devaluation of their contributions, women were primarily engaged in civil resistance, whereas men primarily participated in militarised resistance, and it is the latter that has received the majority of scholarly attention.¹⁷⁹ Reading Bie Lorentzen’s story and essays through the lens Jonassen offers helps to see that gendered expectations and norms have affected how women’s participation in war resistance has been devalued in the historiography because of the gendered bias of historians.

I include Bie Lorentzen’s story from the war because it had a crucial impact on the post-WWII Norwegian left-feminist movement. First, her experiences led her directly into the women’s movement after the war. Bie Lorentzen writes that her passion for women’s issues derived from women’s fates she was confronted with during the war.¹⁸⁰ It seems that the step from seeing women’s suffering to fighting for women’s rights was a short one for her, also when the context changed from wartime to peacetime. Secondly, the community she had

¹⁷⁵ Storeide, “Ravensbrück,” sec. 7.

¹⁷⁶ Bie Lorentzen, “Hver av oss kan gi sin skjerv til lyset,” 126.

¹⁷⁷ Bie Lorentzen, 124.

¹⁷⁸ Bie Lorentzen, 120; 123.

¹⁷⁹ Jonassen, *Alt hva mødrene har kjempet*, 12; 17.

¹⁸⁰ Bie Lorentzen, “Hver av oss kan gi sin skjerv til lyset,” 116.

experienced during imprisonment had proven to her that women were resilient and able to cooperate across class distinctions, political and national borders, expressed in their own realisation that their commonalities were greater than their differences, which had given Bie Lorentzen an unwavering faith in women as political actors.¹⁸¹ Neither women's suffering nor their demonstrated potential for action could be separated from the context in which the post-WWII women's movement was conceived, which largely explains how opposition to war became a guiding principle for the left-feminist movement. During her imprisonment, Bie Lorentzen started planning a women's magazine as an instrument in the struggle for peace. When she arrived back in liberated Norway and learned about *Kvinnefronten*, she contacted the editors, and they agreed to cooperate.¹⁸²

4.1.4. *Kvinnen og tiden* – a magazine for women's political mobilisation

The result of the cooperation was that the first issue of the magazine *Kvinnen og tiden* (Women and Current Affairs), co-edited by Hansteen and Bie Lorentzen was published in December 1945.¹⁸³ In the first years it was published by Cappelen publishing house, and with a few breaks, the magazine was regularly published for a decade. In 1947, they passed 12,000 subscribers in addition to 1,000 sold copies of each issue, and they ran study groups and summer schools in the name of the magazine, both with hundreds of attendants.¹⁸⁴ Until this point, they had only been growing, but in 1947, the winds turned. In a matter of months the number of subscribers to *Kvinnen og tiden* halved and the publishing house terminated their contract.

Rising international tensions were the reason why the readers turned their backs on the magazine. Although *Kvinnen og tiden* did not have any party affiliation, having Kirsten Hansteen, an editor from NKP, made the whole team behind the magazine guilty by association, so to speak. The start of the opposition against *Kvinnen og tiden* coincided with the announcement of the *Truman Doctrine*. On 12 March 1947, the US American president Truman delivered a speech declaring that opposition against communism would be the guiding principle for all US American foreign policy. Although Norway as a nation was not

¹⁸¹ Bie Lorentzen, "Kvinnen og tiden 1945–1955," 134; Bie Lorentzen, "Hver av oss kan gi sin skjerv til lyset," 117; 136–37.

¹⁸² Bie Lorentzen, "Kvinnen og tiden 1945–1955," 134; Bie Lorentzen, "Hver av oss kan gi sin skjerv til lyset," 119.

¹⁸³ Vold, "For fred og demokrati," 24; Translation of the magazine title from: Rokkan, "Women in World History."

¹⁸⁴ Bie Lorentzen, "Kvinnen og tiden 1945–1955," 124.

immediately and directly affected by the Truman Doctrine because the country was not considered part of the Eastern bloc, I nevertheless argue that the rising international tensions materialised as anti-communist discourse in the Norwegian context, and caused the sentiment against Kirsten Hansteen in *Kvinnen og tiden*.

An indication of Hansteen's position regarding the Truman Doctrine came a few months later, in June 1947, when the Marshall Plan was introduced. This financial scheme would place European countries in the US American economic sphere of influence,¹⁸⁵ and historian Kari Enholm argues that it was linked to the Truman Doctrine.¹⁸⁶ Hansteen later opposed the Marshall Plan in the Storting as a threat to world peace,¹⁸⁷ and this should be interpreted as her approach to the Truman Doctrine in general. She would also become a prominent voice in the opposition against the North Atlantic Treaty, as I discuss in section 5.3.

To keep *Kvinnen og tiden* alive, the editors and writers managed to transform it into a cooperative, and for a short while it was published with a decreasing readership. Bie Lorentzen writes that the communist takeover in Czechoslovakia on 25 February 1948 was the direct reason that the magazine had to give up.¹⁸⁸ I would argue that these events further south in Europe were rather the indirect reason, the direct reason being the rising anti-communism in Norway following their wake. On 29 February 1948, the Norwegian Prime Minister Einar Gerhardsen gave a speech later named *Kråkerøytalen*, the Kråkerøy Speech, after the place it was performed. He condemned the coup in Czechoslovakia, before asserting that "[t]he most important task in the struggle for Norwegian sovereignty, for democracy and the rule of law, is to reduce the Communist Party and the influence of the communists as much as possible."¹⁸⁹ In this way, he turned the international context into a national one, and encouraged Norwegians to isolate communists from the political community. Although important historians of Norwegian recent political history consider the speech a turning point in Norwegian political history, they rarely frame it as anti-communism.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁵ Westad, *The Cold War*, 92–94.

¹⁸⁶ Enholm, *Bak fasaden*, 34–35.

¹⁸⁷ Bie Lorentzen, "Kvinnen og tiden 1945–1955," 110.

¹⁸⁸ Bie Lorentzen, 125.

¹⁸⁹ Gerhardsen, "Friheten Og Demokratiet i Fare (Kråkerøytalen)."

¹⁹⁰ For examples, see Bergh, *Storhetstid (1945–1965)*, 5:298–301; Pharo, Eriksen, and Bergh, *Vekst og velstand*, 354–55; Sørensen and Brandal, *Det norske demokratiet og dets fiender*, 160–61. *Kråkerøytalen* is remarkably absent from the historiography of NKP, which was in strong decline by the end of the 1940s. Rather than seeing this in the context of anti-communist discourse, it is primarily explained by internal fracture (Halvorsen, "Fra Motstandskamp Til Partistrid - Oppgjøret Med „Det Annet Sentrum” i NKP 1949/50"; Røseth, "Fra Samling Til Splittelse Norges Kommunistiske Parti Sitt Forhold Til Det Norske Arbeiderparti Fra 1945 Til 1950."; Titlestad,

In the wake of the Kråkerøy Speech, readers would phone the *Kvinnen og tiden* office where the editor Henriette Bie Lorentzen was working, and a typical conversation would go as follows:

- Are you a communist like Kirsten Hansteen?
- No.
- But are you then able to cooperate with Kirsten Hansteen?
- Yes.
- That means you are a crypto-communist, mrs. Lorentzen.¹⁹¹

The suddenness of the magazine's drop in popularity indicates that the negative sentiments towards Hansteen as a communist surfaced as a consequence of the reaction in Norway to the events in Czechoslovakia, and is as such an indication of the extent of anti-communist discourse in the Norwegian debate. Busy with her work in the Storting, Kirsten Hansteen did not write in the magazine at this time,¹⁹² which means that the critique was not tied to any political opinions she expressed directly in the magazine. Rather, the conversation shows how the rejection of communism was tied to Hansteen personally.

"Crypto-communist" (as in the conversation above) was a term meant to suggest that someone held communist ideas without admitting it, and came with the understanding that communism was conspiratory. The emphasis put on the impossibility of cooperation with communists demonstrates a challenge left-feminists faced: the project of cross-political cooperation in many people's eyes was inherently contradictory, either you were not a communist, in which case you would not go near them, making cooperation impossible; or you accepted cooperation with them, meaning that in fact you were a communist, and the cooperation was nothing but a communist conspiracy. This challenge appeared in an aggravated form to Kirsten Hansteen, because by pursuing her political project in *Kvinnen og tiden*, she would personally become the reason for its collapse. Although some contributors abandoned *Kvinnen og tiden* because of her,¹⁹³ Bie Lorentzen and many others refused to participate in isolating the communists.¹⁹⁴

I Stalins skygge (om korleis ein politisk leiar byggjer og taper makt. Peder Furubotn, NKP og SUKP 1945-49)?; Holmgaard et al., *Kommunismen i Norden og krisen i den kommunistiske bevegelse*; Halvorsen, *NKP i krise - om "oppgjøret med det annet sentrum"* 1949-50; Selle, *Norges Kommunistiske Parti 1945-1950*; Hans I. Kleven, *Parti i flammer*; Halvorsen, "Peder Furubotn, the Norwegian Communist Party, and International Communism, 1939-1950."), or by implying that it went out of fashion (Sørensen and Brandal, *Det norske demokratiet og dets fiender*, 160-62.).

¹⁹¹ Hagerup, *Alt er så nær meg*, 105. The typical example is as remembered by author and contributor Inger Hagerup from conversations with Bie Lorentzen.

¹⁹² Bie Lorentzen, "Kvinnen og tiden 1945-1955," 124.

¹⁹³ Bie Lorentzen, 125.

¹⁹⁴ Bie Lorentzen, "Kvinnen og tiden 1945-1955," 125.

When the magazine was re-launched a year later and kept running with a mostly stable readership of 3,000 until 1955, it was all because of the Swedish feminist Elisabeth Tamm (1880–1958). Tamm was among the first women in the *Riksdag* (the Swedish Parliament), and had supported many Norwegian refugees during WWII. She came from a wealthy family, and in 1945 she opened up her Fogelstad estate to the Scandinavian prisoners returning from Ravensbrück,¹⁹⁵ which had been the centre of a radical Swedish women's movement from 1922.¹⁹⁶ Tamm now decided to start a fund to finance *Kvinnen og tiden*, and their summer school was held at Fogelstad estate from 1949.¹⁹⁷ When the editors decided to discontinue *Kvinnen og tiden* in 1955, it was not due to a lack of funding, but because they were troubled that Tamm had bequeathed almost her entire fortune to a magazine whose readership had dwindled away.¹⁹⁸

Kvinnen og tiden was a continuation of the project of uniting and mobilising women Hansteen had launched with *Kvinnefronten*. Treating women as one category was not a depoliticisation of womanhood, on the contrary, the editors called for participation, responsibility and education from women to create a united front “against prejudice and ignorance, dullness and apathy, for peace, freedom and progress.”¹⁹⁹ *Kvinnen og tiden* offered educational political material, and in this way set the agenda that women should unite around in their own interest as politically aware women. The topics that could be found in the magazine were post-war reconstruction of the country, foreign affairs with a focus on war and imperial/colonial relations, economic equality, and rights for working women and housewives, issues that defined the magazine as left-feminist.²⁰⁰

There was a small upsurge in the literature about *Kvinnen og tiden* in the 1980s.²⁰¹ As

¹⁹⁵ Bie Lorentzen, 126.

¹⁹⁶ Clayhills, “Fogelstad,” 118.

¹⁹⁷ Hagerup, *Alt er så nær meg*, 106.

¹⁹⁸ Bie Lorentzen, “Kvinnen og tiden 1945–1955,” 120–35.

¹⁹⁹ Bie Lorentzen and Hansteen, 4. Emphasis in original.

²⁰⁰ Vold, “Kvinnernes kulturhistorie,” 283.

²⁰¹ Bie Lorentzen, “Kvinnen og tiden 1945–1955”; Vold, “Kvinnernes kulturhistorie”; Vold, “For fred og demokrati”; Wiig, *Kvinner selv*, 40–41; Rottem, *Norges litteraturhistorie*, B. 1:50–51; Stanghelle, *Nini Haslund Gleditsch*, 243–48; Skard, “Strømninger,” 28–29. All of these authors to some extent highlight the literary content and literature journalism in *Kvinnen og tiden*, presenting it as having a less political profile as a consequence. To nuance this, I will highlight two pieces of content. The first one is Bie Lorentzen's critique of communist Torborg Nedreaas's (1906–1987) NATO critical novel *De varme hendene* (1952), which explicitly overlooks the lack of literary quality in order to celebrate its political content. Rather than interpreting this as a case where the editors simply were not able to set aside their political standpoint, which is what Vold suggests in “For fred og demokrati,” I see it as an illustrating example of the political positions of the authors they chose to publish and write about. The second one is an article series in the first volume of *Kvinnen og tiden* called “Kvinner bak piggetråd” (Women behind Barbed Wire) by Annalise Urbye (1902–1971), offering her first hand accounts from Ravensbrück. These pieces have literary value, challenging the distinction between reporting and

literary historian Karin Beate Vold writes in an entry about the magazine in *Kvinnernes kulturhistorie, bind 2* (Women's Cultural History, volume 2), "*Kvinnen og tiden* is one of the most categorically forgotten phenomena of our recent Norwegian women's history, despite playing an active role between 1945 and 1955 as a reliable mediator of political and cultural life in its time."²⁰² In this article from 1985, Vold draws a parallel between the radicalism and conscious politicising of women in *Kvinnen og tiden* and in the 1970s women's movements. However, there are still no larger studies about the magazine, and the radicalism of the community around *Kvinnen og tiden* is not acknowledged in the historiography of Norwegian women's movements.

4.2. Left-feminism in national politics

Possibly the biggest victory for the left-feminist movement in Norway, and a pivotal moment in Norwegian political history was Kirsten Hansteen's entry in Einar Gerhardsen's National Unity Government in 1945. This event is an indication of the Communist Party's attention to women's emancipation in line with communist ideology, as well as a result of multiple women and women's organisations' persistent struggle against masculinist institutional politics.

Women showed strong will and ability to take advantage of the meager representation in the Storting and Government through the Cooperation Council of Norwegian Women's Organisations (NKS), which Hansteen herself helped establish based on women's networks and cooperation which had emerged during the German occupation of Norway. Hansteen was the first vice president of the Cooperation Council, indicating her centrality to the emerging women's movement, making her omission from the historiography all the more salient. The establishment of NKS represents a unique moment in Norwegian history, where numerous women's organisations with differing political views united on the basis of shared oppression as women. Typical for a women's organisation growing out of women's networks created during WWII, NKS espoused peace as its ultimate goal in addition to gender equality.

4.2.1. The first woman in a Norwegian government

No previous studies have examined Kirsten Hansteen's role in the Government, or focused on any of her political work. Because she was the first woman to break this barrier,

art, and bear witness to the centrality of the transnational war experiences to *Kvinnen og tiden*'s project.

²⁰² Vold, "Kvinnernes kulturhistorie," 283.

her name is mentioned in many historiographical works. However, this rarely goes further than mentioning that she was a part of the National Unity Government in 1945, and was the widow of Viggo Hansteen.²⁰³ Kirsten Hansteen's entry into Government was a significant moment in Norwegian political history, and as discussed in Chapter III, its omission from the historiography is the result of anti-communism and misogyny in combination. I suggest that precisely the roles of the women's movement and the communists should be acknowledged on the occasion of this advancement of women's political representation in Norway.

The German occupation of Norway ended on 9 May 1945, and on 7 June, the king of Norway Haakon VII (1872–1957, reigned 1905–1957) and the Norwegian Government returned from exile in London. According to some, Margarete Bonnevie, the president of NKF, was waiting on the quai when they arrived to hand over her report on Norway's discriminatory practice of taxation based on marriage.²⁰⁴ Four days later NKF also officially demanded that at least one, preferably more women be appointed into the National Unity Government which was about to be formed, and other women's organisations followed suit.²⁰⁵ Three names were suggested, but Kirsten Hansteen was not one of them.²⁰⁶ However, Hansteen was chosen by forthcoming Prime Minister Einar Gerhardsen (1897–1987) from the Norwegian Labour Party (DNA), and on 25 June 1945 she became the first woman in a Norwegian Government, representing the Communist Party of Norway (NKP).

Hansteen was not appointed her own ministry, but became *konsultativ statsråd*, consultative Cabinet minister,²⁰⁷ in the Ministry of Social Affairs where Sverre Oftedal (1905–1948) was Minister. Out of the 15 members of the 1945 Government, there were twelve Ministers including the Prime Minister, and three consultative Cabinet ministers.²⁰⁸ The most commonly used term for referring to members of government in Norwegian, *statsråd*, does not refer to the Minister post, and is most often used without the preceding *konsultativ* when referring to the officials who have carried this title. It is unclear in the political historiography and records of parliamentary debate which limitations came with the “consultative” title, but it

²⁰³ For examples, see Helle, *Einar Gerhardsen*, 32; Bull, *Norge i den rike verden*, B. 14:32–33; Wiig, *Kvinner selv*, 1984, 37–39.

²⁰⁴ Lønnå, *Stolthet og kvinnekamp*, 137.

²⁰⁵ Lønnå, 137.

²⁰⁶ Lønnå, 137. The three candidates were Aaslaug Aasland, Sigrid Stray, and Ellen Gleditsch.

²⁰⁷ Translation taken from Rokkan, “Women in World History,” 770.

²⁰⁸ regjeringen.no, “Einar Gerhardsens første regjering.” The two other were priest Conrad Bonnevie-Svendsen (1898–1983, no party affiliation, member of the Home Front) in the Ministry of Church Affairs and Education, and Hans Julius Gabrielsen (1891–1965, Venstre) in the Ministry of Supplies.

evidently installed a certain hierarchy in the government.²⁰⁹ Even when women and men have formal political equality, representation in institutional politics can be kept out of women's reach by norms and expectations that favour men.²¹⁰ When Hansteen was appointed to a consultative position instead of a Minister position in Gerhardsen's Government it was a limited success for women's political representation, but a success nonetheless.



Figure 2: Members of Government exit the castle on 25 June 1945. From the left: Sven Oftedal, Tor Skjønberg, Kirsten Hansteen, Oscar Torp, Kaare Fostervold and Conrad Bonnevie-Svendsen.²¹¹

Upon his return to Norway, the King summoned the head of the resistance movement, Paal Berg (1873–1968) from *Venstre* (the Liberal Party), and charged him with creating a government. According to Gerhardsen, one of the conditions the King gave was that there should be a woman among the members, but when Berg failed and the mission was passed on to Gerhardsen, this condition had been abandoned.²¹² It appears that Berg had considered Hansteen after being obliged to take on a woman, and her name was passed along to Gerhardsen.²¹³

There is little reason to believe that Gerhardsen had a proactive role in the process that made his government remarkable from a feminist perspective. Historian Hans Olav Lahlum touches upon the issue of women's representation in Gerhardsen's second Government in his

²⁰⁹ regjeringen.no, "Norske statsråder uten departement." A similar position, *statsråd uten portefølje* (member of government without a ministry), is still in use in Norwegian governments.

²¹⁰ Karam, *Women in Parliament*, 22–25.

²¹¹ "Fra Dag Til Dag Hjemme Og Ute." Photo: NTB scanpix.

²¹² Gerhardsen, *Fellesskap i krig og fred*, 189–90.

²¹³ Wiig, *Kvinner selv*, 1984, 13.

history of the Labour Party. He had made Aaslaug Aasland from his own Party the new consultative Cabinet minister in the Ministry of Social Affairs, but proved very reluctant to trust her to be a full minister, even when the Minister of Social Affairs unexpectedly died.²¹⁴ In a radio interview with Birgit Wiig in 1983, Gerhardsen admits to not have reflected much on women's situation, other than the admirable work they did as housewives during the occupation and the subsequent years of rationing. He also says that he never considered choosing a woman from his own party in addition to Hansteen to join his first Government.²¹⁵ The lacking enthusiasm Gerhardsen displays for women as politicians alludes to a point historian Ellen DuBois makes in the context of women's suffrage: "enfranchisement in the overwhelming number of cases was preceded by a women's movement demanding it."²¹⁶

Gerhardsen writes in his memoirs that Hansteen was among the four or five people suggested by the leader of NKP when Gerhardsen invited the communists to join the National Unity Government with two representatives.²¹⁷ Whether Gerhardsen at this point already had received Hansteen's candidacy via Berg or not is unclear, but it is likely that her name appeared on Berg's list in the same way. It is worth noting that the Communist Party had a woman among their members whom they appreciated enough to propose for this position. Rather than interpreting this as a symbolic posthumous nomination of Viggo Hansteen,²¹⁸ it should be seen as NKP's recognition of Kirsten Hansteen's qualities and politics, as well as an indication of the persistence and dedication she showed and continued to show after Viggo's death. Without asserting that the communists had reached gender equality within their ranks, I would argue that their appreciation of Hansteen suggests a remarkable level of attention to the issue.

Even though Kirsten Hansteen had not been among the women NKF proposed, the women's organisation was also satisfied with her nomination. The Norwegian delegates at the IAW congress in 1946 reported:

Immediately after the liberation we turned to the Storting with an appeal to take women into the government. And we did succeed to the extent that Mrs. Kirsten Hansteen, whose husband had been shot as the leader of the labour organisation, was

²¹⁴ Lahlum, *Noen av oss har snakket sammen*-, 96. After three years of hesitation during which the Ministry of Social Affairs was run without a minister (de facto led by Aasland), and Gerhardsen tried convincing different men from DNA to take the position, Aaslaug Aasland became the first woman minister in Norway on 19 November 1951.

²¹⁵ "Og Som Mødrene Har Kjempet. 5. 'Kvinnens Plass - Er Hvor?' Einar Gerhardsen i Samtale Med Birgit Wiig. - Nasjonalbiblioteket."

²¹⁶ Dubois, "Woman Suffrage and the Left - an International Socialist-Feminist Perspective," 20.

²¹⁷ Gerhardsen, *Fellesskap i krig og fred*, 190.

²¹⁸ As suggested among others by Wiig (*Kvinner selv*, 38).

made a consultative Secretary of State [Cabinet minister], and that later on, Aaslaug Aasland, Inspector of Industrial Work, took her place.²¹⁹

Their report highlights that the victory was larger than Hansteen becoming member of government. Her position was later filled by another woman, Aaslaug Aasland, and because this pattern continued and representation later increased, the victory following the women's organisations' demand in 1945 was a permanent improvement of women's political representation in Norway.

Gerhardsen's Government began the reconstruction of the country, and Hansteen had a particular approach to this task. In an interview before her inauguration, she stated that the most important issue for her was to protect liberated prisoners and the next of kins of those who had died during the war. "It is a matter of honour to provide them with security,"²²⁰ she said, and her wishes were met—she became consultative Cabinet minister in the Ministry of Social Affairs, with care for prisoners and refugees as her particular field of responsibility.²²¹ On 30 September 1945, she greeted Norwegian sailors who had returned from captivity in Japan on behalf of the Government. Her speech was broadcast on the radio, and the audio track has been preserved. "We are happy that you are liberated from the hell you have lived through," Hansteen told the sailors in a clear voice, noticeably laden by the occasion, before describing the country they had come back to: "we have become poorer, we have become worn in every way, not only materially and financially. [...] I think you will also sense that the people here have become worn down."²²² The sufferings of the war infused all parts of the existence when the occupation had ended, and this was true not least also for Hansteen herself as a widow. Hansteen's commitment to the rights of victims of the war mirrors that of the renowned French human rights activist René Cassin (1907–1980). Cassin, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1954 for his involvement in creating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, began his work for social justice in the movement of WWI-veterans.²²³ Hansteen continued defending the rights of the veterans and victims of WWII also in her period as a representative in the Storting until 1949.²²⁴

²¹⁹ Wembley: International Alliance of Women 1946, "Report of the Fourteenth Congress, Interlaken, August 11th-16th, 1946 - 16th, 1946," 65. I use the term "consultative Cabinet minister" as translated into English by Elizabeth Rokkan (Rokkan, "Women in World History," 771).

²²⁰ "Kirsten Hansteen Blir Norges Første Kvinnelige Statsråd. - Og Strand Johansen Rykker Inn i Arbeidsdepartementet."

²²¹ Ustvedt, *Det skjedde i Norge*, 1:254.

²²² "Statsråd Kirsten Hansteen Taler Til Nordmenn Som Kommer Hjem Fra Japanske Fangeleirer. - Intervju Med 2 Sjøfolk Ved Trygve Strøm. - Nasjonalbiblioteket."

²²³ Prost, *René Cassin and Human Rights*, 25–26.

²²⁴ Most notably, Hansteen had a key role in creating war pension in 1946 as the secretary of the Standing

The National Unity Government lasted from 25 June to 5 November in 1945, when the first elections after the war were organised. Gaining almost 12 % of the votes, NKP did an exceptionally strong election, much because of their role in the resistance. Hansteen was the self-evident first candidate in her electoral district, followed by twelve men on the nomination list. Despite her local chapter not being fully established, and therefore not being able to run a strong campaign, they received 13 % of the votes, and were pleasantly surprised.²²⁵ It seems that Hansteen was popular among the voters.

“I am looking forward to starting my work in the Storting,” she said in an interview with her own *Kvinnen og tiden* published in December 1945. “However, the only way we can solve our tasks—in my opinion—is to make the Storting an efficient institution, so everything is not lost in discussion and insignificant disagreements.”²²⁶ Effective cooperation was a crucial method for Hansteen, in party politics as well as in the women’s movement.

4.2.2. A Cooperation Council creating leverage for women’s issues

Hansteen’s position as a member of Government represented a leap forward in terms of women’s influence in institutional politics, but an array of women’s organisations felt powerless when they presented their demands and propositions. The Norwegian women’s movement had been characterised by division up until WWII. The working class and the bourgeois women had held opposing positions on the issue of women’s right to vote, and when universal suffrage was obtained in 1913, their animosity persisted.²²⁷ A council assembling various local women’s associations and national organisations was established in 1904 under the name of *Norske Kvinners Nasjonalråd* (NKN). NKN was the Norwegian branch of the International Council of Women (ICW), and like its transnational parent organisation, NKN never succeeded in attracting working class women.²²⁸

Women who belonged to the working class were mainly organised through the Norwegian Labour Party (DNA), in *Arbeiderpartiets kvindeforbund* (Norwegian Labour

Committee on Social Affairs in the Storting (St.t.tidende (1945/46), Lover om krigspensjonering).

²²⁵ NKP Oslo and Akershus, “Beretning fra 1945 [Report on 1945],” 8–9.

²²⁶ Bie Lorentzen and Hansteen, “Kvinner i Dag: Intervju Med Kirsten Hansteen, Aaslaug Aasland Og Frieda Dalen,” 16.

²²⁷ Løvik, “Norske kvinneorganisasjoners samarbeidsnemnd 1945-1952,” 2–4. Løvik describes the foundational difference between as the bourgeois women being disappointed when the land ownership was removed as a condition for suffrage before women of the higher classes gained their vote, whereas the labour women celebrated the same expansion of suffrage rights as progress. Other conflicting views often concerned women’s labour rights.

²²⁸ Løvik, “Norske kvinneorganisasjoners samarbeidsnemnd 1945-1952,” 1976, 2–4.

Party's Women's Federation), which was established in 1901,²²⁹ and in trade unions which were often closely tied to DNA.²³⁰ In the 1930s, the women in DNA repeatedly adopted resolutions forbidding individual and collective membership in “the bourgeois women’s organisations.”²³¹ In 1923, after deciding to leave the Communist International, DNA was split, and the Communist Party of Norway (NKP) was created by those who wanted to stay in the Communist International.²³² The separation meant that cohesion was also lacking among working-class women. The suspicion against communists was intensifying, and in 1933 DNA adopted a resolution against membership in communist “front organisations”.²³³

4.2.2.1. The establishment of NKS

A segmented movement appeared as an obstacle for women’s emancipation, and several attempts were made in the pre-WWII period to overcome the divisions and secure interests that women seemed to share, but none of them succeeded.²³⁴ When WWII ended, the effort was taken up again. In May 1945, a group of women elected a small committee to prepare the establishment of *Norske Kvinners Samarbeidsnemnd* (NKS, Cooperation Council of Norwegian Women’s Organisations).²³⁵ The speed at which they were able to initiate the Cooperation Council indicates that the women were relying on already existing networks that were created and sustained during the war, and were crucial for the post-WWII political activity. After the occupation ended, the networks could exist openly and therefore intensified, as the process of establishing NKS shows. In early July 1945, the invitation to constitute NKS was sent out to a range of women’s organisations. There were 21 signatories from a wide

²²⁹ Løvik, “Norske kvinneorganisasjoners samarbeidsnemnd 1945-1952,” 2–4.

²³⁰ Aas, *Mellom frontene*, 87–88. The Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) had unionised women, both as general members and in women specific trade unions. In 1941, 59,529 women were unionised, 29 trade unions had only women members, 10 had women’s sections, and 315 trade unions had women as the majority of their members. To read more about Norwegian women’s trade unionising from a centralised national perspective, see this biography about unionist and politician Johanne Reutz Gjermoe (1896–1989).

²³¹ Løvik, 7.

²³² Mathisen, “Husmorkommunisme ; kvinnepolitikk i Norges kommunistiske parti i 1920-åra,” 190.

²³³ “Vedtak På Det Norske Arbeiderpartis Tillitskvinnekonferanse, Onsdag 23. Mai 1951 Vedrørende Stillingen Til de Kommunistiske Dekkorganisasjoner.”

²³⁴ Seip, *Veiene til velferdsstaten*, 127; Aas, *Mellom frontene*, 84–85. In addition to NKN, *Kvindernes Enhetsfront*, Women’s United Front, can be mentioned on this occasion. It was established in 1924 as a political party. Another attempt happened in 1940, when *Samarbeidsnemnda for kvinneorganisasjoner* (the Cooperation Council for Women’s Organisations) was established, unifying labour women from DNA, agrarian women from Bondepartiet (the Agrarian Party), conservative women from NKN and professional women from yrkeskvinnene (Professional Women). The project was short lived due to the war.

²³⁵ Løvik, “Norske kvinneorganisasjoners samarbeidsnemnd 1945-1952,” 1976, 17. The four women in the planning committee were Alette Engelhart (1896–1984, *Norges Husmorforbund*), Aase Lionæs (1907–1999, DNA), Tove Mohr (1891–1981, -) and Aadel Brun Tschudi (1909–1980, *Norske Kvinnelige Akademikeres Landsforbund*)

range of women's organisations and political parties,²³⁶ indicating that there was a will to cooperate from all sides of the political spectrum. Kirsten Hansteen was one of the 21 women initiators, and since women's political engagement was her main message in *Kvinnefronten*, there is reason to believe that the newly constituted consultative Cabinet minister was among the most eager proponents of the Cooperation Council.

A notable contrast with the pre-WWII political climate is that the women from DNA, in particular Aase Lionæs, seemed to be central in the cooperation they had previously opposed. The fact that they were now willing to establish cooperation with the conservatives and bourgeois women, likely came from the confidence that followed the heightened status of the labour movement from the resistance—unlike in the pre-WWII era, they were now the ones to set the agenda. The cooperation with the communists can not be interpreted in the same way, because NKP had gained at least as much esteem as the Labour Party during the last years. Rather, during WWII the two parties had been standing shoulder to shoulder, and established personal connections, overcoming past suspicion. I suggest that this political context was essential for the establishment of the large-scale organ for women's rights that the Cooperation Council was. NKS became the first arena where working-class women were willing to cooperate with bourgeois women,²³⁷ and the extent of this cooperation is a unique occurrence in the history of Norwegian women's movements.²³⁸

NKS took several months to be constituted, and the council was formally founded on 9 November 1945. Frieda Dalen (1895–1995) was elected its president, and Kirsten Hansteen

²³⁶ Løvik, "Norske kvinneorganisasjoners samarbeidsnemnd 1945-1952," 17; Norske Kvinneorganisasjoners Samarbeidsnemnd, "Invitasjon Til Konstituerende Møte for NKS." The full list of signatories is as follows in no particular order. Their affiliations to organisations are mentioned in parenthesis, but these were not indicated in the invitation: Ingeborg Bakken (NKP), Eva Collett (Norges Husmorforbund), Frieda Dalen (Norges Lærerinneforbund), Alette Engelhart (Norges Husmorforbund), Rachel Grepp (DNA), Kirsten Hansteen (NKP), Sigrid Helliesen Lund (Internasjonal Kvinneliga for Fred og Frihet), Ragna Karlsen (Norges Lærerinneforbund and DNA), Aase Lionæs (DNA), Tove Mohr, Maisen Moe (Norges Husmorforbund), Rannveig Olsen (Norges Husmorforbund), Nic Waal, Henny Ording (Norges Husmorforbund), Sigrid Syvertsen (DNA), Thina Thorleifsen (DNA), Aadel Brun Tschudi (Norske Kvinnelige Akademikeres Landsforbund), Signy Arctander (DNA), Sophie Beichmann, Margith Schjøtt (Venstre), Aaslaug Aasland (DNA). Løvik suggests in her master thesis that most of these women had joined the process after the planning committee was put in place, but I find it equally likely that a larger part of this group was the one to elect the planning committee in the first place. She does not refer to any sources, and my own investigations in NKS's archive has also not been able to verify who the original initiators were. The truth is probably that such a source would be impossible to find, because the idea was created between a large number of women.

²³⁷ Aas, *Mellom frontene*, 97.

²³⁸ To the date of writing this thesis, in 2019. Another important campaign was the women's petition in 1905 in support of the dissolution of the union between Norway and Sweden. Women did not have the right to vote, and therefore organised a separate petition to express their view on this important issue. Nearly 280,000 signatures were collected, the vast majority by and from women (Lønnå, "Kvinnenes underskriftskampanje i 1905," para. 3). The women's petition in 1905 reached a large mass of women in a singular event, however it was not planned as a permanent platform for cooperation like the NKS.

vice president.²³⁹ In 1976, history student Marianne Løvik wrote the thesis “Norske kvinneorganisasjoners samarbeidsnemnd 1945-1952” about NKS, which remains the only comprehensive study of the Cooperation Council. Løvik argues that it was Dalen and Hansteen’s prestige from participation in the resistance that made them the leading duo of NKS. Dalen had been the only woman on *Koordinasjonskomitéen* (the Coordination Committee), a central organ in the Home Front, and “Hansteen [was elected] by virtue of NKP’s enhanced position after their war effort.”²⁴⁰ This is the most extensive comment made on Kirsten Hansteen by Løvik. It is an underestimation of her political work and as such an illustrative example of the historiography treats her. I argue that Hansteen did not only gain her prestige by association to a political party, but through her continued work in particular with *Kvinnefronten*, and not least by becoming a consultative Cabinet minister as well as her role in the Party. Dalen and Hansteen were probably the two most prominent women in Norwegian politics by the end of 1945, and their leadership in NKS was of strong symbolic value indicating a high level of ambition and optimism for the Cooperation Council.

NKS is the most telling example of the spirit of cooperation among Norwegian women, but the establishment of the Cooperation Council did not happen without friction, mostly between the initiators and the bourgeois women from NKN.²⁴¹ Løvik argues in her 1976 thesis that NKN felt threatened by the new Cooperation Council, and was stalling its foundation, trying to gain more influence. NKN was in theory supposed to assemble politically organised women in the same way that NKS aspired to do, but as mentioned above, they only succeeded in attracting bourgeois women. When NKN finally agreed to join NKS, the decision was influenced by the fear that they would lose their relevance if they did not.²⁴²

It seems that the leftist women had succeeded in setting the agenda, since they made the bourgeois organisations defensive.²⁴³ One of the largest sources of controversy was interestingly enough not the content of the political program, but the form of the organisational structure. NKN wanted to give all members the right to veto, whereas the proposed structure was by ¾ majority vote. In this way, NKN would be able to block politics they disagreed with. Løvik explains that the right to veto as well as a suggestion to not have an executive committee was opposed, because it could paralyse the council completely.²⁴⁴ But

²³⁹ Løvik, “Norske kvinneorganisasjoners samarbeidsnemnd 1945-1952,” 1976, 26.

²⁴⁰ Løvik, “Norske kvinneorganisasjoners samarbeidsnemnd 1945-1952,” 26.

²⁴¹ Løvik, 19–28.

²⁴² Løvik, 25.

²⁴³ Løvik, 24.

²⁴⁴ Løvik, 1976, 22.

more than indicate preferences for the decision making process, this point of contentions tells us something about different conceptualisations of women's cooperation.

NKN's proposition implying that only issues garnering unanimous support belonged in a platform for women's cooperation, suggests the notion that women essentially share a set of interests, and that any disagreement is related to political preference and separated from their womanhood. Evoking Ellen DuBois's definition, NKN seems to have represented an antithesis to left-feminism, failing to "[fuse] a recognition of the systematic oppression of women with an appreciation of other structures of power."²⁴⁵ In today's terms, we might criticise this position for lacking an intersectional perspective, in particular for not acknowledging the influence class background had on women's interests. Contrarily, when proposing a majority voting system, the majority in NKS signalled that they accepted, and even expected, disagreement, and that they as members would be willing to support political issues they did not agree with, because they understood that women had differing political interests.

4.2.2.2. The main content and work of NKS

"The women's organisations will work to put the reserve of will, ability and labour force among women to use for the betterment of society and the reconstruction of the country."²⁴⁶ This is how NKS introduced the common program in their official statutes. It is to be taken as the frame through which they understood their organising and cooperation as women; inherently intertwined with peace work. I call it peace *work* with particular reference to the invitation letter for the establishment of NKS which alludes to the importance of women's contributions when it comes to the "numerous and difficult challenges of peace,"²⁴⁷ to emphasise that peace was construed as a process that required labour. This was both in a material sense ("reconstruction"), and pertaining to attitudes and ideology ("the betterment of society") regarding the necessity to counteract the remnants of the political climate that allowed for WWII to happen. However, as will be discussed in section 4.3.2, peace activism expressed through transnational solidarity soon became a point of contention within NKS.

As co-editor of *Kvinnen og tiden* and vice president of NKS, Kirsten Hansteen was a bridge between the two initiatives, and the first issue of the *Kvinnen og tiden*, published in

²⁴⁵ Dubois, "Eleanor Flexner and the History of American Feminism," 84.

²⁴⁶ Norske Kvinneorganisasjoners Samarbeidsnemnd, *Lov for Norske Kvinneorganisasjoners Samarbeidsnemnd*, 2.

²⁴⁷ Norske Kvinneorganisasjoners Samarbeidsnemnd, "Invitasjon Til Konstituerende Møte for NKS," 1.

December 1945, included a short article about NKS. *Kvinnen og tiden* did not continue to report on the Cooperation Council, but provided articles and debates regarding many of the issues that were brought up in NKS, such as housewives' rights as workers,²⁴⁸ equal pay²⁴⁹ and mental health care.²⁵⁰ Such articles from *Kvinnen og tiden* provided a knowledge basis for the politics adopted in the Council, for example when the question of joint taxation for married couples was debated.²⁵¹

In the first article about NKS from the opening issue of *Kvinnen og tiden*, secretary of NKS, Aadel Brun Tschudi (1909–1980), expressed her faith in the newly established Cooperation Council as an instrument for the promotion of women's interests, and upheld peace as NKS's ultimate goal.²⁵² By writing this, she made explicit how deeply grounded the NKS was in the anti-war movement, illustrating that this was an implication that followed from carrying the women's networks of the resistance into the post-war context. The creation of the NKS demonstrates the existence of a political community among women, and the article in *Kvinnen og tiden* indicates how the women conceptualised the alliance they were creating. NKS wished for the very category of "women's politics" to become redundant, Brun Tschudi wrote, and once women and men in reality would become equal, "women no longer need to be grouped by their gender, and can dedicate themselves wholly to other groups they belong to, by profession or political conviction."²⁵³ It seems that what created a sense of shared womanhood was shared oppression, and once this shared oppression disappeared, "womanhood" as a grounds for community would also dissipate. This perfectly illustrates that "woman" is a non-fixed category, which manifestly has changed both in content and prominence throughout history.²⁵⁴

According to Aadel Brun Tschudi, the Cooperation Council essentially had two tasks. The first was to promote women's influence, by ensuring their rights and representation.²⁵⁵

²⁴⁸ The issue was discussed in Hansteen and Bie Lorentzen, *Kvinnen Og Tiden*, no. 1 (1945); Hansteen and Bie Lorentzen, *Kvinnen Og Tiden*, no. 1 (1948); Hansteen and Bie Lorentzen, *Kvinnen Og Tiden*, no. 2 (1949).

²⁴⁹ The issue was discussed in Hansteen and Bie Lorentzen, *Kvinnen Og Tiden*, no. 6 (1948).

²⁵⁰ The issue was discussed in Hansteen and Bie Lorentzen, *Kvinnen Og Tiden*, no. 3 (1948). For how these and other issues were treated in NKS, see Løvik, "Norske kvinneorganisasjoners samarbeidsnemnd 1945-1952," 1976, 40–66.

²⁵¹ Norske Kvinneorganisasjoners Samarbeidsnemnd, "Referat Fra Møte i Norske Kvinneorganisasjoners Samarbeidsnemnd 19/9-46," 1.

²⁵² Brun Tschudi, "I Norske Kvinneorganisasjoners Samarbeidsnemnd," 27.

²⁵³ Brun Tschudi, 27. Note on the translation: Whereas the English language saw a distinction between the words sex and gender in the 1970s, induced by the feminist movement, Norwegian still has only one term for these concepts: kjønn. Both in today's context and in that of 1945, the word is best translated to gender, as relating primarily to the constructed social gender roles, not physiological categories.

²⁵⁴ Boydston, "Gender as a Question of Historical Analysis," 564–69; 576–77.

²⁵⁵ Brun Tschudi, "I Norske Kvinneorganisasjoners Samarbeidsnemnd," 27.

This is expressed as follows in NKS's platform:

Women's position in society
Increased representation of qualified women in Government, Parliament, municipal councils and all public, semi-public and organisational boards and committees.

Advancement of qualified women in all governing agencies, including in the commercial sector.²⁵⁶

It should go without saying that NKS saw women as being subject to discrimination. By demanding political representation, they indicated that women were fit for these positions, but were being deprived of opportunities, and they fought against this oppression.

NKS approached the matter of women's political representation in a concrete manner. All of the political parties were represented in the Cooperation Council, meaning that the Council had direct channels of communication to the parties. They often contacted different ministries in order to influence political processes,²⁵⁷ and suggestions and resolutions were routinely sent to all women representatives in the Storting,²⁵⁸ of which there were seven (out of 150) in the period 1945–1949. The communication with the members of parliament seems to have been characterised by at times close personal ties. Hansteen, for example, was a member of parliament during her period as deputy leader of NKS, and will have gotten to know the other members personally. In the minutes from a meeting in the Cooperation Council in September 1946, we can read that two of its members were charged with approaching Aaslaug Aasland, who had taken over Hansteen's position as consultative Cabinet minister in the Ministry of Social Affairs, regarding the issue of maternity allowance.²⁵⁹ NKS was in this way able to reinforce and use personal networks to gain leverage for women's politics at a time where women were severely underrepresented in political institutions. The fact that they were able to have such direct contact with the women in the Storting and the Government was undoubtedly of strong importance both for the women's organisations in NKS which could have their voices heard, and for the politicians who received input and support in return.

The second goal of NKS as formulated in *Kvinnen og tiden* was "to form society according to women's wishes. Generally speaking, this entails that welfare is to replace

²⁵⁶ Norske Kvinneorganisasjoners Samarbeidsnemnd, *Lov for Norske Kvinneorganisasjoners Samarbeidsnemnd*, 2. Emphasis in original.

²⁵⁷ Løvik, "Norske kvinneorganisasjoners samarbeidsnemnd 1945-1952," 1976, 67–68.

²⁵⁸ Norske Kvinneorganisasjoners Samarbeidsnemnd, "Henstillinger Og Skriv Sendt 1947-48."

²⁵⁹ Norske Kvinneorganisasjoners Samarbeidsnemnd, "Referat Fra Møte i Norske Kvinneorganisasjoners Samarbeidsnemnd 19/9-46," 1.

politics by force.”²⁶⁰ This explanation gives a illuminating insight into the core of women’s organising in Norway after the WWII. Women’s politics were not seen as a separate or complementary field to conventional man dominated politics, and labeling certain issues as women’s issues is a misleading approach to understanding this movement. Rather, as the secretary Brun Tschudi’s own description of the work of NKS illustrates, women fought for political influence to act out a politics that would challenge the very framework of conventional politics. New issues would replace rather than complement the existing agenda, and the way in which topics were politicised would change.

An illustrative example is given through the Cooperation Council’s plan “A societal resolution of the housing issue.”²⁶¹ Not only did this point connect peace work and social inequality within the frame of reconstruction, it also paid particular attention to working class and rural women’s housing needs, demanding among other measures public funds to ensure access to water and electricity for all, and comprehensive construction planning that included elements of social child care.

NKS also demanded women’s participation in residence planning, indicating that it saw the issue as highly relevant to women. This task echos the political platform Hansteen announced in an interview when she was about to enter the Government in June 1945, alongside the social protection of refugees.²⁶² Birgit Wiig is one of the few authors who do more than only mention Hansteen’s entry into Government in *Kvinner selv* (1984) about Norwegian women in the three decades following WWII.²⁶³ However, after acknowledging the aforementioned focus in Hansteen’s political career, Wiig writes that “[s]he worked thoroughly, but never delivered a burning passion for the women’s cause.”²⁶⁴ This comment demonstrates that Wiig does not see social policy and peace work as pertaining to the “women’s cause,” which is a gender-only, non-intersectional view.

A similar approach comes out in Løvik’s thesis when she discusses transnational solidarity, which I will come back to in section 4.3.3. She writes that because a resolution from NKS to protect women from execution in Spain also contained critique of Franco’s fascism, it “cannot be characterised as a pure ‘women’s issue’.”²⁶⁵ Through her 1970s

²⁶⁰ Brun Tschudi, “I Norske Kvinneorganisasjoners Samarbeidsnemnd,” 27.

²⁶¹ Norske Kvinneorganisasjoners Samarbeidsnemnd, *Lov for Norske Kvinneorganisasjoners Samarbeidsnemnd*, 3. Emphasis in original.

²⁶² “Kirsten Hansteen Blir Norges Første Kvinnelige Statsråd. - Og Strand Johansen Rykker Inn i Arbeidsdepartementet.”

²⁶³ Wiig, *Kvinner selv*, 37–39.

²⁶⁴ Wiig, 39.

²⁶⁵ Løvik, “Norske kvinneorganisasjoners samarbeidsnemnd 1945-1952,” 1976, 63. Emphasis in original.

conceptualisation of “women’s issues,” Løvik is not able to see a continuity between the left-feminism of the 1940s and feminism in her own second wave context. Historian Chiara Bonfiglioli writes that this continuity was obscured by Cold War anti-communism, according to which women’s political and civil freedom were the only and true themes of “proper feminism,” and demands for social and economic justice were not feminism, but communist propaganda.²⁶⁶ Whereas the latter part of this anti-communist paradigm is not explicit in the historiography of Norwegian women’s movements, left-feminism is disregarded for lack of emphasis on what can easily be framed as women’s personal freedom.

This framework has strongly contributed to the scarcity of literature about Hansteen. I argue that the approach to Hansteen’s politics Wiig puts into words asserts itself as silence in the countless other books and articles that only mention Kirsten Hansteen as Viggo Hansteen’s widow, or the first woman in the Norwegian Government, without any elaboration. Another aspect of left-feminist activism that is typically disregarded in the historiography is the creation and reliance on transnational women’s networks.

4.3. Kirsten Hansteen and transnational solidarity

The ninth and last point in NKS’s political program was “*International orientation for cooperation between the peoples.*”²⁶⁷ The Cooperation Council was tired of the global order being dictated by violence and force, and demanded international cooperation and peaceful resolutions to conflicts under supervision of the United Nations. Kirsten Hansteen was one of the Norwegian women who pursued this parole actively, establishing contact with women from across the globe. When she looked to other countries for inspiration, it also reinforced her communist conviction. “My overall impression,” she said in an interview before the national elections in 1945, “is that the communist parties are the most consistent in their efforts to realise women’s equality in all countries.”²⁶⁸ The majority of the members in NKS did not share this view, and Hansteen was pressured to leave the Cooperation Council in 1948.

²⁶⁶ Bonfiglioli, “Revolutionary Networks. Women’s Political and Social Activism in Cold War Italy and Yugoslavia (1945–1957),” 18; 33.

²⁶⁷ Norske Kvinneorganisasjoners Samarbeidsnemnd, *Lov for Norske Kvinneorganisasjoners Samarbeidsnemnd*, 4. Emphasis in original.

²⁶⁸ “Virkelig Demokrati Eksisterer Ikke Uten at Kvinnene Får Full Likestilling,” 10.

4.3.1. Transnational networks

Within a month of its creation, NKS sent a delegation led by Kirsten Hansteen to the International Congress of Women in Paris from 26 November to 1 December convened by the *Union des Femmes Françaises* (Union of French Women).²⁶⁹ At this congress, the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) was founded on the four pillars of anti-fascism, lasting peace, women's rights and better conditions for children.²⁷⁰ The highest organ of the Federation was *The International Congress of Women* taking place every three years. Next came the Council where all member nations were represented, and which oversaw the work between Congresses and met at least once a year. Among the Council members were elected 27 representatives who formed the *Executive Committee*, which again steered the Federation between the Council meetings.²⁷¹

Many of the women at the congress would have had comparable experiences from war an occupation to Kirsten Hansteen, and yet others had survived Ravensbrück.²⁷² It was an organisation that rose from the ruins of the war, with the knowledge that women had shown strong abilities of cooperation during the war, and the faith in them to carry on and become a positive force. The WIDF saw peace and anti-fascism as prerequisites for women's rights, and vice versa. Specific goals included among others annihilating fascism, organising women to fight for their own emancipation, equal work and equal pay.²⁷³

With its left-feminist project, the Federation quickly expanded, and became the largest women's organisation in the post-WWII era, with sections all across the world. In 1947, the WIDF gained consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council, which it lost again in 1954 after pressure from the USA and Great Britain.²⁷⁴ This is one of many examples of how the work of the WIDF suffered under accusations of being a Soviet "front organisation" and campaigns to discredit its members as communists or communist sympathisers. The anti-communist climate of the Cold War has had rippling effects in the Western historiography of global women's movements, from which the WIDF is almost completely left out.

Hansteen must have been thrilled, the congress gathered 850 women from 40

²⁶⁹ de Haan, "Continuing Cold War Paradigms in Western Historiography of Transnational Women's Organisations," 558; Lundby, "Norsk Kvinneforbund 1948-1960," 12.

²⁷⁰ de Haan, "The Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF): History, Main Agenda, and Contributions, 1945-1991," 8.

²⁷¹ de Haan, 9.

²⁷² de Haan, 10.

²⁷³ de Haan, 9.

²⁷⁴ de Haan, 12-13.

countries,²⁷⁵ and was the materialisation of the political engagement among women she had been imagining. As she expressed it herself before the assembly in her speech “The Fight against Fascism,” “[w]e, Norwegian women, have learned from our experience gained in the last five years to count on the exchange of ideas across borders. We understand now, more profoundly than ever before, the importance and value of a capable and active international cooperation.”²⁷⁶

Kirsten Hansteen herself profited personally from such transnational solidarity among women. Elisabeth Tamm, the Swedish politician who gave invaluable material support to *Kvinnen og tiden* as discussed in section 4.2.4, was an avid proponent of women’s political emancipation, and she took an interest in Hansteen when she became the first woman in a Norwegian government. Tamm invited her to celebrate Christmas at the Fogelstad estate in 1945, and when Hansteen politely declined saying that she had three young children and would not be able to come, Tamm wrote her that “you would still have been welcome if you had ten.”²⁷⁷ The family went, and it was the beginning of a close friendship between the two women.

At the conference in Paris, Hansteen professed her ambitions for the future: “To ensure world peace, we need to establish a democratic economy, because we know that the political madness we call fascism advances firmly on a road paved with poverty and social insecurity.”²⁷⁸ This quote illustrates the intertwinement of peace, democracy and women’s rights in Hansteen’s eyes, and her conception of these three issues. Peace to her was not a mere absence of war, but also the promise of a stable future, and defeating fascism was important to this end. Being the catchall for suppressive politics, fascism also represented the suppression of women that they had experienced during the war. Hansteen joined WIDF on behalf of the women of the Communist Party of Norway, and was herself elected to the Executive Committee of the Federation, together with some of the world’s most prominent communist and anti-fascist women such as Dolores Ibárruri, Eugénie Cotton and Nina Popova.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁵ de Haan, “The Women’s International Democratic Federation (WIDF): History, Main Agenda, and Contributions, 1945-1991,” 8.

²⁷⁶ Fédération Démocratique Internationale des Femmes, “Congrès International Des Femmes: Compte Rendu Des Travaux Du Congrès Qui s’est Tenu à Paris Du 26 Novembre Au 1er Decembre 1945,” 79.

²⁷⁷ Bie Lorentzen, “Kvinnen og tiden 1945–1955,” 126.

²⁷⁸ Fédération Démocratique Internationale des Femmes, “Congrès International Des Femmes: Compte Rendu Des Travaux Du Congrès Qui s’est Tenu à Paris Du 26 Novembre Au 1er Decembre 1945,” 79.

²⁷⁹ Fédération Démocratique Internationale des Femmes, 410.

4.3.2. NKS and Kirsten Hansteen part ways

On 16 March 1946, NKS addressed a letter to the Norwegian Government, urging it to condemn the torture and killing of women in Franco Spain.²⁸⁰ This protest from NKS was in line with the international orientation it had adopted as one of its goals, with the anti-fascist and anti-imperialist connotations internationalism held in the aftermath of WWII. However, the engagement soon turned out to be an exception. The representatives from NKP proposed to NKS to follow up on the critique of Franco a year later, in March 1947, by calling upon the Government to not re-establish diplomatic ties with Spain. In the autumn of the same year, NKP suggested again to take a stance on international politics, regarding Dutch colonial rule in Indonesia. Both propositions were rejected, they were deemed to lie outside the scope of NKS's activities.²⁸¹ Løvik argues that the rejection of these political positions by NKS emanates from Cold War influence,²⁸² which is true, but rather than interpreting the emerging conflicts only as the result of external influence, I suggest that they were also expressions of Cold War fronts within NKS.

When the Cooperation Council turned down the propositions from the representatives from the Communist Party, Kirsten Hansteen advocated for them herself independently, and the distance between her and the Cooperation Council grew. In February of 1947, the Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs proposed to lift the economic and diplomatic sanctions the Norwegian state had towards Spain, following increasing international trade with Spain from other countries.²⁸³

“In my opinion it is our task, and the task of all small nations, [...] to position ourselves and make our voices heard,”²⁸⁴ Hansteen responded in the Storting on 22 March 1947, and upheld that it was a matter of principle to support democracy in Spain, and refuse cooperation with Franco. Her position was criticised as irrational and not pragmatic. “It would not even cross my mind to deny that emotions are in play regarding this issue,” Hansteen responded to this. “We have felt the consequences of fascism, and we should not forget that millions have been sacrificed in Europe in the fight for fascism’s unconditional surrender.”²⁸⁵ By refusing to justify her anti-fascist stance with so-called rational arguments, and instead

²⁸⁰ Løvik, “Norske kvinneorganisasjoners samarbeidsnemnd 1945-1952,” 1976, 63.

²⁸¹ Løvik, 64–65.

²⁸² Løvik, 65–66.

²⁸³ St.t.tidende (1947), Utenriksminister Langes redegj. om Norges forhold til Spania., 266. The debate was prompted by a note from Franco’s Government to Norway, demanding normalised trade between the country

²⁸⁴ St.t.tidende (1947), 278.

²⁸⁵ St.t.tidende (1947), 278.

maintain feelings and principles as a legitimate basis for politics, Hansteen's left-feminism challenged the existing framework for institutional politics. Her approach is an example of the conceptualisation of women's politics as an alternative approach rather than a set of political questions, as discussed in section 4.2.2, and of her commitment to anti-fascism.



Figure 3: Kirsten Hansteen on the podium. She is speaking about economic and diplomatic relations with Spain on 22 March 1947.²⁸⁶

When the majority in the Storting decided against her position, and went on to normalise trade connections with Franco's Spain, Hansteen found another way to be of use for the Spanish people who suffered under fascism. Through *Den norske Spania-komitéen*, the Norwegian Committee for Spain, she helped bring Spanish children living in French refugee camps to Norway for a summer vacation, both in 1947 and in 1948.²⁸⁷

Hansteen was also among the founders of *Norsk-Sovjetrussisk Samband*, Association for Norwegian-Soviet Russian Relations, in 1945, and became the Association's first secretary from 1946.²⁸⁸ As mentioned in Chapter I, she had worked with promoting Norwegian-Soviet relations since before WWII. Such committees and associations were created to raise awareness and spread information and ideas, and were conceived as important platforms for building peace through friendships and cooperation. In the spring of 1947, Hansteen traveled in the Soviet Union for one month, together with Hans Jacob Nilsen (1897–

²⁸⁶ NTB, *Konsultativ Statsråd Kirsten Hansteen Taler i Stortinget*. Photo: NTB scanpix.

²⁸⁷ "Hjelp Spanske Flyktningebarn Til En Ferie i Norge."

²⁸⁸ Bentzen, "En Tid for Begeistring – Nordmenn Og Sovjetunionen i 1945," 126; "Norsk-Russisk Forening," 13.

1957), the president of the Association for Norwegian-Soviet Russian Relations. They visited theatres, schools and collective farms to learn about Soviet politics and the destructions of the war. In addition to seeing the Soviet politics in practice, Hansteen met with the Polish communist writer and politician Wanda Wasilewska (1905–1964) and her husband Oleksandr Kornychuk (1905–1972), also a writer and state official, in their home in Kiev.²⁸⁹ During WWII, Wasilewska headed *Związek Patriotów Polskich*, the Union of Polish Patriots, and she later became a deputy in the Supreme Soviet, the highest legislative body of the Soviet Union.²⁹⁰ Wasilewska was active in the international peace movement, both during and after her time as a Soviet official,²⁹¹ and the meeting might have installed Hansteen with a sense of community it was difficult to find in Norway.

In addition to the bravery and strong will of the people she met during her travel, Hansteen remarked their frustration with the rising anti-communism, which she also discussed with Wasilewska.²⁹² To Kirsten Hansteen, the Soviet Union represented the emancipatory potential of communism for all oppressed groups, and her continued fascination with the country was an expression of her connection to international communism.

After her speech on Spain, the second occasion on which Hansteen expressed her transnational solidarity as a member of parliament was regarding Greece. In Greece, the WWII was followed by a civil war, fought out between the conservative Kingdom of Greece with the government army and the communist led Democratic Army of Greece. At the end of the parliamentary session in the afternoon of 4 May 1948, Hansteen mounted the podium to convey a woeful message from Athens received via telegram to the Norwegian presse that morning. 25 Greek communists had been executed at noon, and 830 imprisoned communists were to be executed shortly, convicted for terror.²⁹³ The parallel to her husband's death must have weighed heavily on her. Hansteen read out the telegram with this information before imploring the Government to take action against the executions. "Past events have shown that appeals from foreign governments combined with a strong and genuine world opinion has been able to save human lives."²⁹⁴ This individual act as a member of parliament shows that

²⁸⁹ "Krigen Er for Russerne En Uhyggelig Fortid - Som Aldri Maa Komme Tilbake," 1; 8. In this interview in *Friheten*, Hansteen and Nilsen mention Kiev, Moscow and Armenia as three of their destinations.

²⁹⁰ Mrozik, "Crossing Boundaries," 19–20.

²⁹¹ Mrozik, 38–39.

²⁹² "Krigen Er for Russerne En Uhyggelig Fortid - Som Aldri Maa Komme Tilbake," 1; 8.

²⁹³ "Stortingsdebatt Om 1 Mai + Appell Fra Kirsten Hansteen, 4.5.1948 Åpning Av Olympiaden i London 29.7.48 - Nasjonalbiblioteket" time: 12'10''-13'18''.

²⁹⁴ "Stortingsdebatt Om 1 Mai + Appell Fra Kirsten Hansteen, 4.5.1948 Åpning Av Olympiaden i London 29.7.48 - Nasjonalbiblioteket" time: 14'12''-14'25''.

Hansteen did not perceive borders and geographical distance as separating the Greek cause and the fate of the Greek people from hers. She demonstrated a strong engagement for justice and humanism wherever it was needed, and upheld dialogue and solidarity as the solution.

Whereas *Friheten* on the day after reported that everyone present was touched by her speech, an audio track from the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation reveals that she might have had to fight unduly for such respect. When she approached the podium, the speaker of the Storting was noticeably surprised, and tried to prevent her from speaking by repeating that the debate had come to an end.²⁹⁵ It was not common to take the floor in an unregulated manner in the Storting, indicating how seriously Hansteen took the situation, as well as her exceptionality as a politician. In the audio track we hear that as she approaches the podium, Hansteen replies to the speaker that she will speak on a different issue. Her comment is followed by a silence, and then a small laughter from the audience of representatives, before she starts her discourse.²⁹⁶

Whether the laughter she was met with was a coincidental expression of the members of parliament's cheerful mood on that particular day, or indicative of Hansteen's political opponents' inclination to ridicule her remains unknown. In either case, it exposes a gap in the Norwegian political landscape at the time, where Hansteen, although supported by the other communist members of parliament, was quite alone in perceiving fascism as a pending threat. This gap seems to also have been present in NKS, with unfortunate consequences for Hansteen.

When NKS elected their board for the next period in April 1947, Kirsten Hansteen was replaced by Alette Engelhart (1896–1984) as a vice president.²⁹⁷ Engelhart represented the more bourgeois housewife organisation *Norges Husmorforbund*, and she was affiliated with NKN.²⁹⁸ The changes in leadership of the Cooperation Council in 1947 marked a turn towards the right. Moreover, in the biography *Aase Lionæs: en politisk biografi* (1997), biographer Doris H. Linder writes that Kirsten Hansteen had to withdraw from NKS in 1948 because the non-communists in the Cooperation Council refused to further cooperate with her.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁵ “Stortingsdebatt Om 1 Mai + Appell Fra Kirsten Hansteen, 4.5.1948 Åpning Av Olympiaden i London 29.7.48 - Nasjonalbiblioteket” time: 11’58”.

²⁹⁶ “Stortingsdebatt Om 1 Mai + Appell Fra Kirsten Hansteen, 4.5.1948 Åpning Av Olympiaden i London 29.7.48 - Nasjonalbiblioteket” time: 11’59”-13’18”.

²⁹⁷ Norske Kvinneorganisasjoners Samarbeidsnemnd, “Årsmelding 1947,” 1.

²⁹⁸ Haavet, “Alette Engelhart.”

²⁹⁹ Doris H. Linder, *Aase Lionæs*, 56–57.

There is no mention of any exclusion in NKS's archival documents, nor are there any references to discussions or circumstances leading to Hansteen's withdrawal from the position as vice president in 1947. This silence means that Lionæs's biographer remains the only source for Hansteen's exclusion, but rather than challenging this narrative, the silence can still be interpreted in support of this understanding of the events. Hansteen does not seem to have left much of a footprint in a council where she was deputy leader, as if she was being counteracted from within the organisation. I propose that the omission of Hansteen in the NKS archive is a result of her affiliation with the Cooperation Council and controversies regarding her being swept under the rug. Further supporting the narrative that Hansteen was forced to leave NKS in 1948 is the fact that it coincides with the communist takeover in Czechoslovakia, Gerhardsen's *Krårøytale* and *Kvinnen og tiden*'s suddenly decreasing popularity. Since it is not easy to detect through the Cooperation Council's own archive, Løvik also fails to mention Hansteen's exclusion in her otherwise comprehensive master thesis on NKS based on research in this archive. When the historiography does not address the anti-communism that led to Hansteen's exclusion, its effect is doubled, transferred from the course of events itself to the way it is remembered.

The promises of cooperation and transnational solidarity initially suggested in the creation of NKS seem to have been quickly forgotten. Contrarily to Hansteen's comrades in *Kvinnen og tiden*, the women in NKS did not find it possible to work together with a communist. Hansteen's story illustrates how the rejection of communists and communist ideas took place, constituting an emerging Cold War front within the Norwegian women's movement. Many non-communist women chose to continue their cooperation with communists, and they would often ended up being subject to anti-communism themselves regardless of their own adherence to leftist politics, as seen in section 4.1.4 and further discussed in Chapter V.

4.4. Conclusion

This chapter has explored the immediate post-WWII left-feminist movement in Norway. It has asked how the historical context of WWII shaped the way left-feminists built their political project, and their very conceptualisation of a community of women. A spirit of cooperation arose among women based on shared struggles and oppression. An emerging women's movement related this awareness to the oppression of the German occupation of

Norway, and accordingly upheld women's rights as a part of the larger reconstruction of the country, both in a material and a nonmaterial manner.

This chapter has also asked how the two magazines *Kvinnefronten* and *Kvinnen og tiden* were embedded in Norwegian women's resistance work. Aside from growing directly out of Hansteen's participation in the resistance against the German occupation of Norway as the editor of *Kvinnefronten*, and Bie Lorentzen's experiences with internment alongside other women prisoners during the war, *Kvinnen og tiden* represented a new way of addressing women. When the country was to be reconstructed after the war, it should happen on the terms of gender equality, and women needed to become a political entity for this to happen. The magazine's editors and contributors set a left-feminist agenda for the post-WWII women's movement in Norway which reinforced women as political actors challenging the political establishment.

Through examining Kirsten Hansteen's role in national politics, I have found that beyond representing her own communist platform, Hansteen was a leading figure in an organised and communal approach to women's political representation. Her position in the Government has been massively overlooked in the historiography of Norwegian women's movements and political history alike, thereby ignoring the Communist Party and various women's organisations' defining roles as catalysts for this momentous moment in Norwegian history. When Hansteen became the first woman in a Norwegian government, it was the beginning of a slowly but steadily increasing pattern of women's representation in institutional politics. This had particular significance in the immediate post-WWII years, when women's organisations cooperated in NKS in order to make as much use as possible of the representation they had to promote their politics.

Lastly I looked at how Kirsten Hansteen related to the transnational women's movement. Through the anti-war lens of the global as well as national 1940s left-feminist movement, Hansteen saw cooperation and solidarity as crucial to lasting peace and ultimate victory over fascism. Hansteen showed herself to be an exceptional politician in the Norwegian context by strongly expressing this as a representative in the Storting. Based on anti-communism against left-feminists in Norway, large sections of the women's movement refused to cooperate with her because of her unwavering internationalist orientation. The next chapter will examine how this hostility towards communists became an important factor in the Norwegian women's movement.

V. The Norwegian women's movement as a Cold War arena

During the first two years after WWII, Hansteen's left-feminist initiatives blossomed. This chapter seeks to understand the subsequent decreasing success of the movement, highlighting a Cold War perspective. Kirsten Hansteen, who so actively believed in the cooperation of women for peace and justice in the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF), ended up not taking part in the organisation when its Norwegian Section was properly established. I explore this apparent contradiction as well as the tensions within the Norwegian women's movement introduced in Chapter IV further.

I will examine these limits of the post-WWII cross-political cooperation among women in Norway, and how they affected the establishment of the *Norsk Seksjon av KDV* (Norwegian Section of the WIDF) in 1948. Kirsten Hansteen experienced a backlash after heading a delegation from *Norske Kvinneorganisasjoners Samarbeidsnemnd* (NKS) to the International Congress of Women in Paris in late 1945, and no other organisations than the Communist Party of Norway (NKP) joined the WIDF. Applying Sherry J. Katz's method of researching around the subject, as introduced in Chapter II, I present NKP's outreach strategy among women in the period following the Paris Congress. I hope to thereby meaningfully contrast the isolation Hansteen was up against with the communist women's willingness to set aside political differences in order to achieve political leverage for women's advancement.

Lastly, through studying the popular campaign led by the Norwegian Section of the WIDF against the North Atlantic Treaty (NAT), this chapter investigates the ideological connection between peace and womanhood in Norwegian left-feminism and the implications of this connection for the future of the left-feminist movement in Norway. When the question of Norway's accession to the NAT reached the public, the newly established Norwegian Section of the WIDF became the spearhead of the popular resistance against NAT. In parallel, Kirsten Hansteen fronted the opposition against the NAT as a member of parliament, and I will show that a particular form of misogynist anti-communism developed in response to the campaign, both inside and outside the Storting.

5.1. An anti-communist backlash

The establishment of the Norwegian Section of the WIDF is hardly covered in the historiography. History student Kristin Lundby offers a good overview of the organisation and its functioning in the national context in her 1978 thesis ‘Norsk Kvinneforbund 1948–1960,’³⁰⁰ but as the title indicates, her study only starts in 1948. With some confusion, Lundby affirms that Kirsten Hansteen joined the WIDF at the congress in 1945,³⁰¹ but then skips the established connection that played out between the WIDF and NKP in the following two years. This section explores how the WIDF was received by Norwegian women’s organisations immediately after its establishment.

5.1.1. The Paris congress

Kirsten Hansteen’s involvement with the NKS ended after three years, but the seeds of her exclusion, discussed in section 4.3.2, were sown already at the International Congress of Women in Paris in 1945. Her fellow delegates from NKS were Frieda Dalen (1895–1995), Aase Lionæs (1907–1999), Margarete Bonnevie (1884–1970) and Ingegerd Lorange (1883–1971),³⁰² all of whom represented conservative or bourgeois organisations, except Lionæs from the Norwegian Labour Party (DNA). The NKS did not join the Women’s International Democratic Federation (WIDF) when it was founded by the end of the congress, and neither did any of the other Norwegian organisations and associations represented by the delegates except for the Women’s Secretariat of NKP. Presumably, the more conservative delegates were put off by the political program of the WIDF, and preferred to remain loyal to their own transnational organisations.³⁰³ Lorange represented *Norske Kvinners Nasjonalråd* (NKN),³⁰⁴

³⁰⁰ Lundby, “Norsk kvinneforbund 1948–1960.”

³⁰¹ She indicates in the text body that “some of the women joined”, but none of the Norwegian organisations did (Lundby, 12.), and contradictingly in the notes that Kirsten Hansteen was the only member of the Norwegian delegation to join the federation in Paris (Lundby, 129.).

³⁰² Ingeborg Bakken from NKP writes in a letter a year after the congress that Gunhild Heyerdahl also was present at the International Congress of Women in Paris November 1945. She also writes that Heyerdahl and Lorange both represented *Høyrekvinnens Landsforbund* (the Norwegian Conservative Party’s Women’s Association), and does not mention NKN (NKP Kvinneutvalget [NKP Women’s Secretariat] to NKP’s sentralstyre [Board of NKP], “Concerning NKP’s Affiliation to WIDF [My title, LGE].”). According to the report from the congress, there were five Norwegian delegates (Heyerdahl not being among them), and six Norwegian organisations are represented, among them both NKN and the Norwegian Conservative Party’s Women’s Association (Fédération Démocratique Internationale des Femmes, “Congrès International Des Femmes: Compte Rendu Des Travaux Du Congrès Qui s’est Tenu à Paris Du 26 Novembre Au 1er Decembre 1945,” 383–84.). Whether it is Bakken or the WIDF report that is mistaken I do not know, but the confusion, as well as both Heyerdahl’s and Lorange’s double membership in both organisations should be taken as a confirmation of the conservative leanings of the national council, NKN.

³⁰³ I have not been able to find any discussion or decision in NKS’s archive regarding the affiliation to WIDF

directly affiliated to the transnational organisation the International Council of Women (ICW), and Bonnevie represented *Norsk Kvinnesaksforening* (NKF, Norwegian Association for Women's Rights), the Norwegian branch of the International Alliance of Women (IAW).³⁰⁵ The WIDF, ICW and IAW were the three largest transnational women's organisations post-WWII.³⁰⁶ According to historian Francisca de Haan, the ICW and IAW limited their perspectives on women's emancipation to a Western worldview and displayed an uncritical attitude towards Western imperialism and colonialism. Because of this grounding, de Haan writes that they were in strong opposition to the WIDF.³⁰⁷ The relationship between the transnational women's organisations seems to have negatively affected the cooperation between the Norwegian organisations.

As for the labour women, historian Doris H. Linder writes that when Lionæs returned from the Paris congress, she predicted that the WIDF had no future, and cited the fact that neither the Swedish, Danish, French nor English social democratic parties, which she could consider as sister parties to her own party, DNA, had sent delegates to the congress. She also argued that "women and men should work together through their political parties to realise their programs."³⁰⁸ Linder rightly points out that Lionæs's hint at closer ties with select countries is her way of concealing a rejection based on the strong presence of communist women in the Federation.

Linder further takes Lionæs's comment about women and men working together as proof of Lionæs's commitment to women's emancipation. Whereas I do not deny that Lionæs was a convinced feminist and contributed greatly to women's position in Norwegian politics as Linder also shows in her biography, I also read another meaning in Lionæs's comment. The opposite of women and men working together within parties is women working alone outside of and across parties, which Chapter IV has shown to be the main method of the Norwegian post-WWII left-feminist movement. At the founding Congress of the WIDF, the around 850

after the congress, nor in that of *Norsk Kvinneforbund* (Norwegian Women's Association), represented by Bonnevie at the congress. I suggest that the lack of documented debate regarding WIDF indicates that these Norwegian women's organisations saw WIDF as so far from them in political position, that the rejection of the WIDF was uncontroversial.

³⁰⁴ Based on her representing NKN in NKS (Løvik, 26.).

³⁰⁵ IAW changed its name from the International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship (IAWSEC) in 1946.

³⁰⁶ de Haan, "Continuing Cold War Paradigms in Western Historiography of Transnational Women's Organisations," 549.

³⁰⁷ de Haan, 551–52. For more literature on the notions of western superiority and imperialism in these transnational women's organisations, see de Haan, n. 36.

³⁰⁸ Doris H. Linder, *Aase Lionæs*, 56.

delegates represented 81 million women worldwide,³⁰⁹ and although not all of these joined the Federation, its political program had a strong appeal, so that the WIDF quickly became the largest women's organisation after WWII.³¹⁰ Mass mobilisation was a characteristic of the WIDF, and in her effort to distance herself from what she perceived as a communist dominated Federation, Lionæs conflated the women's political mass organising in the WIDF with communism, and counteracted the left-feminist endeavour.

Rather than being proof of Lionæs's elaborate anti-communist agenda in 1945, her comment illustrates an already emerging scepticism which later resulted in Hansteen's exclusion from the NKS. The association between women's mobilisation and communism surfaced in the form of misogynist anti-communism during the Norwegian debate regarding the North Atlantic Treaty. As I will discuss in section 5.3, it had long lasting consequences both for the Norwegian women's movement and for Norwegian security politics.

5.1.2. NKP and the WIDF

Upon returning to Norway from the congress in Paris, Kirsten Hansteen was taken aback by the other women's rejection of what she regarded as a promising transnational women's movement. In a letter addressed to the board of the NKP on 17 November 1947 deliberating on a renewed interest to establish a Norwegian section of the WIDF, the NKP Women's Secretariat reflects on the Paris congress. The first reason they saw for the resistance against the WIDF in Norway was a division in the women's movement. This is presented as a similarity between all the Scandinavian countries and Great Britain. The established women's organisations in these countries had in head of the Women's Secretariat, Ingeborg Bakken's words "escaped the war relatively unharmed,"³¹¹ and in this way preserved divisions within the movement, briefly discussed in section 4.2.2, from before the war.

The second reason the NKP Women's Secretariat saw was unique to Norway:

In regard to Norway, one of the other reasons [why it has been so difficult to gain adherence to the WIDF] is a certain miscalculation on our part when it came to the established women's organisations which state in their programs that they will fight for peace, and for women's rights. We had not expected that they would not dare to

³⁰⁹ de Haan, "The Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF): History, Main Agenda, and Contributions, 1945-1991," 8.

³¹⁰ de Haan, 1.

³¹¹ NKP Kvinneutvalget [NKP Women's Secretariat] to NKP's sentralstyre [Board of NKP], "Arbeidet for å danne en norsk seksjon av Kvinnenes Demokratiske Verdensforbund," 2.

join the Women's International Democratic Federation because we did, as many factions expressed a strong will of cooperation at the time.³¹²

Not only does this quote illustrate the anti-communism which seems omnipresent among the Norwegian women's organisation. It also shows the optimism of cooperation and unreservedness towards women of differing political opinions that Hansteen displayed when she joined the WIDF in 1945. The experiences of adhesion between women of different political backgrounds from the resistance during WWII framed her belief in the spirit of cooperation, as laid out in Chapter IV, and as the quote shows, the communist women were genuinely surprised when they realised that anti-communism kept other women's organisations from joining the WIDF.

The NKP Women's Secretariat shared Hansteen's efforts and approach, and the Secretariat's strategy for women's politics echoes the isolation the communists were facing. It seems that the more rejection the communist women received, the harder they tried to reach out to and include women of different political backgrounds. In 1946, they formulated a strategy for the Party, "Our Work Among the Women." In one version of this document conserved in NKP's archive, the program of the WIDF in two pages is attached,³¹³ and it appears to constitute an important guiding document for the Secretariat.

The strategy was defined by a mantra which went as follows: "Our task is to make as many women as possible an active part of the democratic popular movement."³¹⁴ This sentence should not be interpreted as indication that the Secretariat was ordered by high-ranking men in the party to recruit more women in preparation of a party-led revolution. The connection to the WIDF indicates a broader definition of a "democratic popular movement" that explicitly included a non-party affiliated women's movement, one that should exist in parallel to the communist parties, both nationally and worldwide. This interpretation is confirmed by the way in which the communist women addressed further mobilisation:

Since a large percentage of women is not affiliated to any organisation, we need to find ways to draw them to actively make demands in their own interests.

This can be done by trying to bring them into one of the existing organisations or by creating study groups and non-political [*sic*] women's associations.³¹⁵

³¹² NKP Kvinneutvalget [NKP Women's Secretariat] to NKP's sentralstyre [Board of NKP], 2. Emphasis in original.

³¹³ NKP Kvinneutvalget [NKP Women's Secretariat], "Arbeidet bant kvinnene [Our Work Among the Women]."

³¹⁴ NKP Kvinneutvalget [NKP Women's Secretariat], 1.

³¹⁵ NKP Kvinneutvalget [NKP Women's Secretariat], 1. By non-political (Norwegian: upolitiske), should be understood non-party affiliated.

There is question of “bringing women in,” but not into NKP. The list of organisations the communists are wanting to recruit to is not even short of conservative ones, and includes “cooperation with women of the political parties.”³¹⁶ It is also clear from the strategy document that women should define their own needs and demands, not simply adopt and support those of NKP. That the NKP Women’s Secretariat’s main objective was to mobilise women, not to recruit them, might seem counterproductive for a political party, but I argue that it is an indication that the NKP Women’s Secretariat was working in the ‘spirit of cooperation.’ Additionally, there are traces of an underlying belief that as long as women become politically aware, they will come to support NKP. As the Secretariat formulates it: “We need to show in practice that we are the Party for women.”³¹⁷

I also suggest that this approach was further elicited by the NKP Women’s Secretariat’s affiliation to the WIDF, as it placed them in a position to promote women’s cooperation in Norway. They motivated themselves to do all they could to mobilise women for women’s own sake, but also because they wanted to promote the WIDF. Through their representative who replaced Kirsten Hansteen on the WIDF Executive Committee, Annalise Urbye,³¹⁸ the NKP Women’s Secretariat was encouraged to double its efforts:

It is impossible to ignore the grim position of the Federation in the Anglo Saxon and Scandinavian countries, and the tangible reduction this causes to our field of activity. We therefore need to double our efforts to spur women’s interest in our work and our goal in these countries. If their women’s organisations are wary and have a negative stance towards us, we cannot let ourselves be offended, but always be present where we can reach the women who are not our enemies and not yet our associates, but whom we can possibly win over for democracy.³¹⁹

The report this quote is taken from is written by Urbye herself, and it is difficult to discern the WIDF’s intention from that of the NKP women, but it is clear that if this was a charge from the Executive Committee, it was eagerly followed.

The NKP Women’s Secretariat also encouraged cooperation within NKS, which it saw as “an important organ for the mobilisation of women and coordination of [women’s] work.”³²⁰ It appears that the communist women tried to pursue NKS as a platform for

³¹⁶ NKP Kvinneutvalget [NKP Women’s Secretariat], 1–2.

³¹⁷ NKP Kvinneutvalget [NKP Women’s Secretariat], 2.

³¹⁸ It is unclear why and when Hansteen withdrew from the Executive Committee. This report shows that Urbye had taken over the position by October 1946. Her name is often found written in the forms Anna-Lise and Anne-Lise, her own signature reads “Annalise Urbye,” so that is the spelling I use.

³¹⁹ Urbye, “Report: Executive Committee of the WIDF - Meeting in Moscow on 10-15 October 1946 [My title, LGE],” 5–6.

³²⁰ NKP Kvinneutvalget [NKP Women’s Secretariat], “Arbeidet bant kvinnene [Our Work Among the Women],” 2.

promoting the WIDF program. They repeatedly brought up foreign policy issues and called for transnational solidarity, with criticism of Francoist Spain and Dutch colonialism, but they were successful only once, as discussed in section 4.3.2. According to history student Løvik, the emergence of the Cold War led to the categorical rejection of such foreign policy issues in NKS, and even proposals from the NKP Women's Secretariat which seemingly had support among a majority of the members of the NKS were dismissed.³²¹ One such proposal was a proposition about "maternal education," showing that the Cold War hostility among the Norwegian women's organisations ran deep.

It was also in a spirit of outreach that communist women joined NKF, the Norwegian branch of IAW, when WWII ended, wanting to expand the reach and work of the organisation to "all progressive women," in their own words fully aware that NKF would remain a bourgeois organisation.³²² NKF was traditionally dominated by conservative and liberal women from the upper class, and even though the organisation saw itself as renewed and radical after the war, the NKP women did not agree.³²³ Historian Elisabeth Lønnå has also pointed out that certain left-leaning women joined NKF, in particular, Eva Rønnow, Ellen Gleditsch and Kirsten Hansteen.³²⁴ Lønnå presents this as proof of the strength of the bourgeois organisation, but the letter from the NKP Women's Secretariat contradicts her interpretation. According to themselves, it was an active strategy on behalf of the left-feminists.³²⁵ Consultation of the member lists of NKF confirms that Hansteen joined the organisation after WWII, but she also seems to have stayed in the organisation only until 1947.³²⁶ It is likely that she did leave the organisation at this time, since it would have coincided with the uproar against her in *Kvinnen og tiden* as well as her exclusion from NKS in 1948.

Hansteen was not the only left-feminist who had joined NKF right after WWII, and on the basis of NKF's membership list, I suggest that the controversy around Kirsten Hansteen in 1948 also affected other women. Two members of NKP as well as radical women such as

³²¹ Løvik, "Norske kvinneorganisasjoners samarbeidsnemnd 1945-1952," 1976, 72.

³²² NKP Kvinneutvalget [NKP Women's Secretariat] to NKP's sentralstyre [Board of NKP], 2.

³²³ Lønnå, *Stolthet og kvinnekamp*, 18; 145.

³²⁴ Lønnå, 136. Eva Rønnow was a member of NKP (as can be confirmed in this letter: NKP Kvinneutvalget [NKP Women's Secretariat] to NKP's sentralstyre [Board of NKP], "Request for Funding: Nordic Women's Conferences [My title, LGE]."). I do not know the party affiliation of Ellen Gleditsch, but they were both contributors to *Kvinnen og tiden* and were active around WIDF.

³²⁵ NKP Kvinneutvalget [NKP Women's Secretariat] to NKP's sentralstyre [Board of NKP], 2.

³²⁶ "Medlemsliste 1947-1951"; "Protokoll: Medlemmer 1935-." In these membership lists, Hansteen's name appears for the years 1945, 1946 and 1947. I do not take this as conclusive evidence that she left NKF in 1948, but I hold it as likely that she did.

Ellen Gleditsch and Mimi Sverdrup Lunden stayed in NKF at least until 1951,³²⁷ whereas Annalise Urbye and Eva Rønnow, two other left-feminists who were presumably close to Hansteen,³²⁸ left it in 1947 and 1948.³²⁹ NKF was among the most active organisations in NKS, and their political programs had a considerable overlap.³³⁰ Based on the closeness between the two organisations I suggest that there was a definite hostility towards the communist women which made some of them leave NKF, as seems to have been the case with Hansteen's exclusion from NKS. Because I have not found discussions about the women who left NKF in their archives, I also suggest that the hostility might have manifested itself as a continued and increasing unwillingness which ultimately made it impossible for the targeted women to stay, rather than taking the form of open animosity towards them.

In her struggles against the rejection the larger women's movement approached her with, Kirsten Hansteen is a personification of Norwegian left-feminism. It must have been disheartening for Hansteen to face rejection when she initiated and hoped for cooperation, and to have the promising new International Federation that she believed in, fighting for no less than world peace and women's rights, dismissed *because* she as a communist worked so strongly for bringing it to Norway. As discussed in section 4.1.4, many women would later also reject *Kvinnen og tiden* because of Hansteen was behind the magazine. Maybe that is why Hansteen retreated from working directly with the WIDF, or maybe she did so because she had her hands full with her work in the Storting as Bakken from the NKP Women's Secretariat indicated.³³¹ Either way, when the Norwegian Section of the WIDF was finally established in 1948, Kirsten Hansteen was not part of it.

³²⁷ Ingeborg Bakken was the leader of NKP Women's Secretariat, and Siri Sverdrup Lunden is indirectly referred to as a member of NKP by Bakken in the above mentioned letter: NKP Kvinneutvalget [NKP Women's Secretariat] to NKP's sentralstyre [Board of NKP], "Arbeidet for å danne en norsk seksjon av Kvinnenes Demokratiske Verdensforbund," 4. It is worth noting that Bakken did not give up her membership in 1947, when she expressed deep frustration with NKF. This adds the nuance that a continued membership should not be interpreted as enthusiastic embracement of the organisation on behalf of the left-feminists.

³²⁸ Annalise Urbye was a prisoner in Ravensbrück together with Henriette Bie Lorentzen, and later contributed to *Kvinnen og tiden*. She also took over for Hansteen, representing NKP in WIDF from 1946 (Urbye, "Report: Executive Committee of the WIDF - Meeting in Moscow on 10-15 October 1946 [My title, LGE]," 1.) Eva Rønnow was as mentioned a co-editor of *Kvinnefronten*, and then went on to work with *Kvinnen og tiden*. Although these are not unambiguous indications of a particularly tight personal relationship with Hansteen, my research has revealed such indications only for Hansteen's relationship with Henriette Bie Lorentzen, Sigrid Helliesen Lund and Elisabeth Tamm. The limited sources that are available in this regard invite me to guess that Urbye and Rønnow could have been among those Hansteen considered as close.

³²⁹ "Medlemsliste 1947-1951." When I make my argument based on these few names, it is because they appear to me as especially important women within the Norwegian left-feminist movement. Based on the poor cooperation between the bourgeois women and the left-feminists, I also infer that the communist and communist sympathising women who decided to join *Norsk Kvinnesaksforening* were few in numbers in the first place.

³³⁰ Lønnå, *Stolthet og kvinnekamp*, 150–51.

³³¹ NKP Kvinneutvalget [NKP Women's Secretariat] to NKP's sentralstyre [Board of NKP], "Arbeidet for å danne en norsk seksjon av Kvinnenes Demokratiske Verdensforbund," 2.

5.2. The Creation of the Norwegian Section of the WIDF

As section 5.1 has shown, anti-communism among the Norwegian women's organisations had a defining role in the development of the WIDF since the very beginning, and this context represents a crucial contribution to the understanding of the Norwegian Section of the WIDF and Norwegian women's organising more broadly in the decades following WWII. It is equally an important backdrop for when the peace movement in Norway was launched by the Norwegian Section of the WIDF with the campaign against the North Atlantic Treaty (NAT) in 1949. This section will briefly cover the (re)establishment of a Norwegian Section of the WIDF, which allowed for the organised mass protest against the NAT.

5.2.1. La Pasionaria visits Oslo

On 28 September 1947, the Spanish communist Dolores Ibárruri (1895–1989), also known as La Pasionaria (the passionflower), appeared on a rally organised by NKP in Oslo.³³² Renowned for her resistance against the fascists in the Spanish Civil War, Ibárruri fled to the Soviet Union in 1939.³³³ She continued her fight against fascism through transnational political work, and in 1953 she became one of ten vice-presidents of the WIDF.³³⁴ In the autumn of 1947, Ibárruri had been in Stockholm for the WIDF council meeting, and the Oslo chapter of NKP invited her to come to Norway before leaving Scandinavia. It is not surprising that the communist party was aware that such a prominent communist leader from Spain was in the region, but it also confirms that the NKP stayed updated on the activities of the WIDF.

On the night of the mentioned rally, La Pasionaria was invited to the home of Mimi Sverdrup Lunden together with women from different political backgrounds, to discuss the establishment of a Norwegian section of the WIDF. La Pasionaria talked about the urgency of defeating fascism in Spain, and encouraged Norwegian women to join the WIDF and create their own section. The event was covered in a large leftist Norwegian newspaper, *Dagbladet*,³³⁵ and the article offers only little explanation on what the WIDF was. It refers to the foundational congress in Paris without further explanation, indicating that the Federation

³³² “Startskuddet for Oslo-Partiets Valgkamp Traff Midt i Blinken.”

³³³ “Dolores Ibárruri | Spanish Political Leader,” paras. 2–3.

³³⁴ de Haan, “The Women’s International Democratic Federation (WIDF): History, Main Agenda, and Contributions, 1945-1991,” 11.

³³⁵ Stenhamar, “En Aften Med La Passionaria [*Sic*] - Aktiv Norsk Seksjon Av Demokratiske Kvinners Verdensforbund [*Sic*].”

was already known in some circles in Norway. The subtitle of this article calls for an “active section of the Women’s International Democratic Federation,” which implies that a Norwegian affiliation to the Federation was known to exist, albeit in inactive form. This matches the NKP women’s impression that organisations and individuals were reluctant to join the Federation because of the already established link with the Norwegian communists, since this link apparently was known.

Besides *La Pasionaria*, the article mentioned by name: Mimi Sverdrup Lunden, Ellen Gleditsch and Kirsten Hansteen. Sverdrup Lunden and Gleditsch both contributed to Hansteen’s magazine *Kvinnen og tiden*, and they had all three worked together on *Kvinnefronten* during the war. Although Hansteen had led the Norwegian delegation to the founding congress in Paris and joined the WIDF, she did not attend this meeting about the establishment of a Norwegian section.³³⁶ Her close connection to the women who were present, including Ibárruri herself whom she had met at the Paris Congress in 1945 when they were both elected to the Executive Committee of the WIDF, makes her absence all the more striking.

Both Gleditsch and *La Pasionaria* underlined to the journalist that the members of WIDF had diverse political backgrounds, not all were communists. The insistence on this matter indicates that there is a pre-existing conception that the federation is dominated by communists. I propose that Hansteen abandoned the WIDF project in order to dampen the anti-communist suspicion against the Norwegian Section. The following section shows how the NKP Women’s Secretariat considered, and probably decided, to maintain a low level of involvement with the Norwegian Section for the same reasons. It seems likely that Hansteen, as the most prominent woman of the Party, would be affected by such a decision, or even included in taking it.

The work to establish a Norwegian section of the WIDF continued after the meeting with *La Pasionaria*, and the NKP Women’s Secretariat followed the situation closely. They were concerned because of the discouraging experience they had had with bringing the WIDF to Norway so far, and were considering how the Federation could be seen in a friendlier light. In the aforementioned letter from the Women’s Secretariat to the Board of NKP on 17 November 1947, one suggestion is to establish the new section as “Women for the UN” in

³³⁶ Stenhamar. The journalist mentions Hansteen in a parenthesis at the end of the article. Hansteen was such a prominent figure that I assume she would have been mentioned by name and possibly interviewed if she had been present. If she was present, she kept a low profile. This is representative for how Hansteen related to the Norwegian Section of the WIDF from 1948 onwards, as this chapter will show.

order to decrease scepticism among the public, a scepticism that has once again made the conservative women reject the WIDF out of loyalty to other international organisations, namely ICW and IAW.³³⁷

Not the least of the communist women's concerns regards their own position, and the question of how they should conduct themselves in order to best facilitate the development of a new section of the WIDF: "sooner or later this association will be formed [...], and we would be seen in an odd light by not contributing there, since we are already members and indeed have given the International Federation our support."³³⁸ The NKP Women's Secretariat found itself in a difficult position, and as this quote shows, it had to carefully negotiate its political activity towards women outside of the Party. The women of the Secretariat deemed the issue to be so contentious, that this entire letter regarding the WIDF and its reception in Norway was marked "Confidential."³³⁹ Judging from the response the Norwegian Section of the WIDF garnered for their protest against the NAT a year later, the communist women appear to have been right. The Norwegian Section was largely disregarded as communist, also with the NKP women keeping their distance.

5.2.2. The Norwegian Section is established

Sixty women were present when *Norsk seksjon av Kvinnerenes Demokratiske Verdensforbund* (Norwegian Section of the Women's International Democratic Federation, KDV³⁴⁰) was established on 3 February 1948 in Oslo.³⁴¹ Behind the invitation were Mimi Sverdrup Lunden, Siri Sverdrup Lunden (1920–2003), Ellen Gleditsch and Henriette Bie Lorentzen, to give a few telling examples.³⁴² These women were intellectuals and had been active in the resistance during WWII, most of them were not members of any political party,

³³⁷ NKP Kvinneutvalget [NKP Women's Secretariat] to NKP's sentralstyre [Board of NKP], "Arbeidet for å danne en norsk seksjon av Kvinnerenes Demokratiske Verdensforbund," 2–3.

³³⁸ NKP Kvinneutvalget [NKP Women's Secretariat] to NKP's sentralstyre [Board of NKP], 4.

³³⁹ NKP Kvinneutvalget [NKP Women's Secretariat] to NKP's sentralstyre [Board of NKP], 1.

³⁴⁰ KDV is the abbreviation of the Norwegian name for the WIDF, however KDV was used both to talk about the International Federation and the Norwegian Section. In 1950, the Norwegian Section of the WIDF changed its name to *Norges Demokratiske Kvinneforbund* (Democratic Women's Federation of Norway, my translation, LGE). The section was merged with *Norsk Husmorlagsforbund* (Norwegian Federation of Housewife Guilds, my translation, LGE) in 1954, and then took the name *Norsk Kvinneforbund* (Norwegian Women's Association). For the purpose of clarity and consistency, I use the Norwegian abbreviation KDV for the Norwegian Section, and the English abbreviation WIDF for the International Federation in this thesis.

³⁴¹ Lundby, "Norsk kvinneforbund 1948–1960," 33.

³⁴² Lundby, 33. The full list of signatories on the invitation is: Ingrid Borchgrevink, Henriette Bie Lorentzen, Ellen Gleditsch, Ruth Kaurin, Eva Kolstad, Sigrid Helliesen Lund, Mimi Sverdrup Lunden, Siri Sverdrup Lunden, Henny Ording, Mulka Rosenquist, Liv Schjødt, Esther Sveen.

and many came from the circles around *Kvinnen og tiden*.³⁴³ M. Sverdrup Lunden was a teacher (*lektor*), and contributed immensely to the debate regarding women's right to work that started in the 1920s,³⁴⁴ publishing several books and articles throughout the 1940s.³⁴⁵ Gleditsch was a radiochemist who had worked under Marie Curie in Paris, and in 1929 became the second woman professor in Norway.³⁴⁶ Bie Lorentzen was also an educator, and in her role as co-editor in *Kvinnen og tiden* she put her degree in the history of literature to good use.³⁴⁷ Young Siri Sverdrup Lunden was a slight exception. The daughter of Mimi Sverdrup Lunden was still a student at the time, and did have a party affiliation through her engagement in the NKP Women's Secretariat.³⁴⁸ However, her communist background seems to have been unknown to the public, it does not appear in anti-communist attacks on the KDV in the newspapers.

There was some hesitation among the sixty women regarding how heavily the Norwegian Section should base its program on that of the International Federation, because the latter was perceived as being closely related to the Soviet Union. M. Sverdrup Lunden defended the objectives of the WIDF, and KDV adopted the program of the WIDF without any adjustments.³⁴⁹ A provisional board was formed, led by M. Sverdrup Lunden, and when it was replaced by a permanent board in September 1948, she became the president of KDV.

³⁴³ That the KDV was dominated by intellectuals and middle class women became clear when it merged with the working class women's Norwegian Federation of Housewife Guilds in 1954. One of the original members remembers that there were at times large ideological disparities within the organisation, but that they were always able to cooperate and agree on concrete political issues (Rustad, "Uhørte Stemmer: Guri Tambs-Lyche," sec. 7.)

³⁴⁴ The main topic of the debate was married women's right to work. The debate started in 1925, and although there were several victories along the way, and the taxation system Sverdrup Lunden and others fought for was obtained in 1959, equal pay for work of equal value and equal access to the labour market are issues that are relevant also in the Norwegian feminist movement in the 21st century. Lønnå, *Stolthet og kvinnekamp*, 32–38; 161–65; Lønnå, "LO, DNA Og Striden Om Gifte Kvinner i Arbeidslivet."

³⁴⁵ Frølich, "Mimi Sverdrup Lunden." Her most important contributions were the books *De frigjorte hender* (1941) and *Den lange arbeidsdagen* (1948) about women's reduced access to the labour market and their unpaid labour in the home, written with a materialist perspective.

³⁴⁶ Kronen, "Ellen Gleditsch." Gleditsch also served as the president of the *International Federation of University Women* from 1926 to 1929.

³⁴⁷ Rogstad, "Henriette Bie Lorentzen."

³⁴⁸ Her name appears in several documents from the NKP Women's Secretariat, confirming that she was engaged in NKP at least from 1947, and a member of the Women's Secretariat at least in 1949: NKP Kvinneutvalget [NKP Women's Secretariat], "Kvinneutvalgsmøte 14 nov. 1949"; NKP Kvinneutvalget [NKP Women's Secretariat] to NKP's sentralstyre [Board of NKP], "Arbeidet for å danne en norsk seksjon av Kvinneenes Demokratiske Verdensforbund."

³⁴⁹ M. Sverdrup Lunden was prepared for critiques against the Federation, and defended the objectives of the WIDF. She dismissed that the fight against "fascism" should be replaced with the fight against "dictatorship." According to Lundby, the discussion about these terms took place because there were voices who wanted the Section to be able to critique the Soviet Union, which could fall under "dictatorship" but not easily be defined as "fascism." However, the meeting concluded that since fascism was the ideological content of repression, it was more dangerous than dictatorship, which was only the form (Lundby, "Norsk kvinneforbund 1948 - 1960," 34).

The Norwegian Section of the WIDF was established with the purpose of supporting the WIDF's objectives, the annihilation of fascism, lasting peace, the extension of women's rights and better conditions for children, and promote these in Norway.³⁵⁰

The Norwegian Section grew slowly in its first year of existence and members were mainly based in Oslo, with a few exceptions across the country. The activity was centred around education and discussions on diverse topics such as the situation in Spain, anti-Semitism and child rearing.³⁵¹ From the winter of 1949 onwards the organisation expanded. In its second year it became nation-wide, and was particularly strong in the north of Norway. This regional difference highlights a limitation of this thesis, which focuses on the central committees and boards of different national organisations so often located in Oslo. The northern parts of Norway were hit harder by the destructions of the German occupation than the rest of the country, and were liberated by the Soviet army.³⁵² Lundby suggests that this made the people who lived there more likely to advocate for peace, and more likely to view the Soviet Union in a positive light, explaining the north-south differences regarding the KDV. To this list I would like to add a centuries-long tradition of trade and cooperation with Russians due to the shared border in the north-east of Norway, as well as the large geographical distances, which may have made the people there less impressionable to anti-communist discourse produced in and around the Norwegian capital located in the south.

Despite greater sympathy for the WIDF cause in the north of Norway, anti-communism continued to hinder the national success of the movement. Lundby maintains that anti-communism was one reason for the limited success, but that the main reason was that they failed to raise issues most women cared about.³⁵³ She proposes that moulding their work too closely after the wishes of the International Federation prevented the Norwegian Section from focusing on everyday issues that were of direct importance to its members—it was later criticised for “exclusively bringing up ‘questions in high politics,’ and not issues close to the women's lives”.³⁵⁴ Such criticism holds sexist assumptions about what suitable political activities for women look like, and as section 5.3.1 elaborates, the left-feminists themselves rejected the separation of “high politics” and “women's issues.” Rather than being taken at face value, the critique against the Norwegian Section and the WIDF merits critical analysis. By not seeing women's hesitation to engage with the Norwegian Section of the WIDF in light

³⁵⁰ Lundby, “Norsk Kvinneforbund 1948-1960,” 33–35.

³⁵¹ Lundby, 41.

³⁵² Derry, *A History of Scandinavia*, 349–50.

³⁵³ Lundby, “Norsk kvinneforbund 1948–1960,” 41–45.

³⁵⁴ Lundby, 35–36.

of the political discourse of the time, Lundby underestimates the importance of anti-communism in the history of the Norwegian left-feminist movement, and reinforces the dichotomy between the private and the political that the left-feminists were trying to deconstruct.

The anti-war foundation of the left-feminist movement led its members to become the spearhead of the resistance against the North Atlantic Treaty in Norway. These protests represented an inauguration of the Norwegian Section of the WIDF, but the same exposure that led to their instantaneous growth became a large hurdle because of the anti-communist reactions.

5.3. Food not canons

The idea of a political and/or military alliance between Western European countries and the USA had been considered even before WWII, but with the war and the subsequent establishment of the United Nations on 24 October 1925, the idea faded.³⁵⁵ However, it did not take long before the temperature of international relations dropped, and a military alliance between Western nations was actualised again with the beginning of the Cold War. Two important events which have already been discussed in this thesis can illustrate the rising tensions, the announcement of the Truman Doctrine on 12 March 1947, and the communist takeover in Czechoslovakia on 25 February 1948.

Political and military integration between Western European countries was growing. France and Great Britain concluded an agreement of common defence against Germany in March 1947 when they signed the Treaty of Dunkirk. This coalition was expanded a year later with the Treaty of Brussels, president Truman immediately took interest, and during 1948, plans for a North Atlantic Treaty (NAT) started to be shaped.³⁵⁶

The Scandinavian countries simultaneously initiated negotiations for a Scandinavian defence alliance in the autumn of 1948.³⁵⁷ Sweden had successfully pursued neutrality during WWII, and both Norway and Denmark had been under German occupation. Cultural, historical and geographical proximity prompted the idea that they could form a defence unit and protect their neutrality in the future. In December, Norway received word that the country would be invited to sign the NAT, and became impatient in the negotiations for a

³⁵⁵ Greve, *Atlanterrhavspakten*, 9.

³⁵⁶ Greve, 10–11.

³⁵⁷ Greve, 13.

Scandinavian alliance.³⁵⁸ A national debate emerged around Norway's military strategy, and it was ultimately a question of which role the country was to have in the emerging Cold War.

The left-feminist battle against the NAT played out on two fields: in the streets fought by the Norwegian Section of the WIDF (KDV), and in Parliament, by Kirsten Hansteen. Even though they had the same political ideas, and Hansteen had worked closely with many of the women who were campaigning in the streets, it is like there was an invisible wall separating them. Hansteen never appeared in any of the KDV-led meetings, and her name did not appear on any of KDV's public statements, which were signed by many of her comrades, including Henriette Bie Lorentzen with whom she was very close.

Hansteen also largely avoided referring to the KVD in her speeches.³⁵⁹ In an attempt to distance herself from them, and fend off the returning disregard of her arguments as communist propaganda, she quoted large parts of the protest letter sent by another women's organisation,³⁶⁰ instead of her own comrades' arguments.

Hansteen actively pursued the strategy to present anti-war arguments without associating with KDV. In her first parliamentary debate against the NAT, approximately half of her speech was either quotes from non-communists or reflections on the devaluation of communists. After quoting a Norwegian journalist from the DNA newspaper "not because [his] opinion is of particular importance, but because he in an excellent way has expressed what I mean, and what I think the larger part of the people—indeed, I believe the deciding majority—means,"³⁶¹ she clarifies: "I wanted these words to be pronounced here and not just my words, the words of a communist, because they are not highly regarded."³⁶² The other communist members of parliament, all men, did not adopt this approach. A few used quotes from researchers or public figures to present their arguments, but not nearly to the same extent as Hansteen.

It is possible that it was even more necessary for her to make these reservations about her political position, because her opinion would be doubly devalued as a woman as well as a communist. Although Hansteen did not appear in KDV's public statements, she did encourage

³⁵⁸ Greve, 13.

³⁵⁹ She would either name the Federation in passing, referring to the large demonstrations, or the petition they organised (St.t.tidende (1949), Utenriksministerens redegjørelse 24. februar., 304.), or she would quote them without naming them, and emphasising that they were not communists (St.t.tidende (1949), Redegj. fra utenriksministeren om forhandl. om forsvarsforbund., 189.).

³⁶⁰ St.t.tidende (1949), Utenriksministerens redegjørelse 24. februar., 304. The organisation was Norwegian Section of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (IKFF), who wanted to distance themselves from what they perceived to be communists.

³⁶¹ St.t.tidende (1949), Redegj. fra utenriksministeren om forhandl. om forsvarsforbund., 189.

³⁶² St.t.tidende (1949), 189.

people to sign their anti-NAT petition, and an editorial published in *Arbeiderbladet* bears witness of the kind of misogyny she had to navigate: “This call [for signatures] is also part of the camouflaged communist propaganda. And Mrs. Hansteen lends out her name anew, which it should have been her duty to protect.”³⁶³ The author accuses her of exploiting Viggo Hansteen’s name in so called communist propaganda, implying that she as a woman was not entitled to her own political position, but should be faithful to her (late) husband.³⁶⁴ A group of women from DNA, including Kirsten Hansteen’s sister, Gerda Evang, wrote in defence of the communist women’s right to political participation.³⁶⁵ The linkage between women’s politics and communism was contentious.

As discussed in Chapter III, there was massive support for NAT in the Norwegian Parliament; besides the communist representatives, only two members of parliament voted against it in March 1949. Sensing this direction, the KDV addressed a protest to the Government and the Storting in late January 1949, as soon as they had heard about the possibility that Norway would join the negotiations for the NAT. The protest warned that the NAT considerably increased the risk of a Third World War, and called this a betrayal of the next generation.³⁶⁶ It was signed by Mimi Sverdrup Lunden as the leader of the KDV, as well as a handful of individuals, both men and women.

This was the beginning of a petition that the KDV initiated, and they worked intensively to reach out to other women’s, peace and labour organisations. The first in a line of demonstrations was held on 28 January at Youngstorget in Oslo, and several trade unionists were among the organisers together with women from the KDV and others.³⁶⁷

The KDV also wanted to partner with *Internasjonal Kvinneliga for Fred og Frihet* (IKFF), the Norwegian section of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) in the coordination of this campaign, but the women of IKFF refused the invitation. The WILPF was founded in Den Haag in 1915 as a transnational women’s protest against World War I, and combined pacifism with the struggle for women’s political rights.³⁶⁸ It might seem counterintuitive that two women’s peace organisations which both opposed the

³⁶³ Quoted in Sandemose, “Bøker Om Jøder,” 13.

³⁶⁴ Viggo Hansteen did not abandon the NKP before he died, but it is implied that he died in the spirit of the nation, and that the NKP are national traitors.

³⁶⁵ Bruusgaard et al., “Folkebrevet.”

³⁶⁶ KDV to IKFF, “[Protest against the North Atlantic Treaty].”

³⁶⁷ “Mot Atlanterhavspakten.”

³⁶⁸ Haslam, *From Suffrage to Internationalism*, xxii–xxiii. The original committee was called the International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace, and became a permanent organisation in 1919, when it changed its name to Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom.

North Atlantic Treaty could not cooperate on a protest campaign. The minutes from an IKFF board meeting show the reason why: “It was decided to seek out contact with other circles and organisations with similar views on the North Atlantic Treaty, though not with the communists, as their prerequisites for the battle against the North Atlantic Treaty are different to those of the Women’s League.”³⁶⁹ The KDV is referred to as “the communists” and their prerequisites for protesting are understood to be a conspiracy to make Norway a part of the Soviet Union. IKFF perceived the KDV as a threat to the Norwegian nation, and therefore responded by attempting to exclude it from a community of women’s organisations. However, as the campaign against NAT progressed, IKFF’s tactic led to their own alienation in the campaign, whereas the KDV garnered mass support.

5.3.1. Peace and women’s rights

On 26 February 1949, the Norwegian Section of the WIDF organised a protest outside the Parliament, and 5–6,000 people joined.³⁷⁰ Their demand was that the people should be heard in the question of NAT, and they called for a referendum. The labour movement had responded to the KDV initiative, and 27 companies discontinued their operations, as all their employees put down their work on this day to protest.³⁷¹ Mimi Sverdrup Lunden was the main speaker, and she used her speech to make a connection between womanhood and peace which regards the social and political role of women. She did not address women as more peaceful or vulnerable than men, but spoke particularly to them because of their position as building and upholding the realm of everyday life which would be threatened by a war:

We women know that modern war means destruction of everything we build up: home and children [...] We do not believe in a Third World War as the solution to our conflicts. We women therefore built an organisation across national borders after the last war. Transgressing political, social and economic differences, the idea of the WIDF is to create a common ground for the one thing necessary for us and our children: peace.³⁷²

Beyond showing that the KDV was the centre of this campaign, Sverdrup Lunden’s speech illustrates the continuity between the resistance against the NAT and the women’s movement that grew out of the Second World War.

³⁶⁹ IKFF, “Referat Fra IKFFs Landsstyremøte 22. Februar 1949,” 1–2.

³⁷⁰ Lundby, “Norsk kvinneforbund 1948–1960,” 42. This was a considerable amount of people, and such demonstrations were not a regular sight. In 1962, a demonstration against Norwegian membership in the European Economic Community (EEC) gathered 6–7,000 protestors. To the best of my knowledge, these were the two largest demonstrations, and maybe the only ones of such magnitude in the post-WWII period.

³⁷¹ Sverdrup Lunden, “Øst Og Vest - Og Fred,” 4.

³⁷² “Vi Ønsker Ikke å Bli Noen Utpost i USA.s ‘Sikkerhetssystem.’”

Among the thousands of protestors were activists from the KDV holding signs in the snow in front of the Norwegian Parliament. Some of the slogans conveyed a clear association to the Second World War, such as “8,000 children and 100,000 women in the gas chamber” and “900 women gave their lives for Norway’s peace and sovereignty.” By evoking the deaths of women and children during WWII, the activists constructed their political movement as an extension of both the Norwegian and the international anti-fascist resistance movement during the war. The rest of the slogans were variations of ‘butter not guns,’ and they read: “Twill and fabric not uniforms,” “Food not canons,” “Kindergartens not bomb shelters” and “Houses not bunkers.”³⁷⁴ These slogans contrasted the war industry with products needed to sustain the Norwegian society, and which occupied much of the time and work for women, especially if they were working class housewives. These were demands that women were already making independently of the NAT, some of them were formulated by the Cooperation Council of Norwegian Women’s Organisations (NKS) in 1945 as discussed in section 4.2.2. For the left-feminists, there was no opposition between international politics and everyday material conditions, and they used this perspective to show war as counter to women’s interests.

³⁷³ Picture from the newspaper article “Norges Tilslutning Til A-Blokken Er Undergraving Av FN Og Mellomfolkelig Fred Og Sikkerhet.”

³⁷⁴ “Norges Tilslutning Til A-Blokken Er Undergraving Av FN Og Mellomfolkelig Fred Og Sikkerhet.”

³⁷⁵ "Norges Tilslutning Til A-Blokken Er Undergraving Av FN Og Mellomfolkelig Fred Og Sikkerhet."

consideration by the majority of the political spectrum. The protestors repeatedly complained that the press coverage about the NAT was biased or lacking,³⁷⁶ and when the resistance against the NAT did reach beyond the communist press, it was in the form of attacks on the protestors.

The fact that the anti-NAT campaign was being led by a women's organisation prompted the development of a women-specific anti-communism. The Labour Party newspaper *Arbeiderbladet* published a caricature of the protestors on 19 March 1949 (see Figure 5). The drawing depicts a group of women angrily striding into the office of a (presumably Soviet Russian) communist man. Mimi Sverdrup Lunden is given the nickname Base-Mimi in the drawing, because one of her main concerns with the NAT was that it would lead to US American military bases in Norway. She asks the man seated behind a desk with an expression of resignation on his face: "This doesn't say anything about bases! Did you maybe refer to another treaty?"

The caricature combines a range of anti-communist and misogynist tropes. Firstly, there are only women among the protestors, and when they also are drawn as large, angry and tall, it suggests that the reason why there are no men among them is that the women are unappealing to them. The presentation of them as unattractive is reinforced by their interaction with the communist man. He is sitting down while they are practically standing over him and nagging him, like the misogynist image of a wife who is commanding her physically inferior husband. Secondly, the women are being represented as taking orders from Moscow, which is a part of the same anti-communist discourse as IKFF displayed. The women also appear to have misunderstood their orders, alluding to their political incompetence as women.

³⁷⁶ For example in this mass circular letter calling for signatures against the NAT: KDV, "[Circular Letter about the Petition against NAT]."



Figure 5: Caricature of the women in KDV. The captions read: Mimi Sverdrup Lunden: - This doesn't say anything about bases! Did you maybe refer to another treaty?³⁷⁷

The Norwegian Section of the WIDF successfully framed resistance against NAT as a women's issue, and mobilised thousands of women and men with their campaign. The pro-NAT political establishment picked up on the same connection, but with a negative value judgement. Their message was that separately organised women were under communist influence.

5.3.2. Hansteen opposing the NAT in the Storting

The NAT was the product of a *realist* worldview. According to International Relations scholar Karin Fierke, realism is based on two assumptions: firstly, conflict and war are inevitable because all humans are power seeking. Secondly, states are the main or only actors on the international stage, and they are in a constant struggle for power with each other. Since there is no supranational governing body, they have to rely on their own use of force to protect themselves.³⁷⁸ A main conclusion following from these two assumptions which define the realist perspective in International Relations is that a balance of power creates a stable and safe world.³⁷⁹ Since no one can control states, they should keep each other in check, and if opposing states have similar potential for power and violence, they will not attack each other

³⁷⁷ "Base-Mimi."

³⁷⁸ Fierke, *Critical Approaches to International Security*, 53.

³⁷⁹ Fierke, 53–54.

in the fear of loss. The development of the East and West “blocs” after the Second World War was a direct application of the realist worldview. The Soviet Union was growing, and according to the logic of power balance, an equally strong (or stronger) entity should exist to counter the Eastern force, and thus the NAT was created.

In the Storting, the NAT debate took place during the winter of 1949. Besides promoting labour rights in the Standing Committee on Social Affairs in the Storting, Hansteen engaged most actively in the Norwegian accession to the NAT as an elected official. As mentioned above, she was not the only advocate against the NAT among the members of parliament, but she became one of the main actors. She was frequently addressed by her opponents during the debates, and her speech from the session where the Norwegian accession to NAT was decided was the only one to be printed in full length in the NKP newspaper *Friheten*,³⁸⁰ indicating that she occupied an important position. The speech had also been transmitted by the national broadcast. Even though the accession to the NAT had already been approved, this sparked strong criticism by its adherents, as they were worried that the population would get a skewed image of the Treaty.³⁸¹

Hansteen’s voice was defining in the debate, by bringing a left-feminist critique of the emerging Western military alliance into the Norwegian Parliament. In the Parliament session on 4 March, her speech was like an echo from the Congress of Women in Paris 1945:

For as long as we still breathe, we women will do whatever we can to prevent our children from experiencing the same as we have experienced. We know from our own experience that war solves no issues. We know that all disagreements, however big, *can* be solved without war, without military treaties and without arms. [...] History has shown that deterrence has never secured a lasting peace, and neither will it today.³⁸²

Much of Hansteen’s critique of the NAT was based on a rejection of the realist worldview, as in the critique of deterrence in the last part of this quote. The quote also shows how she offered a left-feminist worldview as an alternative to realism, advocating for dialogue and cooperation.

Feminist international relations theory developed from the 1990s represents a fundamental critique of the realist worldview. In the seminal article within feminist international relations ‘Hans Morgenthau's Principles of Political Realism: A Feminist

³⁸⁰ “Norge Og Atlant-Pakten.” *Friheten* was the only newspaper to cover the resistance against the NAT to a significant extent.

³⁸¹ *VG*, *Bergens tidende* and *Adresseavisen* were among the newspapers which debated the media coverage in the days following the session. The debate became of such importance that Hansteen brought it up in the Parliament. After timing the speeches and *NRK*’s coverage of the debate, the office of the President of the Storting dismissed the critique (St.t.tidende (1949), Protest mot repr. Sundts kritikk over Kringkastingen., 758.).

³⁸² St.t.tidende (1949), Utenriksministerens redegjørelse 24. februar., 305. Emphasis in original.

Reformulation' from 1988, scholar J. Ann Tickner deconstructs six foundational realist principles, and presents feminist alternatives. According to Tickner, the realist conceptualisation of "[p]ower as domination and control privileges masculinity and ignores the possibility of collective empowerment, another aspect of power often associated with femininity."³⁸³

I argue that Tickner's formulation captures the critique Hansteen presented against the creation of the NAT. Deterrence was a cornerstone of the bloc politics, and was based in the realist understanding of power. When Hansteen argues from the perspective of women's insights, it is an example of the "possibility of collective empowerment" that Tickner points out as ignored.

In the scenario that the final decision regarding the NAT had been postponed, the left-feminist politicisation of women could have become a potent threat. Many women did not participate in conventional political debate, but if they continued speaking up *en masse*, Norway's accession to the NAT would have become difficult to justify, especially if a referendum would take place. The politicians who were proponents of the Treaty therefore launched a counterattack against this potential threat.

In a direct response to Hansteen's proclamation of women's position against war, the Minister of Foreign Affairs from DNA, Halvard Lange (1902–1970) said that Hansteen was not alone in wanting to protect "our children."³⁸⁴ This was the very first sentence uttered after Hansteen's argument, and I consider it to be one of several statements aimed at nullifying the left-feminist discourse. Rakel Seweriin (DNA) also countered Hansteen's use of "women" by refusing the separation of women as a political entity. She claimed that "The Government is supported by all freedom- and peace loving women and men in this country."³⁸⁵ "Women and men" are placed in opposition to "women," and by adding the qualifier "freedom loving" in reference to the idea that communism was dictatorial, Seweriin implied that the women who protest the Treaty did not "love freedom," and as such were a threat to the Norwegian people.

The conservative representative Claudia Olsen (*Høyre*, the Conservative Party) used a similar rhetoric, reinforcing the opposition between "freedom" and "women." Olsen also went further in her characterisation of the protesting women, when she pointed out that "the large majority of women have behaved in a calm and dignified manner,"³⁸⁶ implying that

³⁸³ Tickner, "Hans Morgenthau's Principles of Political Realism," 438.

³⁸⁴ St.t.tidende (1949), Utenriksministerens redegjørelse 24. februar., 305.

³⁸⁵ St.t.tidende (1949), 309.

³⁸⁶ St.t.tidende (1949), Utenriksministerens redegjørelse 24. februar., 334.

performing street activism was the opposite of this. Olsen's reference to women's respectability is at its core similar to the attack on Hansteen for "misusing" her late husband's name. The political establishment did not merely attack the leftist position of the left-feminists, but targeted women's mobilisation in itself.

The main component of the campaign against the NAT was KDV's petition. On 28 March 1949, a deputation headed by Mimi Sverdrup Lunden delivered more than 40,000 signatures to the Parliament,³⁸⁷ most of which had been collected by women in KDV.³⁸⁸ The fact that IKFF also submitted their protest signed by 540 people on the same day, led to some confusion. Several members of parliament referred to the protests as being led by the Women's League, which shows that women were being lumped together into one category when they protested. In this way, the IKFF also became the target of anti-communist attacks, which partially explains the limited success of their petition, as there would be even more resistance against communism in the bourgeois circles where they were operating.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁷ St.t.tidende (1949), Samtykke til ratifikasjon av Atlanterhavspakten., 655. The final number of signatures exceeded 63,181. 41,715 was the number of signatures handed directly to the Parliament ("Over 42,000 Protester Mot A-Pakten Overlevert," 4; Den norske Fredskomite, "Rapport Til Landskonferansen 24., 25. Og 26. Mars 1950.," 1.).

³⁸⁸ Lundby, "Norsk Kvinneforbund 1948-1960," 70.

³⁸⁹ IKFF experienced being branded as communist, as well as internal fractions as a consequence of the campaign (Norwegian section of WILPF, "Referat Fra IKFFs Landsstyremøte 8. Mars 1949.," 2-3.).



Figure 6: Deputation of NAT-protestors in the Storting. The deputation delivered 41,715 signatures against the North Atlantic Treaty to the Parliament on 28 March 1949. Standing around the signatures from left to right are Housewife Gudrun Eivindson, Mimi Trøan, professor Ellen Gleditsch, worker Ove Varreng and Mimi Sverdrup Lunden.³⁹⁰

The petition itself was also subject to misogyny in the parliamentary debate. As well as arguing that the protestors failed to be factual, the conservative representative Carl Joachim Hambro (1885–1964) presented the following anecdote:

I received a small letter, which I believe is typical for the way which is used to collect signatures [...]. It is autographed by two older ladies [...], and reads in all brevity:

“Honorable Storting! A lady came a while ago with a poster, we signed it, that we did not want the Atlantic Treaty. Please remove our names, we vote for the Atlantic Treaty.”³⁹¹

Hambro’s contribution is an example of the following dichotomy present in Western anti-communist discourses, as discussed by historian Chiara Bonfiglioli: “communist female militants were generally portrayed either as gullible, manipulated women, or as cunning, ruthless executors [...]”.³⁹² Whereas the campaigners were not smeared to the extent of being called “ruthless executors,” they were characterised as cunning and manipulating, and Hambro’s anecdote was meant to spread doubt concerning the actual opinion of the signatories, since women appeared to have signed the campaign after being tricked by the campaigners. This way of criticising the anti-NAT stance rested primarily on establishing that women, or rather women who did not come up to a certain level of respectability, were unsuited for politics.

On 29 March 1949, the Norwegian Parliament decided to sign and ratify the NAT, with 130 to 13 votes. KDV continued its activity, but the membership growth of the

³⁹⁰ In the newspaper article “Over 42,000 Protester Mot A-Pakten Overlevert.”

³⁹¹ St.tidende (1949), Samtykke til ratifikasjon av Atlanterhavspakten., 675.

³⁹² Bonfiglioli, “Revolutionary Networks. Women’s Political and Social Activism in Cold War Italy and Yugoslavia (1945–1957),” 33.

organisation stagnated after the sudden increase that had happened during the campaign against the NAT. There are few concrete numbers to go by, but according to Lundby, they had less than 1,000 members in 1952.³⁹³ KDV also came under illegal surveillance from the Norwegian Police Security Agency in a campaign targeting communist activity in Norway.³⁹⁴ This should be taken as further indication of the intensity of the anti-communist discourse, and the importance of including this perspective in the study of Norwegian women's and feminist history as well as political history more broadly.

1949 was also Kirsten Hansteen's last year as a member of parliament, and it was the end of her period in the national scene. In a letter to the board of NKP, she resigned her nomination in the national election. "It has throughout all these years [...] been my immutable precondition to not continue in the Storting," she writes, and adds that personal health reasons also prevent her from running.³⁹⁵ The letter was published in *Friheten*, accompanied by an announcement that she would have been the top candidate of her district if she had not withdrawn. In no way was this an expression of her fading conviction, and she ended her letter by stating that she hoped to be of use to the Communist Party in new ways in the future.

5.4. Conclusion

This chapter has explored Kirsten Hansteen's involvement and non-involvement in the Norwegian Section of the WIDF and the tensions within the Norwegian women's movement, particularly related to the establishment of the Norwegian Section of the WIDF. I have argued that the anti-communism against Hansteen and the larger left-feminist movement in Norway was characterised by continuity, starting before the overt attack on communists and communism with the Kråkerøy speech in February 1948. I have examined the limits of the post-WWII spirit of cooperation among women in Norway, and found that anti-communism, particularly from social democratic women, made a united Norwegian women's movement impossible. I have traced a women-specific anti-communist discourse back to the International Congress of Women in Paris in 1945. This inhibited the establishment of the Norwegian Section of the WIDF, because the communist women distanced themselves from

³⁹³ Lundby, "Norsk Kvinneforbund 1948-1960," 49.

³⁹⁴ Lund Commission, *Rapport til Stortinget fra kommisjonen som ble nedsatt av Stortinget for å granske påstander om ulovlig overvåking av norske borgere (Lund-rapporten)*, nr 15(1995-96):196–97. It is unclear when the surveillance began, but according to this report it was most intense in the 1950s and 1960s. For more on the report, see Chapter III.

³⁹⁵ "Kirsten Hansteen Frasier Seg Gjenvalg På Grunn Av Helbredshensyn."

the work with the WIDF in Norway, fearing that their participation would directly doom it.

I have suggested that Hansteen hoped that her low profile would ease the work and growth of the WIDF section in Norway, and that by severing her ties to a group that espoused the same left-feminism as she did, she has falsely appeared as detached from the Norwegian women's movement in a historical perspective. Anti-communism has also in this way contributed to Hansteen's omission from the historiography of Norwegian women's movements.

By investigating the ideological connection between peace and womanhood in Norwegian left-feminism and its implications, this chapter has shown peace activism as an arena where left-feminists challenged the dominant political framework. By refuting the dichotomisation of "high" and "low" politics (analogous to the public/private binary), they showed that women's rights and the peace struggle were related. Conservative and social democratic opponents cast suspicion on left-feminist organising in the WIDF, contrasting it to the in their opinion more respectable participation in political parties. Left-feminists in Norway were further discredited in their peace activism by being framed as either too naive or too manipulative. Because of KDV and Kirsten Hansteen's prominent roles in the campaign against the NAT in Norway, such misogynist anti-communism became an important part of the pro-NAT discourse in Norway.



Figure 7: Kirsten Hansteen photographed in her home in 1945.³⁹⁶

³⁹⁶ Henriksen & Steen, "Fru Kirsten Hansteen."

VI. Conclusion

Whereas the Norwegian accession to the North Atlantic Treaty (NAT) was a defeat that the movement could not recover from, it was not the end of left-feminist action in Norway. In May 1949, the struggle for peace and against the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was made permanent when Hansteen helped establish *Den norske Fredskomite* (the Norwegian Peace Committee), with strong involvement from the Norwegian Section of the WIDF (KDV).³⁹⁷ Hansteen could finally join forces with Mimi Sverdrup Lunden who was actively involved in the new organisation representing KDV. Hansteen was also a member of the parent organisation of the Norwegian Peace Committee, the World Peace Council, and became president of the Norwegian committee in 1951.³⁹⁸ Among other endeavours, she was present when the World Peace Council created the Stockholm Appeal on 15 March 1950, and subsequently led the Norwegian part of the international campaign against nuclear weapons.³⁹⁹

After her time in the Government and Storting, Hansteen intensified her work in *Kvinnen og tiden*, increasing awareness about global issues and politics in other countries to the Norwegian audience. Bie Lorentzen writes that when they stopped publishing the magazine in 1955, Hansteen was deeply affected, feeling that she was “of no use.”⁴⁰⁰ Her interest in international politics did not disappear. She started to study Russian, and remained active in the Association for Norwegian-Soviet Russian Relations until the late 1960s.⁴⁰¹ From 1959 to 1970 she worked as a librarian at the University of Oslo,⁴⁰² and lived in retirement in her home in Bernhard Herres vei until she passed away on 20 November 1974.

With this thesis, I hope to have shown the first years of the post-WWII period as significant for left-feminism in Norway and Kirsten Hansteen’s defining involvement in this respect. The hardships of the German occupation had installed people with a sense of perseverance and ambitions for a better future, and like women all over the world, Norwegian

³⁹⁷ Den norske Fredskomite, “Rapport Til Landskonferansen 24., 25. Og 26. Mars 1950,” 1. The establishment of the Norwegian Peace Committee followed directly after the World Congress of Partisans for Peace in Paris in April 1949. The World Congress was initiated by the WIDF among others, and was one in a line of congresses that together led to the establishment of the World Peace Council.

³⁹⁸ Den norske Fredskomite, “Rapport Fra Hovedkomiteen Om Arbeidet i Perioden Sept. 1951 - Juni 1953,” 1–2.

³⁹⁹ Den norske Fredskomite, 1–2.

⁴⁰⁰ Bie Lorentzen, “Kvinnen og tiden 1945–1955,” 111.

⁴⁰¹ Sambandet Norge-Sovjetunionen, “Sambandets Råd Valgt På Det 10. Ordinære Landsmøte 1. Og 2. Nov. 1969,” 1.

⁴⁰² Halvorsen, “Kirsten Hansteen,” September 28, 2014, para. 10.

women participated in the reconstruction after the war, armed with awareness and demands for women's rights. A connection between peace, social rights, and women's improved conditions caught hold among masses of women, but the spirit of cooperation that had first held them together was soon challenged by anti-communist ideas.

The main research question of this thesis has been: *Which role did Kirsten Hansteen play in the post-WWII left-feminist movement in Norway?* Through content analysis of archival documents and rereading of secondary literature about the period 1945–1949, I have found illuminating and varying answers to this question. Hansteen was a driving force and a resource in this movement, dedicating herself to a struggle she believed in. She made extraordinary efforts to mobilise and politicise women. As a co-editor of *Kvinnen og tiden*, she promoted education and debate about issues both directly and indirectly related to women's lives, showing that women's politics was a complete approach rather than a set of separate issues. She pushed for women's political organising, and was one of the backbones of the most successful attempt to unite Norwegian women into one coherent entity in the Cooperation Council for Norwegian Women's Organisations (NKS).

Hansteen's politics was grounded in the Communist Party of Norway (NKP), but she transgressed political borders to engage with other women, and became a national symbol for all women when she became the first woman in a Norwegian government. However, her international orientation and uncompromising anti-fascism made her a controversial actor, and she came to be seen with hostility as a supporter of the 'East' when the political establishment in Norway turned 'West.' She therefore went from being a central actor, to being increasingly marginalised on the political scene. In sum, in all of these different ways, Kirsten Hansteen represented the rise and fall of left-feminism in post-WWII Norway.

Through this biographical study, I have been able to draw broader conclusions regarding womanhood and the women's movement in Norway in the immediate post-WWII era. By asking *how Norway got its first woman member of government*, I have shown that Kirsten Hansteen has been falsely regarded in Norwegian historiography as a mere symbolic member of government, and that she in reality was a talented and trusted politician of her own party, and managed to reach this high position helped by a coordinated and persistent effort by several women and women's organisations. My analysis has as such allowed me to conclude that increased political representation and the putting into practice of formally obtained political rights were main issues for the post-WWII Norwegian women's movement. Discussing the establishment of NKS, I have also shown that the project of women's political

enfranchisement formed a uniting basis, making women perceive themselves as a coherent political entity on the basis of shared oppression.

This thesis has also examined *how Cold War dynamics played out among, and permanently affected, Norwegian women's organisations*. From the left-feminist perspective, as defined in the WWII-context when peace, social issues and women's rights became intertwined, the Cold War appeared as a prolongation of the already existing global threat of violence and injustice. It was therefore not a coincidence, but a characteristic of the historical context when left-feminist women became the driving force of the anti-North Atlantic Treaty campaign in Norway. The study of Kirsten Hansteen and left-feminism in Norway thus shows a continuity between the WWII-context and that of the Cold War, destabilising the perception of the WWII as a delineated event, and of the Cold War as a period of peace.

Norway defined itself as a part of the Western bloc during the Cold War, and an increasingly anti-communist discourse, which at times took the form of specifically misogynist anti-communism, seems to have been directed in particular towards Kirsten Hansteen. I have found that in addition to a sudden rejection of her magazine *Kvinnen og tiden* which nearly caused its instant ending, the anti-communist climate led to Hansteen's exclusion from at least one women's organisation, the NKS. By paying attention to anti-communist discourse in Norway, I have shown not only how Cold War tensions affected the Norwegian women's movement, weakening the position of left-feminism, but also that the post-WWII women's movement in Norway was a site of production of Cold War hostility. With this, I hope to have contributed not only new information, but also new perspectives on the recent political history of Norway.

Lastly, this thesis asked *what Kirsten Hansteen's omission from the historiography illustrates*. Immediately, with the abundance of interesting, extraordinary and significant elements from Hansteen's life and political career I have uncovered, I propose that the lacking attention to her is unjustifiable, and results from conventional historians systematically devaluing women as historical subjects. Furthermore, as a prominent left-feminist figure, her omission is indicative of the overlooking of the entire Norwegian left-feminist movement from the post-WWII era. This shows not only the large scale ignoring of leftist and communist ideas in the Norwegian context, but also the limitations of approaching history with a strictly national perspective, which fails to properly illuminate movements with a strong transnational component, such as the left-feminist movement. An anti-communist perception of left-feminism in Western discourse is that it has little of nothing to do with

women's rights and everything to do with oppressive, authoritarian communism. The omission of Kirsten Hansteen from the Norwegian historiography indicates that such ideas have prevailed in Norway throughout and after the Cold War, illustrating that what started as the post-WWII left-feminist movement in Norway was permanently affected by the anti-communist discourse.

This study has merely begun discovering the political career and life of Kirsten Hansteen. Not only does it cover just a short timespan, it has also does not explore her contributions to Norwegian politics in depth, which were particularly substantial in the field of social politics. Due to my unfruitful archival research on the topic, this thesis does not give a comprehensive picture of Hansteen's position within the NKP. Having laid out the basis of her life however, this thesis points in these directions for further biographical research. How did Hansteen contribute to the negotiations between the NKP and the Norwegian Labour Party when the two parties attempted to merge in 1945? What is Kirsten Hansteen's legacy in the celebrated Norwegian welfare state, and to how are her social politics traceable to both the NKP and the NKS?

Following Kirsten Hansteen's traces in her transnational travels and relationships more closely, both before, during and after the 1940s, could shine light on how communist and left-feminist ideas traveled in and out of Norway. In this context, a comparison of the developments of the left-feminist movements and foreign politics in Norway and its closest neighbour Sweden appear to me as a worthwhile undertaking, investigating whether Sweden's non-accession to the NAT can be linked to the relatively stronger Swedish section of the WIDF. These questions and many more confirm that performing a biographical study of Kirsten Hansteen is to amend the political history of Norway.

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