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Learning by doing: the legacy of 1918 for female German antifascists

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ABSTRACT

Female activists participated in the German revolution of 1918, which led to the abdication of the Kaiser, the end of the war and the establishment of the first full democracy in Germany. For them, this was not a fleeting moment of protests; it was part of their ongoing activism demanding improved rights and, as the threat from the far right grew in the following years, they became antifascists. However, these women, and their activism throughout the 1920s and 1930s, were often dismissed by their male contemporaries and have been marginalised in the historiography. This article uses women's life writing to centre female German antifascist voices and asks how their experiences of mobilising and organising in 1918 sustained and shaped their activism. This article resists the traditional periodisation of the interwar era and uncovers how women resisted and subverted gendered expectations that sought to exclude them and how women can be agents for change within the fight for social justice.

KEYWORDS

Antifascism; Germany; First World War; female activism; revolution

Introduction

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, many German women on the left observed and confronted the rising fascist threat. As early as 1923, the German-born political theorist and high-profile campaigner, Clara Zetkin (1857–1933), offered an astute class-based analysis in which she identified that the failures of states to make decent progress towards social justice, combined with the middle-class fear of becoming proletarian, provided fertile ground for fascist ideology. For Zetkin, the fascist state could only rule by terror and brutality, and she identified that it was not just a problem for Italy following the March on Rome in 1922: Germany and many other states besides were vulnerable.¹ By 1930, the external pressures that Zetkin noted had seeped into communities. For example, in 1932, Berlin-based writer and peace activist Lola Landau (1892–1990) described that she and her husband, revolutionary writer Armin T. Wegner (1886–1978), witnessed their neighbour, an army officer in the First World War and later Freikorps member, pouring black ink on the republican flag that Landau had hung from her balcony.² Among German left-leaning women, the fascist threat did not suddenly appear

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fully formed in 1933; it was a pervasive ideology that they had been using their long experiences of political activism to confront.

Women's experiences of fascism and strategies to challenge it matter because they have long been excluded from, or marginalised within, the historical narrative about the 1920s and 1930s. By placing female activists into the wider context of antifascism, they become visible as agents for change within a wider movement. It is also important to avoid the trap of the 'honorary man', in which a few exceptional women are deemed to have freed themselves from traditional notions of womanhood to become as good as a male activist.³ This narrative erases the work that women have carried out as women and hides how gendered experience was both enabling and restrictive of their work. Moreover, by taking a wider timeframe that bisects common divisions of historical eras—the First World War, the Weimar Republic, the Third Reich, and the Second World War—it becomes possible to understand their shifting political positions.⁴ This article is also a new response to historian Kathleen Canning, who identified how gendered experiences of the First World War and the changing masculinities and femininities of Weimar visual culture have been analysed, but that these periods and topics have been counterintuitively kept separate.⁵ We can identify how these women responded to new threats in changing contexts without losing sight of how their responses fitted into a coherent life and world view. By recognising women on the left as political activists, this article introduces ways in which historians can develop a more heterogeneous understanding of the past that challenges prevailing assumptions. Much of the historiography has traditionally associated antifascism in this era with communism rather than recognising the plethora of political activists and their persuasions operating as antifascists on the left.⁶ Women's contributions to antifascist activism have also long been overlooked by a historiography that privileges male accounts and by contemporaneous accounts from the labour movement that dismissed feminist actions as bourgeois and minimised the importance of gender.⁷ By considering gender as central to understanding the German revolution of 1918 and antifascist activism of the following decades, this article seeks to escape the trap of repeating and entrenching the obscuring of women and their activism by their contemporaries. As this article shows, much more is needed than simply adding women to current research; we need to challenge the narratives that privilege male-centric accounts, cut across standard periodisation, and reexamine the past to create a fuller account and counteract partial readings.

The 1918 revolution provided new opportunities for women on the left to hone their skills as activists and acquire new experiences in organising and advancing ideas for the socialist cause. In towns and cities across Germany, soldiers' and workers' councils were established to create a new form of governance. Some women, such as Toni Sender (1888–1964) in Frankfurt or Rahel Straus (1880–1963) in Munich, were able to take on leadership roles within the councils, although they remained a tiny minority of the whole.⁸ Others, such as Maria Saran (1897–1976), joined the administrative side of the revolution, ensuring revolutionary soldiers could be effectively demobilised from the German army and that everyone could be fed, a vital role. Women used the skills they had developed as trade union organisers before the revolution and their proficiency in typing and stenography to support the revolution. For example, in 1918/19 Hilde Kramer (1900–1974) and Gertrud Völcker (1896–1979) organised council meetings, wrote the motions and kept the minutes, ensuring that accurate records of the council

work were maintained and that work which had been agreed upon could be undertaken. Women also gained valuable experience in confronting the police and, if they were caught, how to evade punishment, often playing on gendered assumptions. For example, in 1919 Cläre Jung (1892–1981) volunteered to smuggle guns and had also hidden wartime deserters because she knew when she was caught, she could pretend to be a foolish young woman who had become swept up in something she did not understand and was likely to be released. This was a tactic Jung employed again in the Third Reich when helping her comrades to escape the regime.⁹ Women also learned how to rely on their close networks to sustain and grow their activism. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, many of them remained in close contact with those they had met during the revolution and continued to work towards their vision of a better world.

Women were targeted by the misogyny of fascism in the early twentieth century in various ways. They were not seen as political subjects. For example, while the Nazi party (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei or NSDAP) had female members and activists, including through the German Women's Order (Deutscher Frauenorden), which affiliated with the NSDAP in 1928, and women joined their local NSDAP branches throughout the 1920s, women were excluded from their candidate lists.¹⁰ Similarly, the fascist movement in Italy called for women to return to the home, with newspaper cartoons in 1924 depicting women as both unfit for working and voting.¹¹ The Nazi view of recent women's history was that political and economic progress was an aberration caused by the First World War, which harmed the nation state. Revolutionary women, such as Rosa Luxemburg, became hated symbols that should be reviled rather than commemorated.¹² Similarly, campaign flyers from the German social democrats in the 1930s specifically addressed women with cartoons and information about how the Nazis viewed women as inferior and would seek to subordinate them if they won power, indicating an attempt to mobilise women on the grounds of gender and highlighting how their rights were under threat.¹³ It was difficult for women to respond to these depictions, and so women with longer histories of activist work, reaching back into the First World War, drew on the knowledge gained from their prior experiences to face this new threat. They worked through their networks to build and sustain communities of resistance.

Defining who is an antifascist is complex, and so this article draws on Nigel Copsey's work that calls for an inclusive definition to avoid reaching an ideological impasse that restricts the argumentation. I follow Copsey's definition that, 'Anti-fascists are simply those of any non-fascist conviction who, cognisant of the barbarous dystopian nature of fascism and the threat fascism poses to humanity, are deeply opposed to it.'¹⁴ I also respond to calls to look beyond the better-researched communist movement to understand antifascism as a 'cultural and political project' that reaches beyond left/right political divides and national borders.¹⁵ Studies of Italian antifascists have described women's antifascism as 'existential antifascism' that is based on observation and understanding of social conditions and is not borne of ideology.¹⁶ Italian antifascist women were able to take on a diverse range of roles in 'organisation of civil protests in the communities; handling of communication networks; and propaganda in the workplace and the marketplace.'¹⁷ In these same spaces, we find German women in their fight against the Nazis. While the women in this article found it difficult to make themselves heard within formal political spaces, they did not shy away from political education, often self-taught, and situated themselves within the larger political landscape.

Scholars have noted the hypermasculinity of antifascism in the later 1920s and early 1930s, particularly amongst the communists.¹⁸ While the communist party (KPD) had intentionally recruited women to its ranks of militant antifascists, women were not viewed by their male comrades as equal combatants and women remained both marginal and marginalised.¹⁹ In party political materials, militarised female fighters did feature, but women were more likely to be depicted as downtrodden wives and mothers, that is, as victims of capitalism rather than as inspirational fighters.²⁰ The Red Front Fighting League (Rote Front Kämpferbund or RFB) was founded in 1924 and organised military-style training for members and conducted public marches. While women were initially welcomed into the RFB, they were very quickly excluded and female paramilitary communist groups were created, the most notable and longest-lasting of which was the Red Women and Girls League (Roter Frauen- und Mädchen Bund, RFMB).²¹ At its peak in 1927, the RFMB was estimated to have around 25,000 members, mostly concentrated in urban areas.²² The male KPD leadership struggled with how to include the RFMB and their support for the increasing militarism of the women's group fluctuated, a reflection of the gender politics within the party.²³ However, this ambivalence did not protect women from fascist violence; they encountered it as political activists, antifascist fighters, and even simply for being women existing in public spaces.²⁴

As well as taking women seriously as antifascists, this article departs from the traditional periodisation of this era because it is only by taking this longer view that women's antifascist activism can be coherently identified and analysed. In order to do this, I focus on the writings of two women, Toni Sender and Maria Saran, who have been brought together in this analysis for the first time. Toni Sender was a trade unionist and Reichstag politician for the Social Democratic Party (SPD). She fled Germany in 1933 and became an American citizen in 1944. She published her memoir *Autobiography of a German Rebel* (1940). Maria, later known as Mary Saran, was a member of the Militant Socialist International (Internationaler Sozialistischer Kampfbund or ISK), which engaged in revolutionary struggle from its founding in 1917 until the early 1950s. Saran escaped to the UK in 1933, and she published her memoir *Never Give Up* in 1976. Both Saran and Sender were active in the councils during the 1918 revolution and explicitly used these experiences and their pre-war activism in their later antifascist work. They were both steeped in socialist political thought through their education and were therefore able to offer a perspicacious analysis of the changing political landscape. However, despite similarities, as my research will demonstrate, the two women also differed in their approaches to democracy and its role within antifascism, indicating some of the diversity within female antifascist commitment.

This article uses close reading to analyse the autobiographical writings of these two antifascist women who had begun their activism during the First World War. As published writings, these are more than a record of a life; the writer is attempting to become the protagonist, to create meaning, to challenge existing narratives, and/or to offer alternative outcomes for their imagined reader.²⁵ We can analyse the narratives within life writing as 'textual effects of specific socio-historical and cultural milieus' that shape our, and the author's, understanding of the past.²⁶ Personal writing is a useful lens through which to examine the world of the subject in her own words and to gain insight into how the author understood the constraints of her context and how

she also resisted these.²⁷ By using these texts, with all of their complexity, new ideas about women's activism, including how they advanced and deployed their education, their involvement in the trade union movement, and the importance of social justice, can come to the fore.

Early years and the First World War

Born in Biebrich in the Rhineland in 1888, Toni Sender was raised in a middle-class orthodox Jewish family and described her parents as strict. She was well-aware of the limited education that was available to her, and as a girl had sought opportunities to develop on her own.²⁸ She persuaded her parents and then the headteacher to allow her to study at a commercial high school in Frankfurt at the age of thirteen, which was lower than the standard admission age.²⁹ Against her parents' wishes, upon finishing school at the age of fifteen, she took a job in an estate agency in Frankfurt. This role quickly led her to join an office workers trade union, and she participated in union activities such as recruiting new members and spying on companies to check their working conditions.³⁰ While working, she and her co-workers formed a reading and discussion group, and it was often midnight before they finished their self-directed education.³¹ In her youth, we can see the importance she placed on learning; she had a desire to acquire both practical and theoretical knowledge about the world around her and was willing to face confrontation in order to advocate for herself.

Workers' rights were also a key part of Sender's political development. For example, she recalled attending protests and demonstrations during her time at the estate agents in Frankfurt, including a pro-suffrage campaign in which the police beat the protesters.³² The protesters were calling for reform to expand representation beyond the nobility and the owners of industry. They were met with police violence and Sender described being hit with 'a rain of blows' across her back.³³ She attributed her interest in socialism to growing after these events as she had direct experience of how the state and business collaborated to oppress working people. This lived experience fed back into her search for further education. Following the protest, she read widely on socialist topics and attended further protests and demonstrations.³⁴ She joined the SPD in 1910, one of a wave of new members in Frankfurt who hoped to improve their own lives.³⁵

In 1910, Sender, aged twenty-two, travelled to Paris to work for a metal company, and while she was there, started a women's labour organisation to engage working women specifically in politics.³⁶ This organising allowed Sender to witness key debates and topics in the trade union movement in relation to issues of gender and also to develop skills in persuasion and public speaking that she later employed in her political career. She also witnessed the role that trades unions played in opposing established power. In Paris, Sender joined a French socialist party but refused to be drawn into factionalism; a position she kept throughout her career. Instead, she believed she could maintain a position as an individual with strong links to the community and a desire to behave unselfishly.³⁷ At the outbreak of the First World War, Sender was a well-connected member of a Parisian network of socialists, which included the antimilitarist Jean Jaurès, socialist academic Alexandre-Marie Desrousseaux (known as Bracke), and French-Russian writer Charles Rappoport who was a founding member of the French Communist party in 1920.³⁸ By the end of July 1914, it was apparent that war with

Germany was likely, but Sender hesitated about leaving; however, she made the difficult decision to return to Germany to avoid arrest.³⁹

During the First World War, she opposed the German socialists' majority support for the war but found it increasingly difficult to voice her minority position in socialist circles.⁴⁰ However, she remained highly critical of the war and attended the 1915 Zimmerwald Conference in Switzerland.⁴¹ This anti-war conference was organised and attended by prominent socialists from across Europe and represented a reestablishment of the pre-war socialist networks. It led to the creation of the Zimmerwald manifesto, calling for the working class to unite for peace.⁴² During the war, Sender herself risked arrest while distributing anti-war materials and speaking at anti-war meetings in Germany. In 1916, she attended a meeting of SPD members who opposed the war, and she spoke against Germany's aims. In her autobiography, she recalled that she 'stressed the imperialist ambitions of the Pan-Germans and of the Kaiser, arguing the absurdity of the spectacle and of the Kaiser, at the head of the war and government forces, fighting against the imperialism of others.'⁴³ This was the integration of her experience of mobilising left wing groups and her transnational outlook that she had developed in Paris.

Maria Saran was also from a middle-class family. Her father was a government official and earned a modest salary in the Ministry of Public Works in East Prussia and then Wiesbaden before the family moved to Berlin when Saran was ten. Her mother was her father's second wife, and so Saran was one of ten children: three from the first marriage and then another seven. Her mother died in 1919 from cancer and her father a few years later.⁴⁴ However, with ten children, the family income did not stretch as far as for smaller families, so although raised with middle-class values and expectations, the Sarans were perhaps more frugal than many, particularly in Maria Saran's early years. Saran's parents did foster her education and her love of reading, but were disappointed that she wanted what her father called a 'learned education' rather than an education suitable for a bourgeois girl to become a bourgeois housewife.⁴⁵ However, they agreed that she could go to university to study medicine— something she was inspired to do after meeting a family friend who was a missionary and a doctor and who emphasised the importance of caring for bodies as well as souls.⁴⁶

Saran was also struck by the inequality she glimpsed despite her privileged upbringing. When she was eleven, her mother took her on a charitable visit to poorer families on Christmas Eve. She remembered the experience as horrifying: 'Why should anybody have to live under such horrible conditions, especially children? In addition, these people were supposed to be grateful for Christian charity'.⁴⁷ The Church's later support for the war and the inequality the German state had fostered appalled her further. As an adolescent, Saran witnessed German imperialism being preached at her Protestant church, and in her writing she remembered how uneasy she felt about this social and political system.⁴⁸ She became critical of the monarchy and began to learn about Germany's 'cultural mission' abroad, through which she described learning about the horrors of colonialism.⁴⁹ She then started 'to understand colonialism as part of an evil system, as a reflection of low moral standards on the colonialists' side'.⁵⁰ Her beliefs brought her into direct conflict with her parents; her mother was a devout Protestant and both parents supported the monarchy.⁵¹ As Saran was younger than Sender, she had fewer opportunities to travel and gain work experience during the

pre-war and wartime years. However, her drive for education and her willingness to endure personal confrontations, even at a very young age, were apparent.

Women in the 1918 Revolution

The German Revolution is often described in the historiography as starting in Kiel in October 1918 when a group of sailors mutinied.⁵² The sailors were imprisoned, and mass protests soon grew as the people demanded not just the release of the sailors but peace, bread and freedom. The anti-war and revolutionary sentiment soon spread across Germany, it is understood, and on 9 November the Kaiser abdicated, paving the way for the armistice on 11 November. The country was then under the control of soldiers' and workers' councils, modelled on the Soviet Union.⁵³ However, this narration is incomplete: why would a sailors' mutiny in northern Germany lead to the abdication of the Kaiser? Instead, this moment can be understood as part of an international movement for social change—a revolutionary imaginary that builds on international movements of unrest and revolution (such as the Easter Rising in Ireland in 1916 and the Russian Revolution in October 1917), creating a wave of revolutionary change.⁵⁴ It also needs to be acknowledged as the outcome of years' worth of activism and mobilisation, which included vital contributions of politically engaged women.

Women's opposition to the war and everyday acts of resistance had actually been increasing as the war dragged on, and it became clear that the quick victory the German public had been promised was not going to materialise. The allied economic blockade was very effective, rapidly leading to high prices and food shortages.⁵⁵ Urban consumers, in particular, women who were responsible for acquiring food for their families, were badly affected, and long food queues became a common sight in most German towns and cities. As research by Belinda Davis has shown in a case study of Berlin from 1915, female protesters were able to use riots over butter prices to mobilise activism across the social hierarchy.⁵⁶ The local authorities believed that law and order was under threat, and saw the actions by female protesters as an extra-parliamentary method of trying to bring about change.⁵⁷ This has been described as a 'proto-revolutionary phase' in which women's clandestine organising and recruitment spilled out into public spaces.⁵⁸

When the revolution reached Frankfurt on 8 November 1918, Sender was quick to mobilise and for the next few days was consumed with giving speeches to persuade soldiers to join, organising strikes, and writing pro-revolutionary materials. Sender and her comrades, including the former leader of a local SPD branch Robert Dissmann and local Reichstag politician Heinrich Hüttmann, mobilised the trades unions and ensured that delegates from every workplace were represented at large gatherings.⁵⁹ She drew on her experience of trade union organising to sustain and advance the revolution in particular, drawing on her public speaking skills and her knowledge of socialist debates that she had developed in France. This time, however, she went further; rather than waiting for news of success from Berlin and in order to prevent counterrevolutionaries from seizing control in Frankfurt, Sender and Dissmann worked with the shop stewards to organise a general strike on 9 November.⁶⁰ As a result of her prominent position, she received hate mail and death threats. When addressing a riotous mob of counterrevolutionaries, she was threatened with being thrown in the river.⁶¹ For Sender, despite these

threats, including women in the revolutionary council movement was essential to bring about the social revolution she deemed necessary and urgent.⁶² She was elected to the Reichstag in 1920 as a member of the Independent Socialist Party (Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, USPD) and continued to represent the SPD after 1922.

Maria Saran was a university student in Göttingen and was part of a left-wing group of activists. During the revolution, she and other students participated in the organisation of the Göttingen Soldiers' and Workers' Council and held mass meetings. Saran identified only a few other socialist students at the university, almost all of them female, but it was the only male student in their group who was included in the Soldiers' and Workers' Council. It was at a mass meeting that Saran made her first public speech, offering a powerful defence of the revolution. In her autobiography, she described her nervousness, but this speech soon led to many more and a lifetime of public speaking.⁶³ Saran participated in the local Council in an administrative capacity, making her own stamp to officially demobilise revolutionary soldiers and enable them to access food rations. She also spoke up in university debates in favour of the new Republic and challenged hecklers. She recollected how one female student accused her of a lack of patriotism and how she defended herself rigorously. As a result, she faced hostility from right-wing students, who would stomp and jeer when she entered the classroom, but she remained determined to speak up for socialism.⁶⁴ This gave Saran a thorough grounding in how to speak to a large audience and how to manage detractors, skills that would serve her well when later giving speeches that denounced the Nazis.

While studying Medicine at Göttingen, Saran encountered Leonard Nelson (1887–1927), a professor who conducted discussion groups for the few socialist students at the university. Unlike Reichstag politician Toni Sender, Saran had a very different position on democracy, greatly influenced by her involvement with the ISK. The ISK remained loyal devotees of Nelson and his approaches long after his death in 1927. The early discussion group used the Socratic method to investigate philosophical concepts and adhered to Nelson's neo-Kantian approach to deducing ethical principles through scientific investigation.⁶⁵ The group developed their principle of *Führerschaft* (leadership) from Kant's categorical imperative; the idea that an individual should only act as if their actions would be the basis of universal law. By ethically considering all positions as equal before deciding how to act, actions could be rationally decided upon, and ethical judgements reached.⁶⁶ The ISK, therefore, had a profound scepticism of democracy, as self-interested actors could sway the electorate and not behave in line with the categorical imperative.⁶⁷ For Nelson, a small group of properly educated individuals should take on leadership until enough of the population was educated in these principles to lead themselves.⁶⁸ This was to be the role of the ISK.

It was from this group founded by Nelson and pedagogue Minna Specht (1879–1961) that the International Youth League (Internationaler Jugendbund) was formed in 1917 as an educational organisation seeking to influence the SPD and was later renamed the Militant Socialist International (Internationaler Sozialistischer Kampfbund or ISK) after being expelled from the SPD in 1926. This group established branches across western Europe. In the summer of 1918, Saran participated in the first course led by Leonard

Nelson and Minna Specht to discuss, in particular, education for leadership, the responsibility of power and the necessity of the fight for social justice.⁶⁹ This became an annual event, and by the second year, Saran was contributing as a teacher.

The Weimar Republic and the Third Reich

Sender was a highly active politician throughout the 1920s and early 1930s, working with trade union groups, contributing to Reichstag debates, editing a Shop Councils' Magazine and undertaking academic study.⁷⁰ When Sender became a city councillor in Frankfurt in the wake of the revolution, improving educational standards was a key aim. While hiring new teachers who embraced the principles of peace and freedom to replace the pro-imperialists was a vital function, she was not willing to lower academic standards for a keen but unqualified teacher.⁷¹ However, she also recognised the limitations of education; in the 1930s, when a member of the Catholic party wanted to bring the Nazis into the cabinet 'and educate them', Sender was outraged: 'Educating the Nazis is an impossible —they cannot be educated ... The Catholics would not educate the Nazis, the Nazis would throw the Catholics out!'⁷² While education could promote democratic and peaceful aims, it could not overturn the Nazis. Moreover, she remained resistant to factionalism drawing on her pre-war experiences of socialist groups in Paris. Even in exile, she navigated a shifting position between the different socialist organisations after 1934.⁷³ She also blamed the ongoing inequality in Germany as contributing to the effectiveness of fascism: 'Political democracy not only is challenged but is in actual danger unless it is accompanied by the establishment of social justice'.⁷⁴

Throughout the Weimar era, female politicians struggled to make their voices heard within formal political spaces. Many worked on sub-committees in fields relating to social welfare. This was, for some, an extension of their long experience of working in the welfare space but, as Helen Boak has noted, attracted less prestige than other fields and offered fewer opportunities to address the Reichstag formally.⁷⁵ Looking back on her time in the Reichstag, Sender recognised that while her female colleagues worked hard to create better legislation for women and families, she was resistant to being restricted to work only within that sphere:

Although I realized that it was my duty to participate in the solution of these problems, my special interest was in the economic field and in foreign affairs. Here it proved to be much harder for a woman to attain recognition.⁷⁶

She was a longstanding member of committees in economic and foreign affairs, but did not have a more prominent role. Her desire to work in areas related to the economy and foreign affairs, both of which affected women and in which she had experience and expertise, acted as a brake on her political career. The sender does not mention working with separate women's committees or organisations to encourage women to join the fight against fascism, as she preferred to work with the trade union movement.

Sender also faced difficulties in speaking out specifically as a woman throughout her career; in early days of the revolution, she had received letters calling her a 'sow' or a 'filthy hag' and although she did not comment on the gendered language in her autobiography, it is very apparent to modern readers.⁷⁷ In the 1930s, the German National People's Party circulated a sexualised caricature of Sender as Marlene Dietrich, and

the Nazis spread rumours that she was a prostitute.⁷⁸ Sexualising female political activists was a tactic that predated fascism and could be found in many European countries as a way to control radical women through humiliation and even criminalisation. In 1916, young women distributing antiwar literature in Berlin were accused of soliciting by the police and in major cities across Sweden, the authorities threatened women of all ages protesting against the First World War with having their names added to the national register of prostitutes. This was a way of publicly shaming the women and also meant that they could be subjected to intimate physical examinations.⁷⁹ The caricature of Sender sought to dismiss her as a serious politician on the basis of her gender and perhaps also because she was unmarried, and it was also a way to try and use the implied threat of sexual violence to silence her. Sender was undeterred by these rumours against her, but by placing them into a wider context of accusations against women, we can see the gendered nature and scale of the challenges women faced.

Throughout the 1920s, Sender opposed the right, even playing a central role in organising a General Strike in Frankfurt against the Kapp Putsch in March 1920 when the local police and army took the side of the putschists.⁸⁰ She chaired the meeting of all the unions in which they discussed how long to maintain the strike and, following this, the putschists were forced to leave.⁸¹ In 1923, when the French army occupied the Ruhr, Sender and socialist leader Paul Faure, whom she knew from her time in Paris, organised open-air meetings just beyond the occupied border. They addressed the workers and the French soldiers in German and French and spoke of peace and international cooperation and against the violence of the occupation.⁸² Drawing on her multiple successes with trade union organising and mass action in the 1910s and 1920s, when the Nazis were undermining democracy in the 1930s, Sender again called for a mass strike. Immediately following Hitler's appointment in January 1933, she declared that 'we still have one powerful weapon, used successfully before—the general strike.'⁸³ From the late 1920s, the politics of the mass strike had begun to shift, however. Political organising was greatly constrained by bans and prohibitions on gatherings or publications. These were aimed across the political spectrum and were often instigated at the whim of local officials, but they had a dampening effect on the possibility for political organising.⁸⁴ Moreover, changes to the economy and social welfare throughout the 1920s increased factionalism amongst the workers. The interests of the employed were seen to be at odds with rising numbers of unemployed and highly skilled workers were often pitted against the lower skilled, who lived precarious lives. As a result, the trade union movement struggled to maintain relevance and to coherently represent workers' interests in this shifting landscape.⁸⁵ Sender's comrades argued that there was no easy slogan to rally workers around, and they were soon involved in fighting election campaigns again in November, rendering an effective general strike impossible. She recognised that the Nazi forces had weapons and were seizing control of important state positions and were using these to destroy democracy and further weaken the workers' rights. Although Sender left Germany in March 1933, she remained dedicated to the labour movement and was cheered by reports that the commitment to her vision by those in Germany remained 'deep and firm'.⁸⁶

Sender expressed a firm commitment to democracy throughout her writing. However, democracy was increasingly under threat by 1930; for example, the Speaker of the House, Hermann Göring, allowed Nazis to shout down any opposing speaker.⁸⁷ Sender struggled

to negotiate this challenging situation in her writing: the Nazis were democratically elected, but they were intent on destroying democracy. Göring and the NSDAP Reichstag members created a challenging environment for Sender to speak in the Reichstag as the elected members of the Nazi party responded with 'howling and derision'.⁸⁸ This continued outside the Reichstag as men in swastikas would often interrupt her constituency meetings, and at times, these meetings would end in violence. Sender was also frequently shouted down by the communists in public meetings in which she sought to inform her constituents about the Nazi activities in the Reichstag; she described the Nazis and the communists alternating between shouts of 'Heil Hitler' and 'Red Front' to drown her out.⁸⁹ The Nazis often led rioting, 'throwing chairs and other objects until it required an actual battle to put them out.'⁹⁰ Sender must have drawn on her experiences of the revolution and the occupation of the Ruhr to keep her nerve and continue to speak against this tidal wave of male fascist and antifascist voices. By 1932, violent street attacks had become commonplace, and Sender was also a personal target of local political violence. The windows of her Berlin home were smashed, and she was even informed that a Nazi motorcycle gang were waiting to kill her on her way home from a meeting.⁹¹ She also discussed the violence that surrounded the elections in 1932, but blamed the courts for not upholding the law rather than stating that the voters were terrorised into voting for the Nazis.⁹² Additionally, she described the downfall of the Weimar Republic as a combination of the relative newness of democracy, combined with what she saw as divisive forces on the left and the right: 'Democratic principles, not yet deeply rooted in the nation's thought, were challenged by the militant forces of the totalitarian crew.'⁹³ Here, the 'totalitarian crew' meant both the communists as well as the Nazis. Indeed, the violence meted out by both far-left and far-right gangs in late Weimar Germany would seem to support her view. Statistics show that between 1930 and 1932, 143 Nazis and 171 communists died in political violence, with tens of thousands injured on both sides.⁹⁴

In late 1932, Sender and her colleagues worked on an economic plan to help Germany find a way out of the depression, and she tried to write it in a way that could be easily understood. This was supposed to show the electorate that the SPD had an alternative vision for Germany that would counter the NSDAP rhetoric. Working on this plan, promoting it at public meetings and campaigning in the frequent elections of the late Weimar era, must have occupied the majority of her time. She described that gaining acceptance for the plan within the Party took time, and the difficulties she had in convincing the trade unions to give their consent to the plan. However, despite this work, she acknowledged that the language of the plan was not accessible enough to achieve the impact she had hoped.⁹⁵

Following the revolution, Saran took a different path than Sender. At the end of 1919, she married fellow student and socialist writer Max Hodann (1894–1946), and their daughter Renate was born in 1921. Marital relations were difficult from the start and although the marriage lasted seven years, they were estranged long before the formal dissolution. Saran gave up her medicine studies in order to care for her daughter and she worked for the German Association for the League of Nations, which furthered her growing interest in international cooperation. In 1923 Maria Saran and her daughter were living in Nelson and Specht's residential school, the *Walkemühle*, where Saran also taught.⁹⁶ The school was shut down by the Nazis after 1933, but Specht continued to run it in exile. Saran also continued her political campaigning, deciding to lend her

support to SPD politician Mathilda Wurm's campaign in her constituency in Thuringia in 1924. As part of this campaign Saran described attending the SPD headquarters in Weimar and being told that she needed to participate in a discussion with a prominent speaker from the German National Party. She felt a great sense of trepidation at taking on this role but as she heard the speaker and saw members of the reactionary student fraternities in the audience, she 'felt a cold fury rising' and 'indignation overcame my shyness' and she delivered her speech without fear.⁹⁷ Although she did not explicitly connect this to her previous university experience, a throughline could be easily drawn. It was during this time in Thuringia that she encountered the Nazi party for the first time and was surprised that the speaker could command the audience's attention even though it was well past midnight when he finished.⁹⁸

The turbulent politics of the Weimar Republic were seen to vindicate the ISK's dedication to leadership, as Saran briefly explained, leadership was 'designed to avoid the pitfalls of both autocratic and democratic systems - for the latter, the Weimar Republic, even in its earliest stages, was to offer shocking evidence.'⁹⁹ Political governance of the Weimar Republic was marked by frequent elections and changes in coalitions which would seem to support Saran's view that democracy had its flaws. However, the longevity of tenure of a politician like Sender gives the impression that stability was a possibility within this political churn. In her writing, Saran's frustration at the quality of candidates and their lack of what she perceived to be an ethical stance was palpable; in a letter to Nelson in 1924, she remarked on the 'many decisions we had to take in favour of the "lesser evil"' when choosing a political candidate to support. In the margins of her letter, he wrote the question 'Would Maria rather choose the greater evil?', perhaps mocking her youthful idealism that politics could be anything other than a compromise.¹⁰⁰ Like Sender, Saran was similarly shouted at by communists¹⁰¹ but she blamed both the communists and the SPD for the failure of policies that had caused mass unemployment and suffering by 1932:

we went down fighting for policies which, as has been widely recognised since, were relevant to the needs of the time: on the economic crisis and the political power situation. Tragically these were not in good hands with either the Social Democratic or the Communist Party.¹⁰²

Towards the end of the 1920s, Saran was writing for and distributing the ISK's journal, *Der Funke*, to spread the antifascist message and maintain the communication network of likeminded activists in the ISK. She would personally deliver the journal to pubs and meeting places in working-class neighbourhoods in Berlin, and she also sold the journal directly to punters. The journal had begun as a monthly publication, but by 1932, the ISK was producing a daily paper to gather antifascist momentum. ISK members volunteered their time for the paper and those who had jobs made donations to cover the publication costs. Saran described using all of her annual leave in 1932 to write every day for the paper.¹⁰³

Neighbourhoods were an important site of community organising for both fascists and antifascists alike as both groups attempted to claim ownership of urban spaces and build tight-knit groups of political organisers.¹⁰⁴ Saran charted the changing mood in the pubs on her nightly rounds in the Wedding district from friendly greetings by sympathisers and curious or indifferent responses from potential customers to open hostility as one pub after another was taken over by Nazi supporters.¹⁰⁵ Saran witnessed the increasing political violence of workers' politics in Berlin from all sides. Her

neighbours engaged in a brawl outside her house with a local Nazi member and left him bleeding in the street, surrounded by a crowd who would not let anyone through to help. Like Sender, she was the target of personal intimidation. Communists often shouted 'we won't let you go home' at her after ISK meetings, although they did not act on these threats. The police, she remembered, could not be trusted as they displayed an 'excess of zeal and even brutality' and would use emergency laws to break up meetings.¹⁰⁶ While Saran continued to confront the communists and engage with them in debate, it was not possible to do so with Nazis, and her writings infer the violence of the threat from fascist detractors: 'No discussion was possible or advisable with Nazis.'¹⁰⁷ Similar to Sender, she appeared to have reached the conclusion that Nazis could not be educated. In the postwar era, Saran did seek to re-educate supporters of the regime to build a better Germany. She worked as one of the lecturers sent to Prisoners of War camps to speak to German soldiers and attempt to help them reintegrate into a non-Nazi world.¹⁰⁸ Perhaps once the mouthpieces and structures of the fascist state were gone, there was a space to begin again with an educational programme. However, in the 1930s both women recognised the limitations of education, that Nazis could not or would not be educated, and that education and reasoned arguments were ineffective weapons against the dedicated followers of fascism.

As for Sender, the trade union movement was also a large part of Saran's life. She taught adult education classes at the Berlin Trade Union Centre¹⁰⁹, and between 1926 and 1933, she worked as a social worker for the Berlin Electricity Works, a scheme that was a partnership between the company and the trades unions, designed to improve labour relations.¹¹⁰ While Saran was frustrated by the inability of the KPD and SPD to form an alliance against the Nazis, she believed that the trades unions could pressure the political parties into collective action, and in the early 1930s, she attended as many union meetings as she could to support this case. However, she was disappointed that the communists often dominated and engaged in 'intimidating behaviour'.¹¹¹ Despite this disappointment, she remained committed to the labour movement; when she arrived in London in 1933, she was supported by trades unions that wanted to help refugees fleeing from fascism. While she identified that some in the labour movement were suspicious of refugees from Germany, many others in trades unions, the Workers' Educational Association, and the National Council of Labour Colleges were welcoming and generous.¹¹² Her lifelong affiliation with the labour movement was based on her work in the 1920s.

The ISK worked in close-knit cells of trained members whom Saran remarked 'trusted each other and learned to persevere in the face of obstacles and difficulties' through their organising in the First World War.¹¹³ They campaigned for candidates who would keep the Nazis out of power, meaning that they, somewhat surprisingly, campaigned for the conservative Brüning government in 1931. They were able to coordinate activities and were highly suspicious of the SPD and Hindenburg, whom they labelled a 'protector of fascism' in 1932. They also campaigned for the Communist Party candidate Ernst Thälmann in the presidential elections of 1932 as the only candidate who would not lead Germany into fascism and war.¹¹⁴ Saran, then living in Berlin, understood the danger this placed her in: she faced threats of violence when delivering publications on the streets, and she decided to learn how to shoot.¹¹⁵ After the Reichstag fire on 27

February 1933, she did not return home, thus likely avoiding arrest, and she made immediate preparations to leave.

Saran remained highly critical of imperialism and colonialism, criticising British practices; in 1924, she attended a summer school in Oxford and met some Irish trade unionists—‘How revealing to see Britain for the first time through Irish eyes!’—and wrote sympathetic reports for her comrades in Germany on the Irish struggle for independence.¹¹⁶ After her emigration, Saran also met Indian independence activists. The ISK was involved in campaigning for the workers on tea plantations in Ceylon (Sri Lanka); for example in 1938 they publicised and campaigned for workers on Cooperative Society tea plantations to unionise.¹¹⁷ Saran described this work as ‘inspired by an awareness of responsibilities beyond national frontiers incumbent not only on governments but on one’s own movement and its members with their stake in the colonies. I began to see what was involved in being a socialist within being an empire.’¹¹⁸ This is a continuation of Saran’s awareness of international issues and her understanding of the links between empire and war that led to social injustice.

After the Second World War, Saran became the women’s secretary for the Socialist International, something that would have seemed unimaginable to her in her younger years, despite knowing that gender equality was a cornerstone of social justice. Reflecting on her aversion to joining women’s organisations in the 1910s and 1920s, Saran explained: ‘it seemed essential not to divert men’s and women’s energies into separate channels, but to co-operate in endeavours to save society from the tightening grip of nationalist reaction and, soon, the fascist threat.’¹¹⁹ However, even in the 1930s, she recognised the contradictions in this statement as women’s rights were specifically under threat by fascism, and she also ran educational groups specifically for female trade union members.¹²⁰ Saran, like Sender, had to navigate a world in which being a woman meant that certain doors were closed or there were additional barriers put in their way. As Sender noted: ‘A woman must make a greater effort, must show more efficiency than a man in order to be recognized as an equal. Once, however, her ability is recognized and acknowledged, one can forget about difference of sex.’¹²¹ It is unclear, however, how much more effort women needed to make, what the cost of these efforts were, and if ‘difference of sex’ were ever truly forgotten.

Conclusion

By constructing a narrative from a series of remembered events, the women examined in this article are trying to create what Hayden White refers to as a ‘practical past’.¹²² That is, these women were seeking to draw on their experiences to explain how they reacted in different situations, to narrate their past in a way that elicits lessons that could be applied practically to their differing presents.¹²³ For Sender, the Second World War was ongoing and fascism was still on the rise. For Saran, the Soviet Union had taken the stage in the Cold War, and second-wave feminism had led to a reassessment of the women’s movement, but fascism and inequality were still lurking. As these writers presented the events of their lives, we can see how their prior experiences shaped their decision-making and how they offer instructions or inspiration to the reader. As has also been understood from research about female political activists in other contexts, these women refused

to remain at the margins of the events around them but came to the fore as politically engaged and active subjects through their writing.¹²⁴

As well as considering Sender and Saran as antifascists and the themes that emerge from their experiences, it is also important to consider the role that gender played. We can see their emphasis on the importance of education, the pursuit of social justice and the role of the trade union movement in the fight against fascism. However, as this article has demonstrated, unlike what has been claimed about Italian antifascist women, these were not women who were purely reacting to fascism on an existential basis.¹²⁵ Instead, they were mobilised through political organisations and motivated by their perceptions of social injustice, blurring the boundary between ideology and experience. Saran and Sender followed different paths from the revolution until their escape from the Third Reich in 1933; however, by positioning them together in this article, some of the diversity of women's responses to fascism begins to emerge. Outside of scholars interested in the history of the German left, these women are little known, and even within these spaces, they are often neglected. However, by the 1930s, both of these women had risen to prominent positions within their organisations and were therefore in positions to influence the decisions made by others.

Uncovering women's activism requires that we take a gender-curious approach. This means asking questions about not just the men who were making speeches or coordinating forces but examining the women who were also there.¹²⁶ As has been demonstrated, when examining the memoirs of political activists, we can find women organising and leading, but this article resists the attempts to describe these women as 'honorary men'.¹²⁷ Ignoring the range of work or ignoring that they were undertaking this work as women, is to misrepresent the roles that they played and the specific challenges and threats that they encountered as women. It also limits the focus of revolutionary change to a small range of men's activities. By taking a gender-curious approach and bringing together two very different women for the first time, this article identifies how these women operated and recognises more of the full range of activities that form part of a movement of change.

When exploring the actions of female antifascists in the 1930s and 1940s, their decisions and actions can at times seem difficult to comprehend. Why would the ISK oppose democracy when Hitler had suspended elections? Why would someone like Sender still be so committed to the SPD even when it had not stopped the Nazis' march to power? However, by taking a longer time frame, we can find that their motivations and opinions are rooted in the experiences of the First World War and the Revolution. As long-standing members of trades unions, it is unsurprising that they both saw this movement as a bulwark against fascism. The organised labour movement offered spaces for workers to come together to discuss their problems, for solutions to be proposed, and, when necessary, for the power of the state to be directly challenged, either by peaceful means or violence. The fact that trade union buildings were occupied, their members harassed from January 1933, and that all unions were subsumed into the Nazi German Labour Front (*Deutsche Arbeitsfront*) from May 1933 is testament to their strength and ability to oppose the state.¹²⁸ Both Sender and Saran had worked with trades unions throughout the 1920s, and in Sender's case, prior to the First World War, and continued to do so to challenge the Nazi threat. However, Sender, in

particular, identified the challenges of unifying the labour movement when she was persuaded not to organise a general strike in 1932.

Saran had a far more complex relationship with democracy than Sender did. Sender had been involved in pre-war suffrage campaigns, exposing her to the aims and importance of democratic rights. However, Saran and the ISK focused more on the criticisms of the German leadership both during the war and in the interwar period. She may also have been more willing to acknowledge that democracy had not stopped fascism, whereas Sender framed her autobiography, and her life's work, to an American pro-democracy audience. Saran's ongoing complex feelings about democracy are also complicated by the context of the Cold War; she was able to reflect on the nuances of the limitations of the state while the world was observing the strength of the totalitarian Soviet Union. Sender, however, was writing before the conclusion of the Second World War and to an American audience that was perhaps ambivalent towards European conflict. They both recognised that there was no single effective way to stop fascism and that different groups and methods had to be brought together in an existential struggle, however, without social justice, democracy was vulnerable to exploitation by fascists. Social justice had to be a cornerstone of every state to guard against fascists and their ideology gaining a foothold. This article, therefore, shapes how we can understand antifascism beyond the purview of the communist movement and opens new directions for research into the evolving fight for social justice in the wider German left during this era. A history of this period that only examines some activists, some activities, or uses a narrow timeframe will only ever be partial and privileges one view or another. It is only by addressing the gaps that we can aim for a fuller understanding of this era and consider how to face current political challenges.

Notes

1. The entire speech is available in translation in Mike Taber and John Riddell, *Fighting Fascism: How to Struggle and How to Win* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017).
2. Lola Landau, *Vor dem Vergessen: meine drei Leben* (Frankfurt: Ullstein, 1992), 260–1.
3. Maša Mrovlje and Jennet Kirkpatrick, 'Beauvoir and Lorde Confront the Honorary Man Trope: Toward a Feminist Theory of Political Resistance', *Women's Studies International Forum* 101 (2023).
4. Many studies that examine the revolution and its aftermath often have a tight timeframe of only 1918 and 1919, such as Christopher Dillon and Kim Wünschmann, eds., *Living the German Revolution 1918–19: Expectations, Experiences, Responses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023). Others might include more of the First War but usually use 1922 or 1923 as their endpoint. See for example Michael Brenner, *Der lange Schatten der Revolution: Juden und Antisemiten in Hitlers München, 1918–1923* (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag im Suhrkamp Verlag, 2019) or Corinne Painter, Ingrid Sharp and Matthew Stibbe, eds., *Socialist Women and the Great War, 1914–21: Protest, Revolution and Commemoration* (London: Bloomsbury, 2022).
5. Kathleen Canning, 'Gender and the Imaginary of Revolution in Germany', in *Germany 1916–23: a Revolution in Context*, ed. Klaus Weinbauer, Anthony McElligott and Kirsten Heinsohn (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2015), 110.
6. Hugo Garcia and others, 'Introduction: Beyond Revisionism', in *Rethinking Antifascism: History, Memory and Politics 1922 to the Present* (New York: Berghahn, 2016), 4–5.

7. Mercedes Yusta, 'The Strained Courtship between Feminism and Antifascism: From the World Committee (1934) to the Women's International Democratic Federation (1945)', in Garcia, *Rethinking Antifascism: History, Memory and Politics 1922 to the Present*, ed. Tabet Yusta and Climaco (New York: Berghahn, 2016), 168.
8. Women were estimated to be between 4 and 5% of council members see Axel Weipert, "'Frauen für die Räte, Frauen in die Räte": Konzepte und Praxen von Frauen in der Rätebewegung 1918–1920', *Ariadne* 73/74 (2018): 39–46.
9. Clare Jung, *Paradiesvögel: Erinnerungen* (Hamburg: Nautilus, 1987).
10. Elizabeth Harvey, 'Visions of the Volk: German Women and the Far Right from Kaiserreich to Third Reich', *Journal of Women's History* 16, no.3 (2004): 160; Jill Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Germany* (Abingdon on Thames: Taylor & Francis, 2014), 84.
11. Daniela Rossini, 'Feminism and Nationalism: The National Council of Italian Women, the World War, and the Rise of Fascism, 1911–1922', *Journal of Women's History* 26, no. 3 (2014): 50–1.
12. See Jill Stephenson, *The Nazi Organisation of Women* (Milton: Routledge, 2013).
13. Pamela Swett, *Neighbours and Enemies: The Culture of Radicalism in Berlin, 1929–1933* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 146.
14. Nigel Copsey, 'Afterword "Are you a communist? No, I am an anti-fascist."', in *Anti-fascism in European history: from the 1920s to today*, ed. Joz'e Pirjevec, Egon Pelikan and Sabrina Ramet (New York: Central European University Press, 2023), 273.
15. Kasper Braskén, David Featherstone and Nigel Copsey, 'Introduction: Towards a Global History of Anti-fascism', in *Anti-Fascism in a Global Perspective: Transnational Networks, Exile Communities, and Radical Internationalism*, ed. Kasper Braskén, David Featherstone and Nigel Copsey (New York: Routledge, 2021), 8.
16. Leonardo Rapone, 'L'italia antifascista', in *Storia d'Italia vol. IV. Guerre e Fascismo. 1914–1943*, ed. Giovanni Sabbatucci and Vittorio Vidotto (Rome: Editori Laterza, 1997), 501–59; Giovanni De Luna 'Ruoli e identità delle donne nell'antifascismo', *L'impregno* 15, no. 1 (1995) cited in Isabelle Richet, 'Women and Antifascism: Historiographical and Methodological Approaches', in *Rethinking Antifascism: History, Memory and Politics 1922 to the Present*, ed. Hugo Garcia, Mercedes Yusta, Xavier Tabet and Cristina Climaco (New York: Berghahn, 2016), 155.
17. Richet, 'Women and Antifascism', 155.
18. Sara Ann Sewell, 'Antifascism in the Neighbourhood: Daily Life, Political Culture, and Gender Politics in the German Communist Antifascist Movement, 1930–1933', *Journal of Comparative Fascist Studies* 9, no. 1–2 (2020): 172.
19. Sewell, 'Antifascism in the Neighbourhood', 191.
20. Swett, *Neighbours and Enemies*, 164.
21. Sara Ann Sewell, 'Bolshevizing Communist Women: The Red Women and Girls' League in Weimar Germany', *Central European History* 45, no. 2 (2012): 268–305.
22. Christian Hermann, *Roter Frauen- und Mädchenbund (RFMB) in Dresden und Ostsachsen 1925–1930* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2024), 15.
23. Sewell, 'Bolshevizing Communist Women', 305.
24. Sewell, 'Antifascism in the Neighbourhood', 187.
25. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*, Second Edition (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 13–14.
26. Maria Tamboukou, 'Action as Narration/Narration As Action: Reading Maud Gonne's Auto/Biographical Writings as Marginalized Knowledges of the Historiographical Operation', *Irish Educational Studies* 37, no.2 (2010): 21.
27. I am drawing here on the work of Masa Mrovlje, 'Disappointment's Magic: Negative Emotions, Transitional Justice and Resistance', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 52, no. 2 (2024).
28. Toni Sender, *The Autobiography of a German Rebel* (London: Routledge, 1940), 12.
29. Sender, *Autobiography*, 7.
30. *Ibid.*, 8–19.

31. Ibid., 15.
32. Sender does not provide a specific date for this, but it is likely to be the May Day of 1910.
33. Sender, *Autobiography*, 20.
34. Ibid., 19–21.
35. Anette Hild-Berg, *Toni Sender (1888–1964) : Ein Leben im Namen der Freiheit und der sozialen Gerechtigkeit* (Cologne: Bund Verlag, 1994), 30.
36. Sender, *Autobiography*, 39.
37. Ibid., 28–9.
38. Ibid., 26–38.
39. Ibid., 48–50.
40. Ibid., 58.
41. Ibid., 62.
42. Francis King, 'Dilemmas of a "Democratic Peace": World War One, the Zimmerwald Manifesto and the Russian Revolution', *Socialist History* 48 (2015): 8–33.
43. Sender, *Autobiography*, 58.
44. Maria Saran, *Never Give Up* (London: Oswald Wolff, 1976), 5–6.
45. Saran, *Never Give Up*, 18.
46. Ibid., 16.
47. Ibid., 23.
48. Ibid., 22.
49. Ibid., 22–4.
50. Ibid., 24.
51. Ibid.
52. For an overview of how the revolution has been narrated in the historiography see Klaus Weinbauer, Anthony McElligott and Kirstin Heinsohn, eds., *Germany, 1916–23: A Revolution in Context* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2015).
53. For more detail about the political actions that led to the events of November 1918, see Mark Jones, *Founding Weimar: Violence and the German Revolution of 1918–1919* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).
54. Klaus Weinbauer, Anthony McElligott and Kirstin Heinsohn, 'Introduction: In Search of the German Revolution', in *Germany, 1916–23: A Revolution in Context*, ed. Klaus Weinbauer, Anthony McElligott and Kirstin Heinsohn (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2015), 34.
55. Belinda Davis, *Home Fires Burning: Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin* (Chapel Hill, N.C: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 76.
56. Davis, *Home Fires*, 80–92.
57. Ibid., 93.
58. This is developed from Veronika Helfert's study of Austrian women during the First World War and their organising in the face of home front suffering discussed in *Frauen, wacht auf! Eine Frauen- und Geschlechtergeschichte von Revolution und Rätebewegung in Österreich, 1916–1924* (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2021).
59. Sender, *Autobiography*, 88–91.
60. Ibid., 88–92.
61. Ibid., 121.
62. Heidi Beutin, "'... denn die neuen Aufgaben erheischen auch neue Mittel': Räte, Räte-system, Betriebsräte in der Gedankenwelt von Toni Sender', in *Die Frau greift in die Politik: Schriftstellerinnen in Opposition, Revolution und Widerstand*, ed. Heidi Beutin et al (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2010), 300.
63. Saran, *Never Give Up*, 38–39.
64. Ibid., 36–9.
65. R.M. Douglas, 'No Friend of Democracy: The Socialist Vanguard Group 1941–50', *Contemporary British History* 16, no.4 (2002): 53.
66. Douglas, 'No Friend of Democracy', 53.
67. Ibid., 54.
68. Ibid., 55.

69. Saran, *Never Give Up*, 46.
70. Sender, *Autobiography*, 171 and 248.
71. *Ibid.*, 127.
72. *Ibid.*, 278.
73. Hild-Berg, *Toni Sender*, 167.
74. Sender, *Autobiography*, 303.
75. Helen Boak, *Women in the Weimar Republic* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 98.
76. Sender, *Autobiography*, 231.
77. *Ibid.*, 115.
78. *Ibid.*, 281–2.
79. Matthew Stibbe and others, 'Socialist Women and "Urban Space": Protest, Strikes and Anti-Militarism, 1914–18', in *Socialist Women and the Great War, 1914–21: Protest, Revolution and Commemoration*, ed. Corinne Painter, Ingrid Sharp and Matthew Stibbe (London: Bloomsbury, 2022), 43.
80. Sender, *Autobiography*, 141.
81. *Ibid.*, 144–5.
82. *Ibid.*, 196.
83. *Ibid.*, 287.
84. Eve Rosenhaft, *Beating the Fascists?: The German Communists and Political Violence, 1929–1933* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 37.
85. Rosenhaft, *Beating the Fascists?* 5.
86. Sender, *Autobiography*, 397.
87. *Ibid.*, 274.
88. *Ibid.*, 264.
89. *Ibid.*, 267.
90. *Ibid.*, 269.
91. *Ibid.*, 280–1.
92. *Ibid.*, 278.
93. *Ibid.*, 271.
94. Swett, *Neighbours and Enemies*, 234.
95. Sender, *Autobiography*, 270.
96. Saran, *Never Give Up*, 33.
97. *Ibid.*, 39.
98. *Ibid.*, 40.
99. *Ibid.*, 46.
100. *Ibid.*, 50.
101. *Ibid.*, 56.
102. *Ibid.*, 59.
103. *Ibid.*, 58.
104. Sewell, 'Antifascism in the Neighbourhood', 177.
105. Saran, *Never Give Up*, 56.
106. *Ibid.*, 54–6.
107. *Ibid.*, 56.
108. *Ibid.*, 90.
109. *Ibid.*, 34.
110. *Ibid.*, 60.
111. *Ibid.*, 57.
112. *Ibid.*, 81.
113. *Ibid.*, 51.
114. *Ibid.*, 59.
115. *Ibid.*, 47–59.
116. *Ibid.*, 115.

117. Modern Records Centre Warwick (MRC), MSS.173/1/5, 'Tea Plantations Campaign Committee to secure trade union rights for employees on English and Scottish Co-operative Society plantations in Ceylon', Amy Moore, 1938.
118. Saran, *Never Give Up*, 84.
119. Ibid., 126.
120. Ibid., 127.
121. Sender, *Autobiography*, 232.
122. Hayden White, *The Practical Past* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2014), 10.
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124. See Tamboukou, 'Action as narration/narration as action' as an example of research about Irish revolutionary Maud Gonne.
125. Richet, 'Women and Antifascism', 155.
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127. Mrovlje and Kirkpatrick, 'Beauvoir and Lorde Confront the Honorary Man Trope'.
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