

## Rosa Manus: Restoring to History a “Dutch Woman Leader”

### Who Fell Victim to the Nazis

First Annual Rosa Manus Lecture, 14 December 2016, Jewish Historical Museum,  
Amsterdam (without the 22 slides that accompanied the lecture)

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#### Introduction

In 1985, on occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the International Archives for the Women's Movement or IAW, historians Mineke Bosch and Annemarie Kloosterman published a collection of letters from the International Woman Suffrage Alliance called *Lieve Dr. Jacobs: Brieven uit de Wereldbond voor Vrouwenkiesrecht, 1902-1942*. This very innovative and important book in 1990 was published in a revised version as *Politics and Friendship: Letters from the International Woman Suffrage Alliance, 1902-1942*.

What is most striking for us now is that Bosch and Kloosterman in 1985 wrote that “Rosa Manus has been at least as important for the women's movement as Aletta Jacobs.” (p. 8, my translation, FdH). For a number of reasons there was no follow up to this statement. Undoubtedly, the most important reason is that they had no access to Rosa Manus's own papers because the looted IAW archives, including that of Manus's, were only rediscovered in 1992, and returned to Amsterdam in 2003.

However, those of you who heard Myriam Everard speak during the presentation of our book *Rosa Manus (1881–1942): The International Life and Legacy of a Jewish Dutch Feminist* on December 1, or who have seen the book itself,<sup>1</sup> will know that we wholeheartedly agree with that assessment.

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<sup>1</sup> Myriam Everard and Francisca de Haan (eds.), *Rosa Manus (1881–1942): The International Life and Legacy of a Jewish Dutch Feminist* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2017). Series “Studies in Jewish History and Culture,” no. 51 <http://www.brill.com/products/book/rosa-manus-1881-1942>

This lecture will not sum up the whole book, and mostly refers to chapters 1, 2, 4 and 8. Chapter 3, by Mineke Bosch, discusses Manus's relationship with Katharina von Kardorff-Oheimb and the role of money in that relationship; Chapter 5, by Ellen Carol DuBois, discusses the 1930s with a focus on what that era meant for Rosa Manus herself; Chapter 6, by Margot Badran, zooms in on the relationship between Rosa Manus and the Egyptian leader Huda Sha'rawi, IAW Board Member like Manus, in the context of the changing politics of that time and the IAW's reactions to these politics; Chapter 7, by Dagmar Wernitznig, analyzes the struggle between Rosa Manus and Rosika Schwimmer about establishing the first International Archives for the Women's Movement against the background of both women's history in the women's movement. Part 2 of the book consists of 21 pictures with context and annotation; and Part 3 likewise presents 13 historical documents related to Rosa Manus.

Myriam mentioned that we might speak of a “top three” of the Dutch first feminist wave, consisting of Aletta Jacobs (1854–1929); Wilhelmina Drucker (1847–1925) and Rosa Manus (1881–1942). Contemporaries and people writing not long after WWII certainly regarded Rosa Manus highly; here are some descriptions from publications about her, including interviews, published between 1921 and 1960 (as included in Appendix 3 of our book, here all in the original language):

- 1921:** “Half Hours with Interesting Women: The Story of ...[RM]
- 1930:** “Vrouwen van den vooruitgang: Rosa Manus”
- 1931:** “Frauen von heute. Rosa Manus – ...”
- 1933:** “Rosa Manus,” in Jo van Ammers-Küller, *Twaalf interessante vrouwen. Also published as Bedeutende Frauen der Gegenwart (1935) and in Polish as Portrety kobiet wybitnych (1936)*
- 1936:** “Een landgenootte waarop we trotsch zijn”  
“Een vrouw van beteekenis. Wie Rosa Manus is. ...”  
*Well-known women of today/Bedeutende Frauen unserer Zeit/ ....*
- 1937:** “Rosa Manus, Distinguished Holland Citizen, ...”
- 1938:** “Rosa ... Manus,” in *Persoonlijkheden in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in woord en beeld.*
- 1942:** “Noted Dutch Women’s Leader Dies in Nazi Camp”  
“Famous Feminist Dead in German Concentration Camp”  
“Rosa Manus Nazi Victim. Dutch Woman Leader Died in a Concentration Camp”
- 1946:** *Een moderne vrouw van formaat*
- 1960:** “Rosa Manus,” in *Grosse Frauen der Weltgeschichte*

So, what I will do tonight is first outline Rosa Manus’s major activities and contributions, to clarify why she was so prominent; then discuss the main reasons why she was forgotten; and lastly, I will briefly suggest some of the implications of this rethinking for the field of women’s history—which Manus herself tried to build up.

Myriam Everard has written two biographical chapters for our book about Rosa Manus, one about her family history and her becoming involved in the women’s movement; the other about Manus’s itinerary from the 1930s until 1942. The book has three parts, with essays, pictures and documents respectively. Myriam’s biographical chapters form the pillars on which the book rests, and I for one am deeply grateful to Myriam for the years of meticulous research and writing she has put into this.

In a nutshell, Rosa Manus was the eldest daughter of the Jewish couple Henri Philip Manus and Suzanna Vita Israel, who not long after Rosa was born in 1881 at the Kloveniersburgwal moved to a mansion at the Plantage Parklaan in Amsterdam, and in 1923 to the majestic Villa Parkwijk in Baarn, with the Amsterdam home at the Plantage Parklaan kept as town quarters until the late 1920s. Rosa Manus inherited her own fortune primarily from her grandfather Manus, who at a young age had established himself as a tobacco merchant, and because of this legacy Rosa was a wealthy young woman by 1899. Among the older assumptions that Myriam's research has debunked is that Rosa Manus did not get a really good education. It was quite the opposite: Manus got what Myriam Everard calls a secular and distinguished education; first, at the so-called Golden Girls School where according to a contemporary "the upper ten" received an outstanding education, in part from highly educated feminist teachers; then at Brillantmont in Lausanne, Switzerland, one of the most exclusive boarding schools in the world, which in Myriam's words "instilled in [Manus] a savoir faire with the European elite that must have been noticed straight away by the international elite of women's suffrage"—i.e. when Manus in 1908 acted as a so-called page at the Congress of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance held in the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, where her function was "to be as much of service to the congress participants as she could" (*Rosa Manus*, p. 50-51).

The Manus family was not just affluent, but its members had been actively involved in the emancipatory history of the Dutch Jews since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, in which active citizenship was highly valued. It was this particular family history that propelled Rosa on a "secular road to the women's movement." And, to a position for which "vanguardism" is a better word than "assimilation," so writes Everard (*Rosa Manus*, p. 56).

Rosa Manus quickly found her way in the women's movement, both nationally and internationally. Already in 1910, when Rosa was not yet thirty years old, she was appointed "special Organizer" of the Congresses of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance, an enormous responsibility that she took up with flair and success. It also means that she knew the Alliance and its top women very well from these early days onwards.

In 1915, Rosa Manus and Aletta Jacobs together convened the women's peace congress that would become famous as the "International Congress of Women in The Hague" and marked the beginning of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom: the longest existing women's peace organization in world history. However, when the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom or WILPF was formally established in Zürich in 1919, Manus was not present. She

had opted to continue her activism for women's rights and peace in the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (*Rosa Manus*, chapter 2 by Annika Wilmers).

This brings me to the next two main points. First, although Rosa Manus was active in a number of organizations and committees, it is clear that the core of her activism were women's rights (especially "equal citizenship") and peace, and these are what we focus on in the book. Secondly, as some of you know, another myth about Rosa Manus is that she shunned, avoided, leading and visible positions. Myriam has unpacked this myth two weeks ago; here I will do that by simply listing Rosa's major functions in the 1920s and 1930s:

1920s	1930s
<b>Special Organizer, IAW Congresses (since 1910):</b> 1923: Rome 1926: Paris 1929: Berlin	<b>Special Organizer, IAW Congresses (since 1910):</b> 1935: Istanbul 1939: Copenhagen
<b>1923–1928</b> Co-founder and Board Member, <i>Nederlandsche Vrouwenclub</i> ( <i>Lyceumclub</i> ) (Dutch Women's Club) Amsterdam	
<b>1926–1941</b> <b>Vice-President, International Alliance of Women (IAW)</b>	
<b>1926–1941</b> <b>Secretary, International Committee for Peace and the League of Nations of the IAW</b>	
<b>1926–[1930]</b> Member and from 1927 Chair, IAW International Standing Committee for Women Police	
<b>1926–1930</b> Board Member, <i>Staatsburgeressen</i> , from 1930 called <i>Vrouwenbelangen</i> (Dutch branch IAW)	<b>1930–1935</b> <b>Vice-President</b> <i>Staatsburgeressen</i> , from 1930 called <i>Vrouwenbelangen</i> (Dutch branch IAW)
<b>1927–1935</b> <b>President, Staatsburgeressen</b> , from 1930 called <i>Vrouwenbelangen</i> , Amsterdam branch	<b>1930–[1938]</b> Vice-Convener ICW Standing Committee on Women's Suffrage and Equal Citizenship, qq. member of the ICW Executive Board
	<b>1931–1932</b>

	<p>Honorary Secretary, (Peace and) Disarmament Committee of the Women's International Organizations (PDC-WIO)</p> <p>1932–1938</p> <p>Vice-President, PDC-WIO</p>
	<p>February 1932</p> <p>Master of ceremony, presentation of the Peace Petition of the International Women's Organizations, to World Disarmament Conference, Geneva</p>
	<p>1933–1935</p> <p>Co-founder and President, Neutral Women's Committee for Refugees, Amsterdam</p>
	<p>1933–</p> <p>Board member, <i>Comité International pour le Placement des Intellectuels Émigrés</i> /International Committee to Secure Employment for Refugee Professional Workers, Geneva</p>
	<p>1935–1940</p> <p>Co-founder and first President, <i>Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging</i> (International Archives for the Women's Movement, IAV), Amsterdam (nowadays Atria)</p>
	<p>1936–[1939]</p> <p>Member, <i>Comité van Waakzaamheid van Anti-Fascistische Intellectueelen</i>, Dutch branch of the <i>Comité de Vigilance des Intellectuels Antifascistes</i> (Vigilance Committee of Anti-Fascist Intellectuals)</p>
	<p>April/September 1936</p> <p>Organizing Secretary, <i>Congrès Mondial / International Congress of the Rassemblement Universel Pour la Paix (RUP)</i> / International Peace Campaign (IPC), Brussels, September 1936</p>
	<p>1938–1941</p> <p>board member, <i>Korps Vrouwelijke Vrijwilligers</i> (Women's Auxiliary Corps, KVV)</p>

This, let me be clear, is only a selection. The **yellow** items are related to women's suffrage and equal citizenship; the **pink** is the unique event of establishing the IAV in 1935; and **green** are her peace activities.

Undoubtedly, this is an impressive list on any account. If there had been any inclination on Manus's side to avoid leadership positions, for sure that was over from the second half of the 1920s. I'll just mention a few of the most outstanding positions she occupied. She was:

- Vice-President of the International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship (IAW)
- Vice-president of the (Peace and) Disarmament Committee of the Women's International Organisations
- Founding President of the *Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging* (International Archives for the Women's Movement, IAV)

Let's add that Manus was elected Alliance Vice-President already in 1923, but the election then ended in a tie between her and the candidate from Uruguay, Dr. Paulina Luisi. For Alliance-strategic reasons, Manus yielded the position to Luisi, and was then elected at the next Congress in 1926; she would be Alliance Vice-President for the rest of her life. And then, obviously, there were her many leadership positions in the international peace movement.

Before discussing that, I'd like to highlight one other aspect of her wide-ranging work. Manus didn't publish or leave a memoir, but that doesn't mean she didn't write or publish. On the contrary. Appendix 3 of our book consists of a Rosa Manus—Bibliography, part one with publications by Manus, part two with publications about her (of which I read a few titles earlier). What I would like to point out is the sheer size of that list of publications of hers, covering the period of 1914 to 1939, and with texts in Dutch, English, French and German: *Rosa Manus*, p. 445-452.

Her writings were in the first place related to her official functions and were intended to inform members of the organizations she was involved in about recent developments. For that reason, many of her publications appeared in the journals of "her" organizations.

The bibliography also documents the increasing scope of her activities and with that, the increasing variety of the audiences she wrote for. Most notably, the bibliography shows that Rosa Manus became the connecting link between the Dutch and the international liberal women's movements and that she fulfilled this function of *trait-d'union* consistently for 25 years (1914–1939).

In the later 1920s and 1930s, she expanded the scope of her writings to informing the general Dutch public about the national and the international women's movements—as her articles in the liberal national newspaper *Algemeen handelsblad* and the more leftist liberal weekly *De groene Amsterdammer* demonstrate. The interviews she gave with increasing frequency had the same function; they appeared in regional and national newspapers in the Netherlands and abroad (*Algemeen handelsblad*, *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, *De Gooi- en Eemlander*, *Utrechtsch Nieuwsblad*, *Le figaro*, *Le petit Provençal*, *Cumhuriyet*).

I have mentioned the Alliance and other international women's organizations already a number of times. What were these international women's organizations? The main three of the pre-1940 era were:

- 1) the International Council of Women (ICW), established in 1888
- 2) the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (from 1926, the International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship, IAW), established in 1904
- 3) the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF, established in 1915, or under this name in 1919)

They were international umbrella organizations that consisted of national member organizations, held major international congresses, and tried to influence national and international politics and policies regarding women and peace. In the aftermath of the First World War, they did so increasingly in the League of Nations, founded in early 1920 as a result of the Paris Peace Conference that ended WWI.

The League of Nations was the first international organization whose principal mission was to maintain world peace. The League also dealt with other pressing social, economic and legal issues on the international level, such as refugees, child labor, slavery, prostitution, and married women's nationality. NGOs did not have a formal position in the League of Nations, as they would have in its successor organization, the United Nations, where they can obtain Consultative Status, but the international women's organizations nonetheless managed to have some impact through their individual members (many of whom were delegates or alternate delegates to the League), through some officials who were sympathetic to them, and through lobbying.<sup>2</sup> They also worked together in

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<sup>2</sup> Carol Miller, "Geneva—the Key to Equality": Inter-war Feminists and the League of Nations, in: *Women's History Review* 3, no. 2 (1994): 218–245.

what historian Leila Rupp has called super-international coalitions, such as the Joint Standing Committee of the Women's International Organisations (est. 1925), the Liaison Committee of the Women's International Organisations (est. 1931), and the Disarmament, later the Peace and Disarmament Committee of the Women's International Organisations (est. 1931).<sup>3</sup>

Manus's main functions in the international women's organizations are listed here in bold:

- International Council of Women: **1930-1938, member of the ICW Executive Board**
- International Woman Suffrage Alliance, from 1926 the IAW or Alliance: **from 1910 special organizer, from 1926 Vice-President**
- Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF, established in 1915, or under this name in 1919): **in 1915, co-founder**

In the League of Nations, the ICW, IAW, WILPF and other international women's organizations cooperated in:

- the Joint Standing Committee of the Women's International Organisations (est. 1925)
- the Liaison Committee of the Women's International Organisations (est. 1931)
- the Disarmament, later the Peace and Disarmament Committee of the Women's International Organisations (PDC-WIO, est. Sept. 1931). Manus was PDC-WIO **1931-1932: Honorary Secretary, 1932-1938, Vice-President**

Clearly, Rosa Manus was a major player in the international women's movement. The list of Rosa Manus's major functions in the 1920s and 1930s (p. 4-5 above) demonstrates something else: namely, her increasing focus on peace and anti-fascist activism from the early 1930s, and even more after Hitler's rise to power. One of the most prestigious and visible activities was Manus's role in the Peace and Disarmament Committee of the Women's International Organisations (PDC-WIO).

A number of governments, peace advocates and women's organizations had been working to convene a global Disarmament Conference since 1927. "As conference preparations moved forward in September 1931, the League of Nations General Assembly officially called on the Liaison Committee of the Women's International Organisations to rally support of the world's women for the forthcoming Disarmament Conference." Already in 1930, the WILPF "began circulating petitions supporting the aims of the Disarmament Conference, and soon other[s] ... joined them. ... [It was]

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<sup>3</sup> Leila J. Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), Chapter 2.

Rosa Manus [who] suggested that the International Alliance of Women (IAW) circulate a petition among its affiliates; the IAW ultimately collected over 2,400,000 signatures in twenty countries” (Karen Garner, *Rosa Manus*, p. 132-133). The PDC-WIO was formed in September 1931 “to coordinate the international petition campaign and to stage the presentation of the petitions at the Disarmament Conference” (ibid, p. 134). The women’s PDC collected more than 8 million signatures (i.e. by February 1932; in the end they collected millions more) whose aim was to convince governments that they had popular support in negotiating a substantive international disarmament treaty. It was also Rosa Manus who organized the presentation of the signed petitions to the World Disarmament Conference on 6 February 1932. Karen Garner describes the events as follows:

“Prior to the opening session, Manus and her deputies had unloaded a truckload of petitions to into the conference hall in order to confront the national delegations as they entered the conference chambers.” A “parade of representatives of the women’s organizations from the fifty-six petitioning nations that had collected ... [the] petitions worldwide” first wended through the streets of Geneva. Then, led by Manus and the other Committee members, “the women’s procession filed into the assembly hall, their arms loaded with stacks of petitions” (Garner, *Rosa Manus*, p. 143–144, and see the illustrations there). After the formal presentation of the petitions to the Disarmament Conference president, a procedure led by Rosa Manus and Kathleen Courtney, Peace and Disarmament Committee Chair Mary Dingman “delivered an impassioned speech to the governments on behalf of ‘the greatest collective effort that women have ever undertaken’” (ibid., p. 144; DuBois, *Rosa Manus*, p. 165–170, also discusses this episode).

We all know that the Disarmament Conference failed, as did all other efforts in the 1930s to keep the peace. But that in itself doesn’t make them unimportant. The Women’s PDC, of which Manus had become Vice-President, was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1934. The Committee did not get the Prize, but did “redouble[...] its public education activities in response to increasing global aggression and the accelerating arms race.” All in vain, and the League of Nations Disarmament Conference officially “suspended its labors” early in 1936 (Garner, *Rosa Manus*, 154).

International peace advocates then undertook what seemed to be one last big organized effort to keep the peace in what was called the International Peace Campaign / Rassemblement Universel pour la Paix (IPC/RUP), which held a World Peace Conference in September 1936. Knowing what a superb organizer Rosa Manus was, Lord Cecil asked her to become the International Peace

Campaign's organizing secretary (and perhaps we should note here that "secretary" really meant something very different than taking notes and performing other given assignments).

It turned out that communists were more involved in the International Peace Campaign than officially known, and the Geneva authorities—Geneva being the city where the International Peace Campaign's conference would take place—grew increasingly nervous. Mary Dingman, the president of the Women's PDC, for the same reason, the role of communists in the International Peace Campaign, informed Manus that the PDC wanted to withdraw from the IPC/RUP. But Rosa Manus, as Myriam Everard writes, kept a "principled and loyal stance ... [which] testifies to a broadmindedness far removed from the constricted one-dimensional politics of neutrality that characterized the women's suffrage movement where Manus had found her political education. ... ." In July 1936, Manus wrote to Dingman:

If the people from the right and the organisations who have never worked with communists and socialists and who have tried to come into the Rassemblement, are now leaving all at once, we are giving the others all the opportunity but we may not blame them for taking everything in hand then. If on the contrary they keep in and come to the Congress it is not impossible that they have a majority which will then enable them to take matters up afterwards but the risk is, if they do not come to the Congress itself, that it will be an entirely communistic manifestation (quoted in Everard, *Rosa Manus*, p. 268–269; DuBois, *Rosa Manus*, p. 177–180, also discusses the ICP/RUP).

The 1936 World Peace Congress in the end would not take place in Geneva but in Brussels. For Manus herself, the consequences of taking on this task would be huge, in the most negative way. She was questioned and fingerprinted by the Belgian police—a very humiliating experience; she became subjected to a hate campaign from the extreme right in the Netherlands; and she was "reported as potentially subversive by the Dutch secret service ... in her capacity as 'general secretary of the International Committee' of the IPC (Everard, *Rosa Manus*, p. 277). Her name also appeared on a "special wanted list" compiled by the German *Abwehr* in 1939 (Ibid., p. 278). Although Manus will not have known about these lists, there were enough deeply worrying signs of growing anti-Semitism, including obviously *Kristallnacht* in November 1938. But when Manus's close friend, the British Alliance president Margery Corbett Ashby, after another worrying incident during the Alliance Congress in Copenhagen in 1939 tried to persuade her to come to England with her straightaway, Manus refused. She did, however, bring the papers she had collected in over thirty years of work in

the national and international women's movement to the IAV, thinking these papers would be safer there than at her own place. We know that this was not the case (Ibid., p. 282–283).

In May 1941, Rosa Manus was summoned by the *Sicherheitsdienst* and questioned for eight hours. They let her go then, but three months later she was arrested by the Dutch police at the request of the *Sicherheitsdienst*. Manus was first held in the *Polizeigefängnis* in Scheveningen, one of the Dutch prisons to which the Germans transferred political prisoners for further questioning. She was then transferred to a *Polizeigefängnis* in Düsseldorf, and at the end of October 1941 arrived in Ravensbrück, the main Nazi concentration camp for women political prisoners. Here she must have been placed in the *Judenblock*, the barrack for Jews, where conditions were significantly worse than in the rest of the camp. Myriam E. has also been able to finally establish when and how Manus was murdered, and suggests a number of the reasons why it has taken until 2016 to establish these facts (Ibid., p. 285-300).

Manus was murdered in March 1942, in a secret operation targeting the elderly, sick or disabled prisoners as well as Jewish prisoners in Ravensbrück. These facts were obviously unknown, but her sister Emma Stern-Manus was informed that Rosa had died in the Ravensbrück infirmary on 29 May 1942 (Ibid., p. 294). Not much later, on June 28, 1942, the *New York Times* reported: "Dutch Suffragist Dies. Rosa Manus Made Prisoner by Nazis in Netherland Invasion" (*Rosa Manus*, p. 454; on 12 August 1942, the *New York Times* again reported about Manus's death; Ibid.).

During her lifetime, but especially in the later 1930s, Rosa Manus had contact with Queen Wilhelmina on a number of occasions, listed here:

### 1913

Manus was co-organizer of the Exhibition "Woman 1813–1913," which Queen Wilhelmina visited twice.

### 1936

Rosa Manus decorated with the rank of "Officer of the Order of Oranje-Nassau" (a high distinction).

### 1938

Rosa Manus writes "De vrouwenbeweging 1908–1918" [The women's movement 1909-1918], in *Huldeblijk aan H.M. de Koningin van de Amsterdamsche Vrouwen. 6 September 1898-1938* [Tribute to Her Majesty the Queen from the women of Amsterdam] (1938).

## 1939

Queen Wilhelmina visits the KVV, the Women's Voluntary Corps, of which Manus was board member (*Rosa Manus*, fig. 9.21 on p. 342).

The last occasion that we know of is Queen Wilhelmina's visit to the Women's Voluntary Corps (KVV) on 30 September 1939, when, in Manus's words, Wilhelmina was "intensely interested in the work. The Queen ... talked to every one [,] putting questions [and] showing her admiration for the energy and devotion of the women in these days of stress and tragedy" (*Rosa Manus* in *International Women's News*, November 1939, 8). In light of Manus's prominence and her contacts with Queen Wilhelmina, it is understandable that the latter was informed about her death, as stated in a letter of 23 July 1942 (Document 11 in *Rosa Manus*, p. 419–420).

**How come, then, that after all this, Rosa Manus was practically forgotten**, and certainly has not become part of our collective memory as one of the leading Dutch feminist and peace activists of her time, both nationally and internationally?

The first larger explanation is the impact of the Second World War in a number of ways. First and foremost, Manus herself was murdered at age sixty. Secondly, her large archive was looted, consisting of the papers and pictures of more than thirty years of national and international activism. The looted IAV archives, including that of Manus's, were discovered in Moscow in 1992, and returned to Amsterdam only in 2003.<sup>4</sup>

Then, Rosa Manus did not write a Memoir, unlike Aletta Jacobs, who strongly contributed to the construction of her own image as icon of the first feminist wave through the publication of her *Herinneringen* in 1924. This book was translated and published in 1996 as *Memories: My Life as an International Leader in Health, Suffrage, and Peace*. Rosa Manus may not have had the drive to claim such a position, but in any case she never got to writing down her version of her life, due to her untimely death.

Manus's long-time friend Clara Meijers in 1946 published a small but beautiful biography, called *Een moderne vrouw van formaat: Leven en werken van Rosa Manus*. However, this modest book appeared only in Dutch and in 1946, not a time suitable to secure Manus a place in public memory. Clara Meijers referred to a forthcoming publication in English about Manus. This was a book

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<sup>4</sup> Francisca de Haan, "A 'Truly International' Archive for the Women's Movement (IAV, now IIAV): From its Foundation in Amsterdam in 1935 to the Return of its Looted Archives in 2003," *Journal of Women's History* 16 no. 4 (Winter 2004): 148–172.

prepared by Hans (Johanna) van der Meulen, with chapters by Margery Corbett Ashby, Mia Boissevain, Hans van der Meulen, and Carrie Chapman Catt, who all had closely collaborated with Rosa Manus. The title of the planned was: *Rosa Manus: Nazi Victim*. Whereas Boissevain, Catt, and Corbett Ashby are well-known to historians, Hans van der Meulen (1909–1974) is not. The manuscript describes her as a “young friend of Miss Manus and at one time her secretary,” and Myriam Everard has established that Van der Meulen was in Manus’s proximity at a number of key occasions in the 1930s, including the Disarmament Conference in Geneva in 1932 and the World Peace Congress in Brussels in 1936. However, how close they were becomes truly clear if one reads Hans van der Meulen’s loving chapter, with many details of Manus’s personal life. The text also includes the result of Van der Meulen’s “efforts after the liberation to find someone who could testify about Manus’s final months in German captivity.” It would seem that the utter sadness of it all was too much for Hans, who, according to family lore, “became insane not long after the war and permanently withdrew from the world.” We assume this is the reason why the book was never published (*Rosa Manus*, Document 13, quotes on p. 424, 425, 426).

A further reason why Manus was soon forgotten must have been the overwhelming and crushing knowledge about the Holocaust, so enormous that it overtook everything. Rosa Manus in that context became a Jewish Nazi victim, one of the six million. She was, but there was no realization until recently that she was not arrested and deported in 1942 or 1943, as part of the mass deportations of the Jews in the Netherlands, but individually, in August 1941, and not deported to Auschwitz or Sobibor, but to Ravensbrück, the camp for women political prisoners.<sup>5</sup> Hence, the understanding of her particular (and major) contributions as an international fighter for peace in the 1930s got lost.

Along similar lines, the post-WWII knowledge of the impact of anti-Semitism seems to have been projected back on Manus, suggesting that she had shunned from taking leading and visible positions out of fear of anti-Semitism since the 1910s. In *Rosa Manus*, Chapter 8, Myriam Everard shows why this is a mistaken view, and we have earlier seen that Manus definitely did take up leading positions. That is not to suggest, obviously, that she didn’t have to deal with anti-Semitism, nor that it didn’t play a role in how she died, but the story is more complex, and that needs to be recognized.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See De Haan, “A ‘Truly International’ Archive for the Women’s Movement (IAV, now IIAV).”

<sup>6</sup> After this lecture, someone suggested that postwar anti-Semitism may have played a role as well; this is something to look into further. On that phenomenon, see Remco Ensel and Evelien Gans (eds.), *The Holocaust, Israel and ‘the Jew.’ Histories of Antisemitism in Postwar Dutch Society* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016).

There is one more element to this, e.g. to how WWII has prevented the recognition of Manus's major role. The Second World War, in its catastrophic dimensions, has in a broader sense blocked our view of the women's movement in the 1930s, both nationally and internationally. The dominant idea of that history in the Netherlands is still that of First Feminist Wave (women's suffrage: Aletta Jacobs!) – nothing – Second Feminist Wave (Dolle Mina! named after Wilhelmina Drucker). There is no box here for Manus and her fellow feminists, active in the 1920s and 1930s, neither in Holland, as she called it, nor on the international stage—nor, for that matter, for how they continued their work in the 1940s and 1950s .

There is reason to believe that gender to some extent also played a role in Manus being forgotten. Among other things, Karen Garner mentions several factors that can explain the historical invisibility of the Women's Peace and Disarmament Committee. The first is what Garner calls the "self-effacing tendency" of the women involved, who "were well known to male government leaders [but] seldom sought recognition for themselves. They were most concerned with promoting their cause rather than achieving notoriety as individuals." The other reason is that "in contemporary accounts and in the later published histories of the era, male leaders and scholars often privileged the words and actions of other men, in standard androcentric fashion" (*Rosa Manus*, p. 130).

Then, the last reason why so much of this has been mostly unknown. There is very little knowledge still about the major role of the international women's organizations in the League of Nations, or of how they continued their activities immediately after WWII in the newly established United Nations. Here it was a handful of women delegates, all connected to or coming from the international women's movement, who successfully worked together to get "the equal rights of men and women" included in the Charter of the United Nations, to get a UN-Commission on the Status of Women (1946), and who in 1948 managed to get the sentence "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" included in Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights—instead of the proposed "All men are born free and equal in dignity and rights."<sup>7</sup>

Rosa Manus was no longer there, but it was primarily leading women from the International Alliance of Women and the International Council of Women—her colleagues and her network—who played decisive roles here. That this is still so much lacking from our collective memory is mostly due

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<sup>7</sup> Francisca de Haan, "Eugénie Cotton, Pak-Den-ai and Claudia Jones: Rethinking Transnational Feminism and International Politics," *Journal of Women's History* 25, no. 4 (2013): 174–189.

to the dominance of the national framework in history, in what has been called “methodological nationalism,” a way of looking at national history in isolation, with a blind spot for transnational processes.<sup>8</sup> In our case, we learn about Dutch history, and of the role of Aletta Jacobs in securing women’s entrance to higher education or getting the vote; but this history, as that of later women’s struggles, is insufficiently understood in the international context that was crucial to it. Feminist ideas, activities, and networks were transnational from at least the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when the British Mary Wollstonecraft wrote her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* inspired by the French Revolution, and became (in)famous across Europe almost overnight, to the early 19<sup>th</sup>-century religious, anti-slavery and revolutionary women’s networks, to the establishment of the international women’s organizations from the 1880s onwards—which in the twentieth century focused on the League of Nations and then the United Nations in order to enhance women’s status in international law, for which they, among other things, used the tool of mobilizing international public opinion.<sup>9</sup>

These influential international women’s organizations, whether Club, Council, Alliance, League, or Federation, consisted of national member organizations which operated in close interaction with, and often guidance by, the international body. It is impossible to understand the women’s movement in the Netherlands, and, for example, the changes in women’s legal position in the 1950s, without taking into account this international level. It was also a two-way or a reciprocal relationship: the international boards guided the national member organizations, but these and their leaders informed and had an impact on the international level. Hence, we also need to know much more about the role of, in our case, Dutch women, in these international networks. The life and work of Rosa Manus is a major example of this reciprocal national-international dimension of the 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century women’s movement; in other words, her life and work show the importance of analyzing and understanding women’s movement activities, networks, contacts, and writings in this national-international interaction.

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<sup>8</sup> Jani Marjanen: „Undermining Methodological Nationalism. *Historie Croisée* of Concepts as Transnational History,” in: *Transnational Political Spaces: Agents – Structures – Encounters*. Mathias Albert, Gesa Bluhm, Jan Helmig, Andreas Leutzsch and Jochen Walter (ed.), (Frankfurt and New York: Campus Verlag, 2009), p. 239-263.

<sup>9</sup> Francisca de Haan, “Writing Inter/Transnational History: The Case of Women’s Movements and Feminisms,” in Barbara Haider-Wilson, William D. Godsey, and Wolfgang Mueller, eds., *Internationale Geschichte in Theorie und Praxis / International History in Theory and Practice* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2016), 499–534.

## Conclusions

The title of my talk was: “Rosa Manus: Restoring to History a ‘Dutch Woman Leader’ Who Fell Victim to the Nazis” (quote from the *New York Times*, 12 August 1942). I hope to have shown that, indeed, “Rosa Manus has been at least as important for the women’s movement as Aletta Jacobs,” as Bosch and Kloosterman wrote in 1985. But we need to underline that this applies not just to the Dutch women’s movement, but internationally as well, or, even more. It is primarily WWII that has prevented Manus’s recognition as a major historical figure.

Among Rosa Manus’s numerous accomplishments, the cooperation she managed to establish in the 1930s between liberal and socialist and communist women was unprecedented, and in retrospect was an early form of post-WWII developments in the women’s movement, again, nationally and internationally. This form of cooperation is also one aspect of the continuity between the pre- and the post-war women’s movements that looking at Manus’s activism has allowed us to see. Lastly, her life and work exemplify the connections between the national and international levels and their multi-directedness, which need a lot more research.

Manus deserves to be widely known and to be included in the Dutch historical canon as well as that of the international women’s movement. It is wonderful that Atria has made a significant step in that direction with initiating this annual international “Rosa Manus Lecture.” But in addition, Rosa Manus deserves monuments, as well as streets, schools and bridges to be named after her. At [www.amsterdam.nl](http://www.amsterdam.nl) we can suggest names for bridges in Amsterdam—let’s all nominate Rosa Manus!