

Gerd Schirmmacher, *Hertha Kraus – Zwischen den Welten. Biographie einer Sozialwissenschaftlerin und Quäkerin (1897-1968)*. (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Publishing Company, 2002) pp.667. ISBN: 3-631-38775-X. (paperback) £45/\$69.95.

After thirty years of research, Gerd Schirmmacher, a German professor of political science and the history of social work and of comparative social systems, has published a biography of the Quaker social activist and social worker, Hertha Kraus. Although all but forgotten in her native land of Germany, Dr. Kraus, who immigrated to America in 1933, has now merited a biography whose author writes from the country of her birth.

Having grown up in a bourgeois Jewish home in Prague and Frankfurt am Main, Hertha Kraus chose during World War I to study for a doctorate in social science. She later took an active role in the Quaker Food Programs of 1920-1923 in Berlin and became director of the social welfare office in Cologne. In 1933 she left Germany for the United States where she proceeded to make a career for herself in social work. Through tireless work, constant writing, and public lectures, she became a professor of social work in 1934 at the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh. Two years later she moved to a professorship at Bryn Mawr College where she then remained until her retirement in 1962. Her early research into Pittsburgh's subsidized city housing led to her serving as an advisor on public housing for the U.S. Secretary of the

Interior. She very quickly immersed herself into the social welfare activities of her newly adopted land.

In the 1930s the burning political issue of the day in the U.S. was the extent of 'welfare state' programs that could be tolerated. Itself in the midst of a devastating economic depression, America faced questions of how to best alleviate the problems of the poor. Along with concerns for these governmental issues, Hertha Kraus was involved in post war relief work, building neighbourhood centers, working along with OMGUS in Germany (Office of the Military Government of the United States), Palestinian Refugee Camps, and city planning for subsidized city housing.

While Schirmmacher gives an account of the life of Hertha Kraus, he also discusses a history of Quakerism which spans from the visions of George Fox to the philanthropic work of Friends in the 20th Century. The reader is taken through a survey which includes the separations of the Puritans, the founding of the Quaker State of Pennsylvania, and the building of the Quaker settlement at Friedenthal (Peace Valley) in 18th Century Germany. Although these digressions from Kraus' life are informative, the reader is led away from biographical material. The question of whether Quakers are a sect or a religious movement would be better handled in a broader framework than this biography offers. Schirmmacher's view that Quakers are simply a mainline religion is problematic. The situation of German Quakers, for instance, cannot be compared to those of splinter group Quakers in the U.S. such as Hicksites and Orthodox. To be sure, these separations were fervently being discussed among Quakers as Hertha Kraus came to the U.S., but, in spite of her enthusiasm for America, she did not transfer her membership from her German meeting to the one in Haverford, Pennsylvania, until 1940. Whether earlier in Germany or later in Pennsylvania, she found, we must assume, in the silent worship and Quaker community life and security and inspiration which made possible the public life she tirelessly carried out.

The chapter, 'The Private Hertha Kraus', is disappointingly brief and inadequate. We do nevertheless learn about her qualities of impatience and restlessness, which we can see form a rather authoritarian personality. In a time when institutionalized mediation and supervision were yet undeveloped, Hertha Kraus' qualities of impatience and directiveness in her professional life were simply seen as appropriate to good leadership. Quaker ideals for cooperation and consensus seemed not to fit the personality of Hertha Kraus. Beyond this, however, we learn very little about what she was like a person. The few references Schirmmacher does make to her private life hardly help the reader toward a better notion of her personality. Although she left no diary, there exists now and have existed both Germans and Americans who knew her personally. Either personal interviews or reference to such materials from the past could have enhanced our understanding of her. The results of Michael Luick Thrams' work on the history of the Scattergood Hostel for refugees in Iowa is but one example of oral Quaker history. That hostel, begun by Hertha Kraus and Karoline Solmitz along with four other Quaker women, aimed to

provide refugees from Nazi Germany with an orientation for becoming 'true Americans'. Through language courses and other introductions to American ways, these Quaker women hoped to integrate these refugees, most of them with academic background, into life in a new land.

The biography does nevertheless show the fruit of thirty years of archival work. Included are the many professional contacts Hertha Kraus managed to have in the tumultuous 1930s and 1940s. Her contact with Germans such as Konrad Adenauer, Walter Ulbricht, and Emil Fuchs, to name a few, are depicted in this book and serve to illustrate the context of German-American relations over two decades in which Quaker networks took place. Wilhelm Sollmann and Karoline Solnitz were able to successfully immigrate due to the generous help of Kraus, who even offered them hospitality in her home near Bryn Mawr College. Her roomy villa became a waystation for refugees whose needs for care and counsel she was able to meet. Karoline Sollnitz, whose Social Democrat husband had died in a concentration camp at Fuhlsbüttel, was later to repay the generosity of Hertha Kraus by helping to translate Kraus' principal published work, *Casework*, a textbook for professionals. A further work in casework methodology was translated in part by Hartmut von Hentig, who had already in the 1930s come to know Kraus through the studies in public housing. Von Hentig later returned to post war Germany and there became a well-known professor of education.

It was no easy task to interpret for Germans the American casework method with its emphasis on individualized help within a psychoanalytic framework and with its focus on personal mobility and change. This approach, often better suited for the well-off client, had to undergo a number of modifications in Germany. Hertha Kraus brought back to her native land these new professional ways and, one might even say, an entirely new profession. Germans found themselves having to use the English word, 'casework', since adequate translations were lacking. Kraus wrote: 'Casework affirms the individual just as he is with all his limitations, so that we can expect him to learn how to in turn affirm others without prejudice or reservation.'

From Schirmmacher's biography we learn that, although the centerpiece of Kraus' published work, casework itself was never a main concern, either for her as a social worker or her as a social activist. She was led more toward community organisation and social policies. Schirmmacher credits her German sensibilities and attitudes toward social welfare for her having often been the voice of opposition within American social work. She was more than once at odds with her own professional colleagues in America.

Schirmmacher, who has long been teaching the history of social work, has managed with his comparisons of social systems and that of social work to bring new understanding to our notions of social welfare. In the present biography he has brought a significant segment of Quaker history into this fold.

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