



Université
franco-allemande
Deutsch-Französische
Hochschule

Doctoral thesis by

Theresa Renana Faye Hornischer

Supervisor:

Prof. Dr. Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey (Deutschland)

Prof. Dr. Claudine Delphis (Frankreich)

Title:

Maneuver and intervention strategies of female intellectuals in the interwar period in France: The case study Léo Wanner

Summary:

The question of what an intellectual is and which term of intellectual the legitimate one is has been preoccupying research about intellectuals in Europe for quite some time. Although different ideal types of intellectuals have been developed in numerous studies, all studies have one thing in common: the omission of women in the systematic analysis of intellectual figures. The term “intellectual” tends to have a male connotation within intellectual history.

Against this background, this PhD project explores female intellectuals in France between World War I and World War II. More specifically, the dissertation focuses on the female intellectual Léo Wanner. Though her name appeared occasionally in the press in the 1920s and 1930s, quite little is known about this historical figure. A historiographical investigation dedicated to the life and political commitment of Wanner is lacking within research.

It is a historical fact that during the interwar period the conditions to intervene in politics were more difficult for women than for men due to the absence of women’s social and legal autonomy. Needless to mention the fact that women’s suffrage was not introduced in France until 1944. So the main questions of the PhD project are: how much room did society and the political stage provide French intellectual women, in particular Wanner, so that they could find acceptance in the male-dominated “intellectual field” and be effectively heard and accepted in the public as intellectuals? Which intervention strategies and topics did Wanner use in order to intervene as an intellectual in the socio-political happenings? What key-values did she stand for? What did she campaign for? And to whom did she direct her words?

As a feminist, she was committed to women's suffrage and women's rights in the 1920s. As a publicist she took with her journal "S.O.S." an important role for the French section of the "Women's International League for Peace and Freedom". She travelled to Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco where she met other intellectuals but also alone to Uzbekistan and Tadjikistan. The voyages in the colonial territories and protectorates of France brought her to campaign against imperialism as a journalist. She spoke out against the repression of the indigenous population in the colonial territories of North Africa and the Middle East. Anti-imperialism, pacifism, anti-fascism and feminism: these attitudes epitomized the French Léo Wanner in her role as an intellectual during the interwar period.

Using Wanner as an example for an intellectual woman who is quite distinguished from her intellectual contemporaries, the PhD project can show the writing methods, networks and strategies, intellectual women used between the two world wars.