Papers Rosa Manus
Inventarisnummer: 0131
It was from the high 'stoep' of the Lower School on the Keizersgracht in Amsterdam that I saw her for the first time.

"Who is that little girl jumping down the steps followed by her little brothers?"

"That little girl? Why that is Rosa Manus. Quite often thereafter she attracted my attention amongst the crowd of swarming children of whom we, in the higher regions as a rule took little notice. One would hear her cheerful laugh in the corridor, or see her laboriously assisting her brothers in pulling on their goloshes. A small personality not easily to be forgotten, full of activity and cheerfulness and yet so quiet and decided in her serious manners.

I don't remember ever having talked to her in those days, and when I passed on to the Higher School where she would follow some years later, the distance between us would be greater still. I noticed her from time to time amidst a group of laughing girls, the centre of fun and gaiety, undoubtedly she was popular.
Undoubtedly she was popular, and yet, poor Rosa, her schooltime was not a happy one. A little 'fatty' with big spectacles she would stare hopelessly at the puzzles she was supposed to solve: A carpenter can do the work in half the time that three carpenters, working respectively so many hours etc. If only little Rosa Manus had been asked on the spot, she would have immediately found out which of the carpenters could have done the work in the shortest time and besides she would have made a devoted carpenter of him, who, for her sake would have worked a little harder still.

And as for languages, what did grammar mean to Rosa, subjuncitive, passé défini, futur conditionnel, so many stumbling blocks for poor little Rosa. But who could speak French more fluently with the Paris cousins or English with the English Miss Hope who looked after the younger brothers and sisters. Many years later Rosa told me about her miseries at school, though even that period had left her with many happy memories, memories of her friendships, the teaparties and little dances where Rosa could not have been missed, and Sunday afternoons when she was invited by
some specially select girl-friend.

But maybe best of all her memories was that in spite of her bad marks at school, some of the teachers took an interest in her and invited her privately to their homes to help her along. It was then that they came to know Rosa as she really was, a most sunny and intelligent child. Rosa's gratitude to those teachers was boundless and she kept up friendships with them all her life.

Though there was little contact between the senior and junior girls, this was no reason for Rosa not to 'flame' for those in the higher forms. She had a true her worship for some of them and she once told me that even when she met them many years later, some of them married and settled, they would still retain for her some of the glamour of her schooldays.

Yes, her worship was one of Rosa's characteristics but there was nothing sordid or exaggerated about it. It was the result of her happy nature, thinking so very little of herself and feeling no envy whatever, but being able to give herself up in admiration for those, who, according to her were either physically or mentally, or both, her betters.
Now, looking back on the years gone by, I realize
that more that this was one of Rosa's great qualities,
to believe in so many people and to keep on believing
in them.

Any little proof of talent, intelligence, prac-
tical sense or charm in other persons was a personal
boon to her. Hearing her speak of herself one would
think she possessed no talents whatever (and she had
many), but each time she met a person, young or old,
in whom she discovered some special quality, she
would express herself extremely enthusiastically on
their behalf. By her warm appreciation they would
oftendiscover for themselves in what way they could
make themselves most useful.

There was one thing for which Rosa knew, she
had special aptitudes, that was organising and getting
people to work together. It did not mean that she was
a paragon from the very start, she went through a hard
school of practice before she became a master in the
art of organising conferences, congresses, exhibitions,
bazaars, meetings, clubs either national or interna-
tional. Gradually she became the best-known and most
beloved link between women of all the civilized coun-
tries of the world.
After the Higher School many years passed before Rosa and I met again.

It was in 1908, while preparations were in progress for the third Congress of the International Alliance for Women's Suffrage. The Congress was to be held in Amsterdam and shortly before the opening Dr. Jacobs asked us both to attend daily in the Hall of the Congress to give all necessary information to the members and delegates.

In the intervening years we had not met, Rosa had done useful work in many directions. Under Mrs. Gompertz, the president of the municipal organization for serving meals to schoolchildren, Rosa had been attending three times weekly, dishing out soup to hundreds of children and cutting three times as many slices of bread, covering the bread with syrup and helping the little ones to the lavatory. Of this she made such a success, that, young as she was, she was made president of a whole district and believe me, her kitchens were the best organized of all.

The remaining time Rosa spent doing secretarial work for Johanna Naber. Miss Naber, of small stature, but with a great mind and a great soul, was one of the pioneers of the Dutch Women's movement,
which started from a basis of christian ethics. Here it was that Rosa, for the first time, came to know something of what was then called, the Emancipation of Women. She suddenly realized what she had not known before, the fact that she was a feminist and had always been one. She did not dream then that she herself would one day play a leading part in the movement. The feelings of veneration and respect she entertained for Miss Naber only increased with the years, but in time roles were sometimes changed and Miss Naber, in her great modesty, would come to Rosa for advice and information.

On the day the Congress opened Rosa fitted out a long table in the entrance-hall and covered it with time-tables, leaflet-guides, picture-postcards, theatre- and concert information, money change and a hundred other practical things her fertile imagination could think of. In a short time she was surrounded by a host of women asking the most diverse questions, and she seemed to find an answer to all of them. Moreover she immediately knew everyone by name, remembered the slightest details of their wishes and in a few hours had made friends with most of the delegates. The Suffrage Congress in Amsterdam was really the turning point
in Rosa's life.

From that day dates her great devotion to Mrs. Chapman Catt. In her own recollections Rosa tells of her first contact with Mrs. Chapman Catt. She had taken part in an old-fashioned wooden shoe dance during a festal entertainment of the Congress. From the platform Mrs. Catt noticed a little Dutch peasant girl dancing with such energy and tapping the wooden shoes with such graceful vigour that she seemed the embodiment of joy and willpower. Mrs. Catt wanted to know a little more about that girl and the next day, returning from a boat-trip, invited Rosa to accompany her in her car on the way back to Amsterdam. No happier girl than Rosa. Mrs. Catt proved herself to be a psychological wizard. All her life Rosa worked under her inspired friendship and in the years to follow would gradually work herself up to the unique position she held in the international as well as in her own national movement. From that time she knew what line to follow and she never swerved from it. To her it meant Service — service in the great cause for woman's freedom, service great or small to the women devoting their life to it.
During the Amsterdam Congress we had grown so enthusiastic for the obtainment of the vote, that we consulted Dr. Jacobs as to the possibility of starting a special propaganda committee. Dr. Jacobs being greatly in favour, installed us officially and soon we were joined by an active group of women, as keen as we were.

We started immediately with plans for Amsterdam, but we had little experience of the intricacies of public meetings and all that it entails.

Our first mistake was, we in that we did not realize that we were accountable to the Amsterdam Branch of the Society of Woman Suffrage and that we could not take any decisions without consulting and obtaining permission from that Committee. So we ran immediately into conflict with the president of that branch, Mrs. Schook-Haver, a convinced feminist of the old style, who, together with Mrs. Drucker was editor of the well-known weekly "Evolutie".

We went to these branch meetings with beating hearts and were usually severely admonished for having undertaken things on our own initiative.
The silly part was that, at the time, we did not quite realize what all the trouble was about and we rather felt as if spokes were put in our wheels without sufficient reason.

One day we had organized a meeting in one of the biggest halls of Amsterdam. To strengthen our means, (which were nil at the time) we charged an entrance fee of one guilder. One of our most popular actresses would address the meeting, moreover we had arranged several entertaining items for the evening. The indignation of the 'Branch' about this guilder entrance fee, which was called 'undemocratic' was so great, that Mrs. Schook-Haver installed herself in person at the entrance, admitting the society's members for ten cents (2d.).

The next time we wanted to do better. We rented an enormous hall in one of the poorer quarters and this time the admittance would be free to everyone. Martina Kramers held a spirited speech, but alas, she spoke to an empty hall. One of the ushers, who had been walking among the empty rows of chairs, suddenly had the bright idea of going into the street and
calling in passers-by to join the meeting. Some women entered out of mere curiosity and after Martina had finished her really excellent speech, all that could be heard was the doleful crying of a few babies at the back of the hall. Later, when Mrs. Docters van Leeuwen joined the propaganda committee we were able to book greater success, the meetings becoming so popular that the police had to be called in to keep back the crowds. After this period of conflict, however, we became very good friends with Mrs. Haver, who outside her board meetings was a very efficient and benevolent woman of high ideals.

We never felt very much at ease at the branch meetings. Often we were frightened by the sharp tone of the discussions and angry outbursts about what seemed to us unimportant questions. It was the custom amongst the old pioneers to address each other as 'mistress' regardless of age or marital state. On one of these occasions, when again we were taken to task by the President, Rosa, to her great dismay, heard her say:

"Mrs. Manus again is quite wrong in her argument".

I saw Rosa nearly jump up from her chair, for
she thought her mother was referred to and it gave her the shock of her life. It was a great relief after the strain of the meetings to be able to laugh off the many disturbing incidents of the evening. Then Rosa would relax and sometimes keep us in fits of laughter until the early morning hours.

Those who are acquainted with the ins and outs of public life know how difficult and often disappointing it can be. At meetings, (and the women's meetings were no exceptions) one will always find some quarrelsome person or selfish ambitious people, or pigheaded members and worst of all muddle-heads. Don't believe that Rosa was not exasperated from time to time. After a disturbing meeting meeting she would not mince words and exclaim: "For heaven's sake what a 'stinker' that woman is!" Then she would laugh in her catching way and try to think no more about it. Often have I seen it happen that afterwards Rosa would get around such a troublesome woman and make a devoted co-worker of her. After Rosa took the lead in so many public meetings the tone was considerably and permanently raised.
As the activities of the propaganda committee were extending, Rosa got more and more into close cooperation with Dr. Jacobs, until she became her faithful helpmate and partner. Between the years 1910 and 1911 Dr. Jacobs started a vast movement for the reductions of tariffs, with the ultimate aim of free-trade all over the world. Rosa took an active part in collecting signatures of sympathisers. One of our foremost bankers at the time, on whom she called to ask for this support, asked slightly ironically:

"Do you really think you are able to understand this most complicated problem of all economic questions?"

"I quite agree," she said, "that I don't understand the very first item of it, but you must know that we women are running this campaign on purely ethical grounds, very easy to understand, whilst you men have made of the world such a complicated structure that ordinary people like me cannot understand it any longer."

They both laughed, as they were very good friends.
In the summer of 1911, after the Stockholm Congress, Mrs. Chapman Catt and Dr. Jacobs went on their world-tour. During Dr. Jacobs' absence we worked actively on the suffrage campaign and started planning an historical exhibition of the progress of women's activities during the last hundred years at the occasion of celebrations to be held in 1913 of the centenary of Holland's independance after a short Napoleonic rule.

The Exhibition, called "Woman 1813-1913" planned on a modest scale soon took much larger proportions, collaboration coming from all sides. The work had to be divided amongst twenty-four sub-committees, working for the most part independantly. About seven-hundred women collaborated actively apart from those employed as salaried clerks. The exhibition lasted nearly five months was visited by three hundred thousand people. Queen Wilhelmina honoured it by visiting it twice. The Queen took such an interest in the proceedings that she had expressed her wish to receive at regular intervals two well-known women, one of them Johanna Naber, to give her all the information of the progress of the plans and explain the aims clearly to her. It was Rosa who led the Queen on her second visit, None happier than Rosa.
a moment of great satisfaction to her as she had a deep veneration for the Queen.

In fact it needed some tactful guiding of the royal party. The Queen's route had to be traced in advance, as the big hall occupied by the two societies of woman suffrage (Vereeniging en Bond), the walls covered by maps, statistical charts and propaganda material, had to be carefully avoided, as the Government considered it unconstitutional for the Queen to pass through that hall.

The Exhibition was not founded on a commercial basis but the funds had to be collected through private gifts. However the municipality granted us a small subsidy and to strengthen our funds some stalls were available to be let to enterprising firms.

I well remember one morning when we were sitting as usual at our big desk opposite each other, feeling rather depressed about our finances, I regret to say, I struck the table with my fist exclaiming:

"Rosa, we must let those stalls or else we will be ruined."

At that moment there was a knock at the door and a gentleman entered who introduced himself as a repre-
sentative of one of the biggest firms of household utensils, could he have a stall at our exhibition? Very seriously Rosa took out the chart and looking severely at me said:

"Is there still a stall vacant, do you think?"

After some deliberation about the price, the man took out his cheque-book and said:

"Well, I expect I shall have to bite through the sour apple. Can you let me have three of your stalls?"

hilarious

Needless to say we had a good laugh when he had left and 'biting through the sour apple' remained for a long time a favourite phrase at our head-quarters.

The year of the preparation for the Exhibition was a tremendous one for all the collaborators. At headquarters fortnightly meetings had to be held with each of the twenty-four sub-committees, the principal ones being those for: Labour, Industry, Education, Social work, Housing and Hygiene, Political activity, Literature, Art, Applied Art, Music, Gardening besides two for the Dutch East-Indies and Colonies and lastly but really the most important one, the Historical Committee. The latter
occupied one third of the vast grounds on the site of which was still to be found a seventeenth century country-house. This was restored into Dutch style and surrounded by smaller houses of the same period and tenanted by women working at the home-industries of those days or having little shops. It would lead me too far to enumerate the many other features of the Exhibition as for instance the big lecture-hall or the cinema with films illustrating women's activities all over the world and last but not least the Indian House reproduced from a typical Java home with its many out-buildings and its Javanese staff. Without Rosa's unwearying energy and optimism the Exhibition would never have opened at the fixed time, but she seemed to be indefatigable when she set her mind to a certain thing. The story goes that she wore out ten pairs of shoes, going daily from the head-building to the various annexes to see that everything was smoothly the ground occupied. Even so she still found time to attend as a delegate the Congress of Woman Suffrage in Budapest where she found, as often was the case, many things to do at the very last moment.
In the two years of close cooperation with Rosa, including the preparation, duration and liquidation (the latter still taking the best part of a year), I had ample opportunity of learning something more of the secret forces working within her and I began to realize what a fruitful and active future lay ahead of her. Specially during that last period of liquidation I became fully aware of Rosa's great qualities of heart.

A little army of salaried women had of course, been employed by us and the numerous sub-committees. Rosa was not content to dismiss these women with a simple word of thanks but she took the utmost trouble to find them adequate positions. For some she invented new kinds of jobs for which they were exactly fitted. Instinctively she felt where and how a person could be most useful and then combined the interests of different people to everyone's satisfaction. Oh yes, she had her disappointments but her motto was: If at first you don't succeed, try, try again. She sponsored many weddings and even found the husbands jobs after their liking.
I know of several women who called their first baby-girl Rosa. For many years afterwards I sometimes would meet at her house some smiling little woman, quite unknown to me, full of recollections of the 'great' exhibition, to her the turning point to happiness thanks to Miss Manus.

It is not my task to dwell on Rosa's home-life, but just as she worked for others outside her home, so she worked for those in the big circle of her family relations and friends. In fact, her home always came first, but she was able to combine the two aspects of her life in such a way that they did not interfere with each other.

The end of 1913 and the beginning of 1914 were times of great activity in the suffrage movement. Dr. Jacobs, full of energy after her world-voyage started a strenuous campaign and enlisted Rosa more and more for important work for the Society of Woman Suffrage and in the meantime arousing her interest for an action for world-peace. War was already threatening in the near future.

In February, under the auspices of the Society for Woman Suffrage, a huge procession through the streets of Amsterdam was organized, in which women from all over
the country and from the remotest villages joined.

In that same year Rosa took also part in founding the Dutch Women Club, an up-to-date and beautiful club in one of the old patrician houses on the Keizersgracht in Amsterdam which she made into a centre for women of all professions and circles of life.

Then the World-war broke out.

In July 1914 on Rosa's initiative a woman's emergency committee was formed within 24 hours, its first aim being assistance to the wives and children of the mobilized men and secondly, the organization of all kind of war-work to be done by women in case Holland should come into the war. As the war passed our door, this work was gradually taken over by the official instances and some of the women were absorbed by their committees.

The war sweeping over Europe destroyed irreparably the hopes for a better world, it was a cruel blow to all social reformers, pacifists and other idealists. Not everyone realized how deep the destruction of our moral heritage of forty years of peace had penetrated the social structure. Some kept hoping
against hope that something might be saved at least out of that heritage if the brutal forces could be stemmed in time. From many countries came the wish that women should pronounce themselves on the war and consider how they could work for a just peace.

On Dr. Jacobs’ initiative we organized in 1915 an International Peace congress in the Hague, with the cooperation of men and women from all over the world, the belligerent countries included. Many prominent women from Great Britain however, who intended to be present at it, were prevented by their government from crossing over to Holland, all shipping being cancelled for the time. Fortunately Miss Kathleen Courtney and Crystal MacMillan were already in Holland. To them now fell the heavy burden of representing their nation without the strong support delegation which had been appointed in an action going straight against the policy of their country. Generous support came from American women arriving at a strength of 40, under the inspired leadership of Jane Addams.

As usual Rosa was the moving administering force behind the scenes. The Congress was immensely popular in Holland. It was the last flicker of light amidst the darkness spreading over Europe. It demonstrated how great was still the good-will and wish for peace amongst the peoples of the world. Emily Balch, one of the American delegates to the Congress in her well-known book
"Women at the Hague" has given us a stirring account of the proceedings. How pleased Rosa would have been, had she known that Miss Balch had been awarded the 1946 Nobel Prize for Peace.

As was to be expected, no direct results were obtained, the war went on as before. Public opinion was proved powerless once the vast machinery of war had started. The Foreign Press was hostile. Mistrust and calumny we harvested from both antagonistic camps.

Rosa was undismayed and gallantly continued her way. When in 1919 the women of Holland at last obtained the vote, she gave her energy increasingly.
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race," she would say. Though many of her friends tried to convince her of the contrary she never swerved from that idea. The Jewish question always remained a great point with her.

In the spring of 1914 we spent a few weeks together in London. It was a most stirring time and as usual Rosa brought me into contact with many interesting people. Bad luck however would have it, that we went to theatrical plays, both of which the Jewish problem was the central point of interest. Back in our hotel, late at night, I found Rosa in her room prostrate with grief. I had never before seen her like that. Amidst tears she said:

"You simply don't know how dreadful it is to be born a Jewess."

We talked for a long time, but it seemed to give her little comfort.

"It is a thing I find so difficult to accept," she said at last, "nothing will ever change the world's attitude towards our race."

It struck me how deeply tragic she looked when she pronounced those words. Looking back on that night when I vainly tried to comfort her, it seems to me as if something prophetic and sinister was already in her mind.
her mind. Many years later in 1933, when the Nazi-party came to power, I was again reminded of that night in London. T

"The fate of the Jews is sealed from now on," she said to me. I thought she was exaggerating and said:

"But really Rosa, in Holland no harm will ever come to the Jews."

Was there in fact, anybody at the time, who could have believed in the beastly atrocities which have sullied forever Germany, forever in the eyes of the world—who could have imagined, even in his worst dreams, the terrible fate that awaited Rosa.

But she shook her head.

"Ask my father what he thinks of the Germans and their aims, he knows them well. Not even in Holland and maybe not anywhere in the world we shall ever be safe."

What a tragic irony of fate! A woman gifted with the happiest nature, full of good-will and loving service to others, fell into the hands of the most amoral people the world has ever known. If ever a German man or woman reads these lines, let them understand how deep the feelings of resentment are rooted.
in the hearts of all those who have known and loved Rosa Manus. It is only one case amongst millions and will take generations to forget.

One day, being in rather a melancholy mood, she asked a friend of hers:

"Is there really a fundamental difference between the Jewish and Christian conception of life?"

He produced a bible and read to her:

"Then one of them, which was a lawyer asked him a question tempting him and saying: Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment and the second is like unto it Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, On these commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

Her friend then said:

"Now listen to what Moses said: Hear O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might. (Deut. 6, 5) And in Leviticus 19, 18 Moses says: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as..."
This seemed to give her comfort somehow. Religious mysticism had been alien to her positive nature but here was a basis of absolute unity, something in which she believed with the whole force of her inner self. From then she went on with greater confidence.

Her friend continued: "And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God and there is none other than he: And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of God.... Yes Rosa, you have been a true Servant in the Kingdom of God. In my mind I see a great multitude baring their heads while you pass on to your martyrdom.