

UPF-Slovakia Honors First Woman to Receive Nobel Prize for Peace

Milos Klas
September 23, 2024



Bratislava, Slovakia – To commemorate the International Day of Peace, UPF-Slovakia hosted a lecture about Bertha von Suttner (1843-1914), who was an early champion of the peace movement and the first woman to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace (1905). The lecture took place in the Peace Embassy and was given by journalist **Barbara Grabner**, who expressed her admiration for the famous pacifist. Among the twenty-seven participants were three journalists.



In her lecture she drew many facts from the book "Bertha von Suttner. A Life for Peace" by the famous historian Brigitte Hamann. Ms. Suttner was the most influential political journalist of her time, writing 40 books in 30 years in addition to 12,000 articles. When in 1889 the novel "Lay Down your Arms!" was published, it was a sensation.

"She was completely surprised by her success, quickly becoming a skilled organizer on a large scale, founding several peace associations and becoming their president even though women then were not even allowed to be members of political associations. They could not vote or study, and political involvement

was considered unfeminine," explained Mrs. Grabner.



One international study accredited her with being the most famous woman in the world in 1900. There is little doubt that Ms. Suttner's friendship with Alfred Nobel had an impact on his will to fund a peace prize. Barbara Grabner made the following comments about their relationship: "She repeatedly asked Alfred Nobel to leave a generous endowment for peace activists so that they could work independently in the long term. They had completely opposite views. Alfred Nobel wanted to secure peace through deterrence, Suttner through international treaties and agreements." To strengthen her demands for a generous subsidy for activists, she wrote 24 long letters to Mr. Nobel.



Bertha von Suttner sought alliances with the left and the right, from above and below, addressing labor leaders and kings, fighting antisemitism and promoting equality for women. Rejected by left-wing women as a "class enemy" and derided in conservative circles as "Red Bertha," the baroness often found herself caught between fronts, a situation which she was able to manage only because the cause was more important to her than her reputation.

The Leipziger Tagblatt in 1904 wrote: "One has to admire the courage of this woman who, in spite of all ridicule and mockery, stands up for and defends her ideal of world peace in a time which seems to be a real mockery to peace." Although she was born and raised in Prague as Countess of Kinsky, she always considered herself Austrian, neither German nor Czech, but supranational. She championed also for a federation of United Europe, which then was unimaginable to most.

As always, the presentation was followed by a lively discussion over refreshments. The famous journalist Igor Cibula greatly praised the event later that evening in his report.