

WFWP Stuttgart, Germany commemorates UN International Women's Day 2020

Ute Lemme
March 7, 2020



Bertha von Suttner, Nobel Prize Winner from Austria

WFWP Stuttgart held an event to commemorate the UN International Women's Day, on the topic of the life of Bertha von Suttner, a woman who invested herself for international peace and cooperation, between 1886 and 1912.

After introductions and refreshments, the official program was opened with a prayer by Gabriele Schickert.

Bertha von Suttner was born in Prague in 1843 as Countess Kinski von Wchinitz and Tettau.

www.bing.com/videos/search... We watched a documentary film about her life; she was disdained and excluded from her Bohemian noble family because of her mother's lowly descent. Despite a good upbringing and education she later had to work for a living. She married Arthur von Suttner secretly and against the will of the noble von Suttner family who disinherited Arthur. The couple lived for several years under difficult conditions in Georgia, where they wrote articles- such as that written by Arthur about the Russian-Turkish war- for newspapers in Austria and Germany. Bertha became skilled in writing papers, articles and serialized novels which she could only publish under a man's name and not her own.

When the couple returned to Vienna, they were recognized by intellectual circles and Bertha had contact to famous writers and to a pacifist society in London. She started to research about war and its effects and this work was the inspiration for a realistic novel to which she gave the title: ‚Lay Down your Arms!‘ published under her own name. The book was a sensation and turned the contemporary view of war upside down. She became a prominent representative of the peace movement, and spoke at congresses and political peace conferences. She gave warnings about the powerful destructive capacity of modern weapons which, at the push of a button, could lead to the double suicide of enemies. She established peace academies, for example in Austria and Germany, and her contact with Alfred Nobel inspired the creation of a peace prize. In 1904 she was a key participant in the International Women's Conference in Berlin, and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1905. In her speech to the Nobel prize committee, she demanded an arbitrational settlement to peacefully resolve conflicts, a peace union of all countries and an international court of law. She died in 1914, in Vienna, shortly before the start of WWI.

After this documentary, the participants considered whether Bertha von Suttner's peace work was a failure or did she change the consciousness of the people of her time?

Ute Lemme presented the founder of the Women's Federation for Peace, Hak Ja Han Moon, as an example of contemporary efforts towards peace. In 2015, Mrs. Moon established the SunHak Peace Prize which was awarded this year to Ban Ki Moon, Bishop Munib Younan and President Macky Sall. Tearfully, she gave assurance that it was God's will that this world become a peaceful world family under God.' She has established many organizations, for example the WCLC (World Clergy Leadership Conference) whose goal it is to work for world peace. And-just as Mrs. Von Suttner did-she tours the world giving speeches, works to end poverty and inspires with her motto ‚peace starts with me“.

Reported by Ute Lemme
WFWP Stuttgart/Germany