

Bertha von Suttner is most often remembered as the inspiration for the Nobel Peace Prize and as the first woman Nobel Peace Prize Laureate. This publication explores her pioneering life for peace and how women peace builders today—from Bougainville to Colombia, Northern Ireland to Rwanda—are building on her legacy.

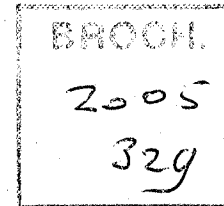
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The **International Peace Bureau (IPB)** is the world's oldest and most comprehensive international peace network. With 20 international and 246 national/local member organizations (and 200 individuals) in over 50 countries, it brings together people working for peace in many different sectors: not only pacifist groups but also women, youth, labor, religious and professional bodies. Bertha von Suttner served as vice-president of IPB. IPB itself was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1910.

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Printed by Drukkerij Tijn Uilenspiegel, Alkmaar, the Netherlands



The Life of Bertha von Suttner



and Her Legacy for
Women Peacemakers Today

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The Life of Bertha von Suttner and Her Legacy for Women Peacemakers Today

Introduction:

Where is Bertha Now that We Need Her? p. 3
by Cora Weiss

Bertha von Suttner (1843-1914): Her Life and Legacy p. 8
by Anne-Kathrin Glatz, Anouk Lloren,
Marielle Mumenthaler and Silvi Sterr

**In the Footsteps of Bertha von Suttner:
Women Peace Builders Today** p. 22
by Shelley Anderson

The Women Nobel Peace Prize Laureates p. 35



The Life of Bertha von Suttner and Her Legacy for Women Peacemakers Today has been produced jointly by the International Peace Bureau and the International Fellowship of Reconciliation.

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Illustrations: Cover: photograph© used with permission of the Nobel Foundation; **p. 11:** photo courtesy of IPB; **p. 25:** Swedish Postal Service.

Proofreading: Shelley Anderson, Colin Archer, Joyce Mumford, Amy Shifflette

Design and Layout: Françoise Pottier

Where is Bertha Now that We Need Her?

by Cora Weiss

It was 95 years before the vision of Bertha von Suttner found its way into international law. In October, 2000, the Security Council of the United Nations (UN) unanimously adopted a resolution that was drafted by a dozen women from civil society. This resolution calls for the **participation** of women at all levels of decision making and at all tables where the fate of humanity is at stake; for the **protection** of women during violent conflict and for the **prevention** of violence as a solution to conflict. UN Resolution 1325, unanimously adopted, has yet to be unanimously implemented. Under the UN Charter all decisions of the Security Council are to be carried out by member states. It's the law.

The centennial year of Bertha's becoming a Nobel Peace laureate offers a perfect opportunity for women, and all people, to study why she was recognized as the first woman peace laureate and one of the most important women of her time. While we're at it, why not study all 12 Nobel peace prize-winning women? It's a small group compared to the 79 men who have also received the peace prize. Since young women today do not have a lot of role models in the peace, justice and feminist fields, I sincerely hope such a study will be taken seriously. This booklet, co-produced by the International Peace Bureau, which Bertha von Suttner served as vice president, and the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, is a perfect place to begin our study.

This joint publication also provides a starting point to consider Bertha's unfinished agenda and the challenges that women continue to face. Indeed, as long as women remain unequal, under represented, sometimes unseen, often unheard, and not included in decision making, the whole world suffers.

Women, women everywhere and not enough in power

Have you ever thought about the percentage of representatives in national legislatures who are women? We may be 50 percent or more of the population in every state, but nowhere are we 50 percent of the decision-making bodies. Rwanda comes closest with 48.8 percent, but sadly that may be due to genocide. Kuwait, Micronesia, and Saudi Arabia have not one woman in their parliaments (www.thewhitehouseproject.org). Some countries require a minimum percentage of legislators to be women. Sadly the United Nations does not, so we often see 15 men sitting around the Security Council table where the most important questions of war and peace are debated.

Bertha cared deeply about women and women's power to influence the peace agenda. She helped to mobilize support for the first world peace congress called by the Czar of Russia and the Queen of the Netherlands in 1899. Russia couldn't afford to keep up with the arms race and decided that if European countries would agree to reduce arms, and declare some weapons illegal, it would save them money. Thus mustard gas, dum dum bullets and dropping bombs from hot air balloons were banned. Bertha was the only woman at the opening of that pivotal congress which also created the foundation for the international court of arbitration and the concept of the "pacific settlement of disputes".

Hundred years later, in May of 1999, civil society commemorated the event when 10,000 people gathered for the Hague Appeal for Peace conference. The conference produced the *Hague Agenda for Peace and*

Justice for the 21st Century, a 50-point document for getting from a culture of violence to a culture of peace. In recognition of Bertha, both disarmament and gender equality were central to the meeting's success.

We will learn much about Bertha von Suttner in this booklet. What we should think about is how her vision and her achievements can inspire our work today. It is very dangerous to second-guess the departed. But thinking about Bertha might encourage us, give us confidence, and help us to carry out Eleanor Roosevelt's admonition, "*When you have decided what you believe, what you feel must be done, have the courage to stand alone and be counted.*"

There is no "women's agenda". Everything that happens in the world affects women. But there is a peace women's point of view about what is happening and thereby lies the challenge.

We have seen what can happen when women are at the negotiating table, such as in Northern Ireland where two women participated in the talks that led to the Good Friday Agreement. They kept the attention of the negotiators on the human rights issues, which were so important to its acceptance. Agreements alone cannot solve problems without the active engagement of the community and government. But they provide a legal basis on which to build steps to reconciliation or to challenge acts which de-stabilize conditions.

Bertha, of course, gained fame with her book, *Lay Down Your Arms (Die Waffen nieder!)*, certainly the only disarmament best seller in history. We have already seen the demise of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM) and the future of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is fragile at best.

The ABM was considered the bedrock of the anti-nuclear missile regime. It was an agreement between the US and Russia during the cold war that established that if neither side could prevent the other from sending nuclear missiles over, then neither side would send them. Without restrictions

**"There is only one honest
means of protecting the
persecuted from persecution:
standing next to them."**

Bertha von Suttner

today, we can produce missiles that will shoot down incoming missiles, if they hit their target, spewing radioactive materials through the atmosphere. If they miss the missile, it is impossible to imagine the destruction and possible nuclear "war" that would ensue.

Where would Bertha be as the world gathers for a regular review of the NPT at the United Nations? Certainly she would be mobilizing public opinion in a massive effort to prevent the demise of the treaty that garnered the greatest number of member state support, and which is now at serious risk of demise. The NPT was a trade off between the then five nuclear weapons states and the rest of the world. If the world's non-nuclear countries would refrain from going nuclear, the nuclear nations would negotiate in good faith to get rid of their nuclear weapons. Now that the five have violated their commitment, it looks like the rest of the world wants to have their nuclear weapons, too.

For twenty years or more there were massive demonstrations, many led by women's peace organizations, against nuclear testing and nuclear weapons. *Hibakusha*, the remarkable survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and Japanese peace movements have led the way, but despite many children's nuclear nightmares, public attention is not as focused on this frightening threat as it once was. Bertha would be busy.

Bertha's commitment to disarmament would likely have had her engaged in the effort to abolish war, just as slavery, colonialism and apartheid have been abolished. Can't you hear her speaking out against an unbridled arms trade that has left the world awash in guns; debating the legitimacy of going to war without an imminent threat or clear and present danger?

She might even explode land mines in front of parliaments and palaces to demonstrate their lethal impact and the need for them to be outlawed.

Bertha combined her understanding of the disastrous nature of weapons, with her recognition of the need for greater participation of women, with her revulsion of anti-Semitism as a root cause of violence, to embrace a holistic approach to peace and justice.

That is her legacy, and that should be our agenda. To help future generations adopt this understanding, we should all be calling for the integration of peace education into all national systems of education as well as in families and communities.

This booklet is for women, men and young people. Read it, and dream about what it inspires you to do to make our world a safer, healthier and happier place for our children and grandchildren. For, as the poet Stephen Spender writes, "nothing happens unless first a dream."

*For more information on the International Peace Bureau see www.ipb.org;
for more information on the Hague Appeal for Peace see www.haguepeace.org.*

Bertha von Suttner (1843-1914):

Her life and legacy

by Anne-Kathrin Glatz, Anouk Lloren,
Marielle Mumenthaler and Silvi Sterr

The early years

Bertha von Suttner was 40 when she began to dedicate her life to peace. Born in Prague on June 9, 1843 as Bertha Sophia Felicita Countess Kinsky von Chinic and Tettau, she did not have the advantages in life that her noble name might lead us to expect. Bertha grew up fatherless, and her mother Sophie Countess Kinsky was a commoner who lacked the same status as a family member of the famous Kinsky clan. During her entire life, Bertha never managed to resolve the dilemma of being an aristocrat on the one hand and a commoner on the other. She remained proud of her heritage throughout her life and admired certain aristocratic values. Especially later in life, however, she became an ardent critic of the aristocratic class's backwardness, which she thought was "blessed with ignorance of all the things that move our century."^[1]

Soon after Bertha's birth, mother and daughter left the Kinsky palace in Prague to move to Brno in Moravia, where Bertha's guardian lived. She grew up in this secluded environment, reading extensively, studying languages and music, and taking part in society events. When her efforts to become a singer failed, she felt she could no longer depend on her mother's diminishing funds. At 30, she found work in Vienna as a governess

and companion in the house of Baron Karl von Suttner, a wealthy aristocrat. In 1873, when Bertha started work as the family governess, the von Suttners led a wealthy lifestyle, despite the Baron's having lost an enormous sum in the stock market, a fact he successfully hid from the family for several years. The four daughters of the Suttner family soon adored their governess Countess Kinsky, and the five of them were often joined by the family's youngest son, Arthur. Bertha and Arthur, who was seven years her junior, fell in love. Their secret was well kept by his sisters and themselves.

Meeting Alfred Nobel

After three happy years in the von Suttner household, Baroness von Suttner discovered the secret and dismissed Bertha immediately. Bertha found a new position in Paris with an "older gentleman"^[2] who turned out to be the 43-year-old Swede Alfred Nobel, then one of the wealthiest men in Europe. Having invented dynamite, Nobel aimed at developing it further so that it would make war so costly in human terms that countries would be deterred from resorting to war. Despite having never attended university, by age 17 Nobel was fluent in Swedish, Russian, German, English and French, in addition to his scientific achievements. Nobel also took a keen interest in the social problems of his time.

After her painful parting from Arthur, Bertha moved to Paris to become Alfred Nobel's secretary. Nobel had already become interested in the pacifist movement and applied his inventions to its service. At that time, Bertha knew nothing about the pacifist movement and had not yet shown any interest in this subject, which would become so important to her later in her life. There was a strong affection between Nobel and Bertha, but she longed to be together with Arthur again. After only one week as Nobel's secretary, she left Paris after receiving a telegram from Arthur, who begged her to come back to marry him. Although Nobel and Bertha had only known each other for a short time, they kept up their friendship throughout their lives by exchanging letters. Nobel would become a faithful moral and financial supporter of Bertha's projects.

The Caucasus years

Aware that they would not get permission to marry from Arthur's parents, Arthur and Bertha married secretly and eloped to Georgia. They had little money, but they were determined to make a living by their own talents. Arthur gave German lessons, while Bertha taught music and French. Bertha and Arthur also started writing. Bertha began with shallow love stories, which had some success. She produced *Es Löwos*, a poetic description of their life together, and published her first serious book, *Inventarium einer Seele* (*Inventory of a Soul*), in 1880. Influenced by Charles Darwin and other authors, she began exploring the idea of a society that would achieve progress through achieving peace. For the first time she formulated the demand for disarmament as the natural consequence of general progress. Alfred Nobel, whose ideas had also been very influential in her writing of the *Inventarium*, was sent a copy of the book. He replied with a warm letter of thanks. The book received positive reviews, and this and other publications facilitated the von Suttners' contact with well-known authors such as Conrad Ferdinand Meyer. However, there was no money to be made with this kind of writing.

Back in Austria

After nine years of financial struggle in the Caucasus, the von Suttners headed back to Austria in 1885. Arthur's parents finally accepted the couple after seeing how happy they were together and how they had been able to make a name for themselves



in literature. They returned to the von Suttner residence in Harmannsdorf, where the couple had to get used to life with a big family. The liberal couple clashed in their views with the conservative values not only of the von Suttner family, but also of aristocratic society. In her writing, Bertha criticises aristocracy with all its privileges and denounces the military pomp of the time. In her second serious book, *Das Maschinenzeitalter* (*The Machine Age*), published in 1889, she criticises many aspects of contemporary society. The "patriotism" of the 1880s, which was really nationalism, was a particular target. Contrary to mainstream ideology, Bertha was among the first to predict the dangerous results of exaggerated nationalism and the build up of armaments.

The von Suttners visited Nobel and immersed themselves in the intellectual life of Paris meeting French intellectuals such as Ernest Renan and Alphonse Daudet. It was in these circles that Bertha heard for the first time of the existence of an organized peace movement. Small peace groups existed all over Europe, but there was no central organization or coordination. The political atmosphere in Europe was tense and Bertha eagerly supported the ideals of the peace movement. In her opinion, an organized peace movement would be the only way to counteract the political tension. She later added to *Maschinenzeitalter* a chapter on the international peace movement and the idea of establishing an international court of arbitration which would settle conflicts between countries. While the book received positive reviews, it was addressed to intellectuals and thus did not receive wide recognition by the general public. Bertha intended her next book to make the peace movement known to a wider audience.

Die Waffen nieder

In the novel *Die Waffen nieder* (*Lay Down Your Arms*) the heroine Martha experiences the wars of Bertha's time. Her descriptions of the horrors of war were so real that the book had a huge public impact. It has been compared to Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. By 1905, *Die Waffen nieder* had been translated into 12 languages and had disseminated

pacifist ideas not through scientific arguments, but by appealing to people's emotions. Bertha engaged in extensive correspondence with pacifists all over Europe. While the book appealed to the public, intellectual circles branded it as utilitarian and paid little attention to it. Bertha received hostile reactions to her success also because she had expressed her liberal, anticlerical and Darwinist viewpoint so clearly. Bertha was ridiculed, with her critics often expressing their contempt for her ideas by referring to her being a woman.

Winter in Venice

Die Waffen nieder improved the Suttners' financial situation greatly, and they were able to spend the winter of 1890-1891 in Venice. For Bertha it was now much easier to get the contacts she needed. She met with Randal Cremer and Frédéric Passy, an English and a French parliamentarian who were also leaders of the peace movement which propagated the formation of an international court of arbitration. In 1888, the two men founded the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), an organization of national parliamentarians from different European countries that lobbied for limits on the arms race. During her time in Venice, Bertha became an active participant in the peace movement. Back in Vienna, she tried to get Austrian parliamentarians interested in the IPU and planned to create an Austrian peace society, which she later headed as president. Both projects succeeded because of her determination and the generous financial support of Alfred Nobel. Although Nobel often donated money, he did not lend his name publicly to the peace movement because he remained sceptical of Bertha's projects.

International Peace Congress and Bern Peace Bureau

Bertha soon became involved in organizing the participation of the Austrian peace society in the upcoming International Peace Congress in Rome. After some initial problems even before the Rome event because of nationalist

"We must defend ourselves against injustice...Not only the directly affected ones must react; also the outsiders must rise against injustice whenever they see it. Their silence is co-guilt and usually is due to the same motives as the silence of the victims, namely anxiousness."

Bertha von Suttner

tensions, the Inter-Parliamentarian Conference and the third International Peace Congress met in Rome in November 1891. The congress united pacifists from 17 countries.

After Rome, the International Peace Bureau (sometimes referred to as the Bern Peace Bureau) was founded with the financial support of different governments. The Bureau served as a central office fostering communication and publicity among the various peace societies. The president was Elie Ducommun of Switzerland. Bertha von Suttner was vice-president.

Von Suttner worked relentlessly for the peace movement by initiating the peace journal "*Die Waffen nieder!*", later called the "*Die Friedenswarte*," to which she regularly contributed articles on current events. In the future Peace Congresses, national problems arose time and again. Political problems between nations could not be eradicated overnight simply because all participants wanted peace and disarmament. Through her moral authority as a famous peace activist and as vice-president of the Bern Peace Bureau, Bertha von Suttner was often able to mediate between quarrelling parties. Although the outbreak of the Spanish-American war in 1898 was a big blow to Bertha's personal efforts, her optimism remained unshakeable.

The von Suttners and especially Arthur were not only committed to the peace movement, but also fought passionately against anti-Semitism, which

was prevalent all over Europe. Both wrote ardent letters denouncing hatred against Jews, and Arthur founded an association against anti-Semitism. Arthur believed this fight to be a crucial precondition for the success of any peace movement. In reaction to this new commitment, some critics now called her “Jew Bertha” in addition to “Peace Bertha.”

The Hague Peace Conference of 1899

Despite all her efforts, Bertha knew that the peace movement was not in a position to abolish war: “Only those who have the power in their hands - that is something the pacifists realize - can put the idea into action. But the idea, if it is repeated clearly, frequently, and unanimously enough, also possesses a power, namely, the power to affect the desire of the mighty to act. And that is what we want.”^[3] She firmly believed in an international legal system and waited impatiently for a leader who would commit himself to help the peace movement.

Bertha saw her hopes fulfilled in 1898, when Czar Nikolaus II of Russia issued his Peace Manifesto. This manifesto called for an end to armament and proposed the holding of an international peace conference. The document written by Nikolaus II was not well received by the press nor by governments, who referred to it as “Suttneriades.” Nevertheless, the von Suttners worked hard to get support for the Manifesto and for the Hague Peace Conference of 1899. Peace activists from all over the world came to the Hague wanting to be part of the conference—if not as official delegates, then at least as experts who would provide information and support for the numerous governmental representatives, most of whom had insufficient knowledge about the peace movement and about the court of arbitration it was working for.

Bertha von Suttner was the only woman invited to the conference’s opening. There she introduced, for the first time in history, the ground breaking practice of civil society activists lobbying government delegates. Peace activists and delegates would meet in her “salon” to exchange ideas.

She believed that many important issues were more easily talked about in a relaxed atmosphere than at the negotiating table. During the conference, Bertha was busy with press and information work. Official delegates at the Hague worked in three commissions dealing with disarmament, with the laws of war, and with the court of arbitration. While the commission on disarmament failed, the results of the commission on the laws of war were far more encouraging. For the first time in history, conflicting customary law on warfare was codified into normative law, harmonizing and unifying existing norms and thus constituting a revolutionary step in International Law.^[4] The most significant innovation produced at the Hague was reached in the third commission with the establishment of a Permanent Court of Arbitration, forerunner of the Permanent Court of International Justice, and a predecessor of today’s International Court of Justice.

Despite these encouraging and innovative results, Bertha was utterly disappointed because public opinion did not support the Hague conference’s efforts. Most European countries were drawn towards nationalism and their governments continued their arms race. It was evident that the first Hague Peace Conference was only the beginning of a long process. At the second Hague Peace Conference in 1907, the debate on disarmament was halted mainly by Germany and by the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which was becoming increasingly dependent on Berlin.^[5] The arms race was intensifying. All powers were preparing for war.

Financial worries

Bertha von Suttner was deeply troubled by these events. Her worries were aggravated by her desperate financial situation. The family estate of Arthur’s parents swallowed huge amounts of money. She had to take up writing for weekly newspapers again and wrote in great haste about subjects she was not interested in, a fact which showed in the poor quality of her writing. Her lack of success as a writer increased the need for money, and the need for money made it harder for her to sustain her peace activities.^[6] A new generation of writers had emerged in Vienna, and Bertha

and Arthur von Suttner's more utilitarian writing was totally outdated. Their financial situation got so bad that Bertha became unable to travel.

Arthur's death

In addition to financial troubles, Arthur and Bertha had personal problems. Being married to a successful woman was not easy for Arthur, nor was the age difference between them. Arthur became interested in his pretty, young niece Marie-Louise, who reciprocated his feelings. Bertha was deeply hurt and even talked about suicide. But she remained dedicated to her husband until his death in 1902 at the age of fifty-two. His death affected her deeply. She found consolation in a letter which Arthur had left for her, asking her to continue their work in the peace movement.

Prince Albert of Monaco's invitation to open a peace institute in Monte Carlo came as a welcome distraction. At the Grimaldi Palace she was able to make contacts with European aristocrats, for which she received a lot of publicity. It greatly increased her reputation; on her sixtieth birthday a questionnaire in the *Berliner Tagblatt* named her as the most important woman of her time.^[7]

Nobel Peace Prize

Alfred Nobel was a financial supporter of Bertha's commitment to the peace movement until his death in 1896. But he was also a friend who was often critical about her work, especially towards the establishment of peace societies and peace congresses. He discussed the peace prize with Bertha for the first time after participating in the 1892 Bern congress as a private observer. Bertha believed that what peace activists really needed was money to allow them to carry out their work. Time and again she tried to persuade Nobel to fully join in the peace movement. In his will he gave in to her urging. Thirty-five million Swedish crowns were to form a fund which would annually provide five prizes to people who, regardless of their nationality,

had done something outstanding for the good of humanity in the fields of physics, chemistry, medicine, literature, and peace. The wording was unusual: the prize would be awarded "for the man or woman who had made the greatest contribution to the brotherhood of mankind, the reduction of armies, and the promotion of peace congresses." The reference to a woman was very unusual at the time, and Bertha was convinced that she was implied. She was very disappointed when the Nobel Peace Prize was not awarded to her for some years. Shortly after a successful lecture tour to the United States, where President Roosevelt received her in the White House, she finally received the long awaited Nobel Prize in 1905.

Post Nobel: looking for financial support

Finding funds for the peace movement had always been an important part of Bertha's work, especially after Alfred Nobel's death. The largest piece of financial aid came from the American millionaire Andrew Carnegie, who had made his fortune in the railway, steel and oil industry. Carnegie had been in contact with pacifists since the turn of the century. He was very interested in the peace movement and had access to such influential people as US President Taft and Emperor Wilhem II. After the conference in the Hague, Carnegie used his money to build the Peace Palace, in the Hague, for the International Court of Arbitration. Bertha also convinced him to give generous allowances to peace activists and to the Bern Peace Bureau. In 1912, after her second extensive and very successful lecture tour to the United States, she herself received a lifetime pension from him.

Her last years

Bertha von Suttner died on 21 June 1914, only one week before the fatal assassination of the heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, in Sarajevo. This assassination triggered the horror of World War I. One month later, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. This was rapidly followed by other declarations of war. Talk about the

inevitability of war, which had been going on for years, finally became reality. In her last years, Bertha von Suttner relentlessly tried to convince the public, the press, and governments to work towards peace rather than war. She helped organize the 1914 international peace congress in Vienna, which never took place because of the hostility of Austrian officials and the outbreak of the war. Shortly before her death, she was honored by the making of a film based on her famous novel *Die Waffen nieder*.

Her legacy

In the aftermath of the attacks of 11 September 2001, it is interesting to ponder how Bertha von Suttner would have reacted to the “War on Terrorism.” What would she have thought of the announcement of permanent war and of the concept of “us” and “them” expressed in US President George W. Bush’s talk of “Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists”? Surely Bertha von Suttner would have addressed the root causes of terrorism rather than expanding the military apparatus to an unprecedented level and starting unnecessary and illegal wars. On the domestic level, she may have been appalled about the US Patriot Act and similar measures in other countries, which severely curtail civil and political liberties.

Over a hundred years after Bertha von Suttner’s call to lay down arms, a wide variety of disarmament initiatives are underway, often initiated and promoted by non-governmental organizations. From the agreement to ban landmines and the small arms initiative to international conventions like the Nuclear Non-Proliferation-Treaty, which will be reviewed in 2005, and the yet-to-enter-into-force Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, the peace movement has grown exponentially since the end of World War II. Recently public attention has turned once again to the dangers that chemical and biological weapons pose to peace.

The year 2005, however, is characterized by ever increasing military budgets in many countries, which threaten to lead to a new and very

dangerous arms race on a global scale. Bertha von Suttner’s message is more up to date and vital than ever before.

In a time when European nations were engaged in power struggles, a vicious arms race and colonization, Bertha von Suttner called for building bridges between peoples, for uniting different nations under a common goal, in order to build a lasting peace. She was a pioneer of a united Europe. The European Union (EU) now consists of 25 member states from Central and Eastern as well as Western Europe, bridging the major conflict lines of the twentieth century. It is important to note, however, that the proposed EU constitution contains references to global security policy that are disappointingly reminiscent of the balance-of-power politics so widespread in Bertha’s time.

Bertha von Suttner is relevant today also in terms of the Nobel Peace Prize: not only was she the first woman to receive it, but she had inspired the creation of the Prize in the first place. It is encouraging that the Nobel Peace Prize 2004 was awarded to Wangari Maathai, a Kenyan activist whose work connects environmental activism with the struggle for peace and human rights. Dr. Maathai is only the twelfth woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, while 79 men have been awarded the Prize since its inception. A new initiative is trying to correct this imbalance. By promoting the peace work of women around the world and in various walks of life, the “1000 Peace Women” campaign is documenting the work of women peacemakers and forwarding more women nominees to the Nobel Peace Prize Committee.

Bertha von Suttner played a significant role in the debate about the first international court, the Permanent Court of Arbitration. Its successor institutions—the Permanent Court of International Justice and the International Court of Justice—have taken international arbitration to a new level. Surely Bertha von Suttner would have been thrilled about the creation of the United Nations (UN) itself. Since its founding, the UN’s primary goal has been international peace, and it has focused on human rights as a precondition for international peace. The Rome Statute for an

International Criminal Court (ICC) is the most recent international agreement which creates a form of international jurisdiction that targets the responsibility of individuals rather than states.

In October 2000 the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. The resolution emphasizes the importance of women's equal participation and full involvement in all decision-making levels—national, regional, international—concerning conflict situations. In particular, women have to take an equal part in prevention, at the negotiation table during conflicts and in post-conflict peacebuilding. Furthermore, governments have to ensure that women play an equal role in peacekeeping and humanitarian operations and implement measures that support local women's peace initiatives. Though the resolution itself is an achievement that finally recognizes the vital role women play in peacebuilding, implementation of the resolution is still widely lacking.

Bertha von Suttner's mission is thus far from accomplished. The Centennial of her Nobel Peace Prize Award in 2005 will serve as the framework for a wide range of initiatives by peace activists in various countries. Bertha von Suttner was the Vice President of the International Peace Bureau (IPB). In collaboration with the Austrian Foreign Ministry, the IPB will organize a speaking tour of women peacemakers from Central and Eastern Europe. This speaking tour will be based around an exhibition on Bertha von Suttner, which will visit several countries. The exhibition will be connected with a number of conferences in 2005 and early 2006 related to Bertha von Suttner, women and peace, and peace education.

More information on Bertha von Suttner can be found at www.berthavonsuttner.info and www.ipb.org.

Sources

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Notes:

[1] Quoted in Brigitte Hamann, *Bertha von Suttner: A Life for Peace*, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, NY, 1996, p. 3.

[2] *ibid*, p. 21

[3] *ibid*, p. 135

[4] Arthur Eyffinger, The 1899 Hague Peace Conference, 'The Parliament of Man, the Federation of the World', Kluwer Law International, The Hague, p. 440

[5] Hamann, *Bertha von Suttner: A Life for Peace*, p. 163

[6] *ibid*, p. 166

[7] *ibid*, p. 83

In the Footsteps of Bertha von Suttner: Women Peace Builders Today

by Shelley Anderson

There are many lessons to be learned by peace builders today from the legacy of Bertha von Suttner. These lessons help make her contributions to international security so important and so lasting—and lasting they are, despite the lack of recognition in history books and by the public at large. Bertha von Suttner's vision and commitment helped to shape the modern international movement for peace.

Bertha's work for peace was informed by four critical factors. Despite being reviled as a utopian dreamer, she had a pragmatic approach to peace. She recognized that efforts to promote peace must always be linked to gaining access to political power and to decision-makers themselves. While decision-makers may ignore individuals, no matter how persistent or visionary such individuals may be, they cannot ignore mass movements. Mindful of the need to mobilize as many people as possible for the cause of peace, Bertha was a movement builder par excellence. She was also aware of the connection between peace and other social issues: she took a strong stand against anti-Semitism, and later in life became an equally strong supporter of the then international women's suffrage movement. Lastly, she freely acknowledged that peace building demands resources, especially financial resources.

A century after Bertha von Suttner became the first woman to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, these factors continue to be critical in peace building. They are especially critical in women's engagement in peace

building, as the examples which follow will show. Bertha von Suttner's own struggle as a woman peacemaker to be recognized as a leader, to have a voice and a space in public debate, is all too familiar to many women activists today. This is perhaps the foremost lesson to be learned, and it comes from Bertha's own life. It is the simple fact that peace is not possible without the active involvement of women and girls. Any movement for peace cannot ignore women's many roles in supporting conflict. Likewise, any movement for peace cannot afford to ignore the energy, ideas and leadership women and girls bring to building peace.

Gaining Access, Mobilizing Others

During an international consultation for women working in conflict areas, organized by the International Fellowship of Reconciliation's Women Peacemakers Program (see www.ifor.org/WPP for the report), women peace activists identified their lack of access to political decision-making as a primary obstacle in their work. "Women are not in decision-making bodies," said one activist from Cyprus. "Women are the victims of political events." A Palestinian activist agreed: "Women don't make political decisions independent of men—they learn to follow the political decisions of men." A Zimbabwean activist pointed out that "Women and girls cannot easily work for peace, because from the beginning they are marginalized as people who cannot make decisions."

Women have successfully organized in different ways to address this lack of access to decision-making bodies. One highly successful international campaign resulted in United Nations Security Council (UN) Resolution 1325, which specifically urges all UN member states to ensure the "increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in

national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict.”

A “Politics of Listening”

In Northern Ireland, peace women successfully formed a political party in order to provide input into the multi-party talks that led to the Good Friday Agreement. The Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition (NIWC) united women from both the Protestant and Catholic communities and paid particular attention to including previously marginalized sections of the communities in the talks on Northern Ireland’s future. The NIWC campaigned for issues that would make or break a sustainable peace, including improvements in health and social services; recognition of the rights and needs of victims of violence; the establishment of a Ministry for Children and Families that would promote direct access by young people to decision makers; and fair employment policies. Former US Senator George Mitchell, chair of the multi-party talks, noted the vital contributions the NIWC made to the peace process. The NIWC’s most important contribution, according to one member, was its development of a “politics of listening”.

In Liberia, too, women were sickened by a seven-year long war that had resulted in over 150,000 deaths. Six women pooled their money to travel to the 1994 Accra Clarifications Conference, in order to make a stand for peace. Denied participation because they were considered not direct parties to the conflict, the women grabbed microphones and demanded to be heard. Their forceful interventions resulted in one woman being included in a five-man council to implement peace. The Liberian Women Initiative (LWI) was born, in order to unite all Liberian women for peace, regardless of religious, tribal or political affiliation. LWI activists brought together warlords of all factions for peace talks, picketing the headquarters of warring factions when necessary. Warlords thought twice about backing out of promises when LWI threatened boycotts: one LWI strike, organized in cooperation with labor unions and students, paralyzed the capital for

two days. The LWI conducted massive voter education efforts and demanded demilitarization before elections, in addition to making sure that peace messages were given radio and newspaper coverage. One LWI founder, Ruth Sando Perry, was later elected interim president of Liberia—the first woman head of state in African history.

Women are often given the primary responsibility to maintain family relationships and community networks. This position, and the accompanying socialization in skills such as communication and trust building, can also be used to mobilize large groups of people for peace. One example of this comes from Asia, where in India and Pakistan, families may be sold into slavery to pay off debts. The bondage may last for generations, as was the case for Suraj Kali and her family. They labored unpaid in a stone quarry in India, until Suraj organized the whole village to demand their freedom. Despite beatings, the community stood firm and also demanded that part of the stone quarry be turned over to them so that they could support themselves. “If you cannot give us land like that then shoot us dead,” Suraj said to the slaveholder. He finally gave in to the community’s demands. “Now we are not tied to anyone,” Suraj says. “We are buying and selling stones of our own. We are able to teach our children.”

Such networks may start off small, as in 1988, when a group of Israeli women stood in silence along a busy street, in order to protest the Israeli occupation of Palestine. Dressed in black as a sign of mourning, Women in Black has grown into an international network, organizing peace actions in countries as far apart as Azerbaijan, Germany, Israel, India, Indonesia, Serbia, the UK and the USA.

Rebuilding lives, rebuilding societies

Building peace movements that cut across divides is characteristic of many women’s peace efforts. Such cross community work demands good relationship-building skills, the ability to listen, and the willingness to grapple with often painful issues of forgiveness and reconciliation.



Building peace in a post-conflict situation is too often thought of as a matter of rebuilding roads and power plants. Such material infrastructure is of course important, but so too is rebuilding the social infrastructure. Many women peacemakers are concerned with the psychosocial, relational and spiritual aspects of peacebuilding. The women's group Pro Femmes/Twese Hamwe in Rwanda has built "peace villages" which bring together both Hutu and Tutsi widows and orphans, in a graphic illustration that the two communities can live together again after the brutal 1994 genocide. Peace women in Cyprus have organized a bi-communal choir, children's peace camps, and internet networks in their work to bridge the divide between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities. In East Timor, after a military occupation by Indonesia that resulted in the deaths of one-third of the population, women peace activists in groups like the Peace and Democracy Foundation (PDF) have persuaded male leaders to give a voice to women and youth in traditional reconciliation rituals. PDF is also helping widows' groups to organize both income generating projects and demands for justice. In the USA, women trainers from the Muslim Peace Fellowship and the Baptist Peace Fellowship are pioneering training mixed groups of Muslims and Christians together in active nonviolence, in an attempt to heal the increasing mistrust and fear between these communities.

Such interfaith peacebuilding is crucial in a world where religion is increasingly becoming a factor in conflict. In the Netherlands, the Christian Vera Tenrue and the Muslim Farida Pattisahusiwa co-founded the peace group Women for Peace in the Moluccans. In addition to organizing migrant and refugee women together in the Multicultural Women Peacemakers Netherlands, they have initiated women's dialogue groups and peace projects in the Moluccan Islands itself. In Bougainville, women peacemakers united all Christian denominations on the Pacific island into the Inter-Church Women's Forum, which has helped train women throughout the island in vital peacebuilding skills. Hiking alone into the jungle to persuade rebel soldiers to lay down their arms, Bougainville women are an example of the resources religion can provide for peacebuilding.

Don't Let Companies Cheat You

Many women peace activists today are working within a framework that recognizes the interconnectedness of issues of sustainable development, justice and peace. A just economics, where there is an equitable distribution of resources and where such resources are used for human needs rather than military needs, is the cornerstone of such a framework. The following examples of the connections between peace and the just distribution of wealth come from Africa.

Occupying oil facilities, and taking oil officials hostage, is nothing new in Nigeria's oil-rich Delta State. Men, often armed, try to take over the oil facilities periodically in order to force oil officials to make good on promises of jobs, running water and electricity for local communities. Their efforts meet with counter violence from the police.

All this changed in the summer of 2002, when 600 unarmed women occupied the Chevron Texaco oil terminal in Escravos, Nigeria. For ten days they surrounded 700 Western oil workers and forced oil officials into negotiations. The women from the Ugborodo and Arutan communities wanted jobs for their sons, electricity and running water for their villages; the building of

schools, clinics and town halls; and help in building fish and chicken farms so they could sell the food back to the facility's cafeteria.

How did unarmed women succeed where armed men had not? "Our weapon is our nakedness," explained one woman. The women employed a traditional shaming device. They threatened to strip naked if the oil company did not meet their demands. It worked. Despite reinforcements of 100 police officers and soldiers armed with assault rifles, oil officials agreed to hire five people a year over the next five years, to install water and electrical systems in the villages, and to build schools and a town hall.

The women were well organized and practical. They brought with them food and a clear strategy. "I was the leader of the air strip team," explained Anunu Uwawah. "If any plane came, I would drive my people there and we circled it." After the successful action, women from other villages occupied four other ChevronTexaco oil facilities in southeastern Nigeria. Uwawah offered this tip to others: "I give one piece of advice to all women in all countries: they shouldn't let any company cheat them."

Green Africa

Trees are essential to village life in Kenya. Some trees are considered sacred and used in rituals to make peace; others are used to build homes. Collecting firewood for cooking and heating is a daily chore for village women. Deforestation results in erosion and is a stumbling block to development. Lack of development increases the burden on women of providing for the family.

Dr. Wangari Maathai sees these connections. In 1977, through the National Council of Women of Kenya, she launched a movement to protect the environment and to promote women's leadership. Using seedlings grown in her own backyard, she educated women on the need to plant trees. The highly successful nonviolent Green Belt Movement was born.

Today an estimated 80,000 people, including women and school leavers, have salaried work through some 3,000 nurseries in Kenya. Seedlings are raised and then sold to the Movement. Green Belt Rangers, mostly disabled people, educate communities on the planting and care of the seedlings, and regularly check that all is going well, thus ensuring an 80 percent survival rate for the trees. Over 20 million trees have been planted on farms, and in compounds of schools and churches across the country. The Green Belt Movement has spread to 30 other African countries.

The struggle has not been easy. Wangari Maathai was clubbed and jailed for leading a civil disobedience campaign to save Uhuru Park in Nairobi's center. Police closed down her office to protect politically well-connected developers who wanted the Park for a construction project. In January 1999, she and two supporters were hospitalized after being attacked at a peaceful demonstration in Karura Forest, in northern Nairobi. She had led an attempt to plant seedlings there to replace trees that had been felled by real estate developers. The next month, after three Members of Parliament were arrested for inciting the protests, she barricaded herself in her own home to avoid arrest.

The struggle to save Karura Forest was also a struggle against government corruption, as then-President Arap Moi had transferred the land to private developers in order to raise money for his re-election campaign. The previous year, in October 1997, Wangari had organized an invasion of the Forest, to stop development of a luxury housing project. The fifty armed guards threw down their guns and ran away when they saw 500 activists marching on the site. The activists burnt the site offices, disabled concrete mixers and trucks, and planted over 2,000 trees.

"We have a special responsibility to the ecosystem of this planet," Wangari says. "In making sure that other species survive we will be ensuring the survival of our own." After the December 2002 elections that brought in a new government, Wangari was appointed Assistant Minister for the Environment, Natural Resources and Wildlife. In December 2004, she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Sweeping Change

A broom hardly seems a symbol for radical social change. This commonplace tool, used by millions of women and girls everyday around the world, is usually seen as a confirmation that women's place is in the home—not in the streets or at the negotiating table. In the hands of women activists, however, brooms and other common household items can take on a whole different meaning.

On March 27, 2003 some two dozen women with saucepans gathered outside No.10 Downing Street, the home of the British Prime Minister, to protest against the war in Iraq. They especially wanted to protest against "the harm, fear and injuries being caused to women and children." One demonstrator reported: "We started off nervously banging saucepans with wooden spoons as the police looked on. On the other side of the road a group of Sikh protesters had been corralled behind barriers. We resisted the police's determination to do the same to us. Undoubtedly, as the noise levels rose, our fellow protesters will have been relieved about the distance between us." The women eventually pushed passed the barriers, then sat down in the street and continued making noise until police carried them off. They then walked up to the Ministry of Defence banging on saucepans and chanting anti-war slogans. "Banging pans shows how enraged we are about this war, but I was surprised how effective it was for releasing all those pent up feelings of anger and frustration," the demonstrator continued. The women decided to continue with the action twice a month, until the war officially ended. There was only one change—they brought ear plugs.

Roses, brooms and valentines

Today in Zimbabwe "the police can arrest you for anything, anywhere, at any time," according to one Zimbabwean. In February 2003, the multi-racial network Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) organized walks in Harare, Bulawayo and Victoria Falls on February 15 to protest against the

escalating political violence in their country. Armed with valentine notes and roses to give to passers by, the women walked under a banner that read, "Yes to love, No to violence". Despite their peaceful protest, the walkers in Harare were ordered to disperse by riot police. They responded by sitting down on the pavement and singing the national anthem.

In Bulawayo the walk had included almost 300 women. Some of the women beat empty pots with cooking spoons to draw attention to food shortages throughout the country. Police charged into the gathering and 15 women were hauled off to jail and held overnight. They were released the next day, and stepped out on to a pavement in front of the jail that supporters had strewn with roses.

WOZA was back in May for Mother's Day when 400 women gathered in Harare. They prayed, sang and swept the square in front of the Parliament building with brooms, under the slogan "It's time to sweep away the violence. It's time to put our house (Zimbabwe) in order!"

WOZA continues to organize women across racial and tribal lines for peace in Zimbabwe, despite an increasingly repressive government. The draconian Public Order Security Act (POSA) forbids meetings of three or more people without government permission, and nongovernmental organizations are not allowed to receive funding from outside the country. Rape by police and security forces, in order to intimidate the government's political opponents, is increasing. According to South Africa's Institute for Democracy, between the years 2000 to 2001, 40 percent of the victims of political violence in Zimbabwe were women.

Washing politics clean

On the other side of the world, women are also recognizing the importance of good governance for peace. Latin American women have a long history of nonviolent resistance to dictatorship, from the Mothers of the Plaza in Argentina in the late 1970s to women in the peace network Ruta Pacifica

in Colombia today. By the 1990s Latin American women's groups were proclaiming that "Democracy begins at home." The fierce dichotomy between private life and public life was critically examined. The tradition that women belonged solely in one sphere and men in the other was challenged.

This was especially true in Peru, where a massive people's campaign against government corruption moved democracy into the streets. In 1997, Peru's then-President Alberto Fujimori announced that he would run for president for a third time. When the Constitutional Tribunal ruled that this was illegal under Peru's constitution, Fujimori dismissed the Tribunal's judges. In protest, a student group in Lima went to the steps of the Congress building with brooms and signs that read, "We are sweeping a dirty Congress. We are defending democracy and human rights."

Continuing the housekeeping theme, other activists printed plastic garbage bags with the face of Fujimori, and encouraged the public to fight political corruption by "throwing out the trash." In yet another action that spread from Lima to throughout the country, activists gathered in front of the government palace every Friday at one o'clock in the afternoon and washed a Peruvian flag. The flag, they said, had been dirtied by corruption and human rights abuses. Later, when Fujimori left the country and a transitional president took office, the activists presented the new leader with a clean flag.

Women Peace Builders Today

Like Bertha von Suttner herself, activists in women's peace movements have broken new ground in developing strategies, organizations and tools for peace. Their work is often grounded in the pragmatic realities of daily life, realities which have the potential to lead to new definitions of peace. "There is a masculine conception of security, which involves an individual assertion of your own power and influence, pushing your own interests until there is a counter resistance," stated former International Alert

**"Universal sisterhood
is necessary before the universal
brotherhood is possible."
Bertha von Suttner**

Secretary General Kevin Clements at the 1999 international seminar 'The New Paradigm of Peace, Security and Development: A Gender Perspective' organized in Finland's parliament. Other definitions of security can differ from concepts of peace based on weapons or superior military strength. "Women know they are most secure when in solid relationships, reciprocal relationships based on cooperation. We need to assert this holistic understanding of how we relate to one another more," he said.

Like Bertha von Suttner at different points in her life, contemporary women peace builders are often impoverished and lack the necessary resources to do their work. Peace needs resources. Bertha understood that one essential resource for peace was money. Her own privileged background gave her two important qualities of any modern-day successful fundraiser: self-confidence and access to circles of people with money. One of the biggest needs of today's women peace builders is financial support.

Along with financial support, peace needs human resources. Peace is the responsibility of every one of us. Peacebuilding is a collective effort and not the result of a few individuals' actions. While individuals like Aung San Suu Kyi, who has suffered over seven years of house arrest in her role as leader of the current struggle for peace and democracy in Burma, or Bertha herself, inspire by their courage and determination, their lasting contribution to peace building comes from the ability to articulate the aspirations, and guide the work, of larger groups of people. It is these larger movements which create social change.

For more information on IFOR's Women Peacemakers Program, see www.ifor.org/WPP.

Further Resources

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You Can't Kill the Spirit, Pam McAllister. 1988, New Society Publishers, Philadelphia.

This River of Courage: Generations of Women's Resistance and Action, Pam McAllister. 1991, New Society Publishers, Philadelphia.

Green Belt Movement, PO Box 67545, Nairobi, Kenya. Tel. 254 2 573 057 (fax: 504 264). Email: gbm@iconnect.co.ke Web: www.greenbeltmovement.org. Also organizes Green Belt Safaris which provide home-stays and visits to development and environmental projects.

The Naked Truth: Successful Nonviolent Takeover by Nigerian Women, edited by Walter Wink and Jo Clare Hartsig, Fellowship: a magazine of peacemaking published by the Fellowship of Reconciliation/USA, Vol. 69, No.3-4, March/April 2003. Web: www.forusa.org

The Muslim Peace Fellowship/Ansar as-Salam, PO Box 271, Nyack, New York 10960, USA. Tel. +1 845 358 4601; fax +1 845 358 4924. Email: mpf@forusa.org. Web: www.MPFweb.org

Peacewomen is the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom's on-line resource for news about women's peace activism and developments on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325: www.peacewomen.org (in English, French or Spanish).

THE WOMEN NOBEL PEACE PRIZE LAUREATES

1. **Bertha von Suttner** (1843-1914), born in Prague, then part of Austria. Writer and Honorary President of the Permanent International Peace Bureau. Awarded 1905.
2. **Jane Addams** (1860-1935), USA. International President of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Awarded 1931.
3. **Emily Greene Balch** (1867-1961), USA. International President of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Awarded (with John Mott) 1946.
4. **Betty Williams** (1943-), Northern Ireland. Co-founder of the Peace People, an IFOR branch. Awarded (with Mairead Corrigan) 1976.
5. **Mairead Corrigan** (1944-), Northern Ireland. Co-founder of the Peace People, an IFOR branch. Awarded (with Betty Williams) 1976.
6. **Mother Teresa** (1910-1997), Macedonia. Founder, Missionaries of Charity. Awarded 1979.
7. **Alva Myrdal** (1902-1986), Sweden. Researcher and disarmament activist. Awarded (with Alfonso Robles) 1982.
8. **Aung San Suu Kyi** (1945-), Burma. Activist for human rights and democracy. Awarded 1991.
9. **Rigoberta Menchu Tum** (1959-), Guatemala. Activist for the rights of indigenous peoples. Awarded 1992.
10. **Jody Williams** (1950-), USA. Anti-landmines campaigner. Awarded (with the International Campaign to Ban Landmines) 1997.
11. **Shirin Ebadi** (1947-), Iran. Lawyer and human rights activist. Awarded 2002.
12. **Wangari Maathai** (1940-), Kenya. Environmentalist and women's rights activist. Awarded 2004.