



international conference

7–8 October 2019

Prague, Czech Republic

Bertha von Suttner:

130 years of ideas

that don't get old

CONFERENCE REPORT



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Introduction

Born in Prague in 1843, **Bertha von Suttner** was a Czech-Austrian pacifist who became the first woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. She was an active peace movement leader who devoted her life to the struggle for peace, believing that a right to peace could be demanded under international law. She is most known for her novel **Lay Down Your Arms!** recognized worldwide and translated into multiple languages.

Lay Down Your Arms! was translated to Czech shortly after it was first published in 1889. Since then, the original translation had become archaic and only a few copies of the original edition were preserved. In 2018, **PragueVision Institute for Sustainable Security** initiated a project to retranslate the book in order to publish it in 2019, on its 130th anniversary. Students of the Institute of Translation Studies, Faculty of Arts, Charles University, translated the book into contemporary Czech.

The book was launched at “**Bertha von Suttner: 130 years of ideas that don’t get old**”, an international conference that was held in Prague on October 7–8, 2019, to commemorate Bertha von Suttner and raise awareness in the Czech Republic about her work.



DAY 1:

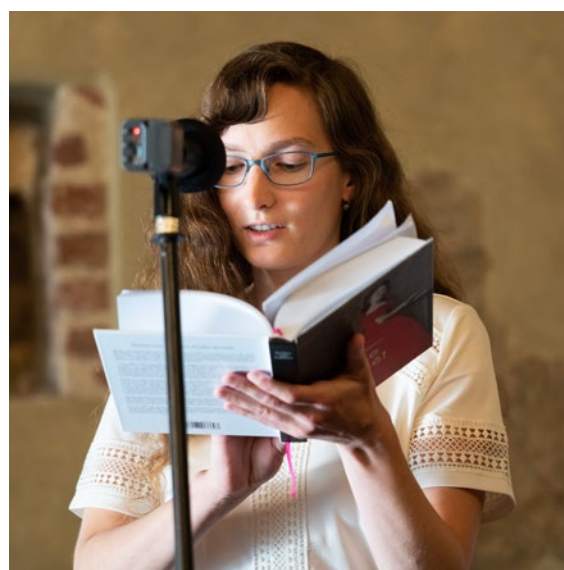
7 October, 2019

Old Town Hall

Book launch

The new Czech edition of **Lay Down Your Arms!** (in Czech: **Složte zbraně!**) by Bertha von Suttner was officially launched in the morning of October 7, 2019, before the start of the international conference.

Prague Councillor for Culture **Hana Třeštková** provided auspices for the event, as well as beautiful historic conference rooms of the Prague Old Town Hall. The book launch was co-organized with the publisher **Prosvěta**. **120 copies of the book** were distributed to guests of the book launch and conference.





Notable speakers

Patrons of the book

Věra Roubalová Kostlánová (former dissident and Charter 77 signatory) and **Taťana Fischerová** (actress, politician and activist)



Pavel Čížinský, Mayor of Prague District 1 where Bertha von Suttner was born



Ivona Remundová and Filip Remunda, publishers of the book



Martin Benda, vice-chair of the Prague City Committee on Culture, Exhibitions, Tourism and International Affairs



Věra Kloudová and Petra Mračková Vavroušová, Charles University professors who managed the book translation project



Charles University students **Anežka Matěnová** and **Tereza Matoušová** reciting from the book and speaking on behalf of the team of translators



Conference opening & Session I

The conference was opened by conference coordinator **Vanda Prošková** on behalf of PragueVision, and **Thomas Oellermann** on behalf of Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung.

Panel discussion: The Legacy of Bertha von Suttner

CHAIR:

Vanda Prošková (Czechia)

PANELISTS:

Peter van den Dungen (UK)

Chair of the Bertha von Suttner Peace Institute in The Hague

Colin Archer (UK)

Former Secretary-General of the International Peace Bureau (IPB)

Eva Quistorp (Germany)

Co-founder of the German Green Party, former MEP, advisor to the World Future Council



Mr. Peter van den Dungen spoke about **Bertha von Suttner's legacy in the present world**. He compared the philosophical questions of war that Suttner explored in *Lay Down Your Arms* with the issues of today, especially nuclear disarmament. Further, van den Dungen pointed out the Nobel Peace Prize as another piece of her legacy, correcting the popular belief that the Peace Prize was Suttner's idea, while in reality Suttner was simply just asking for money needed by peace movements. Further, van den Dungen declared Suttner the "first peace journalist," stressing how relevant this is in today's world of powerful media. Lastly, The Hague's Peace Palace and the Permanent Court of Arbitration were named as direct legacies of this powerful figure.

Mr. Colin Archer presented the "rollercoaster" **history of organized European peace movements**, starting 200 years ago with the London Peace Society establishment and followed by a "Yes We Can" era, to which Suttner and the International Peace Bureau (IPB) belong. The peace Movements' post-WW1 "never again" spirit transformed into post-WW2 excitement about the United Nations, only to soon narrow into mainly anti-nuclear action. The Iraq war and other armed conflicts have led to a new wave of global peace and anti-war movements. Mr. Archer closed by presenting the IPB's work. He stressed how influential Bertha and her colleagues were in laying the groundwork for the establishment of the League of Nations.



Ms. Eva Quistorp concluded the session by highlighting the **role of women's peace movements**. Quistorp acknowledged the progress that women have made and appreciated the many women working in the fields of disarmament, women rights or climate change since the UN Rio conference of 1992. Ms. Quistorp urged that society question mass media and "overcome lies and propaganda" hurting our democracies. Women peace makers should not only be heard more, their funding should also increase. Based on her personal experience, Quistorp recommended a "Bertha von Suttner" prize as an alternative Nobel Peace Prize for women in war-torn regions or other violent environments. Lastly, Ms. Quistorp suggested an integrated campaign to shift the money invested in arms and nuclear weapons to "social, cultural and ecological healing of the planet."



Session II

Panel discussion: Supporting civil society action through international peace prizes

CHAIR:

Christine Muttonen (Austria)

PANELISTS:

Gunnar Stålsett (Norway)

Former member of the
Norwegian Nobel Committee

Fredrik S. Heffermehl (Norway)

Author, lawyer, board member
of The Nobel Peace Prize Watch

Alyn Ware (New Zealand)

PNND Global Coordinator,
Right Livelihood Award laureate



Bishop Gunnar Stålsett outlined the Norwegian Nobel Peace Prize Committee's functioning and intentions. Selected by the Norwegian parliament, the 5 "stewards of Nobel's will" are tasked with a complex and often controversial decision to select one individual, institution or movement out of around 300 nominations each year. Mr. Stålsett highlighted the **ethical values that have formed our civilization and that constitute our shared identity**. Today there are setbacks threatening European identity, destroying its unity and undermining fundamental values. Thus, Suttner's words are a wake-up call to Europe today. Mr. Stålsett also commented on the evolving nature of peace, which in the 21st Century must include consideration of the environment and sustainable development.





Mr. Fredrik S. Heffermehl opened by explaining why the work of civil society is closest to the objectives of Nobel's will, rather than world leaders who are often given the award. According to Heffermehl, the work of disarmament and anti-war organizations is vital, yet sadly underfunded, and needs the award money.

The Peace Prize may be seen as a two-sided coin with "Nobel on the face and Suttner on the reverse," Heffermehl suggested. We should therefore stick to what Nobel had in mind for the award, rather than to what peace may mean to us today. To emphasize this, Mr. Heffermehl suggested the Prize should be called "Lay Down Your Arms Award," as it was Nobel's wish for disarmament to remain in its heart, and Suttner's ideas are now "more relevant than ever."

Mr. Alyn Ware spoke about the role of peace prizes in today's world and introduced the Right Livelihood Award as complementary to the Nobel Peace Prize. He explained how essential such a prize is in highlighting **"success stories"** of peace and human rights. This is vital because media tend to focus on conflicts and violence, rather than peace and conflict resolution. According to Ware, such prizes also promote global cooperation and much needed dialogue. Ware further appreciated the prizes' monetary benefits, as they support the work of campaigners. Mr Ware, for example, used his Right Livelihood Award money to initiate two disarmament campaigns, one of them engaging youth.



Q&A



Both sessions were followed by a discussion with the audience.



Workshop for students and youth

**Raising awareness
about Bertha von
Suttner and her
message of peace and
pan-europeanism**

The student workshop was an hour-long session for university students and youth, mainly from the Czech Republic and Germany. Topics included Bertha von Suttner's ideas on peace and pan-europeanism, as well as peace education and peace awareness of youth. Participants considered the current situation in the Czech Republic and Germany, and brainstormed what could be done to further spread awareness of Suttner's ideas. It was agreed that education is vital, and a program for university workshops was proposed to enlighten students of international relations, international law and similar fields.



Movie screening

As a side-event of the first day of the conference, participants and public had the opportunity to attend a movie screening of **"Love for Peace,"** a German biographic movie about the life of Bertha von Suttner and her friendship with Alfred Nobel.

The movie was in German with English and Czech subtitles. The screening was followed by a discussion in Czech about Suttner's adventurous life.

We thank the **Assembly of German Associations in the Czech Republic** for sponsoring this side-event.





DAY 2:

8 October, 2019

Ministry of Foreign Affairs



Welcome

Ms. Alena Gajdůšková MP, PNND Council Member, welcomed the participants to the second day of the conference on behalf of herself and the Minister of Foreign Affairs **Tomáš Petříček** who provided the auspices for the day. **“Such peace events suit Prague,”** Ms. Gajdůšková applauded.

She commented on the deteriorating global situation as world leaders are reviving nuclear deterrence and withdrawing from key international treaties. She mentioned New Zealand as a “role model” in peace and alternative dispute resolution. Gajdůšková concluded her speech by pointing out the importance of dialogue, cooperation and Suttner’s legacy – now more than ever.



Session I

Panel Discussion: Presentation on the Global Peace Index

CHAIR:

Vanda Prošková (Czechia)

PANELISTS:

Yasmin E. Goecke (Germany)

Global Peace Index
Ambassador

Lea Perekrests (Belgium)

Deputy Director of European
Operations, Institute for
Economics and Peace, Global
Peace Index

Ms. Yasmin E. Goecke presented the work of Global Peace Index Ambassadors. Ms. Goecke stressed that the Global Peace Index should be understood as a useful **"tool that can be put to practice"** to influence national policies and world affairs. GPI Ambassadors are active civil society members determined to impact policy-makers. From personal experience, Ms. Goecke pointed out the importance of cooperation between the civil society and policy-makers. She encouraged conference participants to propose suitable candidates to apply for the GPI Ambassadors program.

Ms. Lea Perekrests talked about the **Global Peace Index**, an initiative of the Institute for Economics and Peace. Through complex research and cooperation with numerous international institutions, the Institute is able to annually evaluate 163 states according to more than 20 "negative peace" indicators, quantifying "the absence of violence or absence of the fear of violence." As of 2019, Iceland is the most peaceful country, **Europe (and specifically the EU) remains the most peaceful region**, while the peace deterioration in the US is rather serious. Perekrests noted a correlation between lower peace index rating and high exposure to climate change impact, and also highlighted that less militarized countries score better on the index. She concluded that despite the decline in "negative peace" globally in the last decade, there has been a slight improvement in 2019.



Session II

Panel Discussion: Alternatives to using force in international relations

CHAIR:

Alyn Ware (New Zealand)

PANELISTS:

Christine Muttonen (Austria)

PNND Co-President, former president of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

Ute Finckh-Krämer (Germany)

PNND Council Member, former MP and member of Bundestag Subcommittee for Non-proliferation, Disarmament and Arms Control

Thomas Hilker (Germany)

Program and Fundraising Manager, "For Peace" Initiative

Anna Červeňáková (Czechia)

Law School of the Charles University, Human Rights Research Center

Ms. Christine Muttonen spoke about the key role of parliamentarians to support disarmament processes. Living in a world that is far from peaceful, **"why not think big?"** As the world today is rather chaotic, facing the issues of growing nationalism, terrorism and climate change, **"we have to show alternatives to military buildups and nuclear deterrence."** In particular, parliamentarians can promote negotiations on disarmament, influence governmental positions including on budgetary spending and raise global awareness.

Ms. Ute Finckh-Krämer presented the role of international institutions – including the UN, OSCE and EU – in diplomacy and peaceful dispute resolution through mediation, adjudication and arbitration. Ms. Finckh-Krämer appreciated two recent developments at the UN – establishment of the Department of Political and Peace-building Affairs, and the Mediation Support Unit. **"Since the end of the Cold War, the world has become more peaceful,"** Ms. Finckh-Krämer argued. She criticized the lack of global media coverage of peaceful accomplishments of international institutions, while the media's attention to war and violence remains strong.

Mr. Thomas Hilker introduced the new “For Peace” initiative which he linked to Bertha von Suttner’s efforts in the previous century. Their progressive vision includes a proposal to establish “Departments of Peace” within national Foreign Ministries, led by “Ministers of Peace” who would have a clear mandate on peace-building. **“The key to peace is us,”** Mr. Hilker said, calling for evidence-based decisions for the creation of peace culture and peace education.

Ms. Anna Červeňáková questioned the world leadership in connection to the multiple crises and threats that humankind has been facing lately. **“If life is so precious, why do wars and armed conflicts persist?”** asked Červeňáková. The culture of peace is clearly linked with the culture of values respecting all fundamental freedoms. And respect for human life should be placed above anything else. Červeňáková explained that she sees problems in the implementation of international obligations, and criticized countries for withdrawing from, or breaching, international disarmament treaties, which heightens legal and political tensions globally.



Workshop

European Union as a peace project

The conference concluded with a workshop on the European Union which was open to all English-speaking participants. Participants discussed the idea of pan-europeanism, rising nationalist feelings, as well as EU’s accomplishments and benefits, such as European citizenship. Participants shared views on multiple identities transcending the usual dichotomy between nationalism and Europeanism.

Impact

15

speakers

100+

participants

12+

countries

The conference was attended by **more than 100 people** from over 12 countries, mostly European. More than half of the participants came from Czechia and Germany.

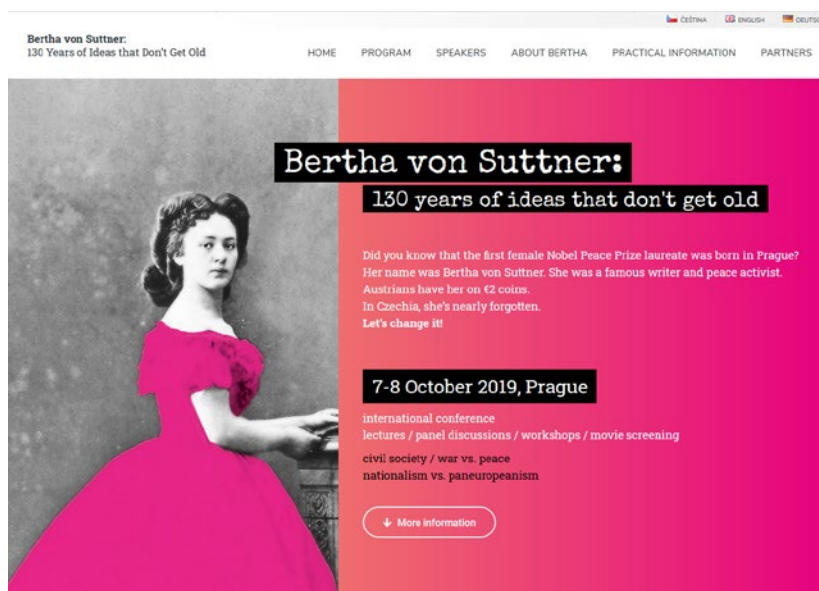
In addition to **politicians, activists, academics and NGO representatives**, the conference was also attended by **many students**, mostly from Prague or Germany. With their input, the conference was able to facilitate a dialogue not only between different nationalities and worldviews, but also between generations. Furthermore, three student interns volunteered during the conference, and six students of Translation Studies provided simultaneous translation between German, Czech and English during both days of the conference.

All Czech conference participants received a free copy of the new Czech edition of **Lay Down Your Arms!**, which was also made available for purchase online and in select book stores. By mid-December 2019 the book has sold out and the publisher **Prosvěta** plans to reprint in 2020.

Special thanks for the success of the book go to the patrons of the book, **Ms. Věra Roubalová Kostlánová** and **Ms. Tatiana Fischerová**, and acclaimed Czech writer **Ms. Kateřina Tučková** who published several columns about the book in the media.

CONFERENCE WEBSITE

Visit the conference website for more information about the events in English, Czech and German. The website includes detailed program, speakers' bios, photogallery and videos.



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Organizers & partners

CO-ORGANIZERS



PragueVision Institute
for Sustainable Security



Friedrich Ebert
Stiftung Prague



Parliamentarians for
Nuclear Nonproliferation
and Disarmament (PNND)



World Future
Council

AUSPICES



The first day of the conference
took place at the Old Town
Hall under the auspices of
Hana Třeštková, Prague City
Councillor for Culture.



Ministry of Foreign Affairs
of the Czech Republic

The second day of the conference
took place in the Czernin Palace
under the auspices of **Tomáš
Petříček**, Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Czech Republic.

PARTNERS & FUNDERS



The Czech-German
Future Fund provided
funding.



Bertha von Suttner
Stiftung provided
funding.



Students of **Institute of
Translation Studies, Faculty
of Arts, Charles University**,
translated the book and provided
simultaneous translations.



**Assembly of German
Associations in the
Czech Republic**
sponsored the movie
screening

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THE KEY
TO PEACE
IS US.

– Thomas Hilker –

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