

## Leopoldine Kulka

**Leopoldine Kulka** was born in Vienna on March 31 in the year 1872. She was an Austrian writer, feminist and editor. At the University of Vienna she was the first woman lecturer. As editor of "Neues Frauenleben" she controversially met women from combatant countries at the 1915 Women's conference at Hague, where she was one of the significant women attending to the congress. She has a deep understanding for democracy.

Kulka joined the radical General Austrian Women's Association (GAWA) before she was thirty. At the start of the century she also became interested in peace issues. Leopoldine was writing regularly for political magazines for women. In 1902 Auguste Fickert started an Austrian magazine which she called "Neues Frauenleben" with Kulka as its editor. Leopoldine Kulka was a historian of literature. In 1904 she and Adele Gerber went to Berlin to help found the International Women's Suffrage Alliance. In 1911 she became vice-president of the GAWA.

In 1914 she had helped translate *Women and Labour* by Olive Schreiner into German. The South African Schreiner argued that women understood the value of life more than men.

Despite a lot of debate about the value of a women's peace conference she was the delegate chosen in 1915. She traveled to The Hague where she represented Austria. This was during the first World War but even then she raised 1,000 signatures of support. She and Olga Meser were supported by the magazine "Neues Frauenleben". On their return they both made reports to the magazine about the conference noting the difficulties that some delegates had in attending the conference. The delegation from Britain was trimmed by the Foreign Office to 24 delegates and actually only two made it to Hague. Italy only managed one delegate, Rosa Genoni, and she was keen to note that she did not represent her country. Laura Hughes came from Canada to represent what was called at the time "the Colonies".

In 1917 she led the peace section of the GAWA. In 1919 the war had finished and Kulka horrified delegates as she described the demoralising effects of starvation. Although she

suffered a lot of harm and destitution till the Zurich congress in 1919, she worried about the well-being of others and fought against hardship as a consequence of war. For Leopoldine Kulka the worst consequence of war was to experience hunger. She had to look for something to eat and couldn't focus on intellectual and political thoughts. Kulka understood the struggle of the poor after this experience and that she couldn't expect political activism and a will to change the world from the poor. At the Zurich congress in 1919 Kulka said: "We have to talk about economic questions, wheat is being grown to earn money – shouldn't it be grown to feed the people? Our whole economical system has to consider the needs and the existence-protection of every single person. Those are not ideals, those are principles." Freedom is a term Leopoldine Kulka often used in her articles. She wrote 1908: "Every win of a woman has to be one for freedom or else it is no win."

Leopoldine Kulka thought that the American women were a great role model. She wrote in an article of "Neues Frauenleben" that they should be admired, because they had half of the jobs in schools, they reached in four states the political vote of women, reduced child labor, etc. She also wrote that thinking and writing are very beautiful things, that achieve their real value through acts. According to Kulka, German women had lots to learn from American women when it comes to take actions as well.

In an article named "work" of "Neues Frauenleben" Leopoldine wrote about equality in the working place: "Working is not a male function, working is not a female function, working is human. Working is the embodiment of human life, who doesn't work, man or woman, is not human."

#### **Her membership in women's organizations:**

„Allgemeiner Österreichischer Frauenverein“: Vice-president, board member

„Frauenverein "Diskutierklub": secretary

„Internationale Frauenliga für Frieden und Freiheit, österreichischer Zweig“: Co-founder

„Rechtsschutzstelle (Allgemeiner Österreichischer Frauenverein)“: employee

„Sektion Friedenspartei (Allgemeiner Österreichischer Frauenverein)“: co-founder

WILPF: founding member

Kulka died when she was 48 years old in Vienna in 1920 because of her illness.