

## HUNGARIAN WOMEN FOR A BETTER WORLD

The Association for Women's Career Development celebrates its 5th birthday this year

We can hear in more and more forums, and more and more responsible people think that there would be less conflict in the world if it were led by women. Even if we don't wish to put it quite so sharply, perhaps the world would advance faster if we decided to tread the path to a better future by relying much more on the cooperation of and by women.

"They are able to do it. We know this from the examples of the undeservedly forgotten, who are very rarely commemorated in history written by men. We also know this from the women who have created something extraordinary in politics, diplomacy, literature, and the arts. I would like to commemorate them and I would like to bring them closer to each other," said Andrea Ferenczi, President of the Association for Women's Career Development in Hungary. "Due to my good luck and work I have traveled around the world and got to know it. I have experienced that Hungarian women are outstanding regarding talent, beauty and taste. It is natural for them to do a good job both at their workplaces and in their families, and they have been doing it so silently for hundreds of years that almost nobody pays attention to their merits. I work," says Andrea Ferenczi, "I fight on appropriate forums, on the Internet and at conferences so that talented Hungarian women can find one another and cooperate as an invisible power. Those who, based on their professional knowledge and commitment to Hungary can contribute to the strengthening of the Hungarian democracy and the rising of the country."

There were a lot of women such as they in history. One of their outstanding spokesmen, Dr. Tibor Frank, Director of the English-American Institute of Eötvös Loránd University, is a respected historian. He commemorated these women in his lecture at the World Conference of Hungarian Women organized in Parliament last year. He mentioned five examples, five different life stories. For example, he talked about Emma Teleki, the sister of the famous Blanka Teleki who became the wife of the Frenchman August De Gerando. However, they could not live the good life of the Transylvanian aristocracy for long. They had to escape from the country because of their active participation in the anti-Habsburg freedom fights. August De Gerando died in Dresden in 1849. The widowed Emma Teleki became a real foreign policy expert of the Hungarian revolution in Paris. Fanni Borbíró wrote an outstanding essay on her, in which she describes that in this period the most important thing in Emma's life was being Hungarian, then came motherhood followed by her background as an aristocrat. After the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 she returned home and wrote several books. She settled down in Transylvania. Her daughter, who became a school director in Kolozsvár, translated the book of novelis Mór Jókai, "The Sons of the Man with a Heart of Stone", into French.

Professor Frank also mentioned Teréz Pulszky, another forgotten Hungarian woman politician. She was the wife of Ferenc Pulszky, the late secretary and commissioner of Kossuth in London, and the General Director of the National Museum. She wrote a book about Hungarian history which was published in the United States and the UK. In the

1850s and 1860s she continued to fight for the principles of Kossuth, who was in exile. She died right before the Compromise of 1867, in 1866, very young.

A Hungarian writer, Anna Lesznai, was also an extraordinary woman, although she expressed her thoughts not in Parliament but in her poems. The young Anna Lesznai lived in Körtvélyes, now in Slovakia, during World War I and for a short time after it as well. She belonged to the circle of the Radicals. She wrote beautiful, typically women's poems. She settled down in New York in 1939, where she wrote her beautiful book, "In the Beginning There was the Garden", a superb recalling of Hungary at the time of the Millennium, of Körtvélyes, the garden in Körtvélyes and the people of Körtvélyes.

Róza Bédi-Schwimmer was one of the founders of Hungarian feminism. Róza was the editor of the journal "Woman" for 13 years. She was ambassador of the Károlyi government in Switzerland in 1918. Later she had to leave the country because of this. She settled down in the United States. In 1929 she did not sign the document that said that she would defend the United States with weapons if necessary, that is why she was not granted American citizenship. Róza Bédi-Schwimmer received a Peace Prize in 1937 and in 1948, the year of her death, she was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

We must not forget Anna Kéthly either, one of the great representatives of social democracy. She was Hungarian MP between 1922 and 1944, editor of the journal "Woman Worker", and one of the most important figures of the Social Democratic Party. She was expelled from the Hungarian Social Democratic Party in 1948. After the union she did not join MDP and finally she was imprisoned in 1949. She received amnesty in 1954. In 1956 she joined the ill-fated Imre Nagy government. After its defeat, she had to flee the country.

All of them are great women of history, who did a lot for advancing noble causes. But we must also talk about women who are now doing a lot in the world, but do so invisibly at this time. They work, create, raise children. "They are the largest minority in the world," as Andrea Ferenczi often stresses. The aim of the Association for Women's Career Development in Hungary, founded by Ms Ferenczi in 2003, is to improve the situation of women in all areas of life and to support the interest representation of women. AWCDH aims to advance the dialogue between government, the profit- and non-profit spheres and academic life. In realizing its objectives, AWCDH endeavors to call attention to all valuable European and American best practices and help implement them. The Association issued a call for participation in the survey "Best Workplace for Women" for the first time last year, whose main patron was Vladimir Spidla, Member of the European Commission, and whose patrons were Dr. Zita Gurmai and Lívia Járóka, MEPs. The Ministry of Social Affairs and the 170-year-old market maker, Procter&Gamble, a company with outstanding traditions in the field of reconciling career and family life, were cooperating partners in issuing the call. On 23-24 November 2007, the Association organized the World Conference of Hungarian Women, as two-day event of never before seen success and interest, to which lecturers and guests arrived from twenty countries of four continents, and which was the first step towards cooperation beyond our borders. Its main patron was Dr. Kinga Göncz, Minister of Foreign Affairs Hungary and Dr. Zita

Gurmai, MEP and was hosted by Dr. Katalin Szili, Speaker of the Hungarian Parliament and its sponsors were the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and State Secretariat for Equal Opportunities of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour and Procter & Gamble.

“Let us, Hungarian women, work together for a better world,” said Andrea Ferenczi in her welcoming speech, whose mission is to encourage and strengthen the cooperation and networking of Hungarian women at home and abroad, to draw attention to the contributions of women of Hungarian descent in the fields of economy, politics, science, culture, media, and sports, to present the achievements of Hungarian women in the solution of global problems, and in the promotion of humanitarian values, to share the experience of Hungarian women living in different countries of the world with each other, and to encourage closer cooperation among them.

The Association launched a campaign to direct attention of decision makers to women with disabilities as a group especially exposed to discrimination and social exclusion. The “March for Disabled Women III” conference organized by the Association in 2008 focused on the promotion of the media appearance of disabled sportswomen. Successful sportswomen like Gyöngyi Dani, Dóra Pásztori and Krisztina Dóra Paralympic champions were introduced, all of whom also work while they are engaged in sports, and whose achievements can provide an example for healthy people as well, and whose successes can give strength to those with similar problems.

“We would like the world to get to know our successful projects in Hungary,” said the president of the association. “In this spirit we are planning to organize the World Conference of Hungarian Women for the second time in Washington in 2009, and we have also contacted the UN, hoping to participate in the work of the world organization as a consulting organization. Obtaining the Consultative NGO Status would make it possible for our organization to establish supporting cooperation with for-profit and non-profit organizations with the same goals not only in Europe, but in other parts of the world as well.”