



Early WILPF Women

Name: Rosika Schwimmer

Dates: 11 September 1877 – 3 August 1948

Born: Budapest, Hungary

Education: Brief schooling in Budapest, convent school in town of Temesvár (modern-day Timisoara, Romania).

Languages spoken: Hungarian, German, French and English. In addition Rosika could read Dutch, Italian, Norwegian and Swedish.

1896 Began work as a book-keeper.

Founded the National Association of Women Office Workers in 1897 and was their President until 1912.

Founded the Hungarian Association of Working Women in 1903.

1904 Founded the Hungarian Council of Women.

1904 Addressed the International Women's Congress in Berlin.

Moved to London to take up the post of Press Secretary of the International Women's Suffrage Alliance.

1913 Organised the 7th Congress of the Woman Suffrage Alliance and was elected corresponding secretary.

1914 Went to the USA to urge Woodrow Wilson to form a conference of neutral countries to negotiate an end to the war.

1915 Helped form the Women's Peace Party.

1915 Attended the International Women's Conference in The Hague 1915. Rosika was a member of one of the delegations to meet politicians and diplomats to encourage peaceful mediation to end the war. After meeting with Prime Minister, Cort van der Linden in The Hague, she travelled to: Copenhagen, Christiana and Stockholm.

After the Armistice Rosika became Vice-President of the Women's International League (from 1919 the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom).

When international leaders refused to take action on mediation, Rosika began making plans for an unofficial, privately sponsored international meeting. In November 1915, Henry Ford, the leading American automobile manufacturer, agreed to back Rosika's plan.



The Ford Neutral Mediation Conference convened in Stockholm on February 8, 1916, with Rosika serving as expert adviser. The American delegation sailed to Stockholm on the *Oscar II*, popularly known as the Peace Ship.

In November 1918, when her native Hungary became a democratic republic, Rosika the post post of minister to Switzerland. However, the democratic government lasted only five months, overthrown by Béla Kun's Communist regime. The new Communist government persecuted Rosika and prohibited her from leaving the country. In 1920, she succeeded in escaping to Vienna.

Rosika travelled to and settled in the USA in 1921. Her public career was marred as she was attacked for her feminism and pacifism. Her political allegiances were distrusted; she was accused of being a German agent during the war and also of being a Bolshevik agent. She petitioned for citizenship 1928 but was denied - she lived as a resident alien until her death in 1948.

In 1935 Rosika worked with Mary Ritter Beard to found the World Centre for Women's Archives. Sadly, lack of funding meant the venture closed after 5 years. Rosika Schwimmer was nominated for the 1948 Nobel Peace prize.

Published:

1928 *Tisza Tales* (for children)

1939 *Union Now, for Peace or War* (pamphlet)

Sources and further reading:

Addams, J; Greene-Balch, Emily. *Women At The Hague: the International Congress of Women and its Results* (1915). The MacMillan Company, 1915.

Encyclopedia Britannica <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/528710/Rosika-Schwimmer>

New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts <http://archives.nypl.org/mss/6398>

Wenger, Beth. Jewish Women's Archive <http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/schwimmer-rosika>

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