

Towards a Green Europe, Towards a Green World (1987) Petra K. Kelly¹

In 1979, Petra K. Kelly (1947-1992) along with Herbert Gruhl and others founded the environmental party the Greens (die Grünen) in West Germany. The party advocated for pacifist objectives such as the disbanding of the Warsaw Pact and NATO, the military dismantling of Europe, and other environmental issues. Their moderate success in gaining political seats in the early 1980s sparked the establishment of similar political parties throughout northern and western Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Argentina, Chile, and elsewhere. Kelly's effectiveness as a political advocate derived from her ability to fuse the non-violent outlook of famous leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. with her own ecological and feminist agenda, inspiring a new brand of activism known as ecofeminism. To some, her message of absolute pacifism alienated many pragmatic leftists and created rifts within the Greens. The document below is an excerpt from her essay "Towards a Green Europe, Towards a Green World" in which she outlines her political position and addresses criticism that she encountered from both within and outside the Green Party.

... I was only able to arrive last evening in Stockholm because of a family reunion we celebrated in Germany. I hope this first International Green Congress has been a valuable and constructive one. I can think of no better place to have an International Green Congress than in a neutral, nonaligned country like Sweden, especially at a time when some prominent Green members in the Green Party of the Federal Republic of Germany are trying to convince us that we must accept NATO membership, arguing that the Green position on nonalignment leads us into "a nation-state and nationalist" way of thinking.

I think the line of tactical thinking and argument, that we should abandon our platform on "nonalignment" and "active neutrality" as a concrete Green goal, is wrong and very destructive. To me, the Green parties and movements in West and East, North and South, must give new life and new commitment to the debate on nonalignment and active neutrality in Europe and elsewhere. Neutrality is not an end in itself but is an instrument for active peace policy. In my opinion Green parties and movements who must work in countries belonging to military alliances must keep nonalignment clearly and courageously in their political program and should act accordingly in political practice. That means also taking the first calculated step out of the military alliance.

¹ Petra K. Kelly. 1992. *Nonviolence speaks to power*. Edited by Glenn D. Paige and Sarah Gilliatt. Honolulu: Center for Global Nonviolence Planning Project, Spark M. Matsunaga Institute for Peace, University of Hawaii.

I hope also that the Green parties in neutral countries such as Sweden, Finland, the Republic of Ireland, Austria, and Switzerland will cooperate more and more closely and will show us the way to a bloc-free Europe....

We also experience conflicts between those coming from a rather dogmatic, old, Leftist political perspective, which shares, rightly so, many anti-capitalist positions and those who come from a holistic New Age perspective, whose aims I also very much support. There is often a great clash of interest, not so much in what we are aiming for, but about how we are to do it, about what strategies we should pursue toward our common goal.

Also there are those who are called in our party the "Realos" In fact, at every step of the way, they try to moderate our political program so as to become more acceptable political partners to the Social Democrats.

In the past few weeks the "Realos" have begun questioning our green strategy of "unilateral disarmament" and our aim of dismantling the two military blocs by starting first at home with NATO. Of course, demanding to leave NATO is in itself not a program, but the beginning of a much-needed discussion about taking the first calculated step out of military alliances. It is a most necessary and important one, when we think about what the NATO alliance has been all about in the past few months. Think about Libya, think about Grenada, think about the Gulf crisis, think about the Cuban crisis, and think about the NATO maneuvers taking place in Turkey under the guise of which Kurdish minorities are being killed by Turkish troops.

There are also the undogmatic, radical independent ecologists and pacifists in the Greens, among whom I count myself, who hope to reconcile the differences I have described if the Green Party is to survive. We do not want to moderate or soften the program for the sake of power tactics!

The title of this closing session, "Toward a Green Europe and a Green World," poses questions about our own political survival at a time when major Green parties, in Germany, for example, begin to split internally on basic questions such as establishing power coalitions, and where and when to make certain compromises. ...

Simply repairing the existing systems, whether they are capitalist or state-socialist oriented, should not be our aim. Our aim is nonviolent transformation of societal structures. Our aim is radical, nonviolent change of a patriarchal society which has been militarized and which has been so much accustomed to the use of force. Decentralism, global responsibility, developing at the grass-roots level new soft technologies and soft energies scaled to a comprehensible human dimension, developing a truly free and truly nonviolent society in our own communities, showing solidarity across all national boundaries and ideologies with people who are repressed and discriminated against, practicing civil disobedience against the nuclear and military state—all this can be done very effectively without having to send a lone Green minister into a Social Democratic

cabinet accompanied by making compromises all along the way to the point of no return. This recently occurred in Hessen!

I believe that we already have considerable power. I also believe that we have much responsibility without joining any government. We can be successful if we truly believe in our own concept of power. First, it is important to realize that we do not talk about "power over" or "power to dominate" or "power to terrorize or oppress." When we speak of a new type of power, the power of nonviolence, it is rather about abolishing power as we know it. We define the power of nonviolence as something common to all, to be used by all, and for all. Power over is to be replaced by shared power, by the power to do things, by the discovery of our own strength as opposed to a passive reception of power exercised by others, often in our name.

At the founding of the Green Party in the Federal Republic of Germany, I coined the term "anti-party party" for the Greens— trying to express that new kind of power. The Hungarian writer Gyorgy Konrad expressed it all the better with the term "antipolitics," as a moral force: "Anti-politics strives to put politics in its place and makes sure it stays there, never overstepping its proper office of defending and refining the rules of the game in a civil society. Anti-politics is the ethos of civil society, and civil society is the antithesis of military society."

The time may or could come one day when we will have a truly ecological political partner. Then we could form a "Green government." (We already have Green mayors!) But that time is not yet in sight. Many more must first be convinced of ecological politics as the only choice for survival on planet Earth before we can have truly alternative governments.

Years ago, recalls Murray Bookchin, the French students in the May-June uprising of 1968 magnificently expressed their sharp contrast of alternatives in their slogan: "Be practical. Do the impossible!" To this demand, we, the generation that faces the next century, can add the more solemn injunction: "If we don't do the impossible, we shall be faced with the unthinkable..."

We would like to get to a Green Europe and a Green World. But there are a few important preconditions that must be part of Green thinking.

First, an ecological society is a truly free society that is based on ecological principles that can mediate humanity's relationship with nature. That means searching for soft, decentralised technologies and energies and for ways of true coand self-determination. It means rejecting and moving away from monolithic modes of production and monolithic technology and monolithic institutions like the military-industrial complex. I believe it is true, as Professor Seymour Melman of Columbia University points out, that there is no economic necessity inherent in capitalism which gives the war-economy dominance. That is a political choice. But at this moment, the five hundred largest

industrial corporations control nearly one trillion dollars in corporate assets in the United States. The six hundred largest multinational corporations will control over forty percent of the planetary production by the end of the 1980s. The result of all of these monolithic modes and trends has been wastefulness, overdependence, and unnaturalness.

But a truly free society must also mean the guarantee of economic, social, and individual human rights. It means that we must speak out loudly to be heard and counted wherever basic human rights are not respected, regardless of country or ideology, regardless of where human rights are violated, whether in Poland or Chile, South Africa or Turkey, El Salvador or Afghanistan.

Unfortunately, at this congress of Green parties, our friends working in the independent Green initiatives in East Germany, Hungary, Poland, the Soviet Union, and Czechoslovakia are missing, unable to join us. "Glasnost" must also include them and their right, as well as ours, to travel and consult one another. Green movements are growing daily within Eastern Europe and in the Third World. We must never forget or ignore them, for all too often we are too "Eurocentric" in our thinking. Each of us must have the right to practice detente from below!

A truly free society must also mean that we do not want peace that oppresses us. We must learn, on our terms, what peace and freedom mean. The phrase "peace and freedom" all too long has been part of Right-wing vocabulary and ideology, at times sadly neglected by the Left, sometimes even within our own ranks. I have been disappointed when I have seen the amount of time, effort, and money we have put into campaigns against the Contras in Nicaragua while at the same time neglecting the question of Afghanistan or the question of releasing certain political prisoners in countries of Eastern Europe. There can be no peace if there is social injustice, if there is suppression of human rights. Internal and external peace are inseparable!

Second, when we try to rid the world of things as oppressive as nuclear, chemical, and conventional weapons, or poverty, sexism, and racism, it can help us to look at their structural underpinning. This is a system of patriarchy which is found in all systems, whether they are capitalist or state-socialist. Patriarchy is a system of male domination, prevalent in both capitalist and socialist countries, which is suppressive of women and restrictive to men. Patriarchy is a hierarchical system in which men have more value and more social and economic power. Under it women suffer both from oppressive structures and from individual men. It shows itself in all areas of our lives, affecting political and economic structures, our work, our home, and our personal relationships. To put it bluntly—men are at the center of a patriarchal world in East and West and South and North—whether they want to be or not. But I believe that norms of human behavior can and do change over the centuries and these aspects also can be changed. No pattern of domination is necessarily part of human nature. However, that means that certain men within the Green parties must give up their privileges and their male-chauvinistic ways of "politics."

Third, the type of true disarmament we are talking about has been best expressed by women coming from five European countries where deployment of American and Soviet nuclear missiles has taken place. I quote from their joint statement: Despite our differences, we are united by the will for self-determination, to struggle against the culture of militarism in the world, against uniforms and violence, against our children being educated as soldiers, and against the senseless waste of resources. We demand the right of self-determination for all individuals and peoples. We want to make a specific cultural contribution to changing existing social structures. That is why we also challenge conventional gender roles and why we ask men to do the same.

The freedom to determine one's own fate also means freedom from exploitation and violence: in our thoughts and actions, at our places of work, in our relationship with nature, and in the relationship between men and women, between generations, between states, between East and West, and between North and South in global terms.

We must, I believe, hold onto our strategies of unilateral disarmament, always making the first step and never pointing at the other side before we look at our own glass house.

Fourth, the most internationalist task for us all is to practice "detente from below" across all national boundaries and ideologies. This means that we should stay in touch with those high up in places of power, but at the same time we should devote our time and efforts equally to those in nonviolent political opposition, to those working on independent initiatives who are still harassed and politically suppressed. Some Greens in my own country prefer to speak only at a selected high level. But speaking with politicians at a very high level should never make us compromise or make us less committed when it comes to our friends in the independent ecological, peace, and women's movements from below. For example, some who want to speak to Mr. Erich Honecker may moderate or lessen their contacts with the independent peace initiatives in Eastern Germany or may begin to ignore them in order to be reinvited. They have not yet understood what can be done when one speaks to both levels on an equal basis and when one devotes energies and time both to Mr. Honecker and to those working in the independent initiatives. Mr. Honecker and the rest will respect the Greens all the more if we continue our solidarity work in favor of the independent peace and ecological groups in Eastern Germany without losing touch. We need not take up the game of "silent" diplomacy. Too many do that already!

Practicing "detente from below" also means doing everything possible to build up a demilitarized, nonaligned Europe in the spirit of Olof Palme, as opposed to Western European military and nuclear superpower now in the making. The German Christian Democrats and the CSU want a hand on the nuclear trigger and more co-determination in nuclear affairs. I need not explain again the Pershing 1-A debate in our country. For the time being Mr. Helmut Kohl has begun to understand at last the arguments of the peace movement concerning the Pershing 1-A missile. But we all know that between

the lines, conservative and reactionary forces in the Federal Republic of Germany are in favor of the idea of British and French nuclear cooperation including, one day, German participation on the basis of full equality. I believe that one of the most important tasks for the European Green Parties is preventing a third military and nuclear superpower called Western Europe.

Fifth, recently our Minister of Justice, Mr. Hans Engelhard, claimed that there is no such thing as the right to civil disobedience in a democratic society. But we continue to insist upon this right as an integral part of every democratic society. We shall continue to reply to the violence of the state with effective nonviolent campaigns. Nonviolence is stronger than violence. We must do everything possible for nonviolent conflict resolution within our own ranks and to spread knowledge and training concerning social defense, i.e. nonmilitary forms of defense. We must be very clear about what we mean when we call ourselves a nonviolent party and a nonviolent movement. The means and the ends must be parallel. You cannot reach a peaceful end with violent means and you cannot reach a just end with unjust means.

Those who call themselves part of the "autonomous" movement and who use violent means at mass rallies and demonstrations must realise that they are not helping us. They are not aiding our cause but rather are deliberately or involuntarily doing our adversaries a service whenever they act side by side with paid provocateurs as if they themselves were supporters of the nuclear lobby and of the nuclear state which we reject. Nonviolent struggle does not mean passive acceptance or inaction. Nonviolent struggle gains its meaning and impact from massive civil disobedience, creatively planned and carried out without confirming conventional establishment expectations of violence. Therefore, we must learn from similar situations in other countries and develop effective methods of nonviolent action.

I was very saddened last April while in Guernica in the Basque country to find that some Green members of the Rainbow Fraktion of the European Parliament have sympathies with the ETA, which is nothing but a criminal organisation using very violent means to try to bring about change. It was embarrassing to see how frustrated and how upset nonviolent groups in the Basque country have become because a few prominent Green members of the European Parliament have suggested that an organisation such as ETA should begin discussions and talks with the Spanish army. This is like asking the Red Army Faction to have discussions with the German government. Actually, as I discovered in the Basque region, there is so much hope and support for nonviolent forms of change that the majority of the Basque people are not on the side of violence and senseless killings. I hope that all Green parties will become more and more Greenpeace-like, firmly committed to nonviolent action. This is a model that all of us should follow.

Sixth, last but not least, in the process of trying to bring more peace, justice, and harmony to this world, we ourselves must become more peaceful, just, and tolerant with

one another, within our own ranks. The hurt, the hypocrisy, the intolerance, the mean-hearted spirit, and the attitude of always "controlling" and not "trusting" each other within the Greens at home has been a strong disappointment to many of us. Such ways have minimized our appeal, our chances, and our concrete results. Participatory democracy must not become a new formula for demagoguery—for misuse of grass-roots power and for tactics such as making decisions for others after most members have left a long and tiring meeting. We must not hurt each other just because there is a disagreement, just because some may not think the same way that the "grass-roots level" has decided. The question always remains: who are the grass roots? This can often be manipulated. There must always be room for tolerance, for accepting each others' positions and points of view. There must always be room to act according to one's conscience.

The Green Party in the Federal Republic of Germany has often complained about the types of pressure other political parties have applied on their own members. But within the Green parliamentary fraction as well there is a lot of pressure on the individual. Considerable psychological pressure is applied if he or she expresses a dissenting opinion. Respecting each individual, his or her talents and individuality without coercion, without mistrust, and without committees and bureaucracies to control and watch over him or her—this is also part of Green politics. Living our values is what Green politics is all about!

SIMPLE QUESTION: WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THIS PIECE AND ITS POLITICAL AGENDA? BE SPECIFIC.