FRIEDENSNOTE NR. 38

Be Vigilant!

In an older song, Reinhard Mey describes how fragile our democracy is, and lashes out at the hypocrisy of politicians.

„The minister whispers, taking the bishop by the arm: You keep them dumb, I'll keep them poor!" This and other quotes from Reinhard Mey's 1996 song „Sei wachsam" have become popular. The singer-songwriter, otherwise said to have a rather gentle temperament, showed himself unusually biting here. The song contains everything one needs to analyze the current situation too: from media criticism, through the way state power treats its subjects, to a sharp-witted satire on war rhetoric. Many have heard it; most, sadly, have since fallen back asleep. But the chanson veteran's warning stays in the memory of those who have an ear for it: „Freedom wears away if you do not use it."

PUBLISHED	8. April 2023
AUTHOR	Burak Hoffmann
SONG	Sei wachsam
PERFORMER	Reinhard Mey

ALBUM Leuchtfeuer, 1996

On his „Rüm Hart“ tour in 2002, Reinhard Mey gave a nearly three-minute speech that preceded his song „Sei wachsam“. In it Mey describes how important it is to grant oneself a little rest now and then and to take things a bit more calmly, to step out of the hamster wheel for a brief moment, to turn one’s gaze to what is, quote: "truly important, to the heart of all things, to the short time we have on this blue planet". But the "hanging out and cooling down" is over in an instant as soon as the word „children“ comes up. For it is they whom they want to dispose of, with their deployment plans that already lie in the drawers of the ministries. Whom they, quote:

> *want to and will push back and forth like little plastic playing pieces on a ‚Mensch ärger Dich nicht’-board, and, depending on the move and the state of play, are also prepared to sacrifice. But they are precisely not little plastic figures, red, green, yellow or black; they are our children, with whom they want to play their games.*

Those 500,000 dead children in Iraq, for example, who according to the then US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright were worth dying for. At the end of his speech Mey sums up that he has "no other choice than to fight for it already today, to be ready to stand up for it and to be watchful".

His speech inspired me then, as it does now, so much that in February 2018 I gave it unannounced at our song evening „Große Lieder, echte Gefühle“ at the Theater Oberhausen. The reaction to it back then was such that the theater’s director reprimanded me afterwards backstage and threatened that if I ever did such a thing again, I would be out of the song evening.

The Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung (WAZ) then wrote in its review: "The theatergoers, by contrast, reacted to Burak Hoffmann with mild annoyance. „When will he finally stop?“, murmured through the rows. His time-consuming introduction to „Weck mich auf“ by Sammy Deluxe for a better world was apparently not what people wanted to hear that evening."

But what was it, then, that they wanted to hear, if they couldn’t even endure the three minutes – time-consuming introduction? – for a better world? What about these three minutes was unbearable amid 90 well-fed minutes of entertainment, glamour and glitter?

> *They cry out for the crucifix, for custom and for good morals.*
>
> *Yet their messages are nothing but ass and tits,*
>
> *Brutalization, dumbing-down, violence are the commandments.*
>
> *Their gods are circulation and ratings.*

However hard the warmongers of this world may try to convince people that they are fundamentally bad, that the merciless law of the stronger prevails, that all the violence, the hatred, the destruction against the enemy are necessary, and that all the men, women and children are worth annihilating for total victory, I hold fast to believing in the good in people.

The best proof of this is the fact that billions are spent on propaganda in order to convince people of the opposite for a brief, expedient moment. And because lies are not sustainable, the propaganda has to be recharged and reinvented again and again.

The only thing one can counter this propaganda with is to be constantly watchful, for the means they use are the same. In 2003 Angela Merkel campaigned in the “Washington Post under the title " Schroeder Doesn’t Speak for All Germans" for closer cooperation with the USA. "The danger from Iraq", said Merkel, was "not fictitious, but real". Europe, in the closest cooperation with the USA, must take responsibility again and keep up the international pressure on Saddam Hussein.

Real were the fears, but fictitious the alleged weapons of mass destruction with which these fears were stoked. Real too were the many thousands of dead who had to die for their war, based on a lie. Equally real are our friends, relatives and acquaintances, who then may perhaps no longer exist if we let ourselves be dragged into another war. People we love and who mean nothing to them. For in the end it will not be they who share their grief. Once again, they will have known nothing of it all.

> *When people were called into the „war against the virus“ and urged to get vaccinated, the real victims afterwards meant nothing to them either. Today the caring state, so concerned about its citizens' well-being, wants to know nothing more about the thousands harmed by vaccination, who under the mafia-like threat of psychological and physical violence let themselves be vaccinated, in part against their will.*

> ORIGINAL
>
> *„Wie sie das Volk zu Besonnenheit und Opfern ermahnen.*
>
> *Sie nennen es das Volk, aber sie meinen Untertanen.*
>
> *All das Leimen, all das Schleimen ist nicht länger zu ertragen,*
>
> *Wenn du erst lernst zu übersetzen, was sie wirklich sagen.*
>
> *Der Minister nimmt flüsternd den Bischof beim Arm:*
>
> *„Halt' du sie dumm, ich halt' sie arm!““*
>
> ÜBERSETZUNG
>
> *„How they exhort the people to prudence and to sacrifice.*
>
> *They call it the people, but they mean their subjects.*
>
> *All the conning, all the fawning is no longer to be borne,*
>
> *Once you learn to translate what they really say.*
>
> *The minister whispers, taking the bishop by the arm:*
>
> *„You keep them dumb, I'll keep them poor!““*

Precisely in these times it is more important than ever to form alliances, to fight, to stand up for justice and peace, and to be watchful. Mey's song shakes the listener to the core and reminds us that we are all human beings and that we can stand up for peace. That we are not powerless spectators shunted onto a siding. So be watchful when, on 18 February 2023 – to the very day 80 years after Goebbels' Sportpalast speech, in which he demanded "total victory" – DIE ZEIT runs the headline "I wish for total victory".

That same ZEIT which, already at the height of the Corona propaganda in November 2021, ran the headline "Society must divide". Strack-Zimmermann, who as early as 2019 drew attention to herself with bizarre statements about the "Volkssturm" and the "Russian" who had better watch out, recently told the RND that the Bundeswehr needed an enemy image, namely the Russian. All of this is nothing but shabby war propaganda. Strack-Zimmermann will profit from many people dying; that is her business. So be watchful!

> ORIGINAL
>
> *„Wir hab‘n ein Grundgesetz, das soll den Rechtsstaat gerantier‘n.*
>
> *Was hilft‘s, wenn sie nach Lust und Laune dran manipulieren.*
>
> *Die Scharfmacher, die immer von der Friedensmission quasseln*
>
> *Und unterm Tisch schon emsig mit dem Säbel rasseln?*
>
> *Nie wieder soll von diesem Land ein Krieg ausgehen!*
>
> *Wir müssen Flagge zeigen, dürfen nicht beiseite stehen!*
>
> *Rein humanitär natürlich und ganz ohne Blutvergießen!*
>
> *Kampfeinsätze sind jetzt nicht mehr so ganz auszuschließen!*
>
> *Sie ziehen uns immer tiefer rein, Stück für Stück*
>
> *Und seit heute früh um fünf Uhr schießen wir wieder zurück.“*
>
> ÜBERSETZUNG
>
> *„We have a Basic Law, meant to guarantee the rule of law.*
>
> *What good is it, if they manipulate it as they please.*
>
> *The rabble-rousers, who forever prattle about the peace mission*
>
> *And under the table already busily rattle the saber?*
>
> *Never again shall a war go forth from this land!*
>
> *We must show our colors, must not stand aside!*
>
> *Purely humanitarian, of course, and quite without bloodshed!*
>
> *Combat missions can no longer be entirely ruled out now!*
>
> *They drag us ever deeper in, piece by piece*
>
> *And since five o’clock this morning we are shooting back again.“*

The more war the warmongers propagate and demand, the more peace and solidarity we must set against them. All of us, as people of all nations, ethnicities, sexes, age groups and religions.

When they call for contempt of humankind, we answer them with love of humankind. And offer it to them too. And say:

> *I long for people who do not deceive me,*
>
> *Who don’t lie their heads off at me with every ceremonial speech,*

> *And spare me the falsely honest ones.*
>
> *The falsely honest, the truly dangerous!*
>
> *I long for a piece of truthfulness,*
>
> *For a bit of backbone in this crooked time*

One of the best tools for this is music. And "that's the beauty of music", as it says in Frank Darabont's 1994 film drama „Die Verurteilten", "they can't take it away from you; you need music so as not to forget, not to forget that there are still places in the world that are not made of stone, that there is something inside you that they can't get at, that belongs to you alone"" In this spirit:

ORIGINAL

„Sei wachsam

Präg‘ dir die Worte ein!

Sei wachsam

Und fall nicht auf sie rein!

Paß auf, dass du deine Freiheit nutzt

Die Freiheit nutzt sich ab, wenn du sie nicht nutzt!

Sei wachsam

Merk dir die Gesichter gut!

Sei wachsam

Bewahr dir deinen Mut

Sei wachsam

Und sei auf der Hut!“

ÜBERSETZUNG

„Be watchful,

Imprint these words on your mind!

Be watchful,

And don’t fall for them!

Take care that you use your freedom;

Freedom wears away if you do not use it!

Be watchful,

Remember the faces well!

Be watchful,

Keep your courage

Be watchful,

And be on your guard!“

LISTEN & WATCH

FIRST PUBLISHED ON MANOVA

www.manova.news/artikel/seid-wachsam

AUDIO VERSION OF THIS ARTICLE · RADIO MÜNCHEN

radiomuenchen.net/de/podcast-archiv/sendeformate/friedensnoten/2201-sei-wachsam-von-reinhard-mey-praesentiert-von-burak-hoffmann.html

THE SONG IN ITS ORIGINAL · YOUTUBE

youtu.be/BVpnrTkQqTI

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Burak Hoffmann

Burak Hoffmann, Jahrgang 1990, wurde in Samsun in der Türkei geboren. Von 2014 bis 2018 studierte er Schauspiel an der Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst in Frankfurt am Main. Während seines Studiums gastierte er unter anderem am Schauspiel Frankfurt, am Gallus Theater Frankfurt und den Burgfestspielen Bad Vilbel. Außerdem führte ihn ein sechmonatiges Auslandssemester in die, von Israel besetzten, Palästinensergebiete, wo er mit verschiedenen Theatern, wie dem Freedom Theatre in Jenin arbeitete.

Anschließend trat er von 2017 bis 2020 sein erstes Engagement am Theater Oberhausen an. Weitere Arbeiten führten ihn unter anderem an das Theater an der Ruhr in Mühlheim, das Staatstheater Wiesbaden, das Stadttheater Heilbronn und das Staatstheater Saarbrücken.

Source: https://friedensnoten.de/en/articles/be-vigilant/