FRIEDENSNOTE NR. 46

For Fear of the Dark

„Ein bisschen Frieden“, Nicole's winning song at the 1982 Eurovision Song Contest, is „naive“ in a positive sense – because losing hope is no solution either.

When people in Germany are asked which peace songs they know, this one will spring to many minds. But they may not admit it, because after all it is just a schmaltzy tune. Yet the song by Ralph Siegel and Bernd Meinunger not only has a serious background, it is also a reminiscence of a time when „peace“ was still, for the most part, a positively charged word. Today one would probably accuse the singer Nicole of being a ragtag-pacifist agent of Putin.

And yet „Ein bisschen Frieden“ captured the menacing atmosphere of a perhaps imminent calamity very well. And the „lyrical I“ came across as pleasingly realistic and modest. While many a hard-edged rock musician gave the impression that his peace song would surely make the powerful of the earth tremble, Nicole simply sings: „I know my songs, they don’t change much. I’m only a girl who says what she feels.“

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SONG	Ein bisschen Frieden
PERFORMER	Nicole
ALBUM	Ein bißchen Frieden, 1982

„Lord of the Lost“, the dark-rock band sent into the race for Germany, sang at this year’s Eurovision Song Contest about „Blood & Glitter“, about blood and glitter – and came in last with it. No wonder. One will hardly be able to warm to lines like "We are so glad that we could die." And: "Now go, go, let your blood flow." What is this message supposed to be? What for?

Rewind to the year 1982. Back then, on 24 April, at the Grand Prix Eurovision de la Chanson in the English town of Harrogate, the German performer Nicole sang about peace – and came in first with a commanding lead. Her song „Ein bisschen Frieden“ received points from every country, only not from Luxembourg; nine countries gave the maximum score, among them Israel, which at that point was likewise unusual. A few months later, incidentally, Nicole sang the English version of her winning title, „A little Peace“, in Israel, on a closed barracks compound near Tel Aviv – before an audience consisting exclusively of Israeli soldiers.

It was the first ESC victory for Germany ever. The total of 161 points – out of a possible 204 – remained a record in the history of the competition until 1997. So it goes down well with many people when Germany commits itself to understanding among nations. Would it not be time to remember that? Now, in the frenzy of war. Now, as the heavy-weapons mantra is being euphorically intoned and killing machines are glorified that can fire up to ten shells per minute.

Pacifists are no longer role models but are mocked as at least naive. And yet: what is wrong with being naive? According to the original meaning of the word, a naive person is one who believes in the good. Shouldn't we all do so far more?

Nicole embodied this endangered credulity in the best sense. She was 17 years old when she competed for the Federal Republic. White guitar, white collar, on her black dress glitter appliqués sparkled. Her blond hair blow-dried angelically, hardly any make-up. An aura of innocence, a teenager who seemed childlike. No special effects, a harpist played in the background, the other musicians wore white suits. The man at the piano was Ralph Siegel, the composer of „Ein bisschen

Frieden“.

The song begins with the unease of a girl who stands in for all those who are sensitive enough to perceive developments that are ominous. The girl feels threatened and abandoned in a world that has turned cold. There is no one to protect her, no one to take her in their arms.

> *Like a flower at the onset of winter*
> *And just like a fire in the icy wind*
> *Like a doll that no one loves any more*
> *is how I feel on many a day*
> *Then I see the clouds that hang above us*
> *And hear the cries of the birds in the wind*
> *For fear of the dark I sing a song*
> *And hope that nothing will happen*

A girl is at the mercy of an end-of-the-world mood. That sounds rather familiar. Today too one reels from one apocalyptic scenario into the next, faithful to the motto "Give us this day our daily catastrophe". The perpetually alarmed climate-glue protesters did not, however, invent the looming end of the world, and neither did the Jehovah’s Witnesses. In the 1980s, the Chernobyl reactor disaster, the ozone hole and the dying of the forests provided a high dose of German Angst. Possible and actual wars, too, were a constant theme; the peace movement with its protests against the NATO Double-Track Decision was omnipresent.

In March 1982, that is, a few weeks before Nicole’s appearance at the ESC, the Falklands War was already looming. The day after the competition was held, the first British naval task force was due to arrive in the South Atlantic to retake the Falkland Islands, which Argentina had occupied shortly before. That, of course, Ralph Siegel and Bernd Meinunger, who was responsible for the lyrics, could not have foreseen.

But since the atmosphere in those years was charged accordingly anyway, Siegel was very keen to write a peace song, come what may. Explicitly not politically motivated, however.

Meinunger was, at first, not much to be won over for it. He had, as he later recounted, wanted to address, if anything, „at most a little peace“. And that is exactly what happened; with that the title was found.

ORIGINAL

„bq. Ein bisschen Frieden, ein bisschen Sonne

für diese Erde, auf der wir wohnen.

Ein bisschen Frieden, ein bisschen Freude,

ein bisschen Wärme, das wünsch' ich mir.

Ein bisschen Frieden, ein bisschen träumen

und dass die Menschen nicht so oft weinen.

Ein bisschen Frieden, ein bisschen Liebe,

dass ich die Hoffnung nie mehr verlier'.

Ich weiß, meine Lieder, die ändern nicht viel.

Ich bin nur ein Mädchen, das sagt, was es fühlt.

Allein bin ich hilflos, ein Vogel im Wind,der spürt, dass der Sturm beginnt.

Ein bisschen Frieden, ein bisschen Sonne

für diese Erde, auf der wir wohnen.

Ein bisschen Frieden, ein bisschen Freude,

ein bisschen Wärme, das wünsch ich mir.

Ein bisschen Frieden, ein bisschen träumen

und dass die Menschen nicht so oft weinen.

Ein bisschen Frieden, ein bisschen Liebe,

dass ich die Hoffnung nie mehr verlier'"

ÜBERSETZUNG

„bq. A little peace, a little sunshine

for this earth on which we dwell.

A little peace, a little gladness,

a little warmth, that's what I wish for.

A little peace, a little dreaming

and that people don't weep so often.

A little peace, a little love,

that I may never lose hope again.

I know my songs, they don't change much.

> *I'm only a girl who says what she feels.*
>
> *Alone I am helpless, a bird in the wind,*
>
> *who senses that the storm is beginning.*
>
> *A little peace, a little sunshine*
>
> *for this earth on which we dwell.*
>
> *A little peace, a little gladness,*
>
> *a little warmth, that's what I wish for.*
>
> *A little peace, a little dreaming*
>
> *and that people don't weep so often.*
>
> *A little peace, a little love,*
>
> *that I may never lose hope again.*"

Who still dares to dream? And who dares to trust the dreams? Perhaps we have no other choice anyway. The prevailing debates exhaust, divide, hurt. The societal combat zone has been widened to such a degree that basically there are only losers left. To say nothing of the cruelties and hells on the battlefields. Only someone who steps forward with a longing, with a hope, however tiny it may be, can shine out of all this darkness.

And yet: does that change anything? Does that change enough? Am I even important? What can I possibly do? Everyone knows the uncertainty that accompanies a setting-out with an uncertain outcome. Does one really want to set off when it is not assured that it will be worth it? Is a fight with windmills in the offing? Is everything long since lost? Should one bury oneself in nihilism? Or wait for the dystopia?

> *The singing girl admits her own powerlessness to herself. Who can still do that in a society that believes it has a solution for everything?*

The narcissism spreading everywhere does not concede this weakness, because it scratches at the inflated self-image. And yet we all know the feeling of being unable to accomplish anything, of being at someone's mercy.

The singing girl seems to have no illusions. She states bluntly: "I know my songs, they don't change much." Nonetheless: she sings. It is precisely this nonetheless that matters. Perhaps what one does has no meaning. Nonetheless, one does it. The nonetheless is like a permission to act, no matter how great the doubts may be. The nonetheless clears the way.

The singing girl does not fall into the collective delusion of being able to save the world, the climate or anything else gigantomaniacal. The „a little" is enough for her. One could also call that humility. An attitude that is no longer in keeping with the times. And which, incidentally, stirred up displeasure back then, too. The peace movement criticised that „a little" was too little. If peace, then radical. But is it not precisely the grand gesture against which reality can never measure up – and which for that reason wears one down? When a step is taken, that is always more than a step that is not taken because the goal seems unreachable.

The Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ) held at the time that one could "be glad that the wish for peace – articulated in a pop song – has found so much resonance, and at the same time regret that the subject has become so topical".

The „subject" has not become topical. It was never gone. Not to this day. Is humanity conceivable without war? Who can imagine such a world – and who cannot? How to contribute to such a world? On this, a quote from the singer-songwriter Bettina Wegner from the song „Waffenlos": "Of my own entirely free will I give up all coldness, I no longer want strife nor to be a victor, I no longer aim the barrel of my weapon at anyone – and let myself in for everything."

At the renewed presentation of the winning title, Nicole performed parts of the song in English, French and Dutch. That is the original idea of the ESC: what unites.

> *„A little loving, a little giving*
>
> *To build a dream for the world we live in*
>
> *A little patience and understanding*
>
> *For our tomorrow a little peace*
>
> *A little sunshine, a sea of gladness*
>
> *To wash away all the tears of sadness*
>
> *A little hoping, a little praying*
>
> *For our tomorrow a little peace*
>
> *Que puis je faire avec une chanson*
>
> *Mais pourquoi me taire, il n'y a pas de raison*
>
> *Pour faire la guerre c'est mieux ton cadeau*
>
> *Il y a qu'a trouver l'unison*
>
> *Een beetje vrede, een beetje liefde*
>
> *Voor onze wereld waarop wij wonen*
>
> *Een beetje vrede, een beetje vreugde*
>
> *Erover dromen dat doe ik al"*

No matter which language we speak, we all belong to the family of humankind. Is there really anyone who yearns for war? Nicole calls on us to join in her peace song. In her little – and yet great – song. It is about making a beginning. A beginning nonetheless.

> *Sing with me a little song*
>
> *So that the world lives in peace*
>
> *Sing with me a little song*
>
> *So that the world lives in peace*

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FIRST PUBLISHED ON MANOVA

www.manova.news/artikel/aus-angst-vor-dem-dunkeln

AUDIO VERSION OF THIS ARTICLE · RADIO MÜNCHEN

radiomuenchen.net/de/podcast-archiv/sendeformate/friedensnoten/2262-friedensnoten-45-aus-angst-vor-dem-dunklen.html

THE SONG IN ITS ORIGINAL · YOUTUBE

www.youtube.com/watch?v=hp_b-095yPc

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Sylvie-Sophie Schindler, ist in Oberbayern aufgewachsen. Sie ist philosophisch und pädagogisch ausgebildet, und hat weit über 1.500 Kinder begleitet. Als Journalistin begann sie bei der Süddeutschen Zeitung und war jahrelang als Lokalreporterin für den Münchner Merkur tätig.

Zig tausend Artikel später schreibt sie aktuell vor allem für die WELTWOCHE und Radio München. Sie ist Trägerin des Walter-Kempowski-Literaturpreises. Mit ihrem YouTube-Kanal DAS GRETCHEN setzt sie sich für den guten Dialog ein.

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