FRIEDENSNOTE NR. 33

No More Ministers of War

Nena's classic „99 Luftballons“ clear-sightedly evoked the danger of a war by accident.

When you hear the name of the singer Nena today, you prick up your ears. To many she is a Corona conspiracy peddler who dared to break ranks with the phalanx of the respectable. To others she is a heroine precisely because of her commitment to artistic freedom — as one of the few public figures.

But if you ask about the artist's politically engaged songs, one above all comes to mind. It is her most famous: „99 Luftballons“. In its content the song is more telling than its simple melody would suggest. After balloons are sighted in the sky, mistaken by the military leadership for UFOs — this detail, too, gives one pause today — the military bombs the world to rubble and ashes. Back then such a scenario seemed relatively remote. But how do things look today?

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SONG	99 Luftballons
PERFORMER	Nena
ALBUM	Nena, 1983

> *„Neunundneunzig Kriegsminister*
> *Streichholz und Benzinkanister*
> *Hielten sich für schlaue Leute*
> *Witterten schon fette Beute*
> *Riefen: ‚Krieg!' und wollten Macht*
> *Mann, wer hätte das gedacht*
> *Dass es einmal so weit kommt."*

> *Because of 99 Luftballons.*

The singer Nena was one of the very few artists in the German-speaking world who took the side of peace during the Corona regime. She grasped that the supposed fight against the pandemic had assumed warlike dimensions against the people. Consistently, she refused calls for a „war against the virus", of the kind that were launched by everyone from Die Toten Hosen to Roland Kaiser. On the contrary: at a mass rally in Kassel against the Corona measures, Nena thanked the activists.

With her clear stance, the singer drew an arc from the mass demonstrations against the NATO arms build-up of the early 1980s to the hundreds of thousands who over the past two years took to the streets for basic rights and against compulsory vaccination.

The song „99 Luftballons" appeared in early January 1983. It was Nena's answer to the so-called NATO Double-Track Decision, which brought nuclear-capable medium-range missiles (Pershing II) and cruise missiles (Cruise Missiles) onto the European continent, in particular to Germany and Italy. With the NATO Double-Track Decision, the USA reinforced its military presence in Western Europe by means of the North Atlantic alliance it led. The cruise missiles would subsequently become one of the most frequently deployed weapons in all the wars the Pentagon waged over the past 40 years.

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Treaty Organization in 1991, the transatlantic military alliance has been extending its radius of action step by step. More and more countries are being incorporated into the NATO structure. Even before the first out-of-area operation against Yugoslavia in March 1999, the number of member states grew from 16 to 19; Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary found themselves, only a decade after the end of the communist regimes, at war – against Belgrade. In 2004, NATO's eastward expansion then gathered enormous momentum: seven new countries from Eastern Europe joined the war alliance. At the end of 2022 there were four more, so that the alliance has by now grown to 30 states.

The great reach right up to the borders of the Russian Federation had already been planned in April 2008, when the admission of Georgia and Ukraine was decided at the NATO summit in Bucharest.

It was Germany in particular, under Chancellor Angela Merkel, that acted as a brake on this step of enlargement. After the end of her term in office – along with the change of personnel in Washington that took place at the same time – warmongers took over the ministerial chairs in Berlin. They no longer wished to oppose NATO's advance towards Russia, which had now been given fresh momentum by Joe Biden. A declaration of guarantees for a neutral Ukraine, as demanded by Moscow, found no hearing in the German Chancellery. And the German chief diplomat – the keyboard almost recoils at that designation – informed the government in Kiev, at a joint press conference with her Ukrainian counterpart two weeks before (!) the Russian invasion in breach of international law: „We stand at Ukraine's side."

In the meantime, weapons from almost all NATO states – with the exception of Hungary – flood the Ukrainian battlefields, where they are deployed against Russian troops. Month after month, new packages are tied up with ever more and ever deadlier military equipment; US intelligence information and fighters from NATO countries round out the Western war machine.

> *What is missing is a broad protest against this war. The peace movement is faltering. At the time when Nena wrote her song „99 Luftballons", hundreds of thousands took to the streets.*

Even in neutral Austria, 70,000 people gathered in front of Vienna's City Hall, and the movement reached deep into the political structures of the established parties. From the „Junge Generation" of

what was then still the „Sozialistische Partei Österreichs", through the „Katholische Jugend", Christian women's associations and trade-union groups, all the way to the alternative and green movements then in the process of forming, many people were on their feet to say „No" to the arms spiral tightened by NATO.

Back then the leading figures of the German Greens were called Petra Kelly and Gert Bastian, and they understood themselves, as a matter of course, to be part of the peace movement. Today, in their place, stand Robert Habeck and Annalena Baerbock, who have not only become part of the NATO war machine but drive it decisively. Without this green motive force, the CDU/CSU and the Liberals would not manage to steer the German public — inclined toward peace for decades — onto a war course.

The Social Democrats, for their part, follow in the footsteps of their Russophobic forebears, who reactivate Russia and „the Russians" as an enemy image precisely whenever it would matter most not to do so. „In the hour of danger we will not leave our own fatherland in the lurch" — with this slogan the SPD Reichstag faction, on 4 August 1914, assented to the imperial declaration of war against Russia. The Social Democratic elder statesman August Bebel had set the line years earlier.

During a party congress in Essen in mid-September 1907, he backed an anti-Russian speech by his party comrade Gustav Noske — the later butcher of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht — and declared:

> *If it were to come to a war with Russia, which I regard as the enemy of all culture and of all the oppressed, not only within its own country but also as the most dangerous enemy of Europe and especially for us Germans, (...) then I, old boy that I am, would still be ready to shoulder the musket and march off to war against Russia. One may laugh at this, but I mean these words in bitter earnest.*

Bebel could no longer follow his words with deeds; he died a year before the outbreak of the First World War.

Today's warmongers in the German Bundestag have – so far? – refrained from any statements about personally taking up combat in the war zone. Instead, they look on as, day after day, young Ukrainian men die on the battlefield for „their values".

Without a strong peace movement that demands an immediate ceasefire, an end to arms deliveries to Ukraine and an end to the sanctions against Russia, the dying will continue.

> *„Neunundneunzig Jahre Krieg*
>
> *Ließen keinen Platz für Sieger*
>
> *Kriegsminister gibt's nicht mehr*
>
> *Und auch keine Düsenflieger*
>
> *Heute zieh' ich meine Runden*
>
> *Seh' die Welt in Trümmern liegen."*

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FIRST PUBLISHED ON MANOVA

www.manova.news/artikel/kriegsminister-gibt-s-nicht-mehr

AUDIO VERSION OF THIS ARTICLE · RADIO MÜNCHEN

radiomuenchen.net/de/podcast-archiv/sendeformate/friedensnoten/2166-friedensnoten-31-kriegsminister-gibt-s-nicht-mehr-von-nena.html

THE SONG IN ITS ORIGINAL · YOUTUBE

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fpu5a0Bl8eY

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Hannes Hofbauer, Jahrgang 1955, studierte Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte an der Universität Wien. Er arbeitet als Publizist und Verleger. Im Promedia-Verlag sind von ihm unter anderem erschienen „EU-Osterweiterung. Historische Basis – ökonomische Triebkräfte – soziale Folgen", „Diktatur des Kapitals. Souveränitätsverlust im postdemokratischen Zeitalter" und „Feindbild Russland. Geschichte einer Dämonisierung".

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