

# INTRODUCTION

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Since all of us have power, Petra Kelly speaks to each of us. She speaks to power of the top and bottom; of the Left, Center, and Right; of the inside and outside; of women and men; of the old and young; of the individual and society; and of nature and humanity. She speaks of, in, and to a planetary circle. She is not always critical; she celebrates as well as censures. Her voice is well worth listening to because we are all dependent for life upon each other and upon our planetary home.

Like Mohandas K. Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., from whom she has drawn nonviolent inspiration (Kelly 1989), however, she has a special sense of the beings for whom she speaks. Amidst the formal institutions of political power she is the voice of the voiceless, those whom she calls "the victims of established power." "To my mind," she explains, "the purpose of politics and of political parties is to stand up for the weak, for those who have no lobby or other means of exerting influence....I view my political work as acting for and with people" (p. 125; unless otherwise noted, page numbers refer to this volume). Thus she speaks on a global scale for cancer-ill children, victims of nuclear radiation, the impoverished, indigenous peoples, and women--as well as for trees, plants, animals, and all the "offspring of Mother Earth."

She speaks as a human being and a worker for a nonviolent world out of a specific context and experience. This includes keen awareness of being in the economically favored "North" as contrasted with the impoverished "South." She speaks as a

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German, mindful of Germany's violent past, experienced in peaceful efforts to transcend the East-West division, and knowledgeable about violent aspects of German reunification at the end of the USA-USSR superpower confrontation. Like other political innovators she is bilingual (German-English), has lived in another culture (the United States), and has traveled extensively to other countries (e.g., to Australia, India, Mexico, Turkey, and many others). Her travels aid her in finding alternative ways of being in the world.

She is an experienced European Community civil servant, a cofounder of the German Green Party (Die Grunen), a veteran social activist and electoral campaigner, and an experienced legislator who knows parliamentary life from the inside as a two-term member of the German Bundestag with special service on its Foreign Affairs Committee.

As a woman she can understand and explain things beyond the ken of men. As a grieving sister, she knows the painful loss of her little sister Grace who died of cancer at age ten.

Petra Kelly speaks in and contributes to an era of growing global consciousness. This includes awareness of the threat of nuclear annihilation, ecocide, economic injustice, and massive violations of human rights produced by nationalism, ethnocentrism, racism, patriarchy, and fundamentalism--as well as by greed, hatred, and ignorance. Amidst unprecedented threats to survival and well-being, she calls for unprecedented nonviolent cooperative action to remove them.

**To whom does she speak? And what does she say?**

She speaks to governments and their leaders, to ministries, parliaments, and parties. She addresses them in Germany and across national boundaries. Her conscience as a nonviolent human being transcends both her role as a government official and the diplomatic niceties of national boundaries. She uses

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neither her official position nor her nationality as an excuse for silence. For her, sovereignty is no defense against nonviolent truth.

She tells governments to stop exploiting their own and other peoples; to stop lying, secrecy, deception, and inaction; to open up decision-making processes for debate and popular participation on crucial issues; and to critically examine the global consequences of their actions. She especially condemns governments for failures to protect the earth, public health, and human rights as well as for failure to stop the spread of nuclear and other lethal technologies. As she explains, "the superficial way in which vital issues are dealt with in Bonn often shocked and angered me" (p. 133).

She praises as well as censures. For example, she lauds the Indian government for providing a refuge for Tibetans in exile (p. 29), while at the same time she questions its human rights policies toward Sikhs, opposes its missile testing programs, and calls upon it not to develop nuclear weapons. She praises the Australian government for proposing to establish a World Wilderness Park in the Antarctic (p. 54), while protesting its missile tests and appropriation of Aboriginal lands for military use.

She speaks to globally powerful domestic and multinational corporations and calls for an end to profit-seeking actions that corrupt governments, exploit the poor, devastate the environment, spread lethal technologies, and poison people. She praises the Gerber and Beech-Nut corporations for removing noxious substances from baby foods (p. 46). She speaks also to labor unions, praising their defense of the environment, as in Australia's Green Ban movement (p. 58), while criticizing them for complicity in life-threatening governmental and corporate actions such as the mining and export of uranium for use in nuclear weapons and nuclear power.

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Speaking to the press and mass media, she appeals for more courageous reporting of truthful "counterinformation" that spotlights problems and conditions contrary to official interpretations, thus providing bases for greater responsiveness to human and ecological needs. She also asks them to stop the mislabeling and misquotation that create unwarranted conflict and misunderstanding.

Speaking to the consumers of rich countries and well-off classes, she asks us to reduce our consumption of energy and other global resources so as to stop destruction of the environment (e.g. rain forests), impoverishment of people ("the poor are feeding the rich"), and military aggression to control sources of supply.

Speaking to men, she calls for an end to patriarchal domination and exploitation. Speaking to women, she urges assertive solidarity in feminist restructuring of male power. She praises courageous feminist leadership in the antiwar, economic justice, ecological, human rights, freedom, and other movements for the well-being of all--while recognizing also the contributions of "many brave and courageous men" (Kelly 1990, p. 15). To all adults she asks that we consider how our political and economic policies and practices affect children, the elderly, the weak, and the poor.

She also speaks to large and sweeping collectivities, encompassing all the foregoing. She calls upon Germany to be honestly critical about its past atrocities; to democratize, demilitarize, and neutralize itself; to liberate itself from racism; and to assume responsibility for domestic and global democratic and ecological well-being. She appeals to all humanity to speak up against abuses of power on behalf of its victims. To all she cries out, "Save the planet!"

Ultimately she speaks to the self--the essence of the reflective, moral individual. "If we want to transform society in

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an ecological way, we must transform ourselves profoundly first" (Kelly 1991, p. 2). Abruptly she reminds us that if we want nonviolent global change, "we must first point the finger at ourselves" (p. 51). This is completely in the spirit of nonviolent politics, which may be the world's first political movement that does not divide the "good" self from the "bad" enemy, king, or class, but rather sees in each of us the potential for rectifying wrong. It recognizes also that mass acquiescence by individuals permits the perpetuation of direct and structural violence. (Sharp 1973, 1979; Galtung 1969).

### **In what directions should we move?**

The essence of political leadership is to point the way (Tucker 1981) and the highest form of it is morally transforming for both leaders and those who respond to or call for their action (Burns 1978). Petra Kelly's leadership exemplifies both of these qualities.

For *global peace and disarmament* she calls for the rejection of war as a political instrument; radical disarmament; removal of foreign military bases; replacement of military defense with civilian-based social defense; dismantling of military alliances; abolition of production, testing, sale, and use of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons; abolition of the world arms trade; and transformation of military industries and budgets to serve social and economic needs.

For *global economic justice*, she appeals to the affluent industrialized countries to limit their consumption of global resources; to stop exporting dangerous technologies; and to stop using superior economic power to subordinate and exploit less favored peoples. To these ends, she urges economic decentralization of "monolithic modes" of production and technology as represented by the "military-industrial complex" (p. 63).

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For *global human rights*, she demands adherence to universal standards--not just condemning violations by enemies, while overlooking those of allies; freedom of dissent for all; an end to male domination and an assertion of feminine power; cessation of suppression of indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities; termination of invasions and occupations (e.g., Tibet); and care for children, the aged, and the sick.

To *protect the biosphere* and its inhabitants, she calls for an end to nuclear technology ("No more Chernobyls!"); the prohibition of the dumping of toxic wastes ("Garbage Imperialism"); an end to commercial destruction of the rain forests; and the prohibition of all other practices and technologies that threaten to destroy the planetary life-supporting capacity. Instead, she calls for the creation of "soft" energy and other technologies as well as for cleanup, restoration, recycling, and respectful preservation. She urges creation of "a global culture of ecological responsibility" and establishment of "binding principles governing ecological relations among all countries" (p. 76).

For *global problem-solving cooperation*, she calls for the combination of demands from below and responsiveness from above that will bring about the well-being of all. She appeals for solidarity and participation of peoples across national boundaries and across all of the foregoing problem areas. In this way people can urge governments to adopt policies that are responsive to global needs and insist upon change.

Furthermore, viewing global life from a holistic perspective, she reminds us of the interconnectedness of all these issues. She explains, "Green politics is different from all other forms of politics because it acknowledges the complexity of that web of life" (Kelly n.d., "Greens...", p. 10). Firm commitment to life-respecting principles is the basis of problem-solving action: "Living our values is what Green politics is all about" (p. 28). "Complete demilitarization and complete

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democratization" are imperative for saving the planet and its inhabitants from destruction. "An ecological society is a truly free society" (p. 22). Furthermore, "environmental problems cannot be solved without understanding the economic issues of which they are a part" (Kelly n.d., "Greens . . .," p. 8). And, the converse of this is also true. "Over and over again," she insists, "we must stress that a healthy ecology is the basis for a healthy economy" (Kelly n.d., "Introduction...", p. 8). Finally, to solve global problems and their local manifestations universal human cooperation is necessary: "Green politics means that, on a global scale, we must act responsibly for each other and practice solidarity across boundaries and ideologies" (p. 62).

In sum, Petra Kelly's message to all who have power is simply this: respect life; be truthful about threats to its existence; and work nonviolently to remove them. Of special interest is what she has learned as a political leader about putting this message into practice. Neither Tolstoy, nor Gandhi, nor King created a nonviolent political party, stood in electoral competition as its candidate, and served as an exponent of its values in a national legislature. Many nonviolent figures in history have deliberately separated themselves from direct participation in formal political institutions (parties, legislatures, executives) as violent instruments of the state. In this tradition, some participants in Germany's Green ecological movement opposed the formation of a political party. They favored seeking nonviolent social transformation by working outside formal political institutions. This debate continues as the Green movement and parties spread throughout the world.

Nevertheless, Petra Kelly and her German Green colleagues, coming out of an anti-leader subculture in a country with a spectacularly violent history, chose the enormously difficult path of direct nonviolent political leadership. Her objective was to create an "anti-party party" based upon a new form of "shared power" from the bottom up rather than upon dominating power from the top down--this being "the power of

nonviolent change" (pp. 21, 41). Such a party would act simultaneously with "courage and conviction" in the streets and in legislatures at all levels as a "conscience and moral force" to control executive governments. Such a party would seek to strengthen democratic processes from below.

She recognizes that "the question of nonviolence is the biggest challenge to all Green parties." One reason for this is that all members do not accept nonviolence as an uncompromisable principle rather than merely as a useful political tactic. Another problem is that the more successful Green parties become, sometimes in coalitions with other parties, the more responsible they are for the direct and structural violence of the state. With characteristic frankness she observes, "I do not believe we have yet found the answer, but we all know that we must try to transform these violent institutions into nonviolent institutions" (p. 67). This is precisely the challenge to nonviolent politics, combining nonviolent movements for social change with direct nonviolent political participation for nonviolent global transformation.

### **What are the lessons from her experience?**

These are reflected mainly in her essays on "Morality and Human Dignity" and an "Open Letter to the German Green Party." First, as she admits, "The Greens, originally intent on transforming power from below, have meanwhile become victims of power from above" (p. 127). This might well have been foreseen on the basis of the classic study of *Political Parties* by Robert Michels (1915) in which he posits an "iron law of oligarchy." This is a process by which the politics of the many becomes the politics of the few cut off from their popular base and engaged in factional and personal struggle for power. This text is an indispensable challenge for all who seek to disprove such a "law." In Petra Kelly's analysis the co-optation of the German Greens in power struggles from the top, combined with failure to adhere uncompromisingly to their principles,

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contributed to their foreseeable failure to gain 5 percent of the votes in the December 1990 national election, with consequent loss of all their seats in the Bundestag.

But the difficulties encountered by Petra Kelly and other nonviolent leaders reflect also the inadequacy of preparation and support that societies are prepared to give political leaders in general. In contrast, compare the great social investment in education and training for military leaders, businessmen, lawyers, and civil servants. On the contrary, political leaders are supposed to emerge spontaneously out of a struggle for power, relatively unaided--except that in violence-accepting societies they are apt to be recruited from the forenamed professions. This is accompanied by virtually universal criticism of the quality and behavior of political leaders in every type of society.

These conventional problems of political leadership are compounded for nonviolent leaders who seek to question, challenge, and change the policies and institutions of violence-prone societies--political, military, economic, social, cultural, and ecological--not only locally but also globally. The lonely paths to martyrdom of Gandhi and King provide prototypical examples. Therefore Petra Kelly's analysis of the personal, organizational, and structural factors that contribute to "self-defeating" electoral, legislative, and executive politics is especially important. The problem of egotistical, jealous, and aggressive personalities--more self-oriented than issue-oriented, compassionate, and constructive--is a fundamental one. It results in an atmosphere of mutual distrust that Petra Kelly characterizes as "Kill the Leaders!" (p. 18). To create nonviolent politics with personalities produced and scarred by violent societies is indeed difficult because nonviolence means noninjury in thought, word, and deed. Since nonviolence applies to friends as well as to enemies, it should be assiduously practiced in a nonviolent political party or movement. But given global resources for spiritual and organizational change, given the will and means, this problem is no more insoluble than to take relatively peaceful

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citizens and to train them to lead, kill, and die in military combat. The scientific combination of meditation and nutrition offers one nonsectarian point of departure (e.g., Yuvacharya Mahapragya 1986, 1988).

Humans are capable of both violence and nonviolence. How we act depends upon which qualities we wish to develop in ourselves, our leaders, and others for the well-being of all. Better human relations are possible among nonviolent leaders, parties, and all who support them. It will take research, education, training, and hard work to accomplish this. But nonviolent movements should take the improvement of organizational performance no less seriously than do military establishments and corporations.

Although Petra Kelly does not mention it, nonviolent political leaders, both inside and outside formal institutions, need opportunities for rest, recreation, and reflection--for spiritual, psychological, and physical revitalization. They need this no less than soldiers in combat or professors who take sabbatical leave. Gandhi's periodic withdrawals from campaigns into ashram life provide an illustration. Driven by events, under attack from both inside and outside the civil rights movement, Martin Luther King, Jr., had virtually no chance for this. Therefore the provision of completely supportive havens for spiritual and physical revitalization is a service to nonviolent leaders in which visionary benefactors and life-uplifting institutions should cooperate.

Petra Kelly's emphasis upon the acquisition, study, and use of "counterinformation" for effective nonviolent political action is of central importance. Such information is needed to counter governmental ignorance, secrecy, deception, and inaction. The stress of information overload experienced by the conscientious nonviolent political figure who seeks to respond to human needs on a wide range of local and global issues is readily understandable. This can be made more manageable by skilful

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combination of technologies and highly competent staff assistance. Both of these are apt to be in short supply for nonviolent leaders. It is not that they do not exist, or cannot be created. Their absence results from two reluctances: the reluctance of dominant, violence-accepting institutions to provide them; and the reluctance of nonviolent political figures who are nurtured in principles of self-reliance and frugality to insist upon them. Supporters of nonviolent political leadership must help to remove these obstacles.

Another lesson can be learned from the fact that although Petra Kelly speaks for the victims of dominant power, she works amidst elite institutions: parties, governments, bureaucracies, the media, and universities. On behalf of power from the bottom up she works primarily from the top down. For comparison, consider the elite person who goes to work for nonviolent change among the poor. Both are essential for nonviolent global transformation--as are poor who work among the poor and elites who work among elites.

But working at the top entails two dangers--isolation and co-optation--for which Petra Kelly suggests corresponding remedies. The first is to try in every way not to lose touch with the various social movements that challenge governmental failure to respond to people's needs. For increasing responsiveness to them is the heart of the nonviolent political process (Burton 1979). She insists, "We cannot stop our ecological consciousness-raising in the streets, even while we are in Parliament. We cannot forget our commitments to the social movements outside!" (p. 67) The other recommended remedy is to engage in civil disobedience within the dominant institutions. This means not to lose contact with those at the top, contact characterized by principled dissent against misuse of power. She explains, "All of us in Germany would benefit if we were to learn at last the liberating and constructive art of civil disobedience--not just in the extraparliamentary movement, but also within parliament and political parties. Civil disobedience

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has to be practiced in parliament or even within our own party if we become too dogmatic, powerful, or arrogant" (p. 148).

Still another lesson for nonviolent political leadership to be learned from her experience is her sense of constituency that differs radically from conventional representational politics. Petra Kelly's constituency is the planet. Imagine it yours as seen from outer space--an increasingly dirty, white-smudged, blue-green spinning ball. From this perspective violent divisions melt away and the nonviolent unity of life is evident. Her constituency includes all the human beings on earth. One expression of their interests is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Her constituency also includes all nonhuman forms of life and everything that supports them. These basic ideas of constituency help to explain why she refuses to be confined within national boundaries, why she works locally for global good, and why she works globally for local well-being. Nonviolent political leaders of the future and their supporters have much to learn from this.

Comparison of Petra Kelly with Gandhi and King, whose nonviolent tradition she continues, is appropriate. Although all three share these qualities to some degree it is nevertheless fair to say that she is more ecologically and globally oriented, more expressive of feminist concerns, more clearly opposed to militarization in all its forms, more experienced in electoral and parliamentary politics, and more informed by global travel. She is a pioneer in carrying nonviolent politics directly into the heart of formal political institutions from a global perspective. She is at one with Gandhi and King, as with the earlier Tolstoy, in possessing a keen sense of the spiritual roots and strength of nonviolence. "We cannot solve any political problems without also addressing our spiritual ones!" (p. 17) For her this means developing "respect for all living things" and understanding their "interrelatedness" and "interconnectedness." This for her is the core of Green ethics and politics. "I believe," she declares, "that

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unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality" (Kelly 1987b, p. 32).

Petra Kelly deserves to be seen now and will in the future be recognized with Tolstoy, Gandhi, and King as a preeminent contributor to nonviolent global change in the twentieth century.

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