

Dream Me, God



It's not you who should solve my problems, God,
but I yours, God of the asylum-seekers.
It's not you who should feed the hungry,
but I who should protect your children
from the terror of the banks and armies.
It's not you who should make room for the refugees,
but I who should receive you,
hardly hidden God of the desolate.

You dreamed me, God,
practicing walking upright
and learning to kneel down
more beautiful than I am now,
happier than I dare to be
freer than our country allows.

Don't stop dreaming me, God.
I don't want to stop remembering
that I am your tree,
planted by the streams
of living water.¹



Dorothee Soelle, Activist for Peace and Justice²

All of a sudden there she stood, one of 180,000 people who had come to Hasselbach in the Hunsrück Mountains to demonstrate against the United States's recent stationing of new cruise and Pershing nuclear missiles. She had probably spoken at one of many rallies leading up to the Hasselbach demonstration, since she was one of the prominent supporters of the peace movement. But now she simply stood in front of the large music stage, dressed and equipped for long walks on foot, unpredictable weather, and every possible

emergency like everyone else at such huge demonstrations. It was October 11, 1986, a clear, sunny day, and the colors and smells of autumn matched the mood that had spread at this most peaceful of all major events of those years; they matched this hope "in spite of everything" that united people from all walks of life and generations on this day.

The peace movement had not been able to prevent the stationing of the latest generation of nuclear weapons in Germany. Nevertheless a lot was happening. The logic of the Cold War seemed to have reached a dead end. From the Soviet Union there were signs of change, *détente* and disarmament, a gesture of rapprochement that the politicians and military strategists in the West would not be able to get around. Among the performers at the huge outdoor lawn concert, beside many other musicians, was a well-known Moscow rock singer who had come to Germany to sing for the German peace movement together with the German youth idol, singer-songwriter Udo Lindenberg. Afterward, a Russian guest spoke; strange and beautiful sounds were heard wafting into the autumn sky. "What a beautiful language," said Dorothee, moved by this conciliatory moment in gesture, speech, and song in the meeting of "Cold War enemies" Lindenberg and the Russian guest.

Sometimes the clearest memory of a person such as Dorothee coincides with a specific moment. For me, that particular moment was the time when the song about the "Wind of Change"³ took over the hit lists and when the Conciliar Process for Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation⁴ took over the churches. It was a time when musicians and writers enriched the efforts to create a different world through art and culture and in the process revived the traditions of earlier peace movements. The following short, moving song was used to conclude every concert program by two women artists who, like many other cultural groups, accompanied the actions of the peace and solidarity movement.

I hold you in my arm's embrace.
Like seed corn, Hope has grown apace.
Will the dream come true of those who died
for the good we scarcely dreamed could be—
To live without Fear.⁵

And somewhere a poem from the 1950s by East German icon of the West German Left Johannes R. Becher reappears describing the inferno of world wars and the necessity of struggling for peace. At the end of the poem, Becher writes:

Looking back
Seeing through the Present
the Gaze
Turns
Toward the Future,
Sifting what's human:
Free,
Simple,
Beautiful,
Arisen from the dream
of the centuries.⁶

"Dream me, God," wrote Dorothee Soelle, freer, happier, more beautiful—in the end these are the same dreams that unite the radical Christian with the militant Communist but with one essential difference: in her text the human being does not develop as an ideal figure⁷ but is created from God's dream. History had more than abundantly documented the limits of human autonomy and of human capacity for the good. For Dorothee Soelle this knowledge of human limitation signaled the necessity of reconnecting with God, enabling and requiring greater freedom and responsibility in the world. For her, "bowing down before God" and "learning to walk upright" were the two poles of her existence, always to be held in balance between

pride and humility, revolutionary activism and mystical devotion to God. She wanted to be planted by God in the earth, which she loved, “like a tree by the streams of water.” In the end, as if she had chosen the day, the lectionary verse (*Losung*)⁸ for the day she died read: “The just are like trees planted by streams of water” (Psalm 1).

Dorothee felt well-grounded in her faith. Perhaps this is why she could hold her head so high, confident of the dream she shared in that moment with so many different kinds of people. They dreamed that the world might yet be set straight, that all of God’s creatures might yet be able to live together without violence, without destroying human life and nature, that life and work might return to a human scale and that life in abundance might again become possible for everyone rather than a luxury for a few; that the biblical “Shalom” might be realized in which justice and peace are one, forever.

One cannot speak of Dorothee Soelle without speaking of this dream, without bringing back to life this vision that gave her wings as she stood in the field that autumn day and demonstrated for peace—free, simple, and beautiful.