

No medal for this Dafür bekamen sie keinen Orden

A few months ago Church and Peace moved into new premises. That meant having to establish an archive for the numerous documents that had accumulated in the international office over the decades. It meant sorting through many files, and weeding out what was unimportant. Essays and lectures from Church and Peace conferences and seminars were placed together; church statements on peace and justice were classified. Among all these piles of papers was a newspaper article, presumably from 1980, a short text with a photo, entitled: "They were not honoured for this".

Dafür bekamen Sie keinen Orden

Zwei Veteranen aus dem ersten Weltkrieg haben zugunsten französischer und belgischer Bauern für den Frieden vorgearbeitet.

Soldaten sind Helden oder namenlos. Wer den Krieg gewonnen hat, stellt immer die Helden. Von den Soldaten des Verlierers spricht man nicht oder nichts Gutes.

Deshalb diese Information über zwei gute alte deutsche Soldaten. Frühjahr 1916 an der Somme. – Bei St. Quentin lernen sich zwei



deutsche Soldaten während des Munitionsfahrens kennen. Der eine heißt Franz Mues (heute 83) aus dem Hochsauer-

land, der andere Willi Walschke (heute 82) aus der Niederlausitz. Daraus wurde eine Freundschaft, die 1980 einen

Zeitraum von 64 Jahren überspannt, ein deutsch-deutsche Freundschaft BRD-DDR, die Beachtung verdient.

Die beiden alten Herren, die sich alle drei Jahre gegenseitig besuchen, waren 1916 noch ganz junge Soldaten. Landwirte von Hause aus, als sie sich darüber ärgerten, daß durch den Krieg große Felder der Franzosen und Belgier unbestellt blieben. Zu nahe an der Front gelegen, waren die Bauern geflohen oder mit den Familien abgezogen.

„Da dachten der Willi und ich“, sagte Franz Mues, „der Krieg muß bald zu Ende gehen, und dann sind die Bauern, wenn sie zurückkommen, froh, die Äcker bestellt und in Ordnung vorzufinden.“

Wir haben dann jede freie Stunde auf den Feldern gearbeitet – freiwillig natürlich – gepflügt und gesät, gejätet mit Hilfe unserer Pferde. Heut gemacht und Vieh versorgt.

Es hat uns gefreut, mit dem schweren Pflug über die riesigen Felder zu ziehen.“

Im Jahr 1918 kehrten beide mit ihren Pferden nach Deutschland zurück. – Der Krieg war aus.

Ein Verdienstkreuz für die Friedensarbeit in „Feindesland“ haben sie nicht erhalten.

Red. Krause

A story that is nearly a century old. A different kind of war story to those we are familiar with. The story of two German soldiers in the First World War. An encouraging story. The two men on the photo were stationed on farms in Belgium and France in 1916. The inhabitants had abandoned them. These soldiers could not bear seeing the farm going to rack and ruin. In every free minute they ploughed, scattered seed, weeded, harvested, cared for the animals – until the end of the war.

Against the background of the slaughter which took the lives of so many people, this story is not only encouraging and comforting. It could be a symbol of a church that is on the way to becoming a Peace Church, a church that lives out its calling as ambassador of reconciliation and takes practical steps.

Willi and Franz were apparently not convinced by the war propaganda that fuelled the hatred on all sides of the conflict. They did not adopt the enemy stereotypes that were propagated in public and also from the pulpits. For them, the farmers whose fields and cattle they cared for, were not wicked French people or barbaric Belgians, but just farmers – like themselves. As farmers they knew what it meant if fields were not ploughed and cattle not fed. They felt a sympathy that was not wiped out by the label “enemy”. Ignoring enemy stereotypes is one of the signs of a church of peace. Unfortunately, people of faith are not automatically immune to them. The attitude of the churches on all sides of the conflict in the First World bears sad witness to this. Today, where a war is unthinkable between English, French and German people, other stereotypes are in circulation, e.g. with respect to Islam. The spontaneous solidarity of the two farmers with people declared to be enemies is a symbol of that openness, that great freedom and readiness to accept all people that we see in the life and teachings of Jesus.

The two farmers are also a parable of a church of peace in their actions. It all started with their annoyance that the war prevented the tending of the fields. So they took action themselves – voluntarily, doing what was necessary. Working as a church of reconciliation and peace means just that: saying a decisive No, being outraged at the forces of

destruction – and, on the other hand, doing what is necessary, as an echo to God’s great affirmation of life. That is the special thing about the *Church and Peace* network. It is made up of groups and communities who, day by day, demonstrate their calling between this decisive No and this clear Yes: they work for social justice in cities or train people for nonviolent actions and conflict resolution; they actively oppose the arms trade or stand up for the rights of refugees. They are always concerned for the same thing: rejecting the use of force in all its forms and, at the same time, working nonviolently for justice and for life. And that is how we may long for – and become - a church that refuses to become habituated to different forms of destruction and is ready to act.

Willi and Franz were able to look beyond the present. They worked towards the future. In the middle of the war they were already focusing on when it would end, and the joy of unknown people when they came back and found everything in order on their farms. This too is a symbol of the Peace Church: it lives and works with hope and joy towards the future.

When members of *Church and Peace* in Serbia and Kosovo work - under difficult circumstances - for the benefit of Roma children and young people they are working towards the future. When these children manage to finish primary school and even go on to secondary education, there is hope that the life of their population group will change. It is very important to stay hopeful and to keep our vision, because the road is full of obstacles - Franz and Willi would perhaps say: full of weeds. This kind of farsightedness is needed today more than ever. Today it is important to encourage children and young people to be enthusiastic for life and for discipleship if we do not want them to end up in death-bringing militias, through lack of orientation. The church’s perspective is a reconciled world in God’s Kingdom, a reality that needs to be practiced here and now – so that it will be visible tomorrow.

We ask God’s blessing on you all in Advent 2014.

Davorka Lovreković

Martin Schuler

Helga Amelung

Nevo-Nülle von der Höhe