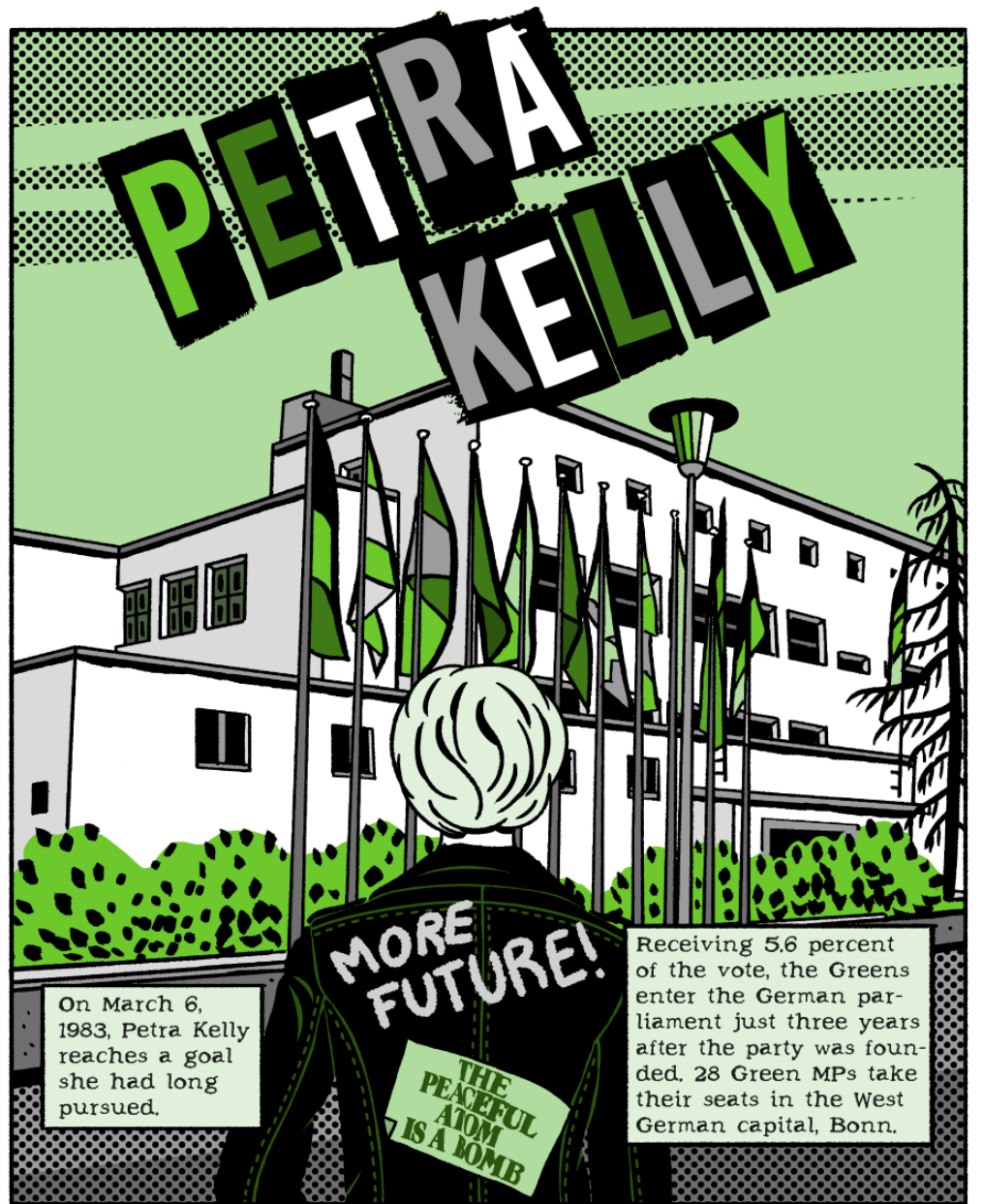


PETRA KELLY



Lieber
heute
aktiv als
morgen
radioaktiv





On March 6, 1983, Petra Kelly reaches a goal she had long pursued.

Receiving 5.6 percent of the vote, the Greens enter the German parliament just three years after the party was founded. 28 Green MPs take their seats in the West German capital, Bonn.

"In West Germany, it's becoming more and more important to choose what you think is right in terms of substance, rather than getting bogged down in lesser evils."



Bursting with drive and energy, Kelly says that she will stand up for Germany's voiceless.



The reactions of the established factions to the new members of parliament range from suspicion to hostility.



With flowers in hand, she enters parliament with the other new Green MPs.



Petra Kelly is the best-known and most charismatic member of the Green Party. Like no one else, she can inspire people from all walks of life to care about peace and environmental policy.



But years later, the woman who always spoke so forcefully in parliament suddenly seems careworn and full of doubt. What happened?



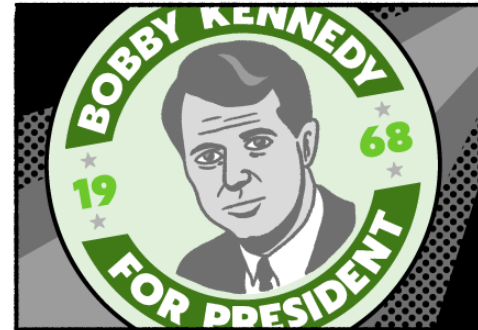
Petra Kelly was born on November 29, 1947, in Günzburg, a small town in Bavaria. Her father leaves when she is very young. The fact that her mother Marianne is divorced and has a job is considered scandalous in the deeply Catholic community.



Little Petra is raised mainly by her loving grandmother, who speaks to her about politics from a very young age. Petra is a sickly child; she has a kidney condition and is x-rayed frequently. When she later suffers a miscarriage, she attributes it to the x-rays.



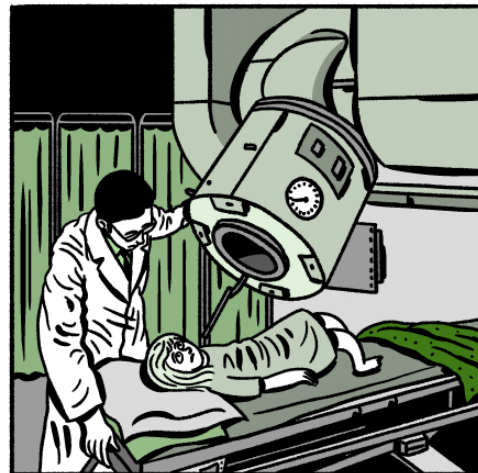
As a student in the US, she becomes passionate about feminism and the nonviolent protest actions of the civil rights movement. She establishes contacts with a wide variety of activists. Kelly graduates at the top of her high school class. But unlike her mother, she does not become an American citizen.



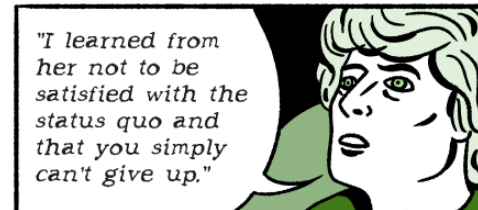
Kelly studies political science and international relations in Washington D.C. In 1968, she works for the campaign of the Democratic presidential contender, Robert Kennedy, and for Hubert Humphrey, who becomes the Democratic candidate after Kennedy's assassination.



In 1959, her mother marries John Kelly, a US army officer, and the family moves to the United States. Petra's half-sister Grace is born shortly before the move.

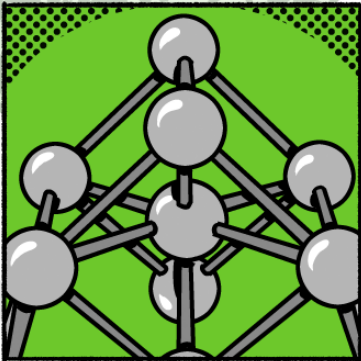


In 1966, her little sister Grace falls ill with cancer and her parents move back to Germany with her. Petra remains in the US to study.



"I learned from her not to be satisfied with the status quo and that you simply can't give up."

Grace receives radiation therapy at Heidelberg University Hospital. When she dies at the age of only ten, Petra Kelly blames this treatment for her sister's early demise. This trauma ensures that Kelly makes the fight against any use of nuclear radiation her life's work. Later, she founds a non-profit organization in Grace's name to give children with cancer and their families much-needed support.



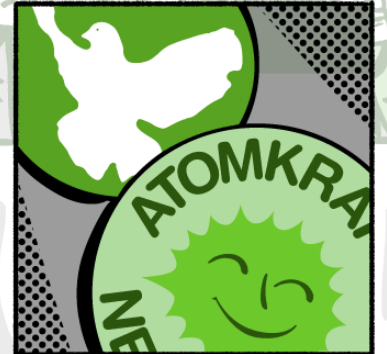
In 1970, Petra Kelly returns to Europe. While studying in Amsterdam, she also works in Brussels for the European Community and the European Commission.



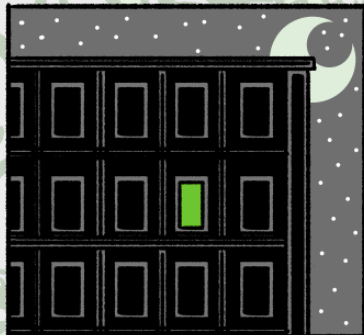
She supports Willy Brandt and joins the Social Democrats in 1972 but leaves the party in 1979 because of the nuclear and military escalation of Helmut Schmidt's government.



Petra Kelly travels the world for her cause. She takes part in numerous protests, panels and TV shows. Soon, she becomes the most familiar face of a new generation of environmental and peace activists, in Germany and internationally.



Petra Kelly creates a new style and a new language. But most of all, she is authentic, a good listener, and genuinely cares about the concerns of people around the world.



Kelly only sleeps about four hours a night. She works as a civil servant in Brussels during the day, and after hours she is active in feminist, peace, human rights and anti-nuclear initiatives.



Her beloved grandmother is always by her side, becoming her manager and assisting with her staggering workload.



People from all walks of life come to identify with Kelly and the sense of visceral suffering she projects in the struggle against war and nuclear power.



Petra Kelly unites the environmental, peace and anti-nuclear movements. The media stylize her as the "Joan of Arc of the nuclear age", an image that she finds deeply distasteful.



In 1979, Kelly is the top candidate on the Green list for the first elections to the European Parliament, but fails to clear the five-percent threshold. In the following year, she co-founds the German Green Party and is a speaker for the party executive.



Petra Kelly maintains close contact with numerous artists. In 1981, she meets Heinrich Böll, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, at a massive peace rally in Bonn, where they both give speeches. Two years later, Böll presents Kelly's new book and reveals that he supports the Greens.



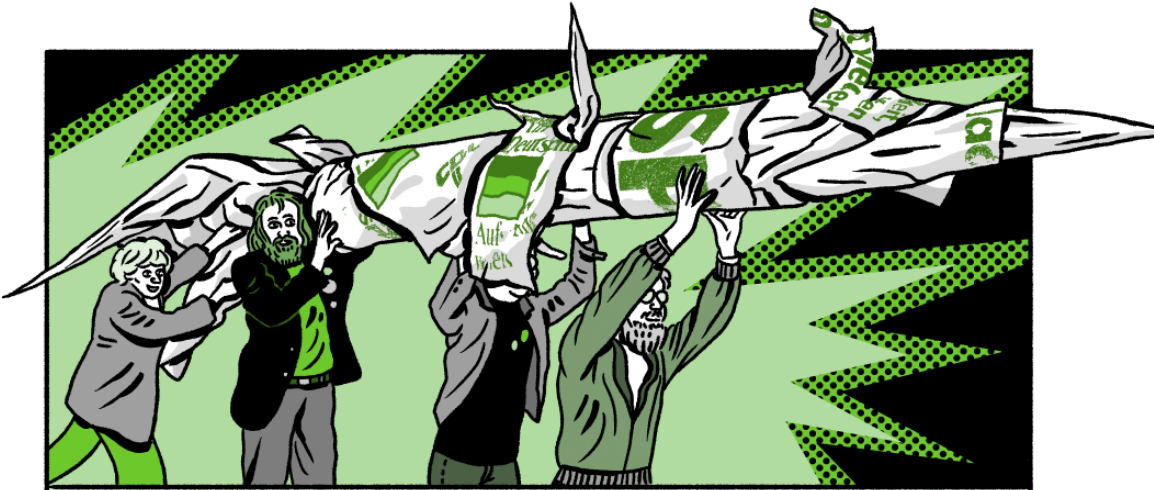
The Green Party is a patchwork of various environmental, anti-nuclear and peace movements. It wants to be an anti-party party, a grassroots democratic movement. No one is supposed to take a standout role and "celebrities" are viewed with suspicion. Petra Kelly's public popularity and her unwillingness to compromise soon lead to conflict in the fledgling party.



At the same time, she remains active in Brussels and travels the world for peace and environmental protection. In 1982, she is awarded the "Alternative Nobel Prize" for her international commitment.



Like Kelly, the artist Joseph Beuys is one of the founders of Germany's Green Party. Beuys supports Kelly in her charitable work. The two share an expansive vision of politics in which new ideas from the art scene and society are of great importance.



Petra Kelly and the Greens keep drawing attention to themselves with spectacular campaigns. To speak out against the spiraling arms race, they burn a large paper missile made of old SPD and CDU posters in front of the SPD party headquarters and unfurl banners at the conferences of the other parties.



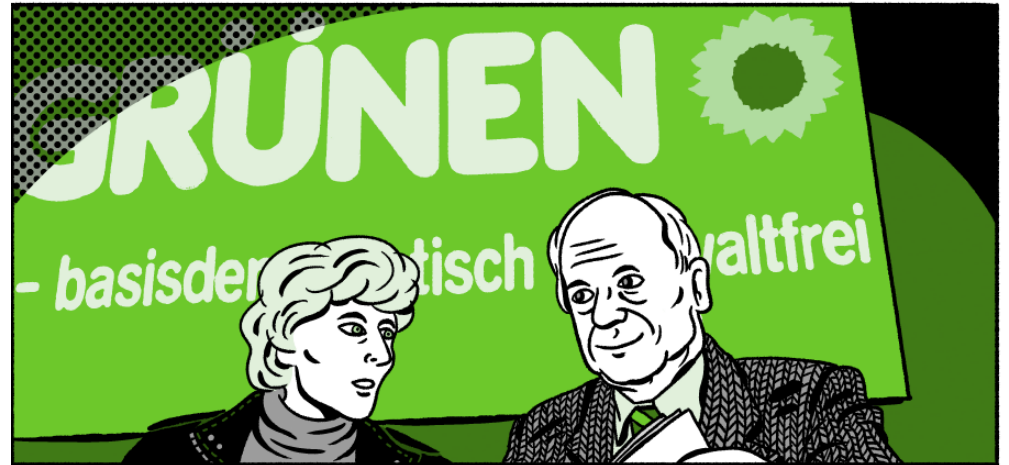
Among the members of the first Green parliamentary group in the Bundestag is Gert Bastian, a former Bundeswehr general. He and Kelly had met three years earlier during a discussion about women and the armed forces. They do not hit it off at first. However, they meet again and again at peace rallies and eventually become involved.



In March 1983, the Greens make it into the Bundestag. With their unconventional approach, they create quite a stir in the parliament. They ask pointed questions about policies behind the arms race and denounce the open sexism in the Bundestag.



The conservative Christian Democrats feel particularly provoked by the Greens. At the swearing-in ceremony of Chancellor Helmut Kohl, Kelly and the Greens leave the hall in protest.



The "peace general" and the activist are now inseparable – as life partners and as fighters for the Green cause. Gert Bastian is always at Petra Kelly's side. The true nature of the bond between the staunch pacifist and the former soldier remains a mystery, however, even to close companions.



Petra Kelly is conflicted about being a member of parliament, because for her the Greens remain an anti-party party. Kelly repeatedly attracts attention with spectacular actions, for example when she unfurls a large banner protesting Chancellor Helmut Kohl's policies during one of his speeches.



Over the years, Petra Kelly has met and stayed in contact with dissidents in many countries. She is particularly close to the civil rights movement in East Germany. She initially supports the Krefelder Appell, an appeal to the West German government against nuclear armament. However, when the call is not addressed to East Germany and the Soviet Union as well, she distances himself from the one-sided appeal.



Petra Kelly is constantly on the move to campaign for peace and environmental protection. She continues to take part in protests against nuclear weapons and nuclear energy. In 1985, she is briefly arrested while participating in a blockade outside a US military base.



In the fall of 1983, Kelly, Gert Bastian and other Greens meet East German head of state Erich Honecker for talks. She demands the release of members of the opposition and presents the puzzled Honecker with a symbolic peace treaty. She demonstratively wears a sweater with the inscription "Swords to Plowshares" – the slogan of East Germany's opposition peace movement. A short time later, Kelly is seen wearing a jacket that reads "Respect Human Rights" in Russian during a meeting with Soviet officials in Moscow.



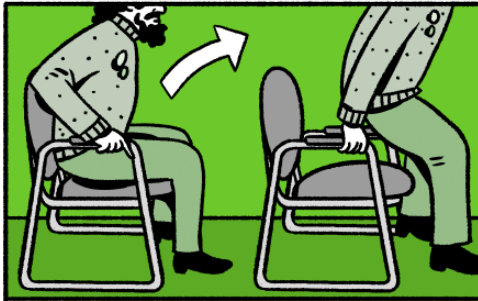
In her fight for universal human rights, she is particularly committed to indigenous minorities such as the Aboriginal Australians and the Lakota in the United States.



Petra Kelly pursues a long-standing campaign for Tibet. Kelly, who knows the Dalai Lama personally, submits a Bundestag resolution on human rights in Tibet in 1987. It is the first resolution to receive votes from across all parliamentary groups.



Meanwhile, Petra Kelly's influence within the Greens is slowly waning. While the party's status in society rises, her importance in the parliamentary group declines. Thanks to the successes of Green policy, her ideas are becoming ever more mainstream. However, this also requires compromises in terms of realpolitik, and Kelly is not up for that.



An important aspect of Green Party policy at the time is the principle of rotation, which is designed to prevent the accumulation of offices and any abuse of power by shortening the term of office. When Petra Kelly opposes rotation in 1985 and refuses to give up her Bundestag seat, tensions arise between her and the party.



While Petra Kelly is perceived internationally as a leader of the Greens, Germans accuse her of jet-set politics. Her colleagues would prefer her to do classic parliamentary work rather than travel around the world. But bureaucracy is not Kelly's thing; Mountains of files pile up in her office. She finds it difficult to prioritize, and the stress grinds down her few staff members.



The fact that Petra Kelly is increasingly becoming the face of the Greens has long annoyed a large part of the grassroots party. No other member of the Bundestag gets as much mail as she does. On the one hand, the party doesn't want leaders. On the other, Kelly is in demand as a speaker among the party base like no one else.



She is increasingly being thwarted in parliament and in the parliamentary group. The internationalist Kelly – one of the few in the Bundestag to speak fluent English – despairs at the provincialism of German politics.



In 1990, the West German Greens fail to clear the 5% threshold in the Bundestag elections. Kelly is defeated in the election for Green Party spokesperson, garnering only 5% of the vote. She warns her party against "tearing itself apart" and "infighting", but the Greens no longer want their star member. Others take over the reins of the party.



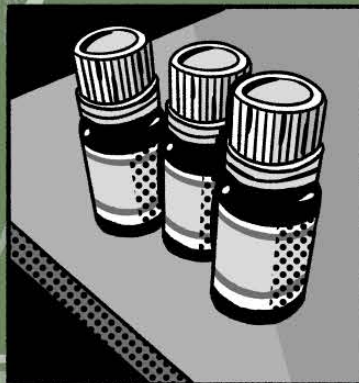
Although politically sidelined within the Green Party, Kelly keeps fighting for various international peace and emancipation movements. She becomes thinner and paler, and her health deteriorates.



In 1992, she hosts an environmental magazine on Germany's emerging private television, hoping to reach even more people. After a falling out with the broadcaster, which she accuses of censorship and treating her "like a schoolgirl", the show is canceled after just a few episodes.



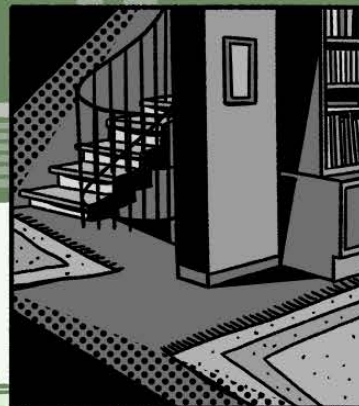
Disappointed, Petra Kelly withdraws more and more into private life with her partner Gert Bastian, but not without seeking new fields of political activity.



Her already fragile health is failing. Decades of burning the candle at both ends is taking its toll.



She increasingly suffers panic attacks and is often unable to leave the house without Bastian.



On October 19, 1992, the police find the bodies of Petra Kelly and Gert Bastian in the town house they shared in Bonn.



More than two weeks earlier, Bastian had shot Petra Kelly in her sleep and killed himself immediately after the murder.



The exact reasons for the crime remain in the dark.

*"Start where you are.
Don't wait for better
circumstances. They
will come automatically
the moment
you start."*



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