

“We Germans Fear God but Nothing Else in the World!” Bismarck in the Reichstag Session of February 6, 1888 (1901)

Abstract

On February 6, 1888, in one of his last and most famous Reichstag speeches, Bismarck called for an expansion of the army to meet existing and potential foreign threats (as he had done in the winter of 1886–87 to whip up electoral support). Near the end of his long speech, shown here in a 1901 painting by Ernst Henseler (b. 1852), Bismarck told the house: “We Germans fear God and but nothing else in the world!” [“Wir Deutschen fürchten Gott, aber sonst nichts in der Welt!”]. The second half of the sentence is important. Bismarck continued: “and it is the fear of God that makes us love and strive for peace.” Contemporaries chose to cite the first part of the sentence, issuing postcards, medallions, and other commemorative items that repeated Bismarck’s stirring phrase (not always with 100 percent accuracy). Most of them ignored the concluding phrase in which Bismarck linked military strength with the maintenance of international peace.

Source



Source: Ernst Henseler, *Bismarck in der Reichstagssitzung vom 6. Februar 1888* [*Bismarck in the Reichstag Session of February 6, 1888*]. Painting, oil on canvas (1901). Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin Inv.-Nr.: Gm 98/29.

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