

Women's Activism during the Revolution: Appeal of the Married Women and Maidens of Württemberg to German Warriors (1849)

Abstract

In 1849, counterrevolutionary government troops put down the revolution in Germany. In this appeal to "German warriors", the women of Württemberg adhered to the traditional roles of wife and mother but used these roles as a political trump by threatening to deny love and marriage to soldiers who directed their weapons "at the heart of the people from whom you come."

Source

German warriors! A mighty spirit is blowing through all the regions of our common fatherland! It is the spirit of the awakened, true liberty of the German people! And to you, young German men, who are following the good German army, goes the admonitory call to participate in the spirit of freedom, so that this treasure so long yearned for will finally become the inalienable possession of the entire nation. But it is not with the path trodden so far, German warriors, that you will help to win the priceless gift of German liberty!

If civic prosperity and happiness, which can only flourish in the liberty of the people, are priceless, sacred goods to you, you can no longer consecrate your bodies and your strength to a princely tyranny hostile to the people by pointing your weapons at the heart of the people from whom you come and to whose midst you will one day wish to return! You have sworn to serve the fatherland against external enemies, but not to stain the heart of your own Fatherland, the peaceful regions of your own homeland, with the blood of its sons, your brothers.

Well then, German younglings and men, listen to the call of German women and maidens: Think of your future, think of the peaceful citizenry that you will one day want to rejoin. Think of the peaceful happiness of love and marriage, and of the domestic hearth, which beckons you from afar. Hear the oath of German women, which we swear in sacred patriotism:

"Never shall we give our hand at the altar to him whose hand was stained by the blood of his fellow German citizens!"

"Never shall we share our household hearth with him who with fire and sword has destroyed this, our sanctuary!!"

"Never shall we draw near in faithful love to him whose hostile weapon has brought misery and destruction upon the German lands!!!"

Listen, German younglings, to our vow, and may heaven's retribution befall us if we do not keep this vow! German warriors! The legacy of your fathers, so have they decided, which you blasphemously seek to destroy with your arms, is withdrawn from you! Let it benefit those whom you, in blind madness, have made widows and orphans! Think of the abyss opening up before your blinded eyes and stand by the people. Otherwise the luminosity [*Genius*] of a happy future for you will conceal its face in mourning.

7. May 1849

All the women and maidens of the Kingdom of Württemberg

Source: "Zuruf württembergischer Frauen und Jungfrauen an unsere deutschen Krieger," in Daniel Staroste, ed., *Tagebuch über die Ereignisse in der Pfalz und Baden im Jahre 1849*, Bd. 1, Potsdam, 1855, p. 145f; reprinted in Gerlinde Hummel-Haasis, *Schwester zerreit eure Ketten: Zeugnisse zur Geschichte der Frauen in der Revolution von 1848/49*. Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuchverlag, 1982, pp. 22–23.

Translation: Thomas Dunlap

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