

Käthe Kollwitz, “Urgent Appeal!” (1932)

Abstract

As part of a dramatic political event in June 1932, Käthe Kollwitz joined other prominent figures in signing an “Urgent Appeal” to the SPD and KPD to form a collective list of candidates who could compete as a unified bloc against the Nazis in the upcoming July 31 federal elections. Kollwitz had longed for the leftwing parties to work together ever since the November Revolution of 1918, and the Nazi Party’s rising popularity in the early 1930s had now made the need for such cooperation on the left critical. The “Urgent Appeal” achieved little resonance in 1932 (the Nazis won a huge plurality of seats in the July 31 elections), but the group issued the same appeal in February 1933, just two weeks after Hitler had come to power and three weeks before a March 5 election that would determine exactly how much power Hitler could wield. Publicized on posters hung all over Berlin, the Appeal tragically prompted an immediate backlash from the many cultural leaders who had already chosen to accommodate themselves to the rising Nazi order. On February 15, 1933, Kollwitz and two of her fellow signatories submitted to intense pressure from their erstwhile colleagues and reluctantly resigned from the Prussian Academy of the Arts.

Source

Urgent Appeal!

The annihilation of all personal and political freedom

in Germany is imminent, if there is not success at the last minute, without prejudice to the principles of opposites, to consolidate all forces that are united in the rejection of fascism. The next opportunity for this is July 31st. It is imperative to use this opportunity and finally take a step toward

Building a united labor front,

which is necessary not just for the parliamentary, rather for additional defense as well. We're addressing everyone who shares this conviction with us, to aid in this urgent call to

Coalesce around the SPD and KPD in this election,

best materializing in the form of joint candidate lists, however, at least in the form of joint party lists. Not only in the political parties, but especially in the large labor organizations, it is essential to exert every conceivable influence. Let us ensure that no sloth of nature or cowardice of heart allow us sink into barbarism!

Source: “Dringender Appell!” Poster, Käthe Kollwitz Museum, Cologne.
<https://www.kollwitz.de/en/kollwitz-timeline>

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