



German History in Documents and Images

Volume 3. From Vormärz to Prussian Dominance, 1815-1866

Women's Activism in the Revolution of 1848-49: Appeal of the Married Women and Maidens of Württemberg to the Soldiers of Germany (1849)

In 1849, counter-revolutionary government troops fought against their fellow citizens, violently suppressing the revolution in Germany. In this appeal to "German warriors," the women of Württemberg use their traditional role as wives, mothers, and homemakers as a political trump, threatening to deny love and marriage to soldiers who "direct their weapons against the heart of the people."

Appeal of the married women and maidens of Württemberg to our German soldiers.

German soldiers! A mighty spirit is blowing through all the districts of our common Fatherland! It is the spirit of the awakened, true liberty of the German people! And to you too, young German men, you who are following the brave 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 you, German soldiers, will not help to win the delightful gift of German liberty with the path you have so far embarked upon!

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 continuing to aim your weapons at the heart of the people from whom you have emerged 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 district your own homeland with the blood of its sons, your brothers.

Come, now, German youngsters [*Jünglinge*] and men, listen to the call of German married women and maidens: think of your future, think of the peaceful civilian estate you wish to rejoin one day, think of the peaceful happiness of love and marriage, and of the domestic hearth, which smiles pleasantly at 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 domestic hearth with him who destroyed this – our shrine – with fire and sword!"

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

Hear our oath, young German men, and may the wrath of Heaven fall upon us if we do not keep this oath! German soldiers! By the decree of your fathers you are stripped of their inheritance, which you blasphemously seek to destroy with your arms! It will benefit those whom you, in blind madness, have made into widows and orphans! Think of this abyss that is opening up before your blinded eyes and throw in your lot with the people, otherwise the spirit of a happy future for you will conceal its face in mourning.

7 May 1849

All the married women and maidens of the Kingdom of Württemberg

Original German text reprinted in Gerlinde Hummel-Haasis, *Schwester zerreit eure Ketten: Zeugnisse zur Geschichte der Frauen in der Revolution von 1848/49* [*Sisters, Break Off Your Chains: Materials on the History of Women in the Revolution of 1848/49*]. Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuchverlag, 1982, pp. 22-23.

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