

Chancellor Gerhard Schröder's Speech against War in Iraq (March 18, 2003)

Abstract

Just a few years after Germany's intervention in Kosovo, Chancellor Gerhard Schröder argued against German participation in the United States-led invasion of Iraq. Schröder had previously committed German troops to support the invasion of Afghanistan, an intervention that had met with broad international consensus in the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States. Iraq was another matter. In a brief televised appeal, Schröder spoke directly to the German people, whom he addressed as "my fellow citizens!" The address was carefully staged: dressed in somber tones, Schröder was framed on one side by the German and European Union flags; behind him was a window with a view onto Berlin's government quarter. The Brandenburg Gate, and the Bundestag with its symbolic dome, were clearly visible in the background. A video link to the speech can be found under Further Reading. The image below is from the German television station ARD. The full credit line appears underneath the translation of the speech.

Source



Television address by Chancellor Gerhard Schröder on March 18, 2003

My fellow citizens!

The world is on the brink of war. My question was and still remains: does the extent of the threat posed by the Iraqi dictator justify a war that will mean certain death for thousands of innocent children, women, and men? My answer in this case was and remains "No." Today's Iraq is a country under comprehensive U.N. monitoring. It is increasingly fulfilling the disarmament requirements set by the U.N. Security Council. There is thus no reason to interrupt the disarmament process now. My government, together with our partners, has worked hard to ensure

the growing success of Hans Blix and his team. We have always regarded this as our contribution to world peace. This corresponds to the fundamental values by which we are bound. I am deeply moved by the knowledge that the overwhelming majority of our population, but also of the Security Council and of the peoples of this world, share this commitment. I have doubts about whether peace will still be given a chance in the coming hours. However desirable it may be for the dictator to lose his office, the aim of Resolution 1441 is to remove weapons of mass destruction from Iraq.

My fellow citizens, whatever the coming days or even weeks may bring, you can rest assured that my government will not waver in grasping the last chance to maintain world peace.

The United Nations remains the proper framework, and you can rely on us to make every attempt to guarantee the greatest degree of security for our country. I have sworn an oath to promote the welfare of our people and protect them from harm. This is particularly true in times of war. I will follow this oath and trust in your will to keep the peace and your support.

Source: Television address by Chancellor Gerhard Schröder on March 18, 2003. Text of speech transcribed from the original broadcast by Elisabeth Mait and translated into English by Pamela Selwyn. Original television broadcast is available online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QO4dV7pohw8>

Source: German public television image from ARD; Chancellor Gerhard Schröder of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) addresses the German public on Tuesday, March 18, 2003, some hours after U.S. President George W. Bush's television address.

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