

is entirely unclear what a male leader would have done in that situation.

Nickels: *“Man könnte ja manchmal an der Geschichte verzweifeln, aber manchmal möchte man ja dann auch Jubelschreie ausstoßen. Ich finde es wirklich großartig, wie sie Kanzlerin geworden ist und dass sie so lange Kanzlerin gewesen ist.”*

Verhülsdonk: *“Sie ist zumindest eine Könnlerin, wie sie mit der Macht umgeht und wie sie ihre ganzen jüngeren Konkurrenten wegknipst.”*

Süssmuth: *“Es muss geschmeidig wirken, aber hart erkämpft werden. Ich weiß, dass das Wort “Kämpfen” unter Frauen und schon gar nicht in der Mann-Frau-Relation das richtige Wort ist, aber es ist die richtige Tat.”*

Rück- und Ausblick

At the end of the documentary, Ursula Männle summarizes the history of women rights in the last 100 years as follows:

“1908 haben die Frauen noch nicht mal auf politische Anstalten gedurft, durften keine politischen Vereine besuchen. 1918 haben sie das erste Mal das Wahlrecht gekriegt, dann haben sie es wieder entzogen gekriegt. Sie standen ihre Frau während des Krieges, ließen sich dann aber wieder zurückdrängen, an den Herd, machten Platz für diejenigen, die aus dem Krieg zurückgekommen sind. Es braucht halt alles seine Zeit, weil es halt ein Kampf ist, ein Machtkampf. Jede Position, die heute von einer Frau eingenommen wird, wird nicht mehr von einem Mann eingenommen. Die haben natürlich was zu verlieren, und deutlich zu machen, dass man nichts verliert, sondern dass es vielleicht besser ist, wenn beide zusammen etwas tun, dieses Bewusstsein, dass sich das in den Köpfen wiederfindet, das ist schwer einzupflanzen. Vielleicht schaffen wir das ja in den nächsten 25 Jahren- ich glaub’ schon.”

Unbending will and patience unites all the different female politicians from all different political backgrounds and prominence as *“Die Unbeugsamen”* gather together to celebrate past accomplishments and future struggles, united in their belief, as Käte Strobel (SPD) puts it:

“Politik ist eine viel zu ernste Sache, als dass man sie alleine den Männern überlassen könnte.”



THE GERMAN SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA Friday Film Fest Series



Die Unbeugsamen (2021)

Directed by Torsten Körner

October 20th, 2023

• 6:30 PM •

Film, Food & Discussion

The German Society of Pennsylvania

611 Spring Garden St.

Philadelphia, PA 19123

Support provided in part by the
Philadelphia Cultural Fund.



Die Unbeugsamen (2021)



Director: Torsten Körner
Screenplay: Torsten Körner
Producer: Leopold Hoesch
Montage: Sandra Brandl
Camera: Johannes Imdahl
Claire Jahn
Music: Stefan Döring
Genre: Documentary

Length: 97 Minutes

Participants: Herta Däubler-Gmelin/SPD - Marie-Elisabeth Klee/CDU Carola von Braun/FDP - Ursula Männle/CSU - Christa Nickels/Die Grünen - Renate Hellwig/CDU - Ingrid Matthäus-Maier/FDP/SPD - Renate Schmidt/SPD – Helga Schuchardt/FDP - Rita Süßmuth/CDU – Roswitha Verhülndonk/CDU – Elisabeth Haines/ Referatsleiterin im Familienministerium - and 2 journalists: Renate Färber Husemann – Sabine Gräfin von Nayhauß-Cormons

Der Film

This documentary tells the story of a group of courageous women. These women were in politics in the Bonner Republic since its founding in 1949. They had to struggle with many barriers, including but not limited to simplistic stereotypes, widespread male protective behavior and outright sexual discrimination. They



overcame these barriers in order to be taken seriously and gain political power.

Some of the archive materials employed in the making of this movie are shocking from today's perspective as they show how unceremoniously and openly many men derided and threatened female politicians. But they also show how women from different political backgrounds fought back with unbending courage, patience, knowledge and humor to be accepted and included as members of parliament, leaders of their respective parties and also ministerial secretaries with various political portfolios.

The journalist and film maker Torsten Körner interviewed many of these women who influenced West-German politics until the unification in 1990. The interviews were conducted at the very places in Bonn where their struggles took place, adding to the authenticity of their stories and illuminating the misogyny of the postwar establishment.

In twelve different chapters, Körner recounts important chapters of West-German history, interweaving famous political personalities and significant parliamentary debates that illustrate how women had to fight for their participation in the democratic decision making process. When the former "*Weggefährtinnen*" all meet toward the end of the documentary it becomes obvious what connects them beyond their party affiliation – political differences pale in comparison to their historic struggle for inclusion and "*Gleichberechtigung*".

With the election of Angela Merkel as the first female Chancellor in German history in 2005 and her subsequent re-elections, the goal of equality seemed to be finally achieved. But recent statistics tell a different story. For the first time in 20 years the percentage of women in parliament has receded again and stands

at 31%. Women earn 21% less than men, they have fewer chances to advance professionally and the “*Familienarbeit*” remains largely their responsibility. Mothers predominantly work part time. In only 9% of the families both partners are employed full time. Antiquated and traditional role models are on the rise again. Women who express their views online are often the subject of insults and threats.

This is the background of the distinct warning by Annemirl Bauer from 1988 that ends the movie:

“*Frauen, wenn wir heute nichts tun, dann leben wir morgen wie vorgestern.*”



Merkel bei der Premiere des Films

Wichtige Schritte zur Gleichberechtigung

At the beginning of the movie the eighty year old FDP politician Marie-Elisabeth Lüders is being asked in 1958 what she thinks about the state of the “*Gleichberechtigung der Frau*” and she gives a prophetic answer:

“*Zum Teil ist sie erfüllt, zum anderen nicht. Wenn die Leute nicht weiterkämpfen, dann werden sie das, was sie haben, wieder verlieren.*” And about the role of women as mediators:

“*Ich bin der Meinung, dass in der aktiven Politik ohne die Vermittlung der Frau überhaupt nichts geht, weil die Männer eine starke Neigung haben, sich zu zanken, und die Frauen eine ebenso starke Neigung haben, sich zu versöhnen.*”

Here are some of the important steps in the history of the Bonn republic towards a more inclusive role for women politicians:

Die erste Ministerin

The first female Federal Minister was Dr. Elisabeth Schwarzhaupt from the CDU in the Konrad Adenauer and Ludwig Erhard cabinets. She headed the ministry of Health from 1961 until 1966.

Alltäglicher Sexismus

On May 5, 1983 Waltraud Schoppe of the Green Party gives a remarkable speech during the debate about the abortion paragraph 218. Her demand to end all daily sexism is met with laughter and aggressive remarks by the male representatives to which she replies: “*Ich glaube, ich habe das Richtige gesagt. Sie sind betroffen.*”



Die Friedensbewegung

During the debate about the so-called “*NATO-Doppelbeschluss*” in November 1983 in which a majority of the Bundestag decided to allow NATO to station new atomic Pershing missiles in Germany, Christa Nickels and Petra Kelly of the “*Grünen*” pleaded with the members of parliament to stop this arms race and listen to the wide spread protests of the peace movement in which many women were active.

Their slogan: “*Wir brauchen keine neue Raketen, wir brauchen neue Männer*”.



Christa Nickels im Bundestag

Hamm-Brücher

Hildegard Hamm- Brücher was a prominent member of the FDP and held federal state secretary positions from 1969 -1972 (Education) and 1977 – 1982 (Foreign Office). When the FDP left the coalition with the Social Democrats in 1982 and supported a constructive vote of no confidence against then Chancellor Helmut

Schmidt, Hamm-Brücher opposed the new coalition itself as well as the method of switching without holding new elections. In the debate about the vote, she gave a famous speech questioning the constitutionality of Helmut Kohl's power play.

Das Feminat

When Helmut Kohl won “*das konstruktive Misstrauensvotum*” against Helmut Schmidt on October 1, 1982, he called for new elections in the spring of 1983. On March 6, 1983, the Green party entered the Bundestag for the first time with 5.6% of the second vote and 28 representatives. With what is known as the “*Feminat*”, the Greens decided in April 1984 to form the leadership of the Green faction in Parliament entirely with 6 women: Waltraud Schoppe, Antje Vollmer, Annemarie Borgmann, Christa Nickels, Erika Hickel + Heidemarie Dann.



Rita Süßmuth/CDU

Globale Ikone

Petra Kelly was a founding member of the Green party in 1979 and quickly rose to prominence as an ecofeminist activist both nationally as well as worldwide. In 1982, she was awarded the Right Livelihood Award for “forging and implementing a new vision uniting ecological concerns with disarmament, social justice and human rights.”

She became a member of parliament in 1983 when the Green Party entered the Bundestag for the first time. In October 1992, her body and the body of her partner Gert Bastian, ex-general and Green politician, were found dead in her house in Bonn in an apparent murder-suicide incident. The tragedy remains unsolved to this day.

Frau Bundeskanzlerin

It was unimaginable in the 70's and 80's that a woman could be Chancellor of Germany. But when the CDU/CSU with Angela Merkel as their candidate for chancellor beat the SPD under Gerhard Schröder by 1% point (35,2% to 34,2%) that scenario became a real possibility. When all options for a coalition government lead by the CDU/CSU or the SPD failed, a Grand Coalition between the two big parties was agreed on with Angela Merkel becoming “*die erste deutsche Kanzlerin*” and Gerhard Schröder resigning.

She would be reelected three times in 2009, 2013 and 2017 before stepping down in 2021 after 16 years in office. Her leadership style and her reaction to the refugee crisis in 2015 when she famously declared “*Wir schaffen das*” accepting over 1 million refugees to Germany gained her international acclaim. It



Schoppe: “*Wir machen hier jetzt diesen Versuch, wir sehen das als Signal für die Frauen unserer Partei, sich verstärkt zu engagieren und für die Frauen in anderen Parteien auch. Wir sehen das auch als Signal über die Grenzen der BRD hinweg für alle Frauen, sich vermehrt in die Politik einzumischen.*”

In 1986, the Greens set the “*Frauenquote*” at 50% for all committees and leadership groups.

Die zweite Ministerin

The second female politician in the Helmut Kohl cabinet was Rita Süßmuth. As a professor of Educational Science she became the Federal Minister of Youth, Family and Health from 1985 – 1988 and dealt prominently with the AIDS crisis. From 1988 until 1998 she was elected President of the Bundestag.

