

# Global Journalist: Germany Gears Up To Elect New Chancellor As Iraq War Looms

**Abstract:** In this Sept. 19, 2002 episode of Global Journalist, host Stuart Loory speaks with four panelists about Germany's upcoming election for chancellor, and possible consequences on the United States' effort to build support for a war with Iraq.

**Host:** Stuart Loory

**Guests:**

- [Kate Connolly, Berlin correspondent for the Guardian and Observer](#)
- [Peter Klein, Bureau Chief of RTL Television](#)
- [David Nissman, Editor of Iraq Report for Radio Free Europe](#)
- [Barbara Slavin, Senior Diplomatic Reporter for USA Today](#)

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**Runtime:** 28:32

**Stuart Loory 00:07**

Welcome to Global Journalist on KBIA. This is the program that says Mid-Missourians, indeed many Americans, are interested in international news. I'm Stuart Loory of the Missouri School of Journalism. The stories that preoccupy most newspaper readers in the United States these days continue to concern Iraq. We are still uncertain whether President Bush will take the United States to war against Saddam Hussein, or show the restraint that the rest of the world seems to want. Saddam has indicated he will let United Nations inspectors back into Iraq and, he says, without conditions to look for nuclear, chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction. The Bush Administration scoffs at the Iraqi letter promising that. Sunday, an election in Germany will shed some light on how popular Bush's policies really are in Europe. Germans go to the polls to elect the new chancellor. The incumbent, Gerhard Schröder, only a few weeks ago appeared headed for defeat. He is opposing a unilateral decision by the United States to make war against Iraq. But suddenly he is drawn even with his opponent Edmund Stoiber, the governor of Bavaria and a Christian Democrat. How should Americans feel about that development? To discuss these issues today we have in Prague, the Czech Republic, David Nissman, editor of Iraq Report. In Berlin, two contributors: Kate Connolly, the German correspondent of The Guardian, and Peter Klein, bureau chief of RTL television. And in Washington, Barbara Slavin, Senior

diplomatic reporter of USA Today. Let's start with the German elections. What are the chances that Schröder is really going to win? Peter, do you want to take first crack at that?

**Peter Klein** 02:09

That is probably the most difficult question to answer. But now, to really answer, I would have to be a prophet because this has been I think the... the most thrilling election campaign I've ever, ever experienced. Not so much by the mood in the country and by the issues, but by these very, very close, neck-on-neck race. It's really too hard to predict. I think it will be Schröder again, but I really can't really say it.

**Stuart Loory** 02:39

Well, if it is Schröder, to what extent are his feelings about Iraq going to play a part?

**Peter Klein** 02:47

I think this would have been the most important single issue in his campaign to really-- if you wins -- this would be the most important reason that he won because he instrument the lies that Iraq crisis to turn around his slugging campaign. At first there were these horrible slots in Germany that gave him a possibility to show himself as a manager, as somebody who cares about the people, who is direct and acts. But then most importantly, I think it was the Iraq issue. He took and he made 180 degree turn from his unlimited solidarity with America, September 11, last year, to the most outspoken critic of President Bush and his stand on the Iraq. With a very often very harsh tone and comparing between the lines Bush with a wild cowboy you cannot trust. And Schröder kind of played with, with two things: on one hand side with a wide spread, let's call it, pacifistic feeling in Germany. Which per se is nothing bad. But then on the other hand also with lingering anti-Americanism, which is in wide parts of the population. And that kind of gave him credit... or a basically was how he rallied up voters on both sides on the left and on the right.

**Stuart Loory** 04:26

Kate Connolly, why the lingering anti-Americanism in Germany?

**Kate Connolly** 04:33

I think that this this phrase anti-Americanism is possibly not the way to describe it. I think what, there is a great deal of skepticism here in Germany towards the Bush position on Iraq, and the large number of pacifists in Germany due of course to its past. And about 65% of Germans, I think, according to the latest polls have behind the Schröder position that he, under his government, Germany will not participate in military action against Iraq. So I think that this has the reason for the, let's say anti-military approach, is because of Germany's history. And Schröder has been playing this line very, very cleverly, I think one could say. And he has climbed back up from being the underdog in the selection to basically being on a par and at times ahead of his rival, Edmund Stoiber.

**Stuart Loory** 05:33

Barbara Slavin, how concerned are officials of the Bush administration with the attitudes in Germany?

**Barbara Slavin** 05:43

I think they're very concerned. Germany is an important ally. We have important bases in Germany and I just see a story that's moved on the wire this morning, this morning suggesting that Edmund Stoiber is so concerned about whether he may lose on Sunday but he's now saying he would bar U.S. forces from using German bases in any kind of unilateral action against Iraq.

**Stuart Loory** 06:04

So Stoiber is realizing that perhaps Schröder's position is a good position politically.

**Barbara Slavin** 06:11

I guess so. But I think it's a broader concern about U.S. isolation. Really only Britain has strongly and forcefully come out behind the United States. We see reservations in France, in Russia. Now that Iraq has said that it would re-admit inspectors, in some countries -- perhaps most countries -- want to see how that would play out. And that raises all kinds of problems for the Bush Administration's plans to go to war in the winter.

**Stuart Loory** 06:37

Of course, if there is a war, German bases, American bases in Germany, are going to be very important. They will be staging bases. Is there the danger that if the German government tries to stop use of those bases, that The United States will do it unilaterally and create a serious crisis in Europe. Peter, why don't you...

**Peter Klein** 07:08

I do-- I never-- I don't, do not believe that. Actually, I don't believe that either that the Schröder if he would win the election, I do not believe that he will keep his position 100%. And I'm absolutely not convinced that he would, for instance, prevent America from using his bases. This really is a campaign... this really is campaigning, and he will find a way out. The problem is more that Germany by then is pretty much isolated and the credibility of is gone. But for sure, he will... would not put any more oil on the fire.

**Kate Connolly** 07:53

Can I say Stuart? I think there's a very strong feeling here that -- this is Kate, by the way -- there's a very strong feeling here that yes, he is electioneering at the moment. But there are lots of signs that once Sunday's election is over, if he wins, that he would possibly stick to this position that he would say Germany will not directly participate in any military action. Yet he will facilitate the US going in this direction. For example, he's very... it's very possible that he might move certain German troops to places where American troops are now stationed in order to allow those troops to move into Iraq. So this is backed up as well by a comment in the British-- in the German papers today. Tony Blair has given, his backing if you like, to Schröder's position, saying that Germany is throwing up questions that it is very sensible to be asked and that nobody, but nobody is doubting Gerhard Schröder, which analysts here are saying that possibly means that there's been some backroom deals done and that Schröder, will actually pull out the stops when the election is over.

**Peter Klein** 09:00

Yeah one one sorry it's Peter in Berlin once on already was last week when Schröder announced that that Germany would be willing to take the lead in the international Forces in Afghanistan together with the Netherlands. The East German Dutch Battalion, for instance says that had been unknown until a couple of weeks ago because of lots of lacking money and lacking material for the German army. So, so what the theory here is, is Germany is... for sure, Germany would not take directly, would not directly participate in any kind of an action against Iraq simply because the German Bundeswehr, the German army, cannot do it because lacking of material and people and fundings. But Germany would certainly increase its role, for instance, in the Balkans or in Afghanistan and free up resources for troops, either British or American. And so in then, indirectly, helping America.

**Stuart Loory** 10:01

William Safire has a column in the New York Times this morning talking about how anti-Semitism is a problem these days in Germany and he,he doesn't quote but he reports on a meeting that he was at, attended also by the former defense minister who was fired because of some corruption charges within the past year. And Sapphire attributes to this defense minister, the statement that what is really going on here is German dissatisfaction and objection to the fact that the Bush administration is being manipulated by Zionists. Is that really a big problem?

**Peter Klein** 10:51

To be heard -- it's Peter -- it's hard to believe that that Rudolf Scharping would said that. And sure there is an issue, there is problems with anti-Semitism in Germany and, and with neo nazis and right wingers especially among young people and as well as in the former East, as in many other European countries, and certainly there is, but... I would not go as far as connecting Schröder's position in the Iraq crisis with anti-Semitism, Semitic feelings here in Germany. I would not go as that far, personally.

**Kate Connolly** 11:35

I, I -- this is Kate in Berlin, and I can back Peter up on that. I think that it's far more simple than that. And again, going back to the fact that Germans having suffered, you know, suffered so much in the war. Not, not to say that they don't take blame for that. But about a sixth of the population were, were killed in in, in the war, and I think that therefore, it's a very, very clear position here. People are not... do not want to see Germany going into another war.

**Peter Klein** 12:10

Absolutely.

**Stuart Loory** 12:12

What about the German economy? Is... the, the economy is in bad shape these days. Is Schröder using his position on Iraq to sort of downplay the economic problems that the country has? Peter, go ahead.

**Peter Klein** 12:32

Sorry yeah, it's okay. Yeah, most most definitely. I mean, I mean that was his kind of trick to, to distract the audience from the sluggish economy because it-- when Stoiber is competitor from Bevaria. Stoiber's main campaign issue is slugging, it's the sluggish German economy. The high unemployment

rate, almost more, more than 4 million people are unemployed. This has been the topic, Stoiber's topic in this campaign and and he was he was leading the campaign with this topic. And just when when Stoiber found that Iraq issue, he could turn the tide. So most definitely.

**Stuart Loory** 13:15

Kate, do you want to add to that?

**Kate Connolly** 13:17

Yeah, no, I think I think that's absolutely right. And I think that it's fascinating that this election, the reason that Schröder has stormed ahead in the polls or rather has regained a lead is because of two issues that are very, very out of his control. The, the situation with Iraq and the military, possible military action. And also the flooding that greatly affected Central Europe and large parts of Germany. He's been able to go out there and show that he's a man of the people, hugging people in distress who've lost their homes. And this is also highlighted the differences between Schröder and Stoiber. Stoiber is rather stiff person who finds it very hard to show emotion, show show... sort of, you know, to hug these people that are in distress. And I think that, that it's paid very, very big role in diverting the attention away from the unemployment which is around ten percent.

**Stuart Loory** 14:16

Okay, we have to take a break now. This is Global Journalist on KBIA. I'm Stuart Loory. We'll be right back.

**Stuart Loory** 14:28

Welcome back to Global Journalist. You may listen to this program again, ask questions or make comments by going to [www.globaljournalist.org](http://www.globaljournalist.org) or here in mid Missouri by calling us at 573-882-9641. Let's move now to a discussion of Iraq, and what is going to happen now that the United Nations has received a letter from the Iraqi Government saying your inspectors can come back without question. Barbara Slavin, the Bush administration does not look well on that letter. They say that the the letter is has too many holes in it, and that despite that, there will be no negotiations about it. What's going on? Does Bush really want to go to war?

**Barbara Slavin** 15:28

Well, it seems so. He certainly doesn't seem to want to send the inspectors back in. As you recall, we had a rather difficult history when the inspectors were last there. They left in 1998 on the eve of U.S. and British bombing. They were harassed, their jobs were made very difficult by the Iraqis and everyone remembers that history. Bush has a timetable apparently in mind. There is a relatively short window of opportunity for attacking Iraq. The temperatures are so hot in the summer that basically true troops in protective gear can only operate there from, say, October, November through April. So Bush does not want to get embroiled in a long dispute with the Iraqis over inspectors. And I think what we're going to see is an attempt to write a new Security Council resolution that is so tough that Iraq cannot possibly comply with it.

**Stuart Loory** 16:21

We've got a lot of people opposed to that resolution from Russia, France, China.

**Barbara Slavin** 16:29

I'm not sure about the Chinese. There's still an effort going on to to write this resolution. I think. So far, we've seen that the Arab countries say there's no need for a new resolution. And the Russians, the French say there needs to be two resolutions, one on inspectors and one authorizing military force.

**Stuart Loory** 16:46

Do you think that the the Bush administration is going to be able to get its resolution through the United Nations?

**Barbara Slavin** 16:57

Very good question. They're going to have some If draft available I think tomorrow, Secretary of State Colin Powell is testifying on Capitol Hill today. And we may get some details of the language that they want. But I should think it would take a little time and also that members of the Security Council will want to at least try to send inspectors back in.

**Stuart Loory** 17:18

Peter Klein, what is the feeling in Germany about this?

**Peter Klein** 17:26

In general, there are just huge doubts in Germany about the effect, the result of military action against Iraq could have for the whole region. And there are two here, two serious doubts about... about if this action would be justified. A prudent one is that the Germans say at the, the attack on Iraq is just that, that the war against terrorism is not over and that this could distract from the war against terrorism. German public and German politics does not see a real connection between Iraq and terrorism of September 11, and so on is really connected. Nobody is really convinced about that here yet. And this second question is what would happen after a war in which situation would be the whole region. And in that respect, everybody is being is very, very critical -- the major parties in Germany, not just with Stoiber is very critical about this.

**Stuart Loory** 18:35

Yeah, David Nissman. You monitor what's going on in Iraq. Do you get the feeling that the Iraqi position is changed, or is this just a delaying action as the Bush administration says it is?

**David Nissman** 18:51

Well, I get the feeling. My initial feeling was two days prior to the Iraqis unconditionally accepting the weapons inspectors. Tariq Aziz said that they would unconditionally not accept any weapons inspectors and that there was a sudden reversal of position. How sincere Iraq is by accepting the return of the inspectors is not really clear. On the same day that they accepted this, the New York Times carried an article by Gary Milhollin and Kelly Motz noting that the inspections even if they pick price will never work. Because on the current constitution of (??), the new... the replacement inspection unit for Unscm. They would be subject to the UN's quote "notoriously inefficient bureaucracy" unquote. And thus nothing would have happened. At the same time, there are other decrees-- Iraq for example, they made a deal in 1998, saying that Iraq was able, allowed to designate vast areas of land large enough to

contain entire factories that inspectors can visit only after announcing the visits and events, disclosing the composition of the inspection team, ie nuclear biological experts. And they have to take along a special group of diplomats. Basically what happens is, it creates a system where by mobile items such as poison gas, tanker trucks, and certain missiles can be just towed from site to site. And never get detected.

**Barbara Slavin** 21:04

If I could interject here for a minute, I think -- this is Barbara in Washington -- what we're, what the Bush administration wants to do is to write a new resolution that will guarantee unfettered access anytime, anywhere, any place is the way Richard Boucher, the State Department spokesman, put it. And if, if you notice the letter from the Iraqi foreign minister to Secretary UN Secretary General Kofi Annan on Monday, said the inspectors could come in without conditions, but it did not talk about what sort of access they would be given. So this is a clear priority to change... to make sure that the ground rules are much tougher than those that have been specified in the past.

**David Nissman** 21:46

I agree.

**Stuart Loory** 21:47

Yes. But Barbara, tell me why does the Bush administration not want to talk to the Iraqis about this?

**Barbara Slavin** 21:57

Because the Bush administration does not believe that Saddam Hussein will ever come clean on his biological, chemical and nuclear weapons. They, the policy of this government is regime change. Unfortunately, the policy for most of the rest of the world is not regime change. It's non-proliferation. And that's why we have this, this clash between the United States and Germany and and most other countries.

**Stuart Loory** 22:20

But the policy was was always regime change. And yet before the Iraqis accepted the idea of unfettered inspection, the Bush administration was talking about inspection and getting inspectors back in.

**Barbara Slavin** 22:36

Well, it's I think it was a little disingenuous. Inspection is not, has never been the object of the Bush administration from what I can tell. They say the the object is disarmament, and they say Saddam Hussein is not capable of disarming that he will strive to keep these weapons and to make new ones no matter what.

**Stuart Loory** 22:55

Okay, but yet the the resolution that the United Nations would like to see the Security Council pass is a resolution that allows unconditional inspection.

**Barbara Slavin** 23:06

Well, as I say, it's a resolution that will include a number of things. It will talk about unconditional, unfettered access anytime anyplace. It will also talk about Iraq's other violations of other UN resolutions. And it will authorize the use of force, it will have language that will authorize action if Iraq does not comply with all of these requirements.

**David Nissman** 23:30

Oh, yes, go coercive inspections. I think it was called.

**Stuart Loory** 23:35

Coercive inspection.

**David Nissman** 23:37

Yes. And that would be inspections which would involve also a multinational military arm strong enough to force immediate entry to any site at any time.

**Barbara Slavin** 23:56

If I could interrupt, I don't think that's the US idea that was proposed by a think tank by the Council on Foreign Relations, I believe. Or sorry, or the Carnegie Endowment...

**David Nissman** 24:05

Foreign policy center.

**Barbara Slavin** 24:06

Yeah. And it's not been taken up by the Bush administration. They have in mind a more classic military action, I think.

**Stuart Loory** 24:13

And is the, the Bush administration's resolution going to say that the United States gets the opportunity to unilaterally carry out a military action?

**Barbara Slavin** 24:26

No, it wouldn't have to say that. It would just allow members of the United Nations to carry out action and everybody would know who they meant.

**Stuart Loory** 24:34

Who that member was going to be.

**Barbara Slavin** 24:36

That's right.

**Stuart Loory** 24:36

What is the chance that this resolution is going to be passed by the Security Council?

**Barbara Slavin** 24:41

Well, we need to see the language first. We haven't seen the exact language. There's a lot of work going on behind the scenes now at the United Nations. The Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov in Washington today, and Colin Powell will be seeing him. So a lot of work that will have to be done to get support for it. But if the United Nations knows that the United States is going to do this with or without a resolution, that may put pressure on them to try to put some sort of veneer of international solidarity behind it.

**Stuart Loory** 25:11

Are Bush administration officials unanimous in wanting this kind of resolution.

**Barbara Slavin** 25:17

Hmm, good question. There's a little bit of daylight between the State Department and the White House and the Pentagon, as we've seen on so many issues. Secretary of State Powell is not gung-ho to go back to war. He's a veteran of Vietnam, the first Gulf War, when he was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. And I think he would be much more willing to allow some sort of diplomacy. He certainly wants a broad international coalition. Vice President Cheney, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld seem to care less about the size of the coalition.

**Stuart Loory** 25:51

Is there any chance that the Bush administration wants to drag these negotiations out through the November elections and then it like Gerhard Schröder's administration might be amenable to some backing down?

**Barbara Slavin** 26:07

No, I think they really want to do this operation. They want to do it this winter. We're all being told December, January. And, you know, they want to do it with international support if possible. But officials have said repeatedly that they feel it is so important that if they don't get the support, we will go it alone.

**Stuart Loory** 26:26

David Nissman, do you see any possibility that the Iraqis are going to back down even further?

**David Nissman** 26:33

Now they've not back down yet. What we also see is in the Gulf, for example, states like Saudi Arabia, which in the past few weeks have been very negative about the idea of American bases on their soil, have backed down from that. And now they say, "Yeah, sure. You know, Have some support bases." The fear in the region is that any American attack will ruin the geopolitical situation, which has existed since the '30s. That Iraq could be fragmented, which is a strong possibility of part in the north, Kurdistan declaring its independence, which would not be in the interests of Turkey and Iran.

**Stuart Loory** 27:32

Right, David--

**David Nissman** 27:33

-- the Shiites in the south.

**Stuart Loory** 27:35

Yeah. David, I am sorry to interrupt you before you finish these thoughts, but we are out of time. Our guests today have been in Washington, Barbara Slavin, the Senior Diplomatic Reporter of USA Today. In Berlin, Kate Connolly, the German correspondent for The Guardian. And Peter Klein, the Bureau Chief of RTL television. And in Prague, David Nissman, editor of Iraq reports. Our director is Pat Akers, and our producer is Sarah Andrea Fajardo. For all, I'm Stuart Loory. Global Journalist will be back next week.