

“Mandate against Gypsies and Rabble” (October 30, 1721)

Abstract

This mandate of Electoral Trier makes reference to the negative images that were associated with “gypsies.” The concept of “gypsies” became virtually synonymous with “itinerant people,” who were, in turn, linked to every possible offense. Therefore, an accordingly rigid approach involving draconian penalties appeared to be the appropriate remedy: In addition to the warning signs that the Sinti and Roma people themselves put up nearly everywhere, mandates (instructions, orders) were posted on the streets and on doors. They contained guidelines on how to deal with “the likes of thieving, murdering, and robbing rabble,” as the Sinti and Roma were often labeled, and in this way made their own contribution to disseminating the negative image of “gypsies” in the German population.

Source

It is all too well known everywhere, and also stated before and after in the edicts of the electors and the regional princes that have been announced in the archbishopric – and sent to be published for everyone’s information – and posted repeatedly on open roads, common streets, and also on the city gates, what, in their broad content, the compelling reasons were for the absolute necessity of repeatedly requiring that various beneficial measures be ordered some way or another to facilitate enduring the frivolous Gypsies and other similar rootless, wicked rabble. For a while, the peace and security hoped for at the time for the potential safety and reassurance of loyal citizens was noted. But after oft-repeated dutiful and humble reports were once again submitted to Your Electoral Highness, etc., Your Most Gracious Lord, the above-cited masses of variously issued severe mandates were created but not considered by the Gypsies; those same people nevertheless continued to find their way into archbishopric lands and were suspected of all sorts of theft, robbery, and ignominious fires. Your Most Highly Respected Electoral Highness, wanting most graciously to know that Your lands are cleansed once and for all of said thieving, murdering, and robbing rabble, is most graciously following the example of the neighboring districts and principalities and herewith orders in all seriousness that the unholy people without decency who sometimes creep into the archbishopric and behave there in such a way as to cause depression, fear, and distress be driven out again with combined forces and arms in hand. If after that any person from the same rabble, be it man or woman, or their followers, should again trespass, every town’s head shall arrest that person forthwith. But if the size of the group is too large, the bells shall be rung, and with assistance from their neighbors, some villages and offices should in that case come together and with thus combined forces loyally stand by one another, avoiding inevitably arbitrary penalties. But every town’s officials must, working with the neighboring towns, be zealously concerned with how the operation is to be set up and safely accomplished. They must also encouragingly communicate to the Gypsies and foreign rootless rabble who are again trespassing, that they must swear an *Urpfehde*, a solemn oath that they will never again trespass on the archbishopric lands and if a penalty affecting life and limb is sought against them, it shall immediately be dropped. But if they trespass again in violation of such sworn *Urpfehde* and are caught, they shall be hanged by the nearest executioner without the formality of a trial. In addition, as these rootless people can be better managed if public notice of such severe penalties threatening them can be seen in advance, at the borders and on common streets special posts shall be erected with metal plates attached to them for publicizing the penalties. This shall in fact also be accomplished by means of communication in advance with the neighboring villages. Not least, the present most gracious order shall be appropriately announced to the public

everywhere, and within the next fourteen days after its receipt that shall be dutifully reported here. Document of the most highly respected Your Electoral Highness; affixed hereunder the Chancellery Seal and the Secretary's customary signature. Ehrenbreitstein, in Consil[io] Aul[ico], October 30, 1721

Ex Mandato [By mandate]

Th. Matt. Syre, Secretary

L.S. [locus sigilli, place of seal]

Source: *Franz Ludwig von Pfalz-Neuburg, Trierer Erzbischof und Kurfürst, Mandat gegen Zigeuner und Gesindel vom 30. Oktober 1721*, Print, LHA Koblenz, 1C, No. 1114; reprinted in Beate Althammer and Christina Gerstenmayer, eds., *Bettler und Vaganten in der Neuzeit. Eine kommentierte Quellenedition*. Klartext: Essen, 2013, p. 109f.

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