

Foreigners in the Imperial City of Cologne in the Eighteenth Century (1793)

Abstract

Anno Schnorrenberg's (1667-1715) chronicle describes the conditions in Cologne during the First Coalition War (1792-97). At the time, the city served as the living quarters for large numbers of French immigrants, but also for numerous French prisoners of war. Immigrants and prisoners of war were allowed to move about freely within Cologne; however, unlike immigrants, the prisoners of war were prohibited from leaving the city. Schnorrenberg attributes the daily rise in bread prices to the presence of the many foreigners. How the Cologne city council counteracted the rising prices can be gleaned from the chronicle as well.

Source

April 1793.

On the 1st at 6:00 am, about 1,000 of the French imperial prisoners, who were housed in the monasteries, guild halls, and other spacious buildings of our city, were taken to Namur. The council had sent 145 of them to live in our monastery. There were enough people whose decadence and dissoluteness were written all over their faces; they were Frenchmen without law and without God.

On the 15th and 16th: Fifty-three artillerymen were billeted in our monastery; they left early today, the 17th, to join the army. At the same time, cannons taken from the Cologne armory and equipped with gun carriages left for the same destination.

In this period, very many priests from the French border region, who had fled to our city due to persecution, left again for the town nearest France, where they are pastors or prebendaries, or are desired for other reasons, because Austria's victory restored the former safety to all of Belgium.

On the 18th at 14:00 hours in the morning [sic] Dumurier (Dumouriez), the former French supreme commander, got to Cologne, and after the horses had been changed, it is said that he traveled on to Vienna. . . . Following his example, officers and more than a few entirely French regiments left the camp and went over to the Austrian army. Various generals for whom the war had not gone well were thrown in prison, declared to be traitors to the fatherland, and executed. The things that emanate from this unholy, anarchical regiment are outrageous.

As God's inexhaustible goodness and mercy spared Cologne from the raging attack of the rogue Franks, a solemn prayer service of thanks was held with 13 hours of prayers and te deums. It began on the 28th in the cathedral and was continued on the following days in the other churches. The same order went to the country parsons. The Eucharistic prayer service was ordered justifiably, for the storm was terrible and came near us, and we were very close to all perishing.

All the imperial troops have now left Cologne. In their place, 500 soldiers from the Electorate of Trier have come; they are to guard the remaining grain, the infirmaries, and whatever else belongs to the imperial army.

May 1793.

The food prices increase daily, for our city is crawling with French immigrants and prisoners. The latter are taken to the marketplace daily, escorted by imperial or Palatine soldiers, to purchase the necessities of life, and pay without bargaining about the prices demanded by the sellers. As a result, the citizens must buy the necessities at higher prices.

In Cologne, infectious dysentery prevails. Many die of it.

[...]

October 1793.

On the 3rd, 2,700 captured Frenchmen were placed under the guard of Electoral Cologne. We received 50, again just officers. Columns of prisoners march through daily. As the French refuse to exchange prisoners, they will be taken to Hungary to work.

On the 18th, 700 more captured Frenchmen were placed under the guard of Hamburg troops. On the same day, the regiment named after its leader Michalowitsch passed through the city, wild men, recruited in Serbia. They committed robbery everywhere and could not be held back from excesses.

On the 30th, 2,500 Hessian soldiers arrived in Cologne; 140 of them were assigned to our monastery. They had three days of rest and then marched on to the Prince of Coburg. They were all capable, brave, powerful people, with pleasant ways, next to none in their military training, and also well-dressed. The persons providing quarters had only praise.

[...]

November 1793.

In our hard-pressed times in which the rising price of bread distresses the public, our council announced the following: *The German text of the council's decision of the 15th of November follows; it confirms the price commission formed in the previous year and calls for further support for it, signed by J. J. Cardauns, Dr. Secretarius.* The council could choose between only two methods to lower bread prices: either imposition of an extraordinary tax or voluntary contribution of the city and its residents of the spiritual or temporal class. The council chose the latter, as it was familiar with the pious compassion of the residents and their proven zeal for doing good.

Repeated thefts and break-ins caused the council to institute nightly patrols and to prohibit setting foot on the streets after ten o'clock without a light; violators would be arrested without regard to the person's standing.

Source: Hermann Cardauns, ed., *Köln in der Franzosenzeit. Aus der Chronik des Anno Schnorrenberg 1789-1802*. Bücherei der Kultur und Geschichte, edited by Dr. Sebastian Hausmann, volume 30. Bonn and Leipzig: Kurt Schroeder Verlag, 1923, pp. 53-58.

Translation: Kathleen Dell'Orto

Further Reading

Astrid Küntzel, *Fremde in Köln: Integration und Ausgrenzung zwischen 1750 und 1814*. Böhlau Verlag: Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna, 2008.

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