



German History in Documents and Images

Volume 2. From Absolutism to Napoleon 1648-1815

Emperor Franz II's Confidential Instructions to his Officials in Austria and Bohemia on "Preventive Measures for the Maintenance of Citizenly Peace and Order" (February 9, 1793)

Here, in summary form, are the anti-revolutionary concerns animating the Austrian government after the outbreak in 1792 of war with France. Notable are the recommendations for clandestinely government-inspired propaganda against French revolutionary sentiments and partisanship.

Vienna, February 9, 1793

Since His Majesty has no greater concern than to apply all beneficial means toward maintaining the peace, safety, and prosperity of His subjects, by contrast eliminating anything that may relate to the spread of the unbridled and pernicious attitudes and principles prevailing in France, His Majesty has deigned to command that the provincial authorities shall once again be involved emphatically in:

1. Permitting no secret meetings, under whatever pretext, and punishing persons acting contrary to this rule;
2. Keeping a watchful eye on all French immigrants and granting residence in this country only to those among them who have passports issued according to regulations and conduct themselves peacefully;
3. Strictly ensuring, by means of censorship, that there is no domestic printing, reprinting, and importing of such books that give a favorable account of the French Revolution or deal with such changes of state and principles that run counter to the principles of a well-established monarchy, especially in the Austrian territories, and just as much also
4. Paying careful attention so that, in accordance with the orders effective already, nothing is included in the domestic newspapers that has any favorable association with the French Revolution. On the contrary, it would be very conducive if both journalists and scholars were encouraged to depict, whenever appropriate, the evil consequences of the French Revolution vividly, making use particularly of a popular style of writing that is easily comprehensible to anyone.

5. Paying full attention to eradicating and eliminating the home-based print shops found and already prohibited, by means of which the dissemination of pernicious writings, directed at thwarting the most effective censorship regulations, can be carried out most easily, and impressing upon police the importance of supervising this.

Source: *Sr. K.K. Majestät Franz des zweyten politische Gesetze und Verordnungen für die oesterreichischen, böhmischen und galizischen Erbländer* [*His Royal Imperial Majesty Franz II's Political Laws and Edicts for the Austrian, Bohemian, and Galician Hereditary Lands*], vol. 2. Vienna: Heubner, 1793, p. 23f.

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