

Setting Up a Citizen Militia

From the Town proceedings of 1847-1851

The bad harvests of the years 1846/47 brought hard times to the people, in some towns coming almost to hunger riots. As in the following year matters ran to revolutionary intrigues, the citizens called for freedom of press and assembly, and along with this a general arming of the people. Against this background, the upper office of the town council asked the council to consider if a citizen militia should be set up.

Geradstetten calculated the expenses needed for this at 6560 fl. Everything was reckoned down to the procurement of drums. The grounds for unanimously declining these costs are worthy of note. The record shows:

...for general expenses, including the procurement of drums

<i>Total</i>	<i>6560 fl.</i>
<i>Annual tax at 5%</i>	<i>328 fl.</i>

5. Our town is unable to share in this first procurement, because with the low wine prices the vinyardmen are not in a position to have their taxes raised and undertake other expenditures, much less to argue with the community for such an ongoing expenditure, also the town now pays 400 fl annually to maintain the town poor, and will shortly undertake a schoolhouse building project of at least 1500 fl.

6. In the foreseeable future the town will receive no compensation [for the militia], therefore the payments will be completely lost...and no hours are left over for a man to spend in marching about, his property will go to waste and the nourishment of many families will be pulled down, because of this it is the wish of many townspeople that setting up a citizen militia be suspended and the current military system be maintained.

7. There are no officers at hand in town, not to speak of marksmen and soldiers, who would be able to act as instructors. Also for our vineyardmen here, the physical exercise would be very problematic as they mostly have to do a lot of carrying on their backs, and they therefore are stiff.

The year 1848 itself also brought unquiet times to the villages of Württemberg. One had of course a policeman, but he was unarmed. This deficiency must be removed! The town council therefore ordered:

Because our policeman has no weapon at all, so it is resolved: to purchase a saber, and because our office assistant Mak owns one, it should be bought for 2 fl. 30x and owned as property of the town.