

Wendel Hipler's Agenda for the "Peasant Parliament" in Heilbronn (May 1525)

Abstract

In May 1525, leaders and envoys of the various rebel armies were summoned to Heilbronn for a "Peasant Parliament" held under the leadership of Wendel Hipler, a former official of the counts of Hohenlohe in Franconia and a university-trained lawyer. Hipler's agenda for the parliament is reproduced below. The agenda covers points ranging from the practical to the theoretical, but the main goal of the meeting was to incorporate the peasants' demands into a wider reform based on the Word of God. Like Friedrich Weygandt's draft, Hipler's agenda espoused the idea of an Imperial reformation.

Source

The following issues are to be considered and debated in Heilbronn:

The beginning of this endeavor, and how it has developed to the present day, is known. We are now in the middle of it. And the representatives of each band should report the conditions of each place, town, castle, and village conquered, how they held them and took them in [-to the alliance], how they negotiated. Further they should consult about where there is room for improvement if some bands should capture something more. In addition, every band should reveal and explain to the others their regulations for the battlefield and the related articles, also any other regulations, so that they can compare and improve their own.

Each band should also report how much opposition they have met and whether they need help. Especially if the Odenwald band captures the Bishopric of Würzburg, their advance should, with God's help, not cease before they reach Schwäbisch Hall. Similarly, the other bands should say whether they intend to press forward or remain where they are. Also, whether the opposition to the Swabian League needs help, which bands should help and how. Further, what should be done against the Palatine Elector and the princes of Brandenburg-Ansbach and Baden, and whether with amicable or severe demands (and the same with the Bavarian and Hessian princes). Whether or not we should seek support from foreign princes like Saxony etc., who are more lenient towards the poor [i.e. common] man than other princes. Also, whether or not we want to deal severely with the bishoprics of Trier and Cologne, as we did against Mainz and Würzburg, and to move against them with united bands.

Also, if God makes us so fortunate that this band can be partially disbanded and the common man sent back to his work, whether we should nevertheless organize and maintain a convened army in this region; and who should remain captain and advisors, to oversee all cases and discussions, and to enforce order, peace, and the law among us, and to organize help if necessary.

Also, if the emperor brings a foreign nation [i.e. mercenaries] or recruits other princes, what we should do about it. Also how and which measures we should take to answer the emperor and whether one should write to him first.

Also, how and to what extent or in what form we should bring the nobility from other lands into our alliance. Also whether or not there is a consensus that the secular princes and nobles should be compensated for their tithes, tributes, and entry fines using property seized from the clerical territories, but not to excess, rather in the amount deemed by the appointed to be appropriate after sufficient

inquiry. Thus the princes, lords, and nobles should be granted the same rights as their subjects, so that no one abuses the liberty of another, and all are treated equally, the poor as the rich.

Finally, that an agreement is reached concerning the time and place for reformation. Also, who should be summoned and authorized to participate in the [formulation of the] reformation: scholars, citizens, and peasants, and how many [of each]. Also that the princes, lords, and nobles will be allowed to send a number of councilors who shall form the opposition. Also who shall speak for the common man and present the list of grievances, so that, when considering both sides, the men appointed thereto might properly compose the reformation in good order, so that the complaints are alleviated in all aspects. Also, from whom and to what extent those appointed and those sent shall have their costs reimbursed.

Source of original German text: *Quellen zur Geschichte des Bauernkrieges*, compiled and edited by Günther Franz. Darmstadt: WBG, 1963, pp. 370–71.

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