

“Against the Excrescences of Carnival and Excessive Dancing” (January 29, 1929)

Abstract

This article from a regional newspaper published in the town of Ochsenhausen, about 85 miles west of Munich, reports on the various measures taken by the regional parliament and the Catholic Church to curtail the exuberant celebrations associated with the Carnival period that culminated on Fat Tuesday, just before the start of Lent. While a diverse and permissive nightlife developed in the major cities during the Weimar era, this article illustrates how strictly the Catholic Church and its organizations were trying to protect the younger generation in particular from the “moral decay” that they saw stemming from late-night revelry, revealing dress, and unconstrained dances, such as the Charleston. While these efforts were aimed primarily at rural regions, they were also aimed at the urban Catholic stronghold of Cologne and its famous carnival tradition. Carnival has been celebrated in Cologne and other places, especially in the Rhineland and Swabia, since the Middle Ages. These celebrations traditionally include elements that thumb their noses at authority, such as the Rose Monday parade, held two days before Ash Wednesday, which has long featured satirical depictions of well-known figures from politics and society. These measures not only reflected a long history of attempts to regulate individual behavior at Carnival time, but they also echoed an increasing national concern to “protect” young people from ostensibly immoral images, ideas, and practices, a concern highlighted in the 1926 passage of the “Gesetz zur Bewahrung der Jugend vor Schund- und Schmutzschriften” (Law for the Protection of Youth from Sordid and Dirty Publications).

Source

The Vorarlberg state parliament has passed two laws on public dance entertainment and the holding of dance courses, according to which dance entertainment is completely prohibited during Advent and Lent! Young people under the age of 16 are not allowed to participate at all, and up to the age of 18 only when accompanied by their parents. – At a Berlin district conference of Catholic journeymen’s associations, a resolution was addressed to the leadership of Catholic Action against the excesses of amusements in Catholic associations and demanded: 1. that no amusements take place on Saturdays; 2. that all events should close at 1 o’clock at the latest; 3. that no public box office should be set up; 4. that only ladies in discreet dress should be admitted; 5. that dancing should conform to the principles of a noble dance culture; 6. that no amusements, especially no dances, should be organized for charitable purposes. – In a meeting of the central committee of the Catholic parents’ associations of the diocese of Augsburg, the excesses of carnival processions in the present time were unanimously rejected. Even if a well-managed carnival procession could be harmless in itself, it created the atmosphere of carnival through mass suggestion, which carried so much mischief in its wake. The excesses of carnival, however, had to be fought for the sake of young people and from the point of view of Christian parents. In view of the current social and moral conditions, it was unanimously decided to support the fight against the excesses of carnival with all our strength. – The working group of Cologne's Catholic associations, referring to the relevant resolutions of last year’s Cologne Catholic Congress, calls for a restriction of carnival both in terms of the duration and the excessiveness of the events. The demand is for the ruthless implementation of the enacted regulations on police hours, the protection of night-time quiet hours and, above all, the protection of Sunday sanctity. The street entertainment, which had been permitted on a trial basis the previous year, no longer fits in with our times. Finally, the Catholic Congress addresses the entire population of Cologne with the urgent request to be aware of their great responsibility to impose

restrictions on themselves in the interest of the whole, to ruthlessly exclude anything that contradicts Christian morality, so that by cultivating a genuine popular humor and pure *joie de vivre* a sharp separation and a clear distance is created from filth and licentiousness in every form and from uncultured and crude amusement. – In a speech given in Budapest, the Archbishop of Kalocsa, Msgr. Count Zichy, sharply denounced the decline in morals. The dancing frenzy had degenerated into actual madness.

Source of original German text: *Der Rottumbote*: amtliches und private Anzeigeblatt für Ochsenhausen und Umgebung, January 29, 1929. Available online at: <https://www.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/newspaper/item/515L3VFXSBWQGUXNIIGPIMH22IJ66BC3?issuepage=7>

Translation: GHI staff

Recommended Citation: “Against the Excrescences of Carnival and Excessive Dancing” (January 29, 1929), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/weimar-germany-1918-1933/ghdi:document-5464>> [March 16, 2026].