

~ The Purity Law ~

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Relax, dear Reader, this is just a vignette about beer. The *raison d'être* for beer steins is, of course, **beer**. So let's talk a little about our favorite beverage. We shall set back the time clock a mere than 465 years and fly to Ingolstadt. {Ed. note: Of course, by the year 2000 this has increased to 484 years.}

The Bavarian city of Ingolstadt is located about halfway between Nuremberg and Munich. We find it right on the "*Bierstrasse*" on the banks of the beautiful blue (?) Danube.

Duke William IV is the ruler of all Bavaria. Today, on April 23, 1516, he is in a determined mood. He has just signed a decree in Ingolstadt which will benefit all sons and daughters of his domain: For some time his loyal subjects have been complaining about the poor quality of many of the local brews. **Foaming** with rage, they claimed that most beer tasted as if it had been drunk before. One cannot do this to Bavarians! The monumental challenge of finding good beer is very close to their hearts (and stomachs). So you can see that thing were **fermenting** in Bavaria and trouble was **brewing** throughout the land.

In fact, only 18 months later, on October 31, 1517, other event would come to a **head**, which next to the beer question would permanently stir up the composition of the Western World. But back to Duke William IV and beer.

The Duke's decree of 1516 is known as the *Purity Law* and governs the brewing of beer.

The basic ingredients are limited to barley-malt (wheat-malt for pale beers), hops, yeast and water. Additional chemicals, whether "natural" or "artificial", are an absolute no-no. This law was to be rigorously obeyed. Violators were subject to severe penalties! (There seems to be a question about the "legality" of adding yeast: The *Saarbruecker Zeitung* recently reported the list of ingredients as noted above; however, a German brewmaster, Joachim Kortuem, who is also an SCI member and a member of the "Happy Steinhunters of Wisconsin", says that yeast was definitely not used as a brewing ingredient at the time of the German *Reinheitsgebotes* (Purity Law). So for the time being you have your choice: Yeast or no yeast. But we shall research the question further.)



Das Reinheitsgebote, or Purity Law, of 1516

The Weimar Republic took over the Purity Law lock, stock and - **barrel**. Indeed, the Free State of Bavaria had made it clear that they would join the Weimar Republic as a member state *only* if the Purity Law were retained. This proves without a doubt that even in the field of high statesmanship the brew-orities have the pri-orities.

German brewers are very proud of the excellent reputation of their product. They vigorously oppose any efforts on the part of non-German brewers to have them lower their standards in the interests of European coordination.

And just a smattering of statistics: While Germany trails the United States in annual beer production, they did produce 92.7 million hectoliters in 1976, against the U.S.'s 179.6 hectoliters. But no German brewery was represented in the "Top Ten" largest brewers in the world (Anheuser-Busch led all the rest). On the other hand, the German drinker still outdrinks everyone else with a cool per-capita consumption of 147 liters of beer per year for every citizen of West Germany! The USA comes in 13th with only 82 liters per year per person.

[Ed. note: In "The New World Guide to Beer", 1988, Michael Jackson reports that US production of beer had grown to a whopping 230.5 hectoliters, about 23 percent of total world production, while the second-place West German total barely budged to 94.1 hectoliters.]

Let us hope that Purity will triumph all over the World.



As a result of the Purity Law, Bavarian beer enjoyed immense popularity, even beyond the borders of Bavaria. Eventually other German states also adopted the Purity Law, so that by 1906 this law became uniformly accepted throughout the whole German Empire.