

and incurred the risk of spoilation. Finished in 1590, the Hofbräuhaus was erected not far from the former royal residence, the Alter Hof, a few minutes' walk from today's Residenz. Wilhelm's successor, Maximilian, was a good deal less extravagant about spending money and made considerable effort to reduce the state's debt. As a way of ensuring an increase in income, in 1602 Maximilian forbade anyone else in Bavaria except his breweries from brewing Weißbier (wheat beer, which, due to the process of 'top fermenting', escaped the sometimes-elastic Reinheitsgebot), in effect creating a Weißbier monopoly for himself. In addition, as well as building a larger Munich brewery complex in 1606, which later became home of the Hofbräuhaus at Platzl, a series of Weißbier breweries were erected around Bavaria. The lucrative Bavarian Weißbier monopoly was only removed when the reform-minded Elector Karl Theodor dismantled it in 1798, while his successor, the future King Maximilian I, had all the royal breweries sold off, with the exception of two: one in the grounds of Schloß Schleißheim on the edge of Munich; and the second was Munich's Hofbräuhaus.

Beer Riots

Alongside often poor quality, the price of beer in Munich proved to be a perennial problem that was disputed between breweries, landlords of *Wirtshäuser* (pub-restaurants) and the drinking public. As seen in chapter 5, the quality of Munich's water supply and with it the quality of beer was eventually addressed by Max von Pettenkofer, who, by the 1870s had transformed Munich from one of Germany's least sanitary cities into a model of hygiene. Beer prices, however, were a different challenge altogether. While riots over beer prices had never previously seemed likely to cause the fall of a Bavarian ruler, in the decades after the final defeat of Napoleon in 1815, monarchies across Europe were particularly vigilant about public protests of any sort, more so after the 1830 July Revolution in France. The primary worry was that a protest against beer prices in Munich would be the catalyst for wider demands.

In the 1830s, Munich's beer barons were, it appeared to the city's population, disdainful about public concerns about the quality of the city's beer and beer prices as they ostentatiously displayed their wealth in the form of grand villas

and luxurious carriages. Indeed, by the mid-1830s, ten of Munich's highest tax payers were brewers. The possibility of beer riots was caricatured by a correspondent for a French newspaper when he reported, 'The Bavarians are a rough but good-natured people, and nothing can really move them to rise up and rebel. But if someone were to take away their beer, then there would be a wild revolt.' The first of Munich's great beer riots started on 1 May 1844, a year after terrible crop failures across much of central Europe had piled misery on the population in the form of hugely inflated grain prices, with the concomitant effect of higher beer prices. Political agitation was already very much in the air as the influx of people from rural to urban areas started to change the relationship between town and country. And though Munich may not have been the centre of large-scale industrialisation, the city was certainly not immune to demands from an incipient industrial working class searching for better pay and conditions. The May protests against a hike in the beer price took the form of violence aimed at the brewery buildings, with the Munich city chronicler recording, 'All the window frames in the Löwenbräu house were battered down with great force, and the huge Pschorrbräu, the Wagnerbräu, the Augustinerbräu were all wrecked.' Similarly, Bavarian civil servant Franz Xaver Gabelsberger noted,

The revolution against beer [prices] is happening – if one can call it that – with Bavarian composure, so that except for the pubs, ... nobody else's property has been damaged or put at risk. In the houses of the brewery owners, up to the third floor there are no remaining doors, drawers, tables or chairs, no ovens, no clocks, no cutlery.

On 2 May, Princess Hildegard was preparing for her wedding day (set for the next day) with her court ladies with increasing trepidation about the possibility of further disturbances. Again recorded by the city chronicler, a fearful mob formed in order to attack various brewery-related targets, just at the same time as the bride's wedding procession rode past. All of the stones and rocks meant for the windows of brewery property at once disappeared into pockets in order to allow the participants to applaud the princess, proof, according to the loyal chronicler, of the high esteem Munich's population held for the Wittelsbach royal family. Nevertheless, further rioting erupted, before the brewers

decided they had seen enough and on 4 May they gave in to demands and dropped the price of beer. The cost had been over 30 breweries destroyed, one person dead, 10 policemen injured and 142 people arrested.

Four years later, few – if any – lessons appeared to have been learned by the brewers. In the wake of the abdication of King Ludwig I in 1848, the newly crowned King Maximilian II immediately ordered the lowering of the price of beer to four kreuzer. Brewers, thinking they knew better, quickly raised the prices again, which set off a series of small beer riots, culminating around the time of the 1848 Oktoberfest with the biggest beer riot the city had ever seen. With a slogan of, ‘We want the beer for four [kreuzer],’ on 17 October protestors along with members of the military set out for brewery property. Though there does not seem to have been much evidence of political demands from the swelling number of people in Munich, this was not the case in other cities at this time, where various economic and political demands were central to popular protests. The result, in Munich at least, was success: the price of a Maß beer was set at four kreuzer.

The last of the so-called great Munich beer riots was in 1910, and again it was a public protest against rising beer prices. Again it was directed at local brewers and landlords, though this time the price rise had been determined by a hike in the price of malt across the whole of the German Empire, not just Munich. Breweries and pubs were attacked and set on fire, with the usual result, as announced by brewer Joseph Bachmeier: ‘That’s enough,’ he said. ‘From tomorrow the price of beer will be served again at the old price.’

While the effectiveness of Munich beer riots had hardly changed in over half a century, during this time the Munich brewing industry had been transformed. In 1840, there were 40 breweries in the city, by 1860 this had fallen to 25, dropping to just 18 in 1870. As seen, just as in other areas of the modern economy, this contraction was predicated on the most powerful brewers buying up smaller, weaker ones. Only seven breweries in existence at the grounding of the German Empire in 1871 were still in existence by 1945. The others had been taken over or had gone to the wall. This had the effect of considerably weakening the diversity of Munich brewing, but it also had the effect of strengthening the surviving firms.

Today, though some small independent Munich breweries still exist, the city is dominated by six huge concerns that comprise the Verein Münchener



The extensive Löwenbräu brewery, Nymphenburger Straße, 1910

Brauereien (Munich Brewers Association): Augustiner-Bräu, Hacker-Pschorr, Löwenbräu, Paulaner, Spaten-Franziskaner and, reflecting that it is owned by the state of Bavaria, the Staatliches Hofbräuhaus in München. With the exception of the Hofbräuhaus, and less so Augustiner, however, this is only half the story as most of the breweries are subsidiaries of larger concerns and struggle to be described as German owned, never mind Munich owned (in fact, Löwenbräu and Spaten-Franziskaner are part-owned by the same parent company, the highly unimaginatively named AB InBev, currently the ‘world’s largest beer maker’, according to the *Wall Street Journal*).

Regardless of the realities of who exactly owns the breweries, the city derives huge economic benefits from them, while Munich has a well-deserved reputation as home to a veritable honeycomb of distinguished beer halls, atmospheric restaurants and pubs, and most popular of all countless beer gardens, all predominantly selling ‘Munich’ beer. The ubiquitous Munich beer garden has arguably the city’s greatest patron, King Ludwig I, to be grateful for its existence. In the 1820s and 1830s, Munich’s rapidly expanding population was consuming greater quantities of beer. Prior to adequate cooling systems, in



A delivery of beer from the Spaten brewery, around 1920

the warmer months of the year, the beer was prone to go off. To counter this problem, as early as 1724, Munich breweries had taken to storing their produce in cellars near the tree-shaded and cooler shores of the Isar. It seems that over time, local residents had taken to taking a *Krug* (beer glass) to these Isar beer cellars in order to buy a *Maß* beer and hang about under the shade of the chestnut trees while drinking. Naturally, rudimentary bars, comprising little more than a few benches and tables, were erected, which attracted increasing numbers of people.

Landlords of Munich's growing number of *Wirtshäuser* were less than impressed with this direct selling of beer, prompting Ludwig I to rule that the Isar beer cellars could continue to sell beer, but they could not sell food. Importantly, however, if people wanted to eat while enjoying a beer, they could, he decreed, take along their own food, a tradition that Bavarian beer gardens enjoy to this day.