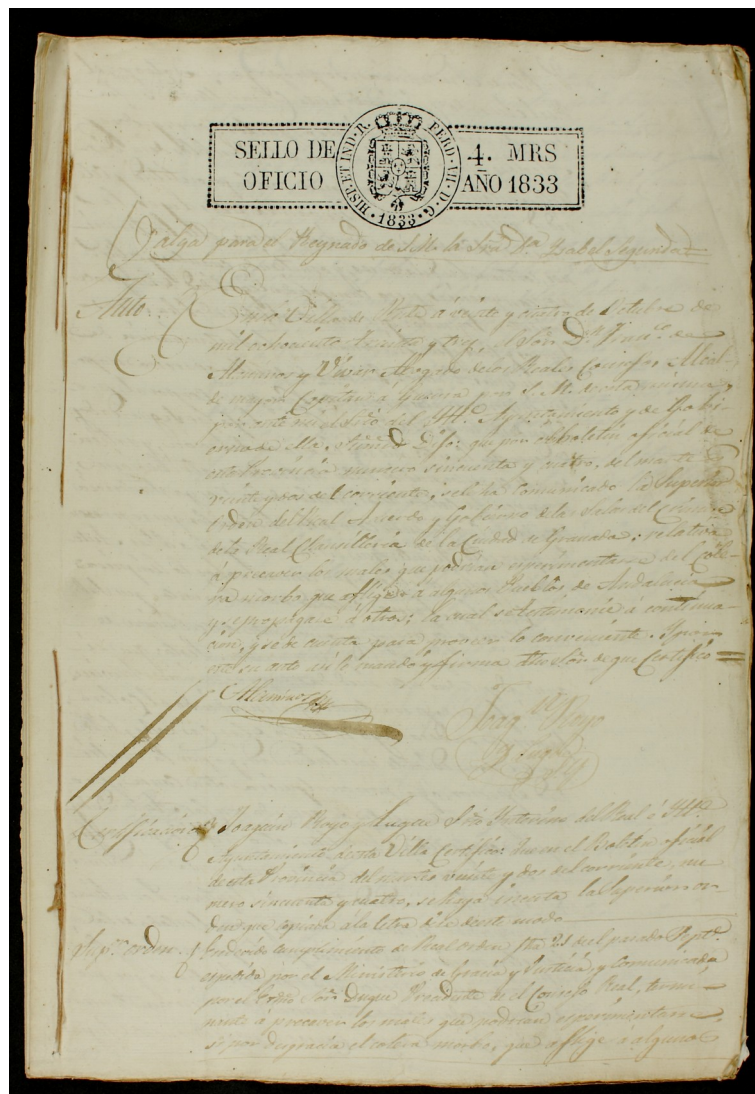


## Fight against a Cholera Epidemic in Andalusia (1833)



Proceedings relating to the superior order of the Secretariat of the Royal Agreement and Government of the Criminal Chambers of the Chancery of Granada, communicated to the Justice of Rute, on the precautionary measures for the cholera epidemic affecting some towns in Andalusia (1833).

LOCAL JUSTICE OF RUTE. AHPCO 2355/33

In 1833 a terrible epidemic of cholera raged through all of Andalusia leaving thousands dead in its wake. It was an unknown disease whose origin could have been in the delta of the Ganges river. The development of different means of communication, the extension of trade, and migration caused the arrival of this pandemic in Spain in various points and forms that are still disputed. On the 9th of August, 1833, the first cases of cholera were confirmed in Andalusia when the Board of Health in Huelva declared a state of contamination in the city. On the 12th of September, the Captain General and President of the Supreme Board of Health in Seville established a quarantine line for the villas of Palma del Río, Luisiana, Marchena, Morón, Coronil, Lebrija, Ventas del Cuervo, Almonte, La Palma, El

Pozuelo, El Berrocal, Castillo de las Guardas, El Ronquillo, Almadén de la Plata, El Pedrosos, and Puebla de los Infantes.

Despite all of the precautions taken, cholera arrived at the Cordoban capital in May of 1834. Between the 11th of June and the 11th of September of this year, 2,548 Cordobans were infected, of which 981 died. In December, the number of fatalities reached 2,459. Previously, it had already been spread to some small towns near Priego: Almedinilla, Sileras, Zamoranos, Cañuelo, Castil de Campos, Tójar, Esparragal, and Zagrilla. Gradually, it had been affecting the populations of Subbética and la Campiña. On the 11th of March, the first infections were detected in Rute which would receive 1,500 maravedis from the distribution of the queen's donation for "relief of the needy." Of the 6,608 inhabitants of the town, 901 would be infected, of which 371 would ultimately die. With 55% of deaths from cholera, Rute had one of the highest mortality rates in the province.

Given the disease's incredible aggressiveness, the authorities soon began to worry about the epidemic. It was necessary to address the problem from two perspectives; on the one hand, it was necessary to scientifically analyze the "exotic disease," and on the other hand, all kinds of measures should be taken to prevent or at least mitigate its terrible effects. The medical knowledge that was being acquired would depend on the hygienic-sanitary measures.



Amongst other conclusions, doctors had established that overcrowding and a poor diet caused the appearance of foci that were later very difficult to eradicate, so that the Secretary of the Royal Agreement and Government of the Chambers of Crime of the Chancery of Granada ordered the

“magistrates, mayors, and justices” of various towns in Andalusia to take care of the state of their prisons and avoid the accumulation of prisoners in unsanitary conditions, releasing them if necessary.

The court of Rute received an order on the 24th of October, 1833. In it explained with clarity seven measures that should be taken into account to avoid an outbreak of cholera within its dependents:

1. That the magistrates, mayors, and justices of the towns in the district, conduct and determine with promptness and rapidity that permits the observance of the Laws the motives of accused prisoners, shortening their sentences, cutting down delay, and diligently omitting all those that are not essential to fulfill the legality of the proceedings.
2. That, with this objective, double the efforts and work without rest on the conduct of the same.
3. That when it appears that one cannot impose corporal punishment upon the presumed criminals, proceed with their release under the security of law.
4. That without the slightest delay and using all means within their power, seek the release of the sentenced criminals from the prisons, reporting, where appropriate, the obstacles that arise for them.
5. That authorities monitor with great care the cleaning of the prisons and good quality of food, which is supplied to the prisoners and with fair distribution to them in their respective departments.
6. That if these measures of precaution were still adopted, and there would be probable cause to believe the invading cholera favors the development of the state of the prisons for its irreparable unhealthiness for the multitude of prisoners, or whichever cause, proceed opportunely in accordance with the authorities who are responsible, and authorize another building that does not have the same inconveniences, reporting without arrest to this Superiority.
7. Lastly, that without losing a moment, and with the state of the prisons, the number of prisoners that are within them, and the difficulties to carry out what has been foreseen, accompany the circumstantial reason of the prisoners, whose cases are in this Superiority, with designation of the Chamber Notary to which they correspond, as it results from the testimonies of protection that should be kept in the original Notaries.

In response, the authorities of Rute sent a list of the prisoners, with orders over their cases and the quality of food and facilities. In total, there were four prisoners: Juan Marcelino de los Reyes, Diego de los Reyes, Juan Antonio Quintero, and Gerónimo Rodríguez. The Secretary decided to set free three criminals, although only one of them appeared in the referred list. Two men stayed imprisoned due to pending cases with the local law and being a traitor of the army. The bail consisted in their custody to a neighbor who was obligated “in legal form to return them to these Royal Prisons when ordered by the Mayor of this villa or another competent Judge.”

[illegible]

Finally, Andalusia was the region of Spain most crippled by the cholera epidemic. The authorities of the region managed orders to mitigate its effects to the “towns of Andalusia” during a period in which it was starting to be configured in the way in which we know it today.

Proceedings relating to the superior order of the Secretary of the Royal Agreement and Government of the Chambers of Crime of the Chancery of Granada, communicated with the authorities of Rute, on the precautionary measures of the cholera epidemic that affected towns of Andalusia (1833).

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