

Declaration of His Majesty the Emperor Francis II, whereby he abdicates the German imperial throne and the imperial government.

Abstract

Francis II (1768–1835) was the last Holy Roman Emperor. Assuming the imperial throne in 1792, he found himself immediately consumed with the turmoil of the French Revolution and shortly thereafter, with the rise of Napoleon and the Napoleonic Wars. Suffering defeat at the hands of Napoleon and his armies, Francis II was forced to abdicate as Emperor and to disband the Empire. As a political entity, the Holy Roman Empire had brought stability and order to Central Europe for a thousand years; its disbanding was sign that new political institutions were gestating.

Source

Declaration of His Majesty the Emperor Francis II, whereby he abdicates the German imperial throne and the imperial government, and releases the electors, princes, and other estates, along with all members and servants of the German empire from their previous obligations^[1]; dated Vienna, August 6, 1806.

We, Francis II, elected Roman Emperor by the grace of God, ever increaser of the realm, hereditary emperor of Austria, etc, King of Germany, Hungary, Bohemia, Croatia, Dalmatia, Slavonia, Galicia, Lodomeria, and Jerusalem, Archduke of Austria, etc,

After the conclusion of the Peace of Pressburg, all our attention and care was directed towards ensuring the fullest discharge of all the obligations we had thereby assumed with the accustomed level of loyalty and conscientiousness, and to maintain the blessing of peace for our peoples, to cement those auspicious peaceful relations on all sides, and to anticipate whether the fundamental changes in the German Empire introduced by the peace would make it possible for us to adequately fulfill the grave duties placed upon us as supreme head of the empire after the electoral capitulation [i.e., terms of election]. The consequences that followed from multiple articles of the Peace of Pressburg immediately after its publication and up until the present, and those events which are generally known to have subsequently occurred within the German Empire, have led us to conclude that under the present circumstances it will no longer be possible to uphold the terms entered upon in the electoral agreement. And, if up until now the possibility remained that certain political developments might still be put aside in such a way as to improve the situation, any hopeful expectation of such a development has been utterly negated by the agreement between several of the leading estates, signed in Paris on July 12 and since confirmed by the parties involved, in which they seceded entirely from the empire and united as a confederation of their own.

Given this complete conviction of the impossibility of any longer fulfilling the duties of our imperial office, we are thus required by our principles and our honor to lay down the crown, which in our eyes can only retain its value as long as we are in a position to live up to the trust of the electors, princes, and estates and other members of the German empire and adequately perform those obligations.

We thus declare in this present decree that we regard the bonds which have thus far tied us with the body politic of the German empire as dissolved, that we view the office and rank of the imperial head of

state to be terminated by the agreement of the Confederated States of the Rhine and ourselves to thus be freed from all those obligations towards the German empire formerly placed upon us, and to lay down the imperial crown and imperial government which we had thus assumed up until now, as we do herewith do.

We simultaneously release the electors, princes, and estates and all members of the German empire, particularly the members of the supreme court of the German empire and all other servants of the German empire, from those duties with which the [imperial] constitution had bound them to us as the legal head of the empire. We thus in exchange release all our German provinces and imperial lands from all those duties which they have thus assumed under whichever titles under the auspices of the German empire, and we will diligently bring the same in their unification with the Austrian body politic as the Austrian emperor under the restored and existing peaceful relations among all the powers and neighboring states to ensure peace and prosperity, which is the utmost aim or our desires and the purpose of our most careful attention.

Given in our capital and residence city of Vienna, on the sixth of August in the year one thousand eight hundred and six, in the fifteenth year of our reign, both over the Roman and the hereditary empire.

(L.S.) Francis

Johann Philipp, Count of Stadion

Ad Mandatum Sacrae Caesareae ac caes. regiae apost. Maj. Proprium

Hofrat [Councillor] von Hudelist

NOTES

[1] From Kais. Franz I polit. Gesetzen u. Verordnungen, vol. 27, p. 1. Printed opposite the “Pragmatikal-Verordnung” (Patent v. 1. August 1804) in v. Meyer’s Corp. Constitt. Germaniae etc. p. 103 ff. See also, vol. 22, p. 79. d. cit. Oestr. Ges. Samml. über die veränderten Titel, wo es beim kleinen Titel des Kaisers heißt: “these deviations are in part the result of the treaties from Campo-Formio, Luneville, and Paris”*). (*From December 26, 1802) – Cf. p. 44 above and the note, and the imperial title, p. 65 and the note.

Source: *Corpus Juris Confoederationis Germanicae oder Staatsacten für Geschichte und öffentliches Recht des Deutschen Bundes*, edited from the official documents by Philipp Anton Guido von Meyer, revised and updated by Heinrich Zoepfl, (Frankfurt am Main: Brönnner, 1858), p. 71–72. Available online: <https://mdz-nbn-resolving.de/details:bsb11068570>.

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