

2014/3/2 Abstract: Emperor Franz II. (I.) and uniforms

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The uniform as uniform apparel, especially for military personnel, has an eventful history. In the beginning it was used as "working clothes" and for marking when opposing the enemy. After a victorious war it served as a distinctly visible and proudly presented symbol, showing that its bearer was one of those who had taken part in fighting against the enemy. During longer periods of peace, like about 100 years ago, it changed into a stylish garment. People wearing uniforms celebrated veritable triumphs in all manner of media, from the dime novel to the operetta, and as objects desired by the - at that time still - "gentle sex", particularly as the long-term Emperor Franz Joseph I. wore a uniform all the time all his life. After the First World War had been lost, however, and had brought inexpressible harm among the population, uniforms were out for a long time. This naturally also applied to the time after the Second World War. 200 years ago, on the other hand, when Austria was at war with France, the situation was completely different. The following essay is supposed to show how the uniform as a garment for military and civil personnel taking part in the war were dealt with. The attitude of Emperor Franz II. (I.) himself to uniforms is decisive for this matter. Modesty, simplicity and plainness characterized the emperor's lifestyle. The uniform was not only "working clothes" of the soldier, and it was not worn in order to take care of the own clothes. On the contrary, the uniform helped to distinguish between soldiers and civilians when engaged in battle, because only people in uniform were allowed "legally" to fight with arms. Civilians carrying arms were considered partisans or „party liners“, as they were also called according to the direct translation of the term "partisan". No state could intervene for people without uniform when they were caught or treated cruelly or were even to be killed. This distinct segregation between the military and civilians ended with the establishment of the landwehr. From then on one differentiated between military officers and civil officers. After some Viennese civilian officers had appeared with decorations in Moravia, Archduke Karl obtained a resolution from the emperor which allowed the wearing of uniforms and decorations only on the place of residence, and only at Corpus Christi Day, Plague Celebration, Wedding Notice Celebration and civilian funerals. Even a petition of the Viennese Civil Militia, which referred to the fact that already 1760 Empress Maria Theresia had allowed the civilian officers to wear uniforms and decorations without any restrictions, could not change this situation. The emperor stuck to his decision. In conclusion the essay also deals with how the authorities paid attention to the outward appearance of the population. Thus, a possible bad fashion influence from abroad was to be kept away.

