

Famous Portraits Series

Klemens von Metternich

Austrian Foreign Minister & Chancellor (1809-1848)

Born: 15 May 1773 - Died: 11 June 1859 (Aged 86)

Issue 15



1. Metternich in c. 1803
Drawing by Anton Graff
(aged 30)



2. Metternich when appointed
Austrian Foreign Minister in 1809
(aged 36)



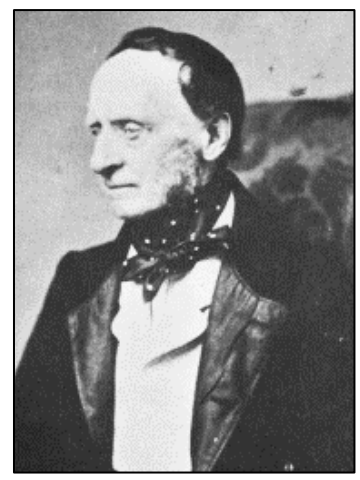
3. Metternich at the time of the
Congress of Vienna in 1815
Portrait by Thomas Lawrence
(aged 42)



4. Metternich as Austrian
Chancellor in 1822 Portrait by
Friedrich Johann Gottlieb Lieber
(aged 49)



5. Metternich at the apex of his power
as Chancellor in 1835
Königswart Castle, Bohemia
(aged 62)



6. Metternich photographed during
his retirement in 1855.
(aged 82)

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Image credits:

1. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Klemens-von-Metternich>
2. Graf Clemens Metternich - Klemens von Metternich - Wikipedia
3. Prince_Metternich_by_Lawrence.jpeg (1570×2000) (wikimedia.org)
- 4 <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/436887>
5. Metternich (c. 1835-40) - Klemens von Metternich - Wikipedia
6. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Klemens_von_metternich_in_his_last_years_of_life.png1855

Klemens Wenzel Nepomuk Lothar, Prince of Metternich-Winneburg-Beilstein, better known as Klemens von Metternich was born in Coblenz, Germany into an old Rhenish noble family. As a child he went on official visits with his father and was tutored in academic subjects, swimming and horsemanship. In 1788 he entered the University of Strasbourg to study diplomacy, but because of the French Revolution he had to move first to the University of Mainz, secondly to Brussels in the Austrian Netherlands, where his father was chief minister, and then to Vienna in 1794 where he finished his studies. A year later, he married Countess Maria Eleonore, a granddaughter of a former Austrian Chancellor, which marriage introduced him to high Viennese society. After the death of his first wife in 1825, Metternich married again in 1827 and in 1831. He had several children from all three marriages.

Metternich rose through key diplomatic Austrian posts. These included ambassadorial roles in the Kingdom of Saxony and the Kingdom of Prussia. In 1810, as Austrian Foreign Minister, he engineered the marriage of Emperor Napoleon to Marie Louise, the daughter of Emperor Francis I of Austria. In October 1813 he was given the title of Prince for his services to the Austrian Empire. In 1821, Metternich held the post of Chancellor of State until 1848, under both Francis I and his son Ferdinand I.

The Carlsbad Decrees were a set of social restrictions introduced in Germany by Prince Metternich in July 1819. They effectively dissolved the *Burschenschaften* (or student associations), set up university inspectors and rigorous press censorship. Reformers in many local governments were forced out of office and by 1820 all significant German reform movements had come to an end. The confederated governments agreed to remove from the universities and public educational institutions all teachers who promoted liberal and nationalist ideas. These decrees came to symbolize Metternich system of repression and were only repealed with his downfall in March 1848.

A traditional conservative and a skilled diplomat, Metternich was keen to maintain the balance of power in Europe during and after the Napoleonic period. After Napoleon's downfall he encouraged a Congress System where representatives of the Great Powers would meet to suppress liberal and nationalist revolutionary movements such as those of 1820 and 1830. In Austria, he became a hated symbol of repression and during the Vienna riots of March 1848, Metternich was forced to resign and seek a brief exile with his family in England. He eventually returned to Vienna in 1851 when the revolutions had then been suppressed and a conservative regime re-established in the Austrian Empire. In an interview before his death, Metternich remarked, "*I have been a rock of order...*".

Further Reading:

- <https://www.heritage-history.com/index.php?c=resources&s=char-dir&f=metternich>
- https://kids.kiddle.co/Klemens_Wenzel_von_Metternich
- <https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/metternich-clemens-von>
- https://academickids.com/encyclopedia/index.php/Carlsbad_Decreeshttps://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Klemens_von_Metternich

Questions

1. How did Metternich's first marriage help him in his career?
2. How did the French Revolution affect Metternich's personal life?
3. How would you describe his political ideology during his years in power?
4. To what extent did Metternich manage to achieve his objectives at the Congress of Vienna in 1815?
5. Identify TWO major challenges Metternich had to face in trying to maintain the balance of power in Europe after 1815.
6. Explain why Metternich eventually became very unpopular with the people. How did this affect his later political career?
7. In your opinion, what was his greatest achievement and what was his greatest failure?
8. Identify TWO adjectives which best describe Metternich's character and personality and give reasons for your answer.