

# The Polish Revolution of 1846: Historical and Literary Insights into Austrian, Polish and Ukrainian Perspectives

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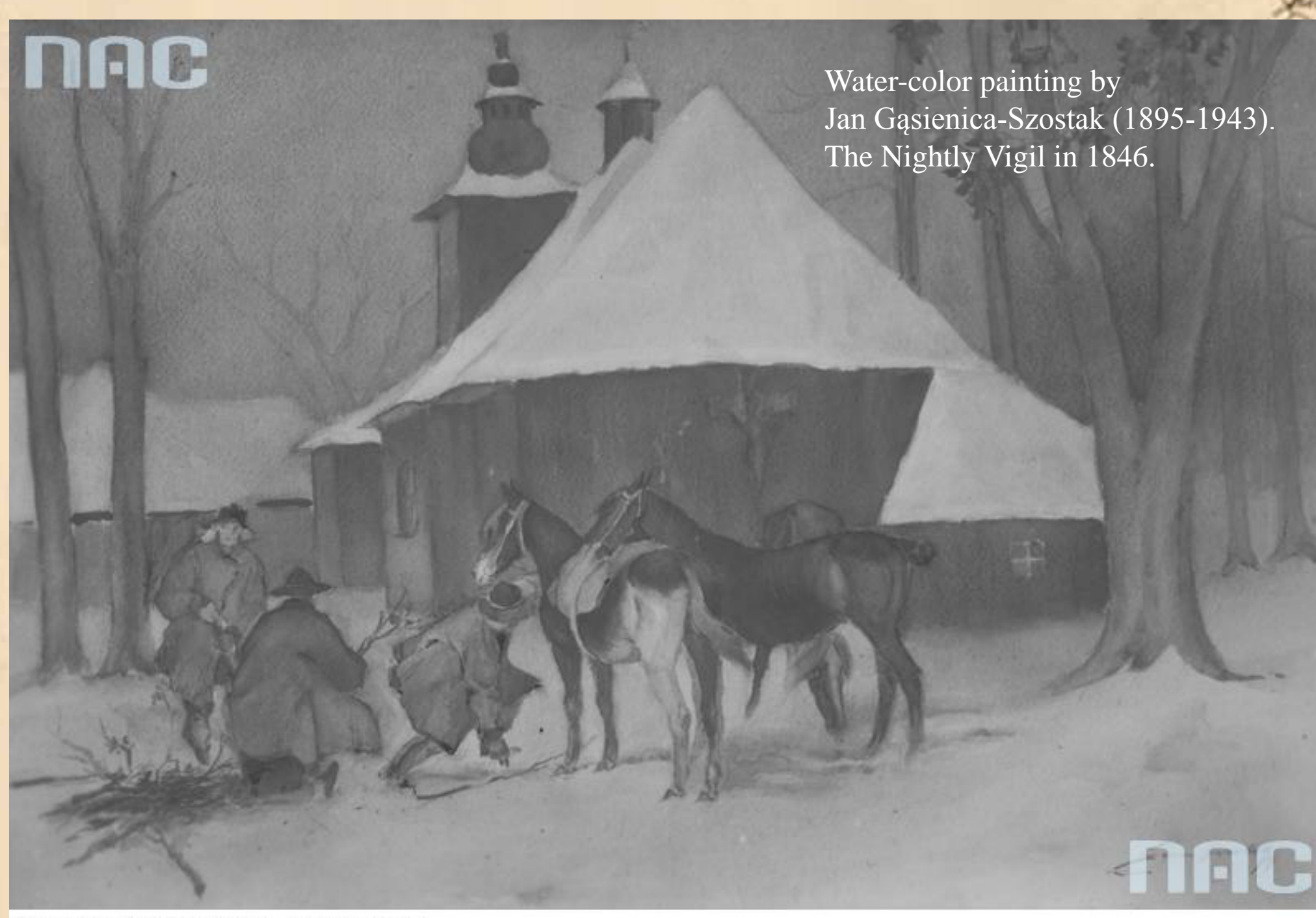
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## Historical Background

The revolution of 1846 was the attempt of Polish revolutionaries headquartered in France to rise against the Austrian Empire. Setting their hopes on Polish and Ukrainian peasants to form the core of military action against the Habsburgs and eventually spread the revolution to the Prussian and Russian territories, the revolutionaries did their utmost in order to gain their support. Contrary to the expectations of the Polish revolutionaries, the Galician peasants not only refused to support the idea of reestablishing and fighting for a Polish state, but actively opposed the Polish uprising.



Prince Adam Jerzy CZARTORYSKI (1770-1861)  
– Polish politician and leader of the Party of the Polish Nobility in France, which took part in the revolution of 1846.



Water-color painting by  
Jan Gąsienica-Szostak (1895-1943).  
The Nightly Vigil in 1846.

Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe, sygn. 1-K-2895

## Sources

This revolution was an extraordinarily intricate matter for all those involved. Every party to this conflict had their own ideological, strategic, political and media-related systems of action and narrative which were permanently presented in a biased way to audiences throughout Europe. In most cases, depending on the narrative tactics of the author, texts were defensive, offensive, apologetic, descriptive, polemical etc.

In my work, I explore several examples of coverage of the revolution by interpreting of primarily Austrian sources. Polish and Ukrainian texts offer further perspectives I deal with on a secondary level. I examine their most relevant facets by drawing on texts of various genres, in different languages and marked by controversial content and ideologies. The thesis holds that the revolution of 1846 and the Habsburg Empire had polarizing, but also modernizing effects.

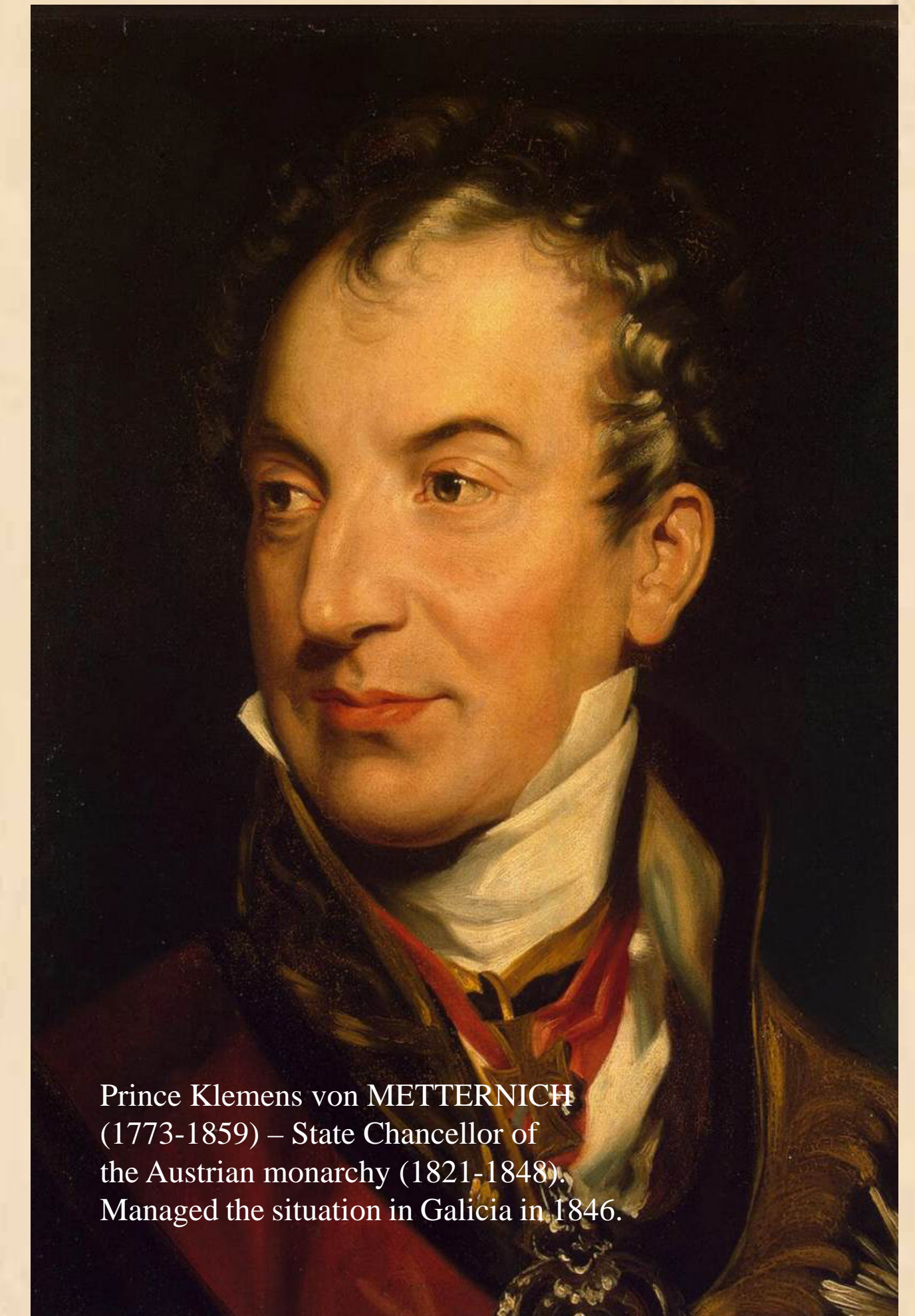
The bulk of the texts, from all perspectives and pertaining to all genres (fiction, journalistic and historical texts, life writing), are politically and ideologically charged and part of political discourses. They form coherent pools of writings of historic, political and sometimes also literary value. At the same time, most of them are part of a revolutionary literature with propagandistic and agitational accents.

Therefore, I assume that the entire nineteenth-century text corpus on the revolution of 1846 – with the exception of the Ukrainian perspective, which appeared at a later time and was less widespread – can essentially be termed as post-revolutionary strategic literature on 1846.



Jakub SZELA  
(exact years of birth and death not known) was a Polish peasant and one of the most controversial players in 1846.

Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe, sygn. 1-H-541



Prince Klemens von METTERNICH  
(1773-1859) – State Chancellor of  
the Austrian monarchy (1821-1848).  
Managed the situation in Galicia in 1846.

## Perspectives

Texts reflecting a comprehensive scope of perspectives, in terms of language, genre and content, were chosen exemplarily. Within the framework of my interpretations, they represent respective national perspectives, particularities and a wide spectrum of ideas circulating in the context of 1846.

Polish sources are also the oldest ones. Texts by Polish authors can also be regarded as the most sophisticated, successfully addressing target groups all over Europe in Polish, German, French and English (e.g. see Alexander Wielopolski, Jan Alcyato, Leonard Chodźko, Juliusz Słowacki et al.).

Austrian sources are not as frequently represented and are possibly the least assertive. In most cases the texts were written at a later point in time and are mostly in German (e.g. Moritz von Sala, Franz Schuselka, Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, Cäsar Wenzel Messenhauser etc.). Both perspectives are ideologically charged, polemical and permanently engage in a hit-and-miss interaction with each other.

The Ukrainian texts appeared last, constitute the smallest group and were written exclusively in Ukrainian (Ruthenian, in both Cyrillic and latynka). The Ukrainian perspective has been least explored to this day and is supported by very sparse archival documentation. The texts of this perspective chosen for my thesis reflect the most neutral and a relatively uncommitted position compared to the other two perspectives (e.g. Ivan Franko, Jakiv Holovac'kyj, memoirs of the Greek-Catholic clergymen etc.). They show a peripheral view of the events of 1846.