

Ferdinand III (1630s)

Abstract

Born in 1608, Habsburg emperor of the Holy Roman Empire Ferdinand III (r. 1637-57) inherited the ongoing Thirty Years War (1618-48) from his father, Ferdinand II (r. 1619-37). In 1634, after imperial general Albrecht von Wallenstein was accused of treachery, removed from his post, and murdered at Ferdinand II's behest, Ferdinand III was put in charge of the imperial army. Though imperial troops under his command won an important victory at Nördlingen later that year, the war went badly for the Habsburgs. The fighting wreaked havoc on the German territories and was prolonged, in part, because of the Austrian Habsburgs' alliance with the Spanish Habsburgs. Ferdinand proved less intransigent than his father in confessional matters, but his refusal to offer a general amnesty to Protestants and his insistence on an exclusively Catholic faith in his domains prevented an earlier peace. Moreover, he failed politically in his attempts to reverse both the fragmentation of the Empire and his own dwindling influence. It was not until 1663, when his son, Leopold I (r. 1658-1705), turned the Imperial Diet [*Reichstag*] into the Permanent Imperial Diet that a limited recovery of imperial power began.

In addition to his military achievements, Ferdinand III was also known for his interest in and patronage of the arts; he was an avid reader, wrote music, and is said to have spoken seven languages. This portrait of Ferdinand predates his reign as emperor and shows him as King of Hungary and Bohemia. He appears in an armored vest, a reference to his role as a military leader. Given the Austrian Habsburg's close ties to Spain, it is worth noting that the portrait was painted by Francisco de Zurbarán, one of the greatest artists of the Spanish Golden Age. Oil on canvas by Francisco de Zurbarán (1598-1664), 1630s.

Source



Source: Francisco de Zurbarán: King Ferdinand III. St. Petersburg, Eremitage.

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