

NEWSLETTER

Historical Society Liechtenstein



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80th BIRTHDAY OF PRINCE HANS-ADAM II

CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR JUBILEE!



The reigning Prince Hans-Adam II of Liechtenstein celebrates his 80th birthday on 14 February.

His Serene Highness Hans-Adam Ferdinand Alois Joseph Maria Marko d' Aviano Pius was born on 14 February 1945 in Zurich as the first-born son of Prince Franz Joseph II of Liechtenstein (1906-1989) and Princess Georgina née Countess von Wilczek (1921-1989). After attending primary school in Vaduz and high school in Zuoz, Switzerland, he studied economics at the University of St. Gallen. Here he graduated successfully in 1969 and then did an internship in a London banking centre.

On 30 July 1967, Prince Hans-Adam married the Czech Countess Marie Aglæe Kinská (*1945 Prague-2021 Grabs) in Vaduz, who was born in the Kinský Palace on Old Town Square in Prague. A year later, on 11 July 1968, their son Alois, the current Crown Prince, was born. Their family grew to include sons Maximilian (*1969) and Constantine (1972-2023) and daughter Tatiana (*1973). They brought the ruling couple a total of 15 grandchildren.



Prince Hans-Adam II pictured with his parents and siblings (circa 1955).

In 1970, Hans-Adam was charged by his father with reorganising the administration of the family estate, which included the vast fields and forests of Austria, the war-damaged palaces of Vienna, and the extensive art collections. He concentrated the family's wealth in the Liechtenstein Global Trust (LGT). The family fortune began to grow and is now estimated at between four and six billion euros.

Hans-Adam's next task was to prepare to take over the role of head of state, so his ailing father appointed him regent in 1984. The Crown Prince fulfilled all the tasks of a reigning prince. His mother died in October 1989 and his father less than a month later. On 13 November 1989, the Prince became Head of State - Hans-Adam II, the reigning Prince of Liechtenstein.

Despite initial opposition from politicians and some voters, he succeeded in 1990 in pushing for entry to the United Nations and the European Economic Area, which was strategically important for a country that was 90 percent dependent on exports. In addition to the embassies in Bern and Vienna, Vaduz added further embassies.

Some politicians wanted to make him merely a formal monarch whose only task would be to represent the country. Hans-Adam II, on the other hand, demanded a strengthening of power if he was to continue to have responsibility for the prosperity and freedom of the country and its citizens. If he did not get it, he was prepared to

give up his rule and move with his family to Austria. But the citizens of the principality trusted him by a clear majority.



The wedding of Prince Hans-Adam II to Countess Maria in 1967 was the beginning of a happy marriage.



The national emblem of Liechtenstein on the building of the original seat of the Provincial Assembly in Vaduz (now government).

The crisis was resolved by a referendum on 16 March 2003, in which the majority of the population (64% of the 88% of the voters who took part) voted in favour of strengthening the role of their prince. He can now veto any law, but can be overridden by a referendum initiated by the government, parliament or the citizens

themselves. Citizens also have a statutory initiative.

In August 2004, the Prince entrusted his son, Crown Prince Alois, with the duties of Head of State in preparation for his future independent reign. He has remained head of state with a decisive say to this day.



The princely family in the 1990s at Vaduz Castle.

The Prince has impressed with his views on the necessary reforms of states, which he described in his 2009 book „*The State in the Third Millennium*“. This has been published in 15 translations, including the Czech one (published by Grada Publishing in 2011). In April 2011, he discussed his views with students at Charles University in Prague and Masaryk University in Brno (the university awarded him the Great Gold Medal on that occasion).

In November 2014, the Prince celebrated the quarter-century of his reign. This, in addition to the rapid increase in the overall economic level of the country, is characterised by a growing population. Gross domestic product has been increasing rapidly since the 1970s and this

growth has been driven mainly by engineering (51% of GDP).

During the reign of Prince Hans-Adam II, GDP increased by more than 200 % and in 2005 the country rose to second place in the ranking of countries by GDP per capita, behind Monaco, which it still holds today. In 2012, Liechtenstein's education system was ranked the best in Europe (1st place in PISA 2012) and is still at the top today.



Prince Hans-Adam II won great popularity with the public for his humane approach.

Between 2000 and 2013, the two Viennese Liechtenstein palaces were expensively renovated at the expense of the family foundation (total of approximately EUR 200 mil.) and opened to the public (Liechtenstein Museum). The princely collections are among the two most important private art collections in the world and have grown by about 1/3 since the 1980s to 1,700 top works by leading European artists of the 16th-19th centuries.

After 64 years of broken diplomatic relations, Prince Hans-Adam II succeeded in establishing

diplomatic relations between Liechtenstein and the Czech Republic in September 2009. He has not yet succeeded in returning the property confiscated in 1945 from four members of the Princely Family and 34 other Liechtenstein citizens, even though Liechtenstein was a neutral country during World War II.

Shortly after diplomatic relations were restored, Prince Hans-Adam II came to South Moravia in September 2009 to christen the first book about his family by the Czech author Pavel Juřík, *"Moravian Dominions of Liechtenstein and Dietrichstein"*. This book and a series of articles by this author in the Czech press provided the general public with truthful information about the Liechtenstein family, including the period of World War II, and helped to change the understanding of the history of the princely family in a positive direction. Therefore, the Prince was warmly welcomed by a large number of people in Mikulov, Breclav, Lednice and Valtice.



During his visit to South Moravia in September 2009, Prince Hans-Adam II presented the first book about his family by a Czech author at Valtice Castle.

In December 2009, *the Historical Society of Liechtenstein* was founded and granted permission by Prince Hans-Adam II to use the coat of arms of his family in its name. Since then, the association has organized dozens of events (conferences, exhibitions, lectures, etc.) that have contributed to the knowledge of the common Czech-Liechtenstein history. A number of events were attended by Prince Hans-Adam II or members of his family and ambassador of Liechtenstein to the Czech Republic H. S. H. Maria-Pia Kothbauer Princess of Liechtenstein.



In 2010 Masaryk University in Brno awarded Prince Hans-Adam II the Gold Medal.

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Prince Hans-Adam II meeting with President Václav Klaus (5 May 2010).

The Prince's contribution to the development of Czech-Liechtenstein relations was recognised by Charles University in 2021. At the suggestion of HSL, the university awarded him the Historical Medal. *"I see the award that I received today from the representatives of Charles University as a gesture of our mutual understanding,"* said Hans Adam II. *And secondly, as an understanding that a successful future is not possible without education, science, art and cooperation. And I*

would like to thank the University of Prague not only for the medal, but also for this understanding."



Ambassador of Liechtenstein H.E. Marie-Pia Kothbauer Princess Liechtenstein presents her credentials to the President of the Republic (11 April 2011).



In 2013-2015, the family tomb in Vranov u Brna (not owned by the family) was reconstructed at the expense of the princely foundation.

Although the Prince never wanted to sue for the property that was illegally confiscated from his family in 1945, he was forced to do so by the New Civil Code. But the Czech state was the first to sue him. In 2014, the Office for the Representation of the State in Property Matters (ÚZSVM) filed a lawsuit against the Prince Liechtenstein Foundation, seeking to annul the ownership of the said land, which had been handed over to it two years earlier by the District Court for Prague-East in the context of additional inheritance proceedings.

Since then, there have been dozens of lawsuits at all levels of court, some of which have ruled in the Foundation's favor, but the higher courts have always ruled against the Foundation. The Constitutional Court's decision of 10 May 2023, in which it rejected the Liechtensteins' constitutional complaint in a case concerning land in the Kolín district, is significant.



On 18-19 May 2015, Prince Hans-Adam II visited Opava, the former capital of the Duchy.



In 2017, the princely couple celebrated their golden wedding (postage stamp).



Rector of Charles University Prof. Tomáš Zima presents the University's Historical Medal to His Serene Highness Prince Hans-Adam II.

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While two judges voted in favour of the Czech Republic, Constitutional Court Judge David Uhlíř expressed his fundamental disagreement with the previous decisions of the Czech courts in his judgment, stating, inter alia, that: *"Franz Joseph II, Prince of Liechtenstein, the legal predecessor of the complainants, whose disputed property should have been confiscated by Presidential Decree No. 12/1945 Coll., was a citizen of a state that maintained neutrality throughout the Second World War. There is no reason to regard him as anything other than a German-speaking citizen of another neutral State, such as Switzerland. The idea that Franz Joseph II, Prince of Liechtenstein, was complicit in the crimes of the Third Reich and that he was therefore subject to a presidential decree is absurd. In my opinion, the decisions of the ordinary courts and the Constitutional Court are unfortunately influenced not only by legal considerations, but also by political and economic ones."*

In 2020, Liechtenstein turned to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg over a dispute over property in the Czech Republic expropriated from the Liechtenstein family after World War II. The court's decision is expected by

2026. In addition to the Princely Family, 30 other citizens of neutral Liechtenstein who were purposely declared Germans in 1945 were affected by the confiscation of property in Czechoslovakia.

In recent years, the Prince has suffered several personal losses. First, on 21 August 2021, his beloved wife Princess Marie passed away at the age of 81. Two years later on 5 December 2023, his youngest son Prince Constantin died suddenly at the age of 51, leaving behind a wife with two sons and a daughter.



Three generations of princes: hereditary Prince Alois, reigning Prince Hans-Adam II and his grandson Prince Wenzel.

We wish Prince Hans-Adam II health, happiness and contentment on the occasion of his significant jubilee.

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The Liechtenstein family is well established and its future is assured. The family of Prince Hans-Adam II is also large (in the 2012 photo the Prince is standing third from the right in the back).