

gradually outstripped by events, was already an irritant to his colleagues. Count Franz Anton Kolowrat complained of him as a pompous pedant who was constantly telling everyone that two and two made four, not five, and that all actions had consequences. The claim on his behalf that his criticisms of Josephinian centralism in Austria put him on the same wave-length as the early ethnic nationalists⁶ seems to misunderstand both Meternich's quite impractical bid to substitute regional for national loyalties (as in Galicia) and the necessarily cautious tactics of the nationalists concerned.

Meternich falls short of greatness in another sense. He was a weaker man than he imagined, who allowed Emperor Francis, one of the most influential mediocrities of modern times, to frustrate even his modest reform proposals. Francis, the prosaic son of an enlightened father, humanised by a somewhat sardonic humour and the old tradition he clung to of receiving petitioning subjects personally in Viennese dialect, was unswayed by the exasperation his pedantic administrative methods aroused in his abler brothers, the Archdukes Karl and Johann. The problem was that the Emperor could get his way. He had something of the suspiciousness and *amour propre* of the mediocre, which made him prefer disjointed government to a coherent system under a leading minister less easy to control. Hence the Archduke Charles was driven into political retirement after 1809; Meternich's reform plan of 1817 was put away in a drawer; a Kingdom of Illyria was set up briefly (1816-23) but had a shadow existence before abolition; Galicia gained a Diet (1817) and a Ministry of the Interior lasted for some years, but only for the non-Hungarian lands. The failure to use the favourable outcome of the war to shape strategic decisions for an empire which was still pliable and loyal must be accounted a major factor in its ultimate fall.

An unreformed Austria failed to fund the army needed to lend weight to Meternich's diplomatic goals. Whereas military expenditure took half the state's income in 1817, this had fallen to 23% by 1830 and 20% by 1848. Between the last two dates the troops in the important Italian sector fell by half, to less than 50,000 men. Indeed, army strength was always well below its nominal complement of 400,000, and it was regular practice to furlough soldiers at harvest time. Meternich had only his own persuasiveness to rely on in foreign affairs. Increasingly, it was not enough.

The Eastern crisis of 1821-29 provided the first major evidence of this. The Greek revolt against their Turkish overlords put the principle of Great Power hostility to rebels under strain for the Tsar, who

could not take kindly to the Turkish response of hanging the titular leader of Orthodox Christians, the Ecumenical Patriarch, on his cathedral door in full regalia on Easter Sunday. When Castlereagh was succeeded by the more liberal Canning as British foreign secretary the next year (1822), Meternich lost a possibly sympathetic ally. Alexander's successor, Tsar Nicholas I, distrusted him. Russia began to look to Britain as a partner in imposing a settlement on the Turks. Together with Britain and France she destroyed the Turkish fleet at Navarino in autumn 1827 before launching a ground war on Turkey the next year. Austria played no part in the Treaty of Adrianople (1829), which paved the way for the creation of an independent Greek kingdom three years later.

The 1830 July revolution in France, putting the 'bourgeois monarch' Louis Philippe on the throne, produced wide-ranging echoes, from revolts in Belgium, Russian Poland and the Papal States to pressures for further constitutionalism in the German *Bund*. Keeping the lid on liberal and nationalist tendencies in Germany and Italy remained Meternich's special concern. In the former country his line was that this goal could only be achieved by Austria not appearing to push her special interests while at the same time frustrating any combinations by others. Though most German rulers shared his anti-revolutionary fears, so negative an approach cut against the grain of a society experiencing economic growing pains and slow rise of a public opinion. Besides, Austria's defensive posture appeared to many, particularly south Germans, to risk drawing Germany into war in defence of over-exposed positions, notably an Austro-French war over Italy — a scenario that came about in 1859. New ideas were budding, like the Prussian hegemonist ambitions of the first architect of German customs union, Prussian finance minister Motz, or the 'Hra' schemes of middle-ranking south German states like Bavaria and Württemberg for an independent role alongside Austria and Prussia. Hindsight suggests Austria might have sided with the south German over the Prussian scheme. In fact, Meternich dismissed him, preferring an Austro-Prussian dualism but under Austrian lead. There are parallels with British illusions towards Europe after another Pyrrhic victory, in the Second World War. Following the famous Harburg festival of German liberal-cum-national sentiment in 1832, the Austrian Chancellor was able to get six Articles through the Frankfurt Diet, further establishing the monarchical (i.e. anti-constitutional) principle in German government and, in 1834, a court of arbitration to which rulers could appeal against impotence