

straddled its borders. Metternich's Chancellery had a section on domestic matters with direct access to the Ministry of Police, and he himself took on the task of monitoring intellectual trends and managing the Monarchy's ideological stance (including, in modern parlance, its 'image') at home and abroad. He approached this work with the mental equipment of an eighteenth-century rationalist *grand seigneur* untouched by either the liberal democracy or romantic reaction of the French revolutionary period, concerned to preserve the balance of the body politic against the gusts of enthusiasm from whatever quarter. In international politics this led him to advocate the so-called Congress system of periodic meetings of the Powers (1815-22) to coordinate the fight against revolutionary tendencies. In central Europe he secured the confederal Diet's acceptance of the Karlsbad decrees (1819), which limited free speech and the autonomy of universities, where liberal and German nationalist ideas were strongest. In the Monarchy itself balance for Metternich meant ending the disproportion between its Austrian and Hungarian parts by lessening centralism in the former lands and reining in Magyar separatist tendencies in Hungary. To this end he advocated building up north Italian, 'Illyrian' and Galician entities (based on regional not national loyalties, however) which could then, by the most ambitious of his several reform drafts of this period (1817), become sub-units of a new Ministry of the Interior, with the hint of Hungary and Transylvania's potential reduction to similar status.

Metternich was thus aware of the problems which had long plagued Habsburg administration: its lack of coordination and the confusion between policy-making and its implementation. By proposing a system of ministries he was repudiating the time-consuming tradition of collegiate bodies through which the Monarchy had hitherto been governed. Ministries could efficiently discharge the day-to-day running of government business, while a small elite body advised the monarch on general policy for the state as a whole. The second goal had been the principle behind Kaunitz's *Staatsrat* of 1761 but in the interval this highest organ had continually allowed itself to be drawn into the detailed application of government policy. Francis's habit of settling matters directly with individual departments and his concern with minutiae had prevented the development of any kind of governmental *esprit de corps*. By the year 1802, 2000 files are said to have piled up for the Emperor's attention. Metternich's proposals for administrative reorganisation were thus not new. The Staats- und Konferenzministerium (1801) and revamped Staatsrat (1808, 1814) were

all failed attempts to embody the idea of a central consultative forum unbundled by the trivia of the daily round.

Exalted notions of Metternich's statesmanship have been almost as common in some twentieth-century quarters as was his denigration as the evil genius of reaction in the nineteenth. The man who told the Duke of Wellington in 1824 that he felt all Europe to be his fatherland has been portrayed by his chief biographer Heinrich von Srbik as the guardian of Austria's European role in a system which recognised state and national individualities but subordinated their separate egoisms to the wider good. This fairly reflects Metternich's self-image but is somewhat uncritical. The Chancellor's generalised nostrums bespoke static assumptions. Human nature did not change, he opined; the mass of the people were always conservative and the oscillation of the forces of change and stability permitted only a cyclical view of history; hence, revolutionary utopias were a dangerously folly attractive only to naive idealists (professors, religious radicals). Metternich played a role in the Papal condemnation of Lamennais in 1834) or self-interested egoists 'who enter the house they have set on fire not to save the valuables but to make off with them'.⁴ Equality was a chimera, for what equality could there be between a wise man and a foolish one? Monarchy and sound religion cemented the bonds of loyalty necessary in a hierarchical society; democracy dissolved them. Metternich's *apertus* were not without sociological force. He recognised the aristocratic base to the unique constitutionalism of pre-1832 England. He had, too, some awareness of the limits of the possible; when Adam Müller blamed all Europe's discontents on the Reformation, he remarked that he was not going to take on Martin Luther. Conscious of the need to rely on more than censorship in the battle for ideas, he overrode the police chief Seitzlitzky and allowed the leading German newspaper of the day, the mildly liberal *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung*, into Austria in the 1820s, getting its cautious editor Collin to accept Austrian government material for fear of losing his concession. But does this justify the claims of a higher political wisdom?

Clearer as he was, Metternich's imagination was limited by a marked complacency, both intellectual and social. 'Such is my character', he wrote to one of several mistresses in 1813, assuring her of the magnitude of his passion; 'if it is unlike others', so much the worse for them... time will prove to you... what I am and what I can be for the friend of my heart'.⁵ The conviction of his superior rationality, which made him reluctant to abandon doctrines