

METTERNICH'S PROJECTS FOR REFORM IN AUSTRIA. By *Egon Radvany*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971. x, 154 pp. 22.75 Dutch guilders, paper.

In February 1807 Archduke Johann of Austria wrote in his diary: "The sovereign at the head has taken everything onto himself. Jealous of his power, he allows insight to nobody; everything comes to a stop—no decision—nothing but contradictions. He does not, or does not want to, understand the situation and thus leads his state irretrievably toward destruction." The sovereign in question was Johann's brother, Emperor Franz, and the assessment was just. During a long reign, from 1792 to 1835, he tried to run the multinational empire as if it were a family estate, reserving the right of decision in all important matters and using it to block change of any kind. *Quieta non movere* was his guiding principle, and it continued to prevail even after his death, for his son was a mental defective whose power was wielded by a regency government too divided to alter anything of consequence.

Mr. Radvany has written an excellent book, based on exhaustive use of the archives in Vienna, about the efforts of the most capable public servant in this period to reform the system. Klemens von Metternich, from 1809 until his fall in 1848 the director of the empire's foreign policy, was from an early date aware that the emperor's policy of *Fortwurschteln* (muddling along) would, in the long run, weaken Austria's prestige abroad and make its policy ineffective. He sought to prevent this by a basic reform of the imperial structure which would have given extensive powers to a ministerial conference under his own leadership to give authoritative advice to the emperor and facilitate necessary decisions.

Radvany's description of the way in which Metternich's reform plans were defeated throws fascinating light on the internal politics of the empire. He points out that the chancellor always had to contend with opposition from "numerous members of the highest Austrian nobility—many of whom were jealous of [him] as a foreigner—and of the upper strata of the deracinated Josephinian bureaucracy domiciled in the capital who were hostile to any measures leading to a shift of administrative power from Vienna to the provinces," some degree of which Metternich considered desirable to accommodate the cultural and historical diversity of the realm. But the chancellor had more serious antagonists. First was the emperor himself, a virtuoso in all the arts of indecision and delay, who simply refused to be budged. Second was the Bohemian aristocrat Count Franz Anton Kolowrat, an ambitious intriguer who, after 1826, gradually made himself supreme arbiter of domestic affairs by exploiting the formlessness and muddle of the regime, and who consequently opposed any reform that might introduce system and discipline. Third were the archdukes who, resenting their own exclusion from power and blaming it on Metternich, came down, at crucial moments, on Kolowrat's side.

Finally, Metternich was his own worst enemy. On more than one occasion he might have had his way by putting his international prestige in the balance and by threatening to resign. At the sticking point, he never had that kind of toughness, as his staunchest supporter, General Clam-Martinitz, noted with despair. Metternich was no fighter for principle, a fact that helped make Archduke Johann's dark forebodings come true.

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