

The standard biographer of Metternich remains Heinrich Ritter von Srbik, whose two large volumes of 1925 (produced in a format rather like telephone directories) present a picture of the Austrian State Chancellor as a European statesman of the first rank with a profound if rather doctrinaire understanding of the European balance of power and the European social order. Srbik also produced a condensed biography for those unable to cope with his masterpiece in 1956. Srbik's portrait of Metternich was not, however, entirely uncritical. He believed that the statesman should have undertaken reforms before 1848 and that he should have done more to resist the growing Slavification of the Habsburg Monarchy. Srbik's real hero was probably Prince Felix zu Schwarzenberg, Franz Joseph's prime minister from 1848 to 1852, a true man of action, whose aim, albeit frustrated, had been to create 'a Reich of seventy million' incorporating all the territories of the Monarchy, the German Confederation and the Zollverein in a political and economic union under Austrian leadership, a form of Mitteleuropa stretching from the Baltic to the Adriatic, that would have dominated Europe. Still, in Srbik's eyes, Metternich was a statesman with a European vision and a rational mind who dominated European diplomacy from 1813 to 1848. This view, of course, has always been contested by liberal and socialist historians although none of them have written anything substantial on Metternich, certainly not a biography, leaving Srbik's views to dominate until recently, despite the attack on them from his colleague at the University of Vienna, Viktor Bibl, whose own biography of Metternich, entitled significantly *Metternich, der Dämon Oesterreichs*, blamed the Chancellor for every catastrophe in Austrian history, including the 1848 revolutions and the outbreak of the First World War.

Like Srbik, Wolfram Siemann, professor of modern and contemporary history at the University of Munich, intends to write two books on Metternich. His 'large Metternich' will be based on the Chancellor's family papers in Prague, and will be, he promises, a new portrait of the statesman and of his times, which will make a significant contribution to historiography. One can but hope. In the meantime, he offers us his 'little Metternich' as a foretaste. It describes my own recent book on the statesman – *Metternich and Austria. An Evaluation* – as having contributed 'the most significant progress to date' on the subject, so I suppose I should be flattered, although he seems to deprecate my (too) vigorous criticism of Paul Schroeder's views on the nineteenth century state system.

All in all, there is much to recommend in Siemann's book. He is very good on the Napoleonic period and the period of Metternich's exile after the 1848 revolutions, when he was treated abominably by the Vienna government. He defends Metternich against Srbik's charge that he was insufficiently German (quoting Metternich's rebuff to Napoleon during their famous interview in Dresden in June 1813: 'You forget, Sire, that you are speaking to a German!') and his analysis of Metternich's views on the nationality problem is much like my own. He also, like myself, sees Metternich as a peace-loving statesman with a warm and generous disposition who had a grasp of modern economic problems and was in no way reactionary. Indeed, he prefers to use 'Reconstruction' rather than 'Restoration' for Metternich's aims in Europe after 1815. Like myself, he sees the State Chancellor's diplomatic policy as one of creating a balance of power in Europe but with the emphasis on balance – indicating moderation, reconciliation, compromise and agreement – rather than power. He abhorred war and never wanted to spill blood. He

was, as I pointed out in my own book, a rationalist who preferred the rule of law to the use of force. Like myself, Professor Siemann agrees that Metternich would have liked to reform the Monarchy but was always frustrated when he tried to do so by the ruling family. Indeed, in one surprising revelation, Siemann points to Metternich's love for England: 'If I were not [an Austrian] which I am, I would very much love to be an Englishman. If I could not be one or other, I'd prefer to be nothing at all'. In England, there was the rule of law but hatred of revolution and violence. Metternich, of course, deplored revolution and the deaths it caused but was no reactionary. The first idea he had for the motto of his coat of arms was 'Forwards'. Altogether then, there is much to admire in Siemann's 'little Metternich'.

On the other hand, it has a few faults. The period after 1815 is far too rushed and the diplomacy simplified. The Congress of Aix-la Chapelle, e.g. is missed out in the account of the Congress system. There are also several factual mistakes. The Austrian contingent in Napoleon's army that invaded Russia did not sit out that campaign harmlessly in Galicia; Metternich did not want war and a popular uprising in 1809; the Austrian governor of Galicia in 1830 was not Polish; the role of Russia's army in Hungary in 1849 is overestimated; the discussion of Metternich's memorandum on Hungary of 1844 is taken out of context; Siemann's complaint about the lack of research into the pre-March period is odd, given Schlitter's four volumes, Bibl's work on the Lower Austrian Estates, Rath's and Häusler's books on Vienna in 1848 and recent work such as Michal Chvojka's book on Selnitzky, not to mention the work of Hungarian historians from Andics onwards or Moritsch's edited volume on Austro-Slavism. There is also my own work on the army and my own, long, detailed account of Metternich's policy towards Lombardy-Venetia and Ronald E. Coon's illuminating article on, among other things, the intrigues surrounding his resignation in 1848. Arguably, therefore, the Vormärz is one of the best researched periods of Metternich's career. One final quibble, Siemann thinks that Metternich would be happy with the present situation in the EU. Yet given its centralising bureaucracy and its disdain for national differences, he might well condemn it as much as he condemned the Bach system. Still, these are fairly minor quibbles, and the book is well worth reading.