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Saxony, Austria, and the German Question after the Congress of Vienna, 1815-1816

THE UNEXPECTED DEFEAT of Napoleon in 1812 and the subsequent collapse of his European empire offered the Habsburg dynasty an opportunity to re-establish its traditional influence over the German-speaking lands of central Europe, which had been largely eliminated by the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806. The post-Napoleonic reconstruction of central Europe was to be an important chapter in the history of the Habsburg dynasty and in the political evolution of the German lands of central Europe, or the German Question as this evolution has come to be known.[1] Negotiations over the future organization of Germany began during the War of Liberation and continued throughout the congress of Vienna, which met from September 1814 to June 1815. The architect of Habsburg German policy at this time was Prince Clemens von Metternich (1773-1859), the foreign minister of the Austrian Empire. The very existence of this empire, established in 1804, was a testimony to the low fortunes of the Habsburgs under the French Imperium, for the consolidation of the Habsburg core provinces around Vienna, Prague, and Budapest into the Austrian Empire was a direct consequence of the exclusion of Habsburg influence from Germany after the coming of the French.[2] In numerous negotiations between 1813 and

[1] For a good bibliographical review of work on Austria and the German Question during the German Confederation, see Michael Derndarsky, 'Österreich und der deutsche Bund 1815-1866: Anmerkungen zur deutschen Frage zwischen dem Wiener Kongress und Königgrätz', in *Österreich und die deutsche Frage im 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, eds. Heinrich Lutz and Helmut Rumpler (Vienna, 1982), pp. 92-116. Also useful is a recent collection of articles on the German Confederation, *Deutscher Bund und deutsche Frage, 1815-1866: Europäische Ordnung, deutsche Politik und gesellschaftlicher Wandel im Zeitalter der bürgerlich-nationalen Emanzipation*, ed. Helmut Rumpler (Vienna, 1990), *passim*.

[2] On the end of the Holy Roman Empire and the founding of the Austrian Empire, see Enno E. Kraehe, *Metternich's German Policy*: Vol. I: *The Contest with Napoleon* (Princeton, 1963), pp. 25-57; Otmar Freiherr von Aretin, *Vom deutschen Reich zum deutschen Bund*, Deutsche Geschichte, Vol. VII (Göttingen, 1980), pp. 90-102.

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1815, Metternich endeavoured to create a German states system – controlled as much as possible from Vienna – that would serve the strategic and political interests of the Austrian Empire. If made immune from outside influence or incursions, the system would prevent France or the recently expanded Russian Empire from invading central Europe and utilizing its resources against the Austrian Empire, as had been the case with the French-sponsored *Rheinbund*. Moreover, by keeping the two flanking powers of France and Russia out of central Europe and thus physically apart, a German defensive union would contribute to the stability and repose of the overall European states system. This last consideration was especially important to Metternich, as the Austrian Empire emerged from the Napoleonic Wars territorially satiated and vitally interested in the maintenance of the *status quo*.[3]

Although Metternich would prove extremely flexible in carrying out his German policy, he did not share the sentiment widespread at the time which called for a revival of the Holy Roman Empire under Habsburg leadership. Not only had the Empire proved unable to defend itself against outside aggression, but the continued existence of many of the German *Rheinbund* states, which precluded an Imperial restoration, had been guaranteed by Austria under the accession treaties of 1813. Henceforth, these states, led by the middle-sized powers of Bavaria, Württemberg, and Baden, would work assiduously to defend their independence and sovereignty. Perhaps the greatest obstacle to the revival of the Holy Roman Empire was the challenge from the second great power of Germany, the kingdom of Prussia. Since the peace of Hubertusberg in 1763, Prussia had steadily expanded her power and influence in northern Germany, often at the expense of Habsburg Imperial pretensions. Cencentury was characterized by alternating rivalry and co-operation between Berlin and Vienna.[4] Although nearly destroyed by Napoleon in 1806, Prussia emerged from the War of Liberation determined to take full advantage of the post-war reconstruction to regain and enhance her status as a European great power. In particular, Prussia renewed her drive for domination in northern Germany by trying to persuade Austria

[3] Metternich's German policy at the time of the congress of Vienna is discussed most recently in Enno E. Kraehe, *Metternich's German Policy*: Vol. II: *The Congress of Vienna, 1814-1815* (Princeton, 1983), pp. 3-6, 18 ff., 28 ff., 396 ff., and *passim*. See also, Heinrich Ritter von Srbik, 'Metternichs Plan der Neuordnung Europas 1814/15', *Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Instituts für Geschichtforschung*, xl (1925), 109-26; Karl Griewank, *Der Wiener Kongress und die Neuordnung Europas 1814-15* (Leipzig, 1942), pp. 29 ff., 111 ff.; and Paul W. Schroeder, 'An Unnatural "Natural Alliance": Castlereagh, Metternich, and Aberdeen in 1813', *International History Review*, x (1988), 522-40.

[4] Adolf Schmidt, *Preussens Deutsche Politik, 1785. 1806. 1849. 1866* (Leipzig, 1867), pp. 3-173; Aretin, *Vom Deutschen Reich*, pp. 14-109.

to place the post-war German states system under dual Austro-Prussian hegemony, with the Main river dividing the Austrian and Prussian spheres of influence.[5]

Metternich was aware of the danger that such dualism posed to the restoration of Habsburg leadership in German affairs, but initially seemed willing to conciliate Prussia in order to achieve the goal of a stable and well-defended European centre, so long as Prussia did not directly threaten the Austrian Empire. Prussia's size and strategic location on the northern European plain made her indispensable to the defence of central Europe against attacks from east and west. Especially crucial would be her role in forming with Austria a bulwark against a possible Russian attack from the east.[6] One consequence of this policy, however, would be the abandonment of the Habsburgs' traditional role as defender of, and arbiter between, the smaller states of Germany. Indeed, the price for Austro-Prussian dualism would be paid by the small and middle-sized states – Saxony being one – whose sovereignty stood to be restricted, in one form or another, under such an arrangement.

Throughout 1814, Metternich worked with his Prussian counterparts Karl August von Hardenberg (1750-1822) and Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835), in composing a draft constitution for a future German confederation.[7] Their co-operation reached its height in October 1814 with the completion of the so-called Twelve Articles (a draft constitution which went a considerable way towards establishing Austro-Prussian dualism and the division of Germany into Austrian and Prussian spheres of control),[8] and with Metternich's success in persuading

[5] Karl Erich Born, 'Hardenbergs Pläne und Versuche zur Neuordnung Europas und Deutschlands, 1813-1815', *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, viii (1957), 550-64; Karl Griewank, 'Preussische Neuordnungspläne für Mitteleuropa aus dem Jahre 1814', *Deutsches Archiv für Landes-und Volksforschung*, vi (1942), 342-60.

[6] On the importance of Prussia in Metternich's central European vision see Kraehe, *Metternich's German Policy*, i. 250-326; ii. 37-8, 64-5, 82-3; Griewank, *Wiener Kongress*, pp. 116-17; Edward Vose Gulick, *Europe's Classical Balance of Power* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1955), pp. 199-200.

[7] Negotiations preceding the congress of Vienna regarding the constitution of the planned German confederation are discussed in Kraehe, *Metternich's German Policy*, ii. 66-79, 100-17; Griewank, *Wiener Kongress*, pp. 108-35; Peter Burg, *Der Wiener Kongress: Der Deutsche Bund im europäischen Staatensystem* (Munich, 1984), pp. 73-6. Also helpful on this topic and on the congress in general is Wolf Gruner, 'Grossbritannien, der deutsche Bund, und die Struktur des europäischen Friedens im frühen 19. Jahrhundert: Studien zu den britisch-deutschen Beziehungen in einer Periode des Umbruchs, 1812-1820', unpublished *Habilitationsschrift* (University of Munich, 1979), pp. 312-22, 343-61.

[8] Kraehe, *Metternich's German Policy*, ii. 151-73; Griewank, *Wiener Kongress*, pp. 133-5; Burg, *Wiener Kongress*, pp. 76-7; Gruner, *Grossbritannien*, pp. 361-83.

Prussia to join Austria and Great Britain in trimming Russia's territorial claims in Poland, thereby limiting Russia's military and political potential to influence German affairs.

As an incentive to join the anti-Russian front, Metternich provisionally agreed, in October 1814, to Prussia's immediate occupation – and ultimate acquisition – of Saxony. Unlike many of the *Rheinbund* states, Saxony had failed to abandon Napoleon in timely fashion. Following the battle of Leipzig in late 1813, King Friedrich August I of Saxony (1750-1827) had been sent to Berlin as a prisoner of war and his kingdom placed under Allied jurisdiction and occupation. Although Hardenberg was personally convinced of the necessity of aligning with Austria in the defence of central Europe, the acquisition of Saxony was an especially welcome prospect, as it would constitute an important step towards Prussia's domination of northern Germany. When Metternich was criticized by Austria's political and military leaders for his readiness to cede to Prussia such a strategically important state as Saxony, he replied that Prussia's incorporation of Saxony, although potentially threatening to Austria, was the necessary price for Prussia's support against Russian expansion towards central Europe.[9]

Austro-Prussian co-operation in German affairs ended as a result of the so-called Polish-Saxon crisis of late 1814 and early 1815. In a display of solidarity with Tsar Alexander I, Frederick William III of Prussia (1770-1840) disavowed Hardenberg's agreement with Metternich and withdrew Prussia from the anti-Russian front. Having thus lost Prussia's support in defending central Europe from Russia, Metternich withdrew the offer of Saxony, which in any case had been contingent upon a successful initiative against Russia. Backed by Great Britain and France, he now offered only limited Prussian gains in Saxony, while Hardenberg, supported by the tsar, persisted in demanding the whole state. The resulting deadlock precipitated a general crisis and, for a while, the dispute over Saxony became the focus of European diplomacy. The crisis reached its height on 3 January 1815, when Austria, Great Britain, and France concluded the Triple Alliance, threatening war against Prussia and Russia if Prussia did not modify her claims on Saxony. After a brief war scare and much acrimonious debate, the five great powers agreed to cede to Prussia about fifty-eight per cent of Saxony,

[9] Kraehe, *Metternich's German Policy*, ii. 64-5, 146, 172-3. The high-water mark of Austro-Prussian co-operation in German and European affairs was expressed in Metternich's 22 Oct. note to Hardenberg, in which the Austrian foreign minister re-affirmed (albeit grudgingly) his offer of Saxony and his commitment to the principle of Austro-Prussian leadership in Germany. The full text of this note is printed in Jean de Bourgoing, *Vom Wiener Kongress: Zeit und Sittenbilder* (Vienna, 1943), pp. 362-5.

which included around forty-two per cent of the population. The remainder was returned to Friedrich August I.[10]

The confrontation between Berlin and Vienna over Saxony poisoned their relations and ended their plans for co-hegemony over Germany. By the time attention again focused on German constitutional questions in February 1815, Metternich had moved away from close co-operation with Prussia and instead solicited the support of the small and middle-sized states. Even during the height of his collaboration with Prussia in 1814, Metternich had tried to avoid totally alienating these states, holding them in reserve in the event of an unforeseen rift. Now that this had occurred, he skilfully exploited their fear of Austro-Prussian co-hegemony, both as a lever against Prussia, who continued to argue for dualism, and to drum up support for Austrian leadership of a union of independent states. When the German conference convened at the congress of Vienna in May to draft a definitive constitution, Metternich stood for a loose federation of fully sovereign states and free cities under the sole leadership of Austria.

The final version of the constitution of the German Confederation, known as the Federal Act, represented a victory for Metternich's German policy in its federalist incarnation. According to the Federal Act, dated 8 June 1815, the German Confederation was to consist of a 'perpetual union' of the sovereign princes and free cities of Germany. The main object of the union according to article two was the maintenance of the external and internal safety of Germany and the independence and inviolability of its individual states. In a reassertion of Habsburg influence throughout all Germany, Austria was granted the permanent presidency (*Präsidium*) of the federal diet, which was to convene in September at Frankfurt am Main.[11]

The Federal Act of 8 June 1815 did little more than establish the general outline of the German Confederation. The necessity to conclude the congress of Vienna in order to meet the challenge thrown up by Napoleon's return to France had obliged the German negotiators to

[10] The percentages are from Rudolf Kötzschke and Hellmut Kretzschmar, *Sächsische Geschichte* (Frankfurt/Main, 1965), p. 310. On the unfolding of the crisis and its resolution see, Kraehe, *Metternich's German Policy*, ii. 234 ff.; Griewank, *Wiener Kongress*, pp. 174-207; Burg, *Wiener Kongress*, pp. 9-29; Gruner, *Grossbritannien*, pp. 331-43, 383-92.

[11] The Federal Act was signed on 10 June and backdated to ensure its incorporation into the Final Act of the Congress of Vienna. The Federal Act is printed in Ernst Huber, *Dokumente zur deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte* (Stuttgart, 1961), pp. 75-81. On the impact of the Saxon crisis on German constitutional matters see Kraehe, *Metternich's German Policy*, ii. 264 ff., 309 ff.; Griewank, *Wiener Kongress*, pp. 178-85, 218-26; Gruner, *Grossbritannien*, pp. 378-83.

draw up the federal constitution in haste.[12] Much was left unresolved by the Federal Act and many details regarding the confederation's function and development remained to be worked out. Vital questions such as the competence and authority of the federal diet, political and economic relations between member states, and the organization of the confederation's military and foreign affairs were left unanswered. The catch-all tenth article of the Federal Act betrays the haste of the final weeks of the congress of Vienna: 'The first object to be considered by the diet after its opening shall be the framing of the fundamental laws of the confederation, and of its organic institutions with respect to its foreign, military, and internal relations.'[13] Although the framers of the Federal Act had stipulated that the federal diet was to convene on 1 September 1815, the diet did not in fact begin its work until 5 November 1816. The intervening fourteen months constituted a highly unstable period in the history of the German Confederation. Austria's designated role as leader of the German states system was not taken for granted; indeed, all the agreements on German affairs reached at Vienna were placed in doubt. Exacerbating this uncertainty in German affairs was the fact that the entire settlement of 1815 was unstable and incomplete in the months following the congress of Vienna and the second peace of Paris. Despite the vast network of mutual obligations and multilateral agreements that had been erected at Vienna and Paris, much in fact remained, as with the Federal Act, unfinished or deferred. Numerous financial and territorial clauses of the 1815 treaties remained to be executed. France, an essential component of the European balance of power, was temporarily removed from participation in European affairs by the second peace of Paris, which had placed the French kingdom under an Allied military occupation. French society, moreover, which had proven so volatile in past decades, appeared in late 1815 to be unreconciled to either the Bourbon restoration or the national humiliation at Waterloo. The solidarity of the Allies, crucial for the maintenance of peace, emerged from the difficult negotiations of 1814 and 1815 sorely tested. Widespread dissatisfaction with many aspects of the 1815 accords as well as the re-emergence of great power rivalry over the Eastern Question threatened to undermine the international co-operation necessary for completing the unfinished work of the peace conferences. This state of affairs was particularly worrying to the Saxons, who had lost so much at

[12] Peter Hausherr, *Der Einfluss der 'Hundert Tage' auf die politische Willensbildung und die Beschlüsse der europäischen Mächte* (Lachen, 1951), pp. 21-9; Kraehe, *Metternich's German Policy*, ii. 320 ff.

[13] Huber, *Dokumente*, i. 78.

Vienna but now believed that they could gain most from the German Confederation and the general European settlement of 1815.

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The records of the Saxon foreign office in Dresden offer a good vantage point from which to view the emerging German Confederation and Austria's German policy at the beginning of the Restoration era.[14] Because the Saxon political élite believed that the fate of their state was firmly tied to the fate of the settlement of 1815, they tended to be keen, if anxious, observers. At the congress of Vienna, Saxony barely escaped extinction and absorption into Prussia, and in view of the strained compromise that ended the crisis, Friedrich August I and his chief minister, *Kabinettsminister* Count Detlev von Einsiedel (1773-1861), left the congress convinced that at the first opportunity Prussia would move to annex the remainder of the kingdom, which contained 1.2 million inhabitants as well as the cities of Leipzig and Dresden.[15] The Prussians remained extremely bitter over their failure to acquire all of Saxony or at the very least the city of Leipzig, which had been denied them during the last phase of the negotiations.[16] The fate of the Saxon army also prompted concern over Prussia's ultimate goal. In accordance with the partition agreement, the Saxon army was to be divided along with the

[14] Saxon diplomatic papers and reports dealing with the congress of Vienna and the years 1815-16 are located at the Staatsarchiv in Dresden. Regarding secondary works on Saxon foreign policy during the congress, consult Walter Kohlschmidt, *Die sächsische Frage ... und die sächsische Diplomatie dieser Zeit* (Dresden, 1930) and Theodor Flathe, *Geschichte des Kurstaates und Königreiches Sachsen* (Gotha, 1873), iii. 274-358. Partitioned Saxony's relative insignificance and diplomatic passivity following the congress have not encouraged study of Dresden's post-1815 foreign policy. My doctoral dissertation attempts to fill this gap: 'Between Legitimacy and Expedience: The Saxon Question after the Congress of Vienna, 1815-1818' (Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1987).

[15] Einsiedel to Schulenburg, 12 Feb. 1815, Sta[atsarchiv] D[resden,] G[eheimes] K[abinett], Loc. 2954, ii. 158; Uechtritz to Einsiedel, 16 Sept. 1815, StaD GK, Loc. 624, p. 99; Instructions et lettre de créance du Baron de Just, 24 Jan. 1816, StaD GK, Loc. 30021, p. 7 (hereafter, Instructions for Just). On the life and career of Count von Einsiedel see Karl von Weber, 'Detlev Graf von Einsiedel, Königl. Sächsischer Cabinets-Minister', *Archiv für sächsische Geschichte*, i (1863), 58-116, 129-93; Eduard von Wiethersheim, 'Nachtrag zu dem Aufsatze über den Cabinets-Minister Grafen von Einsiedel im I. Bande des Archiv für sächsische Geschichte', *ibid.*, iii (1865), 353-90; *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, v. 760-1. An insightful character sketch of Friedrich August I is found in Ferdinand von Funck, *Im Banne Napoleons: Aus den Erinnerungen des sächsischen Generalleutnant und Generaladjutanten des Königs Ferdinand von Funck*, ed. Artur Brabant (Dresden, 1928), pp. 15-64.

[16] Kraehe, *Metternich's German Policy*, ii. 302-6. See also Hardenberg's memo of 8 Feb. 1815 containing Prussia's final arguments for the acquisition of Leipzig, in *Acten des Wiener Congresses in den Jahren 1814 und 1815*, ed. Johann Ludwig Klüber (Erlangen, 1814-35), vii. 96 ff.

kingdom, with sections of the officer corps and their units passing under Prussian command. The precipitous manner in which the Prussians carried out the division, however, sparked a mutiny by loyalist Saxon units, brutally suppressed by General Blücher, who authorized the execution of Saxon troops by Prussian firing squads.[17]

Although diplomatic ties between Saxony and Prussia were re-established following the congress of Vienna, relations between the two states remained tense. A gauge of the tension was to be seen in the persistent difficulty after 1815 in working out the details of the partition, which included a division of state debts in the ceded provinces as well as an exact delineation of the new frontier. A Saxon-Prussian commission set up in late 1815 to deal with these matters soon became deadlocked. Despite the presence of an Austrian mediator, talks dragged on until late in 1818, often interrupted by walkouts and the exchange of protest notes between Dresden and Berlin.[18] The inability of the commission to complete its task in timely fashion prevented the normalization of relations between the two states and, from Saxony's point of view, deepened the anxiety and uncertainty surrounding her relations with her powerful northern neighbour.[19]

Conditions within Saxony also engendered pessimism about the future. During the congress of Vienna, Einsiedel and others had maintained that Saxony could not long survive the political and economic consequences of an extensive partition.[20] Yet the partition treaty of 18 May 1815 demanded of the Saxons what appeared, at the time, to be insurmountable losses. The territorial cessions to Prussia included not only over 800,000 subjects but also Saxony's principal wood-, grain-, and salt-producing areas. In addition, the partition left the remaining parts of the kingdom badly exposed to a Prussian attack. Aside from the

[17] Ernst Rudolf Huber, *Deutsche Verfassungsgeschichte seit 1789* (Stuttgart, 1957), i. 572-5; Flathe, *Geschichte Sachsen*, iii. 331-6. A detailed Saxon account is found in Joseph Friedrich von Zezschwitz, *Mitteilungen aus den Papieren eines sächsischen Staatsmannes* (Dresden, 1864), pp. 374-95.

[18] Flathe, *Geschichte Sachsen*, iii. 360-2. The period from late 1815 to late 1816 was the most difficult in the commission's three-year life. Regarding the notes exchanged between the two governments regarding problems arising from the talks see, 'Cabinets Depeschen, 15 Dez. bis Dez. 1816', StaD GK, Loc. 3449. The final accord, dated 28 Aug. 1819, is published in *Gesetzsammlung für das Königreich Sachsen* (Dresden, 1818/1819), pp. 237-315.

[19] Instructions for Just, 24 Jan. 1816, StaD GK, Loc. 30021, p. 7.

[20] Einsiedel to Schulenburg, 2 Dec. 1814, StaD GK, Loc. 2954, i. 291-3; same to same, 12 Feb. 1815, StaD GK, Loc. 2954, ii. 176-7. See also Schulenburg's negative assessment of the economic consequences of a partition contained in his memo of early 1815 entitled 'Kann der Thüringische Kreis vom Königreich Sachsen getrennt Werden?', StaD GK, Loc. 2954, ii. 39-40.

decimation of the army, the crucial Elbe fortress of Torgau, which guarded the northern approaches to Dresden, was ceded to Prussia while Leipzig, Saxony's commercial centre and second largest city, was left by the partition almost within sight of the new Prussian frontier.[21] The political journal *Deutsche Blätter* expressed the sentiments of many when it predicted that partitioned Saxony was doomed to become an 'object of future war [that] will slowly bleed to death'.[22]

Under these conditions the restored Saxon monarchy, which returned to Dresden on 7 June 1815, undertook the daunting task of the financial and political reconstruction of the state. Extensive financial cutbacks and wide-ranging administrative changes were made under Einsiedel's direction to fit the kingdom to its reduced circumstances. The government also worked effectively to reassert its political authority after a nearly two-year absence. Officials who had remained loyal to Friedrich August I during his captivity were rewarded with promotions and pensions; those who had collaborated with the Prussian occupation forces were forced from public life or driven into exile. To regain the support of the majority of Saxons who had proved neither traitors nor patriots, the government launched an interesting – and ultimately successful – public relations campaign designed to instil a renewed loyalty towards the dynasty and the state. However, lest anyone should suppose that renewal and recovery implied political change, Einsiedel expressly precluded constitutional reform on the ground that it would only intensify the dislocation brought about by war and the partition. The restored regime therefore steadfastly adhered to Saxony's pre-war feudal estates constitution, remaining one of the most conservative regimes in Restoration Germany.[23]

Although foreign observers generally gave high marks for effort to the Einsiedel regime, it was clear to all that Saxony's future would depend, in the final analysis, on the actions of Prussia and the other great powers; 'on événements extérieurs, which no one can foresee', as the Bavarian minister to Dresden remarked in early 1816.[24] Einsiedel apparently concurred, for it was upon international relations that he and his subordinates felt compelled to focus their attention.

[21] Flathe, *Geschichte Sachsen*, iii. 325-8. The text of the partition treaty is found in Klüber, *Acten*, vi. 120-38.

[22] *Deutsche Blätter* (Leipzig, 1815) i. nr. 15, pp. 225-6.

[23] The best overview of the restored regime's efforts at administrative reorganization is found in Gerhard Schmidt, *Reformbestrebungen in Sachsen in den ersten Jahrzehnten des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Dresden, 1969), pp. 59 ff. The second chapter of my dissertation (pp. 86-117) deals with the more general political aspects of this topic (see above, fn. 14).

[24] Luxburg (to Munich), 26 April 1816, G[eheimes] St[aatsarchiv] M[ünchen,] MA 2811 P[olitische] B[erichte,] S[achsen,] 1816-17, unpag.

After 1815, the Saxon foreign office, which remained under Einsiedel's direct supervision until 1821, never seriously contemplated the possibility of exploiting a new war to regain the lost territories. The trauma of the partition as well as the continued threat of Prussian aggression had placed the kingdom 'in a difficult and delicate position'.[25] Any change in the international situation, whether precipitated by a new war, a prolonged diplomatic crisis, or a general revision of the 1815 treaties, might well give Prussia the opportunity to annex the remainder of the kingdom. Thus, far from desiring to fish in troubled waters, the Saxon foreign office after 1815 sought only to hold on to what had been left to it by the great powers at Vienna. The ultra-conservative Einsiedel and Friedrich August I were staunch advocates of the Holy Alliance, an organization which, for all its vagueness, held out to the Saxons the promise of peace and international co-operation. According to one of the first sets of diplomatic instructions to emerge from the Saxon foreign office after the partition, the king would concentrate upon reconstruction and internal affairs and 'participate in foreign affairs only to the extent that it is necessary to ensure the security and defence of his kingdom and to fulfil his obligations as a member of the German Confederation'. For the rest, he would stake the survival of the kingdom upon the legal framework of the Vienna Settlement and the determination of the great powers to respect it.[26] The great powers, therefore, must maintain their solidarity, avoid conflict, and work at completing the unfinished parts of the 1815 treaties. For the most part, Saxon diplomats posted throughout Europe were passive observers, watching for signs of the settlement's consolidation – or its imminent dissolution.

Although aware of the sanctuary offered by the treaties of 1815, Saxon diplomats were also aware of the provisional state of affairs existing in the wake of the peace conferences. Georg von Griesinger (1769-1845), left behind at Vienna to observe the closing of the congress on 9 June, reported to Dresden that 'of all the plenipotentiaries who were called to this congress, there is but only a very small number who have left satisfied'.[27] By the beginning of 1816, when the foreign office was making its first post-congress assessments, Einsiedel pointed out to the new Saxon minister to London that, despite the multitude of treaties signed in the previous year, 'the state of Europe has still not taken a fixed form'.[28] Especially crucial to the Saxons was the implementation

[25] Instructions for Just, 24 Jan. 1816, StaD GK, Loc. 30021, p. 7.
[26] *Ibid.*
[27] Griesinger to Einsiedel, 17 June 1815, StaD GK, Loc. 30017, unpag.
[28] Instructions for Just, 24 Jan. 1816, StaD GK, Loc. 30021, p. 9.

of the Federal Act, as articles two, three, and eleven guaranteed the inviolability and independence of the confederation's members. Fearful of the appetite of their Prussian neighbour, the Saxons realized that the success of the confederation was essential to the survival of their truncated kingdom. This view of the Federal Act and the confederation as a refuge was noticed in Berlin. In a *Denkschrift* dealing with the European states system after 1815, *Staatsrat* Johann Peter Ancillon (1767-1837) of the Prussian foreign office noted that 'Saxony clings to the authority of the confederation because it seeks there, and can find there, a bulwark of support'.[29]

The success of the nascent confederation would depend on the attitude of Austria. The Habsburg dynasty's leadership of the Holy Roman Empire, the Austrian Empire's status as the primary German great power, and Metternich's important role in the last stages of the negotiations over the Federal Act, all gave Austria a special place in German affairs. Indeed, in the years following the congress of Vienna and throughout the 1820s, the Saxon government under Einsiedel held the reputation for cleaving to Austria and consistently following her direction at Frankfurt am Main. Foreign diplomats posted to Dresden after 1815 noted that the Saxons seemed to place great hopes on Austrian support and protection;[30] perhaps this is why Heinrich von Treitschke scornfully maintains in his polemic against Restoration Saxony that her diplomacy consisted of 'obediently following Austria's lead'.[31]

Dresden's apparent faith that Austria would support the Federal Act did not arise spontaneously, but developed gradually during the first years of the German Confederation. During the provisional period from late 1815 to late 1816, Saxony was hard pressed to ascertain the future policy of Austria in regard to Germany; her doubts about Austria's post-war role there being coloured perhaps by experiences during the congress of Vienna, which did not engender trust for Metternich or the foreign policy of the Austrian Empire. Despite Austria's ultimate stand in favour of an independent Saxony, Metternich had appeared willing

[29] 'Tableau général de la situation et de la politique des États de l'Europe au commencement de Juin 1817', Z[entrales] Sta[atsarchiv] M[erseburg], R 92, Nachlass Hardenberg, G 17, pp. 156-7.

[30] Oelsen to Hardenberg, 26 June 1816, ZStaM, Ministerium der auswärtigen Angelegenheiten, 2. 4. 1., Abt. I, nr. 3821, p. 206; Morier to Castlereagh, 11 March 1817 [Public Record Office], F[oreign] O[ffice Records] 68/20, unpag.; Luxburg (to Munich), 1 July 1817, GStM MA 2811, PBS 1816-17, unpag.; Rheinwald (to Stuttgart), 29 Nov. 1819, H[aupt]st[aatsarchiv] S[tuttgart], Verz. 30, Carton III, unpag.

[31] Heinrich von Treitschke, *Treitschke's History of Germany in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Eden and Cedar Paul (London, 1918), iv. 310.

at first to sacrifice all of Saxony to Prussia in return for her support against Russia, and only the unexpected collapse of the *démarche* against Russia had prevented this bargain from being carried out. The Saxons left the congress remembering this episode just as clearly as Austria's membership of the Triple Alliance of 3 January 1815 or Metternich's post-partition professions of friendship.[32]

Taken as a whole, Saxon records dealing with the congress of Vienna express the frustration of knowing that Austria's support was – and would remain – an essential defence against Prussian aggression, but at the same time that this support was highly tenuous. At the start of the congress, the Saxons assumed that Metternich's private assurances of support and Austria's strategic interest in maintaining Saxony as a buffer state between Austria and Prussia would suffice to assure them of Austrian protection.[33] Metternich's decision in October 1814 to allow Prussian troops to occupy Saxony 'provisionally' came, therefore, as an unpleasant shock;[34] similarly, during the partition, Einsiedel was severely critical of (and hardly grateful for) Metternich's agreement to Saxony's enormous losses.[35] Both the necessity for–and the ambiguity of–Austrian support were expressed in October 1814 by the Saxon representative to the congress, Friedrich Albrecht von der Schulenburg (1772-1853). In a dispatch dated 10 October, he told Einsiedel that he was 'more than ever convinced that the firm voice [of Austria] alone will save Saxony – or that its weakness will be responsible for the destruction of our Fatherland'.[36]

The Saxons feared that in the uncertain times preceding the opening of the federal diet Austria might reconsider her commitment to the Federal Act. They were especially worried that Austria might revive the policy of 1813-14 which posited close co-operation with Prussia at the expense of the smaller states of Germany. Such co-operation might result in the overthrow or radical revision of the Federal Act and the establishment of Austrian and Prussian spheres of influence in Germany. As a north German state, the Saxons had no illusions as to their fate in a sphere controlled exclusively by Prussia. The constant postponement of the opening of the federal diet during late 1815 and throughout 1816 heightened their anxiety. Originally set for 1 September 1815, the opening was continuously postponed, ostensibly to allow for the completion

[32] Flathe, *Geschichte Sachsen*, iii. 357-8.
[33] Instructions for Schulenburg, 9 Aug. 1814, StaD GK, Loc. 2954, i. 96, 102; Einsiedel to Schulenburg, 23 Oct. 1814, *ibid.*, pp. 172-3. See also, Kohlschmidt, *Sächsische Frage*, pp. 55 ff.
[34] Einsiedel to Schulenburg, 5 Nov. 1814, *ibid.*, p. 194.
[35] Einsiedel to Schulenburg, 12 Feb. 1815, *ibid.*, ii. 176-7.
[36] Schulenburg to Einsiedel, 10 Oct. 1814, *ibid.*, i. 145.

of negotiations for the second peace of Paris and to resolve outstanding territorial disputes among the German states.[37] However valid the reasons, the constant postponements, announced unilaterally by the German great powers, had an unsettling effect; early Saxon reports from Frankfurt am Main did not encourage trust in the *Bundestreue* of either of them. After reporting to Dresden on 2 December 1815 of yet another postponement, Karl Heinrich von Görtz (1752-1826), Saxony's representative to the diet, noted that 'the oft-postponed opening of the federal diet and the conspicuous indifference of the Austrian and Prussian courts towards its deliberations feed the anxiety that both courts are presently aiming to gain time, and if their hands are freed through repose in France and Russia's involvement with the Turkish Empire, to execute their joint expansion plans against Germany'.[38]

In all the Austro-Prussian partition schemes foreseen in Dresden during 1815-16, Prussia was the instigator and chief culprit, supposedly highly dissatisfied with the treaties of 1815 and determined to annex the remainder of Saxony and achieve hegemony in northern Germany.[39] The Saxons found more difficult the task of gauging the intentions of Austria. On the one hand, she appeared interested in asserting her traditional leadership over all Germany through the presidency of the federal diet. During the final days of the German conference, Metternich emphasized to the Saxon diplomat Furchtgott von Globig (1773-1832) the necessity of an all-German confederation (as envisioned in the Federal Act) for preventing Prussian hegemony in the north and as the best means 'to uphold and guarantee the peace of Germany'.[40] On the other hand, Austria emerged from the Napoleonic Wars seemingly with so many internal problems and non-German commitments as to throw into question her ability to preside over the German Confederation and to keep an aggressive Prussia in check. Such was the dual nature of the *Österreichbild* that emerged from early Saxon assessments of post-Napoleonic Austria and her place in Europe and Germany.

[37] Alfred Stern, *Geschichte Europas seit den Verträgen von 1815 bis zur Frankfurter Frieden von 1871* (Berlin, 1894), i. 291-2; Treitschke, *History of Germany*, ii. 384.

[38] Görtz to Einsiedel, 2 Dec. 1815, StaD Auss[enministerium], nr. 2835, unpag.

[39] Uechtritz to Einsiedel, 16 Sept. 1815, StaD GK, Loc. 624, p. 99; same to same, 25 May 1816, *ibid.*, p. 208; Georg von Einsiedel, Réflexions sur les principes qui doivent régler la conduite du ministre du Roi en Russie, ainsi que sur les rapports futurs de la Saxe avec l'Angleterre, et les autres puissances qui exercent actuellement une influence générale sur le système politique de l'Europe: 5 Janvier 1816 (hereafter Georg von Einsiedel, 'Réflexions') StaD GK, Loc. 617, p. 74; Instructions for Just, StaD GK, Loc. 30021, p. 7.

[40] Globig's report of his conversation with Metternich is printed in Flathe, *Geschichte Sachsen*, iii. 357-8.

One of the earliest Saxon appraisals of Austria's possible post-war orientation is found in a memorandum on German affairs written late in 1813 by *Staatsrat* Friedrich von Breuer (1786-1833) of the Saxon foreign office. Breuer's overview began from the conditions prevailing after the battle of Leipzig and the unravelling of the confederation of the Rhine, when the struggle for the domination of Germany was reaching a critical stage, and the receding French influence had yet to be replaced by an alternative. In discussing Austria's future role in Germany, Breuer touched upon what would become an increasingly important issue in Austro-German relations, namely, the divergence between the Habsburg dynasty's traditional interest in Germany and the more restricted – and not necessarily German – concerns of the Austrian Empire.[41] Breuer was convinced that although Francis I was not personally inclined to revive the Holy Roman Empire, he would eventually be persuaded by widespread opinion in Germany to take up the 'supreme direction of German affairs', reviving the Imperial crown. At the same time, however, Breuer noted that reviving the Empire was not the principal concern of the Austrian government, and that 'the views of the Austrian cabinet are – and will remain – more particularly directed towards advantages to be obtained for the Austrian monarchy itself'. Breuer recounted rumours that Austria might attempt to recover the Austrian Netherlands, but himself believed that Austrian policy was mainly directed towards Italy and the Mediterranean.[42] This possible redirection became more critical two years later, during the provisional period of the confederation. In reply to a query from Einsiedel about Austria's German policy, Griesinger, the Saxon chargé d'affaires in Vienna, gave warning that the Austrians might be taking 'only a very secondary interest in German affairs, [and that] the Emperor appears to be concentrating his efforts on the conservation of the provinces which now form the greater part of his monarchy, avoiding all new wars, and becoming involved as little as possible in disputes that do not directly concern his estates'.[43]

If the Austrian Empire appeared increasingly the focus of Habsburg interests and power, Saxon observers did not express much confidence in her ability to play an assertive role in European or German affairs: most descriptions of Austria and her foreign policy in 1815-16 stressed her caution to the point of timidity and weakness. One diplomat who con-

[41] Breuer's thoughts were set down in two memos: 'Motifs généraux du points d'instruction' (16 Nov. 1813), StaD GK, Loc. 3271, pp. 18-20, and 'Exposé II' (20 Dec. 1813), *ibid.*, pp. 77-85.

[42] *Ibid.*, p. 81.

[43] Griesinger to Einsiedel, 24 Feb. 1816, StaD GK, Loc. 30017, pp. 28-9.

tinually pointed to the weakness of the Austrian Empire and the perils of depending on it too much was Emil von Uechtritz (1783-1841), Saxon minister to France from 1815 to 1827. Uechtritz's reports from Paris constitute an important early source for Saxony's *Österreichbild*. In the months following the battle of Waterloo, Paris became the centre of European diplomacy as the leading statesmen and their staffs converged on the French capital to negotiate the second peace of Paris. Uechtritz's embassy in Paris was also one of the few Saxon missions in operation in late 1815, as most of them were not reopened until early the following year. Uechtritz was decidedly pessimistic about the future of the Vienna Settlement and maintained in his reports that it was merely a matter of time before a new upheaval swept away the agreements of 1815.[44] Nor did his observations on Austria and her policy suggest that she would fare well in the coming storm. He emphasized Austria's weakness in relation to the other great powers as well as her fecklessness towards the smaller states. On 16 September 1815, he reported to Einsiedel that Austria 'continues to play the conciliatory but weak role that she played at Vienna',[45] adding a fortnight later that the Austrians were being badly beaten by the Russians in the competition for the friendship of France.[46] Uechtritz tried to persuade Einsiedel not to rely on Austrian support, even in the mundane matter of reparations: the Austrians would not help Saxony to collect damages from France, as they 'are far too weak, too inconsequent, and too indifferent to the interests of others'.[47]

What was the source of this apparent weakness? Uechtritz focused on the internal problems of the Austrian Empire following the congress of Vienna. Despite her enormous size in 1815, the Austrian Empire was not a well-organized *Gesamtstaat*, able to concentrate its varied resources for a single purpose, but an 'assemblage of non-amalgamated and heterogeneous provinces governed by a cabinet without means or moral force'.[48] This internal weakness would ultimately undermine Austria's standing among the great powers, for once rivalry and competition returned to the international scene, Austria would be able to exert 'only a subordinate voice in the European Areopagus'.[49] What appeared especially daunting to Uechtritz was the task confronting the Habsburgs in

[44] Uechtritz to Einsiedel, 16 Sept. 1815, StaD GK, Loc. 624, p. 99; same to same, 18 Oct. 1815, *ibid.*, pp. 153-4.
[45] Uechtritz to Einsiedel, 16 Sept. 1815, *ibid.*, p. 95.
[46] Uechtritz to Einsiedel, 28 Sept. 1815, *ibid.*, pp. 116-17.
[47] Uechtritz to Einsiedel, 26 Sept. 1815, *ibid.*, pp. 113-14.
[48] Uechtritz to Einsiedel, 22 July 1815, StaD GK, Loc. 30025, p. 170. Uechtritz sent this dispatch from Stuttgart, his post from 1807 to 1815, shortly after his appointment to Paris.
[49] *Ibid.*, p. 170.

consolidating their authority over their newly acquired provinces and frontiers. In an overview of Austrian interests written in December 1815, Uechtritz noted that 'the Austrians are attempting to Austrianize northern Italy, a great enterprise that would confound any man of state, even were he one less superficial than Prince Metternich, at the same time they have their eyes fixed on the provinces that Bavaria is supposed to cede to them'.[50] Somewhat later, in the spring of 1816, Uechtritz again attributed Austria's passivity in international affairs to internal problems, remarking that Vienna 'thinks only about the consolidation of its authority in northern Italy and in an amelioration of its finances'.[51]

Another challenge to Austria's international standing, and distraction from German affairs, was the constant danger after 1815 of a conflict with Russia. With the destruction of French hegemony in 1814, Russia became the leading military power on the continent. The volatile personality of Alexander I, the aggressive habits of his diplomats and 'agents' throughout Europe, and the unmatched size of his army, all combined to elevate Russia to the leading position among the great powers. Indeed, by late 1815 many leading statesmen in Europe were worried about the future application of Russian power, especially about a new Russian attack on the Ottoman Empire.[52] Uechtritz remarked that 'Russia extends with satisfaction its giant reach, and has reached a point where it fears no one'.[53] Similarly, *Legations Rat* Friedrich Biedermann (1764-1844) noted that Russia's massive armies were 'equally disposable against the infidel and the saints of 26 September 1815'.[54]

The Austrian Empire seemed especially vulnerable to Russian aggression. The Polish province of Galicia, recently regained by Vienna, remained assailable, militarily and politically, from Russian-controlled Congress Poland. Similarly, a Russian attack on the Ottoman Empire would eventually jeopardize Austrian interests in the Balkans. In a long memorandum on post-Napoleonic Europe written in January 1816, Georg von Einsiedel (1767-1840), minister designate to St. Petersburg, noted that Russia's control of Poland posed a serious threat to the Austrian Empire, which, he added, 'ought to tremble if it realizes the full danger of its situation'.[55] Austria's commitment to repose, he concluded, stemmed partly from her need to 'consolidate her position in

[50] Uechtritz to Einsiedel, 18 Dec. 1815, StaD GK, Loc. 624, pp. 358-9.
[51] Uechtritz to Einsiedel, 25 May 1816, *ibid.*, p. 206.
[52] Charles Kingsley Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh, 1815-1822* (London, 1925), pp. 88 ff.
[53] Uechtritz to Einsiedel, 18 Dec. 1815, StaD GK, Loc. 624, p. 359.
[54] Friedrich Biedermann, 'Réflexions au sujet du nouveau projet de Confédération Germanique' (25 May 1816) (hereafter 'Confédération Germanique'), StaD Auss, nr. 823, p. 7.
[55] Georg von Einsiedel, 'Réflexions', StaD GK, Loc. 617, p. 72.

Galicia as well as in the other areas along her eastern frontier'.[56] Perceiving Austria to be principally concerned with the overwhelming task of internal reconstruction and the threat of Russia along her eastern frontiers, Georg Einsiedel feared the weakening of her commitment to federalism in Germany and a return to the Austro-Prussian dualism of 1814:

> Will Austria, ceding to the circumstances of the moment, draw near to Prussia and make common cause with her in Germany rather than expose herself to new wars ... ? One senses that the partition of Germany so desired by Prussia will be gradually brought about by the force of events, and that Austria, not being able to oppose the partition alone, will be brought around to participating in it, as was the case with Maria Theresa during the partition of Poland ... Austria would prefer to profit from that which she cannot prevent, for fear of being pushed aside by her traditional rival.[57]

Fear that such a development might be imminent reached its height in mid-1816, amidst widespread rumours of war in the east and at the time of a Prussian initiative to revise the Federal Act before the opening of the federal diet. Indeed, the possible convergence of these two developments during the first half of 1816 took on for the Saxons the character of a general crisis. Overshadowing European international relations at this time was the fear of a Russo-Turkish war and its likely effect on the post-war settlement. After the signing of the second peace of Paris, the Russians had reactivated their Near Eastern policy, dormant since Napoleon's invasion of 1812. The issue that signalled their renewed interest in the Eastern Question was a claim that the Ottoman government had not adequately complied with the treaty of Bucharest, which had ended the Russo-Turkish War of 1806-12. In early 1816, Count Paul Stroganov was sent to Constantinople to demand that the Turks comply with the treaty, and when the Porte resisted, very quickly rumours of an impending Russo-Turkish conflict began to circulate across Europe. Many western diplomats feared that Alexander I harboured ambitious plans for the annexation of the Romanian Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, nominally held by the Turks. Particularly unsettling was the rumoured concentration of Russian troops near Kiev and in Poland, convenient staging areas for thrusts into both the Principalities and central Europe.[58]

[56] *Ibid.*, pp. 74-5.
[57] *Ibid.*, p. 75.
[58] Griesinger to Einsiedel, 31 Jan. 1816, StaD GK, Loc. 30017, pp. 17-18; same to same, 10 Feb. 1816, *ibid.*, pp. 23-4; Circular, 11 April 1816, StaD Auss, nr. 3886, unpag.

As tensions deepened in the east, Prussia moved to modify the Federal Act in such a way as to revive her previous close co-operation with Austria and create an Austro-Prussian dualism in the administrative and military affairs of the German Confederation. This project was known as the Hänlein plan, after its initial promoter, Karl Sigmund von Hänlein (1760-1819), Prussia's first envoy to the federal diet. The plan, as it evolved over the winter and spring of 1816, was ultimately approved – and edited – by Hardenberg and the Prussian foreign office. As presented to the Austrians in June 1816, the plan called for sharing the administrative direction of the federal diet which, according to the Federal Act, had been allotted exclusively to Austria in her capacity as president. Under the new arrangement, Austria would retain the presidency but the real direction of affairs at Frankfurt would be shared with Prussia. For example, while Austria would reside over sessions of the diet, giving her the right to open and close debate, Prussia would record the minutes and draft all federal resolutions. The plan also assigned control of the federal chancellery, or administrative office, to Prussia. Finally, both Austria and Prussia would share control of the diet's archives and records. Even more threatening to Saxony, the Hänlein plan called for the *de facto* partition of Germany. Prussia would assume supreme command of all federal forces in northern Germany, Austria in the south. Any state unable to field a large contingent would be obliged to integrate its forces into the Prussian or Austrian armies.[59]

Hänlein presented a draft of his plan to the Austrian envoy to the diet, Count Buol-Schauenstein (1763-1834), in early March 1816, but the Austrians did not openly repudiate the plan until July. The intervening months were anxious ones for Saxony as Einsiedel tried to find out what was intended. Buol's assurances that the plan did not envision a co-directory did not satisfy Einsiedel, who stepped up his efforts to ascertain Vienna's true intentions towards the Federal Act.[60] He met with little success. On 6 April, Griesinger reported from the Austrian capital that 'at Vienna there exists a profound silence on the affairs of Germany'.[61] On 24 June, six days before Hänlein's arrival with the final draft of his plan, the Saxon chargé d'affaires reported from Frankfurt 'a constant and almost universal' mistrust of Austro-Prussian plans for Germany.[62]

[59] On the Hänlein affair, see Treitschke, *History of Germany*, ii. 390-400; Stern, *Geschichte Europas*, i. 296-300; Georg Heinrich Pertz, *Das Leben des Ministers Freiherrn vom Stein* (Berlin, 1849-55), v. 92-9.

[60] Einsiedel to Griesinger, 19 Feb. 1816, StaD GK, Loc. 30017, p. 305; same to same, 26 April 1816, *ibid.*, pp. 328-9; Einsiedel to Görtz, 8 Feb. 1816, StaD Auss, nr. 2837, unpag.; same to same, 19 April 1816, *ibid.*, unpag.

[61] Griesinger to Einsiedel, 6 April 1816, StaD GK, Loc. 30017, p. 56.

[62] Gebhardt to Einsiedel, 24 June 1816, StaD Auss, nr. 2836, unpag.

The Saxons were acutely aware of the dangerous connection between an eastern crisis and developments in Germany, and of the potential impact on Russia's influence in European affairs. Despite Russia's support for Prussia's claims against Saxony during the congress of Vienna, the Saxons, by late 1815, viewed Russia as playing a vital role – at least as important as Austria's – in the consolidation of the post-war settlement and thus their own survival. They noted with growing satisfaction the cooling of relations between Russia and Prussia after the second peace of Paris as well as the apparent revival of Russia's traditional interest in protecting the smaller powers of Germany. Moreover, Alexander I's determination – oft stated – to use Russia's considerable power and influence to uphold the treaties of 1815 was greatly appreciated by the Saxons,[63] not only in view of the uncertainty surrounding Austria's German policy, but also because of their pessimistic assessment of the will and ability of the other two non-German powers to defend the nascent confederation. Although France had previously played an important part in protecting the smaller states of Germany, the second peace of Paris had rendered her temporarily incapable of trying to prevent an Austro-Prussian *putsch* against the Federal Act.[64] Regarding Great Britain, the Saxons were uneasy over the continuing Anglo-Prussian friendship and Viscount Castlereagh's seemingly persistent anti-Saxon attitudes.[65]

The Saxons, therefore, naturally looked for support to Russia. Starting in late 1815, they cautiously endeavoured to re-establish friendly relations with the ultimate hope of gaining the personal protection of the tsar.[66] An explosion in the Near East leading to a Russo-Turkish war would ruin everything by distracting his attention from Europe. Moreover, such a conflict might spread, igniting the much feared general upheaval likely to sweep away the settlement of 1815. At the very least, Austria would be closely engaged along her eastern frontiers and the scenario envisioned by Georg Einsiedel might come to pass, whereby a hard-pressed Austria would be forced to accommodate herself to

[63] Georg von Einsiedel, 'Réflexions', StaD GK, Loc. 617, pp. 75, 76; Instructions for Just, StaD GK, Loc. 30021, p. 7.

[64] Georg von Einsiedel, 'Réflexions', StaD GK, Loc. 617, p. 74.

[65] Instructions for Just, StaD GK, Loc. 30021, p. 5.

[66] Einsiedel to Uechtritz, 15 Oct. 1815, StaD GK, Loc. 624, p. 146; Uechtritz to Einsiedel, 28 Oct. 1815, *ibid.*, pp. 175 ff.; same to same, 3 Nov. 1815, *ibid.*, p. 193. Saxon efforts to gain the good offices of the tsar culminated in late 1818, when Alexander visited the Saxon monarch in Leipzig and gave personal assurances of his protection. I am currently developing the Saxon material in this matter for publication.

Prussia's ambitions. In late 1815, Saxon diplomats feared that a Russo-Turkish conflict would precipitate an Austro-Prussian partition of Germany.[67] During the mounting war scare the following spring, the Saxon foreign office noted the grave concern in Vienna over a possible Russian advance on Moldavia and Wallachia and therefore watched closely for signs of an Austro-Prussian *rapprochement*.[68] Writing in May 1816, Biedermann suggested that if the danger of war in the Balkans persisted, Prussia might try to capitalize on Austrian fears by demanding the remainder of Saxony 'as a price for her alliance against Russia or her neutrality'.[69] On 26 May, the Saxon chargé d'affaires in Berlin told Einsiedel that Prussia and Austria appeared to be closing ranks against a possible Russian threat and at the same time renewing their earlier 'alliance in regard to German affairs'.[70]

In addition to a war scare in the east and a possible Austro-Prussian modification of the Federal Act, the Saxon foreign office also had to contend at this time with a third challenge to Austrian-led federalism in the form of a *Sonderbund* formed by the leading south German states of Württemberg, Bavaria, and Baden. Like Saxony, these middle-sized states also felt threatened by the spectre of Austro-Prussian dualism. Unlike Saxony, however, the political élite in Stuttgart, Munich, and Karlsruhe had not been paralysed by events. In striking contrast with Saxony, the south German states had emerged from the Napoleonic era relatively unscathed and significantly expanded. The dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire and the creation of the *Rheinbund* had liberated them from formal subordination to the Emperor, and the steady decline of Imperial authority after the Imperial Recess of 1803 had allowed them to complete programmes of internal consolidation by mediatizing the numerous ecclesiastical estates, free cites, and fiefs of the Imperial nobility, which had existed within their territories under the protection of the Holy Roman Empire. Having successfully made the transition from the *Rheinbund* to the Allied coalition in late 1813, the south German monarchs remained determined that the sovereignty and independence they had achieved since 1803 should not be compromised in the reorganization of post-Napoleonic Germany.[71]

[67] Görtz to Einsiedel, 2 Dec. 1815, StaD Auss, nr. 2835, unpag. See also, Rose to Castlereagh, 23 Nov. 1815, FO 64/100, p. 253.

[68] Einsiedel to Just, 13 April 1816, StaD GK, Loc. 30017, p. 312; same to same, 30 April 1816, *ibid.*, pp. 314-15; same to same, 12 May 1816, *ibid.*, pp. 316-17.

[69] 'Confédération Germanique', StaD Auss, nr. 823, p. 8.

[70] Breuer to Einsiedel, 26 May 1816, StaD GK, Loc. 606, p. 179.

[71] Hans A. Schmidt, 'Germany without Prussia: A Closer Look at the Confederation of the Rhine', *German Studies Review*, vi (1983), 18-30; Kraehe, *Metternich's German Policy*, i. *passim*.

During the congress of Vienna, at a time when the Saxon government was powerless and its very existence in question, the south German states, especially Württemberg and Bavaria, actively opposed all Austro-Prussian plans that might place Germany under a great power condominium, in particular constitutional blueprints that would grant Austria and Prussia unrestricted military and diplomatic freedom, while fettering everyone else. Equally inimical were Austro-Prussian suggestions of the partial restoration of the mediatized nobility. As the congress progressed, Württemberg and Bavaria began to consult with Baden and other states that felt similarly threatened, such as Hesse-Darmstadt and Nassau. From these consultations emerged the idea of a league of secondary German states designed to thwart the hegemonic designs of Prussia and Austria; an early manifestation of the so-called Third Germany or Trias idea, which would punctuate the entire history of the German Confederation. Between 1815 and 1866, the Trias idea would manifest itself in various forms, but always assume that the best organization of Germany would be trialist: the two great powers, Austria and Prussia, should share the leadership with a third, but equal, *bloc* of small and middle-sized states.[72] Trias sentiment became widespread in late 1814, after the introduction of the Austro-Prussian Twelve Articles which would have come close to establishing Austro-Prussian hegemony over the other German states.

The interest in a Trias league abated temporarily in early 1815, as the immediate threat of Austro-Prussian hegemony subsided as a result of the Saxon crisis. Nevertheless, suspicions lingered regarding the sincerity of Metternich's conversion to federalism and a number of secondary states adhered to the Federal Act reluctantly and with reservations. Bavaria signed only at the last possible moment, while Württemberg and Baden waited until after the close of the congress.[73] The refusal of the great powers to allow the secondary states to participate in the negotiations for the second peace of Paris as well as the failure of the federal diet to open on schedule served to keep alive the Trias idea throughout late 1815. When rumours of the Hänlein initiative began to spread from Frankfurt am Main in early 1816, the south German states once again began actively to consider Trias options.[74] Through the initiative of King Frederick of Württemberg (1754-1816), Württemberg, Bavaria,

[72] Peter Burg, *Die Deutsche Trias in Idee und Wirklichkeit: Vom Alten Reich zum Deutsche Zollverein* (Wiesbaden, 1989), *passim.*

[73] Burg, *Deutsche Trias*, pp. 7-68; Kraehe, *Metternich's German Policy*, ii. 366-99.

[74] Wirsing to Einsiedel, 30 Jan. 1816, StaD GK, Loc. 30025, unpag; Einsiedel to Görtz, 1 Feb. 1816, StaD Auss, nr. 2837, unpag; Einsiedel to Karl Einsiedel, 19 Feb. 1816, StaD GK, Loc. 30023, unpag. See also, Burg, *Deutsche Trias*, pp. 69-84.

and Baden began to discuss the formation of a Trias league. This project evolved through a number of forms throughout early 1816 and by summer Stuttgart had drawn up a draft treaty for the projected league, to which the preamble stated that the 'present state of affairs in Germany has made necessary a closer, more precise union [of the secondary powers] in order to preserve their sovereignty and independence'. The first article provided for a mutual guarantee of the territorial possessions of the signatories; other articles for the member states to consult and vote *en bloc* in the federal diet on matters concerning state sovereignty and jointly to oppose all that was 'contrary to the clear sense of the Federal Act'.[75] Württemberg apparently hoped to expand the league beyond south Germany by inviting Hesse-Darmstadt and Saxony to accede.

As a middle-sized state clearly threatened by great power politics, Saxony was a prime candidate for membership in such a league. In later years, after the consolidation of the confederation, Saxony would join and, under Count Beust, play a leading role.[76] During the confederation's formative years, however, Saxony remained decidedly aloof. The Trias project of 1816 was viewed in Dresden as neither an opportunity nor a refuge, but as an unwanted threat to the confederation and to Saxony.[77] To be sure, Einsiedel appreciated the community of interest shared by the secondary states in an international system dominated by the great powers; Saxony's experiences at the congress of Vienna had given him first-hand knowledge of the threat posed by the great power Areopagus. From the same experiences, however, he and Friedrich August I concluded that the survival of both Saxony and the settlement of 1815 would depend on the great powers, especially, in the German context, Austria. In dealings with the secondary states after 1815, Einsiedel always advocated close co-operation and mutual support, but within the bounds of the 1815 treaties and never in a manner that might irritate the great powers. That the support and friendship of the secondary states was of limited utility for Saxony had been brought home during the congress, when their protests at Saxony's treatment had been ignored or stifled.[78]

Aside from these sobering lessons from 1814-15, reports on Trias activity reaching Dresden in early 1816 served further to dampen any enthusiasm to join the movement. Saxon diplomats noted early on the

[75] Bundestag, 'Engere Verbindung de suddeutsche Staaten', HstS, E65 [Verz. 57,] Bü 56.

[76] Helmut Rumpler, *Die deutsche Politik des Freiherrn von Beust, 1848 bis 1850* (Vienna, 1972).

[77] Einsiedel to Görtz, 11 Aug. 1816, StaD Auss, nr. 2837, unpag.

[78] Kohlschmidt, *Sächsische Frage*, pp. 76-81.

disunity and bickering amongst the secondary states that would characterize all Trias ventures throughout the confederation's existence. The Saxon envoy to Munich, Karl von Einsiedel (1770-1841), reported that territorial disputes between the south German states had provoked 'pretensions and jealousies' that were undermining their solidarity.[79] Görtz reported from Frankfurt that even if the proposed league could organize south Germany, it might not be able to expand north of the Main, as Hanover and other north German states were loath to follow the lead of Munich or Stuttgart.[80] Einsiedel may have had his own suspicions regarding the goals of the leading south German states. Saxon reports from Stuttgart and Munich since mid-1815 had suggested that Württemberg and Bavaria might reach beyond merely defending the Federal Act; that Bavaria hoped to become a European rather than a German power; and that Württemberg was only mildly enthusiastic about the Federal Act.[81]

Bavaria and Württemberg might be able and willing to try their luck outside the protective confines of the confederation; Saxony was not. During March and April the foreign office remained silent as Saxon diplomats reported enquiries from their south German counterparts about Saxony's participation in a Trias league.[82] It was characteristic of Saxony's precarious position in the post-war states system that even such activity could not allay the Saxons' anxiety. The Trias project of 1816, regardless of its prospects – or Saxon complicity – constituted a threat to the fragile settlement of 1815. Although uncertain of Austria's German policy at this time, Einsiedel believed that even the attempt at forging a Trias subgrouping might have fatal consequences. In a dispatch dated 9 April to Görtz in Frankfurt (who had been asked by a Bavarian diplomat about Saxony's attitude to a Trias league), Einsiedel expressed the fear that the projected league, far from acting as a brake upon Austro-Prussian plans, might well *accelerate* them, leading to the 'dissolution of the confederation'.[83]

Saxony's faith in Austria's *Bundestreue* increased as the various 'crises' of 1816 passed or failed to derail the confederation. Although the

[79] Karl Einsiedel to Einsiedel, 28 Feb. 1816, StaD GK, Loc. 30023, unpag.
[80] Görtz to Einsiedel, 25 March 1816, StaD Auss, nr. 2836, unpag.
[81] On Bavaria's ambitions, Karl Einsiedel to Einsiedel, 16 May 1815, StaD GK, Loc. 30023, unpag.; Kocher to Einsiedel, 10 Aug. 1815, *ibid*; on Stuttgart's attitudes, Uechtritz to Einsiedel, 22 July 1815, StaD GK, Loc. 30025, unpag; Wirsing to Einsiedel, 30 Dec. 1815, *ibid.*
[82] Uechtritz to Einsiedel, 21 March 1816, StaD GK, Loc. 624, unpag; Görtz to Einsiedel, 25 March 1816, StaD Auss, nr. 2836, unpag; Wirsing to Einsiedel, 9 April 1816, StaD GK, Loc. 30025, unpag.
[83] Einsiedel to Görtz, 9 April 1816, StaD Auss, nr. 2837, unpag.

Eastern Question would remain a constant problem in Restoration diplomacy, the immediate tension was eased in June 1816, when the tsar gave adequate assurances of his peaceful intentions to the other great powers.[84] Shortly after receiving the Hänlein plan on 30 June, Count Buol, on instructions from Vienna, unequivocally rejected it as contrary to the Federal Act.[85] With this repudiation, Austria's reputation as guardian of the Federal Act soared. Reporting from Frankfurt, Gebhardt noted that the entire episode had resulted in 'clearly increased trust of Austria in direct proportion to increased distrust of Prussia'.[86] The Saxons were clearly delighted by Austria's strong stand for the Federal Act. Gebhardt told Einsiedel that more could not have been asked of Austria,[87] while Einsiedel himself, speaking for the king, called the Austrian rejection of the Hänlein plan 'a new affirmation of the just principles of His Majesty the Emperor of Austria'.[88]

Trias activity also began to wane as the immediate threat of an Austro-Prussian coup receded; by August the proposed league was clearly foundering. The end came on the 15th when Bavaria, a crucial component of any league, withdrew from the deliberations, citing the need to settle first all the outstanding territorial disputes in south Germany, as well as the obvious failure of the Hänlein plan.[89] At the beginning of August, Württemberg (belatedly) had made a direct and confidential approach to Saxony, presenting to Einsiedel the draft Trias convention. By then, apparently, the Saxons felt confident enough to take a strong stand. Leaving no doubt of his hostility towards the proposed league, Einsiedel replied that the secondary states of Germany could find safety only within the Federal Act and under the leadership of Austria.[90] He also took the opportunity to relay a similar message to the Saxon mission at Frankfurt, as a kind of general policy statement on German affairs. Informing Görtz of Saxony's rejection of Württemberg's

[84] Circular, 3 June 1816, StaD Auss, nr. 3886, unpag.; Einsiedel to Griesinger, 14 June 1816, StaD GK, Loc. 30017, p. 348; Schulenburg to Einsiedel, 26 June 1816, *ibid.*, p. 111.

[85] Görtz to Einsiedel, 9 July 1816, StaD Auss, nr. 2836, unpag.

[86] Gebhardt to Einsiedel, 12 July 1816, *ibid.*, unpag.

[87] Gebhardt to Einsiedel, 2 Aug. 1816, *ibid.*, unpag.

[88] Einsiedel to Gebhardt, 1 Aug. 1816, StaD Auss, nr. 2837, unpag.

[89] Montgelas to Wintzingerode, 15 Aug. 1816, HstS, E65 Bü 56, pp. 268-9. See also Burg, *Deutsche Trias*, pp. 80-1.

[90] Rheinwald (to Stuttgart), 9 Aug. 1816, HstS, E65 Bü 56, pp. 263-4; Stuttgart's reply was less than gracious; Wintzingerode told the Saxon representative in Stuttgart that despite Saxony's refusal, he remained 'thoroughly convinced, that given the state of affairs in Germany and in Europe, [Saxony] will sooner or later recognize the need of a similar union as the only means to salvage its independence', Wirsing to Einsiedel, 20 Aug. 1816, StaD GK, Loc. 30025, unpag.

offer, he condemned the Trias plan (and all Trias activity by implication) as not only superfluous but also dangerous:

Since the principal goals of the proposed union, namely, the maintenance of the independence and inviolability of the individual German states as well as the guarantee of their federal possessions, are already guaranteed in articles 2, 3, and 11 of the Federal Act, His Majesty believes that a special convention is not only unnecessary, but can also give rise to mistrust and divisiveness that could be ultimately detrimental to the unity and general interest of the confederation.[91]

By the late summer of 1816, events began to move quickly towards the opening of the federal diet. Preliminary conferences began in September and, on 5 November, Buol formally called the diet into session. At long last, the federal envoys could begin to work out the details of the Federal Act. To be sure, discussion of the implications of the Federal Act would provoke more suspicion, acrimony, and crises before its full elaboration at the Vienna Conference of 1820. Nevertheless, the opening of the federal diet fourteen months after the signing of the Federal Act was a significant step in the stabilization of post-Napoleonic Germany,[92] and in preserving the independence of Saxony.

* * *

The pessimism of the Saxons about the Austrian Empire and its place in German and European affairs proved, in retrospect, premature. Under Metternich's astute leadership, Austria emerged in the 1820s as a pillar of the conservative restoration and as a resourceful defender of the settlement of 1815. Undoubtedly, the gloomy visions of the Saxon foreign office were in part a result of Saxony's treatment at the congress of Vienna and the fear, bordering on panic, regarding Saxony's chances for survival in the post-congress world. Moreover, as representatives of a small state in a states system dominated by the great powers, Saxon diplomats were often forced to observe events at a considerable distance from their source. The Saxons may not have made adequate allowances for Austria's need – and Metternich's personal inclination – for 'tacking, evading, and flattering' in relations with others. Be that as it may, Saxon fears expressed during 1815-16 were based on real, if latent, possibilities. Of necessity, Einsiedel and his diplomats were practitioners of politics as the art of the possible, which consists, as Enno E. Kraehe

[91] Einsiedel to Görtz, 11 Aug. 1816, StaD Auss, nr. 2837, unpag.

[92] For an overview of the issues taken up by the federal diet after November 1816, see Ludwig Bentfeldt, *Der Deutsche Bund als nationales Band 1815-1866* (Göttingen, 1985), pp. 52 ff.

suggests, 'not only in sensing what can be attained but also in appreciating the full range of what can happen'.[93] All of the issues discussed by the Saxons in 1815-16 would become increasingly important as the century progressed, having a decidedly negative impact on Austria's German policy.

The distinction noticed by the Saxons after 1812 between the German lands as a whole and the core provinces of the Habsburg dynasty derived from a process begun in 1713 with the Pragmatic Sanction and further crystallized by the creation of the Austrian Empire in 1804. Although the Federal Act of 1815 seemingly united, once again, Habsburg and German interests, the separation between Austrian and German affairs would become more pronounced as the nineteenth century unfolded. One cause of the growing divergence was the relative change in the balance of power in central Europe as a result of the Napoleonic Wars and the post-war settlement. Although Austria emerged from this period in many ways triumphant, she had in fact lost ground to her traditional German rivals who, it can be argued, gained more than Austria by the settlement of 1815. Indeed, one source of the Saxons' anxiety after 1815 was just this change in the balance of power, which they saw not only in the emergence of a large and aggressive Prussia, but also in ambitious ex-*Rheinbund* states such as Württemberg and Bavaria. These states did not share Dresden's need of, or desire for, a strong Austrian presence in Germany. Moreover, the very nature of the Austrian Empire as observed by Saxon diplomats in 1815-16 engendered doubt that Austria could muster the necessary resources to give strong leadership outside the sprawling empire, and especially at Frankfurt am Main. Although the Saxons shared Austria's wish for peace and repose, they also saw that the wish arose from more than ideology. They viewed with foreboding the overwhelming task of reconstruction facing the Austrian Empire at the start of the Restoration era, when set against Prussia's continued dissatisfaction with the settlement of 1815 and her persistent efforts at revisionism. The Hänlein fiasco was merely the first of numerous Prussian attempts to force Austria to accept an Austro-Prussian dualism over Germany. Already during the eastern crisis of 1816 it was clear to the Saxons that Prussia would be able to take advantage of Austria's involvement in non-German affairs (in Italy and the Balkans, for example) in order to pursue her own goals in Germany. The constantly shifting character of Austro-Prussian relations between collaboration and competition, so closely watched by the Saxons, points to a central dilemma in Austria's German policy during the nineteenth century: as Roy A.

[93] Kraehe, *Metternich's German Policy*, i. 191.

Austensen remarks, Prussia was, simultaneously, Austria's 'most dangerous rival and her most important ally'.[94]

The Saxons, too, found themselves in a dilemma. Their political élite who emerged so scathed from the congress of Vienna clearly recognized that the future of their diminished state depended upon the success of Austria's 'federalist' reorganization of Germany in 1815. Yet, at the same time, their views of the Austrian Empire and its relation to the German Question seemed to point, almost inexorably, to the eventual triumph of the Prussian solution of 1866.

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[94] Roy A. Austensen, 'The Making of Austria's Prussian Policy', *Historical Journal* xxvii (1984), 861.