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METTERNICH AND THE FICQUELMONT MISSION OF 1847–48: THE DECISION AGAINST REFORM IN LOMBARDY-VENETIA

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Introduction

Metternich was no federalist. Indeed, the purpose of his reform plans for the Habsburg Monarchy in 1817 had been to ensure that it was run efficiently from the centre; local nobilities might be consulted, but merely in a cosmetic fashion.[1] Metternich's aim had been to prevent the Emperor Francis from abolishing diets and ruling the Monarchy along French lines. In this article I aim to demonstrate that even when crisis approached in 1848, Metternich was still unwilling to devolve power from Vienna, as was demanded by his assumed successor, Count Ficquelmont, who had been sent to Milan in 1847 in order, among other things, to assess the political/constitutional situation there. Curiously, Ficquelmont's mission, despite its importance for any assessment of Metternich's views on constitutional 'reform', has been ignored by historians, having previously been mentioned, and misinterpreted, just once, and then only in passing, by A. J. P. Taylor in 1934.[2] Although, for example, Marco Meriggi, Brigitte Mazohl-Walling, and David Laven, have recently worked on the Italian and Austrian records concerning the politics and economics of Lombardy-Venetia under Austrian rule

[1] See Alan Sked, 'Metternich and the Federalist Myth', in Alan Sked and Chris Cook (eds), *Crisis and Controversy: Essays in Honour of A. J. P. Taylor*, London, 1976, pp. 1–22. The view that Metternich did indeed intend to federalize the Monarchy was most stridently put forward by Arthur G. Haas, 'Metternich, Reorganization and Nationality, 1813–1818. A Story of Foresight and Frustration in the Rebuilding of the Austrian Empire' (hereafter, 'Metternich, Reorganization and Nationality, 1813–1818'), *Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für europäische Geschichte, Mainz*, vol. 28, Wiesbaden, 1963. For agreement with my interpretation of the 1817 documents see, for example, Konrad Clewing, 'Staatlichkeit und nationale Identitätsbildung. Dalmatien in Vormärz und Revolution', *Südosteuropäische Arbeiten*, vol. 109, Munich, 2001, pp. 24–25; and David Laven, *Venice and Venetia under the Habsburgs, 1815–1835*, Oxford, 2002, pp. 60–61.

[2] A. J. P. Taylor, *The Italian Question in European Diplomacy, 1847–1849*, Manchester, 1934, pp. 21–22.

between 1815 and 1848, none seems to be aware of Ficquelmont or his proposals.[3] Their discovery of how much the local élites sought to protect their own interests by working contentedly with the Austrians for decades after 1815, has rather overshadowed their interest in the comparatively old-fashioned story of how the Austrians reacted after 1846 when the European economic downturn, the harvest failures, the election to the Holy See of the liberal Pope Pius IX, the funeral of Confalonieri in Milan, the selection of an Italian as Archbishop of Milan, Radetzky's 'occupation' of Ferrara, the return to political life of the Central Congregations of Lombardy, the Tobacco Riots and the granting of constitutions in Naples and Piedmont all brought the prospect of outright revolution ever closer.[4] It was the apparent ending of political co-operation by the Italian élites under the pressure of these events and the political crisis which this represented that brought Ficquelmont to Milan in 1847.

Constitutional Background

In order to make the Ficquelmont proposals clearer I shall first briefly sketch how Lombardy-Venetia was governed.[5] At the top of the administration was the Emperor's youngest brother, the Archduke Rainer, who served as Viceroy. The local administrations of Lombardy and Venice were separated and placed under two Governors (who, like the Viceroy himself, were assisted by individual advisory councils), while both lands were run by a bureaucratic chain of command consisting of delegates and district commissioners who, like the Governors, presided over bodies of nobles and notables who were meant to implement legislation and collect taxes. The Governors presided over their respective Central Congregations (or 'diets'), the delegates over provincial 'congregations', and the district commissioners over municipal assemblies and local mayors. In fact, all decisions of even minor importance (for example, the appointment of a local schoolteacher or postman) were taken in Vienna, most often by the Emperor himself — after he had conscientiously read all the reports from Italy and those of the relevant court offices or *Hofstellen*, and those of his political advisers on the State Council or Staatsrat. Indeed, he might even commission reports from any other individuals whom he saw fit to ask for advice.[6] In short, the decision-making process was long and the local Austrian

[3] See Laven, *Venice and Venetia under the Habsburgs, 1815–1835*; Marco Meriggi, *Amministrazione e classi sociali nel Lombardo-Veneto (1815–1848)*, Bologna, 1983; and Brigitte Mazohl-Walling, *Österreicher Verwaltungsstaat und administrative Eliten im Königreich Lombardo-Venezien, 1815–1859*, Mainz, 1993. Meriggi's book supports the thesis that the Italian élites were for a long time willing to be bought off by the Austrians. Indeed he refers to them after 1818 as the 'new Italian interlocutors of Vienna's policy' in various organs of government such as the delegations, the provincial congregations and the Central Congregations (p. 86). The willingness of the Venetian nobles to act thus is demonstrated by Eurigio Tonetti's *Governo austriaco e notabili sudditi. Congregazioni e municipi nel Veneto del Restaurazione (1816–1848)*, Venice, 1997. By the 1840s, particularly, however, after 1846, this willingness to co-operate had almost disappeared. Especially the younger generation of nobles was not willing to accept Austrian rule. See Alan Sked, *The Survival of the Habsburg Empire: Radetzky, the Imperial Army and the Class War, 1848*, London, 1979, ch. 10. For Austrian impressions of Italian support before 1847, see below.

[4] Sked, *The Survival of the Habsburg Empire*, pp. 94–95.

[5] For the administration of Lombardy-Venetia under the Austrians, the standard work is Augusto Sandonà, *Il Regno Lombardo-Veneto, 1814–1859. La costituzione e l'amministrazione*, Milan, 1912 (hereafter, *Il Regno Lombardo-Veneto, 1814–1859*). A more recent account is Marco Meriggi, *Il Regno Lombardo-Veneto*, Turin, 1986.

[6] For the role of the *Hofstellen* in the decision-making process see Count Franz Hartig, *Genesis of the Revolution in Austria*, appended to Archdeacon William Coxe's *History of the House of Austria*, London, 1853, pp. 19–20.

officials, far less the local Italian nobles and notables, had almost no way of influencing it. Even the Viceroy had no power.

As a result of a meeting held in Vienna on 15 April 1818 under the chairmanship of Count Zichy (a meeting at which Metternich's State Chancellery was not represented) a decision was taken to bind the Viceroy of Lombardy-Venetia by severely limiting instructions, which robbed him of any vestige of prestige and reduced him in effect to doling out pensions and pinning on medals of no great distinction.[7] Metternich and others protested at this. If they had never intended to give the Viceroy real power, they had always assumed that he could be a figure of respect. Yet they could achieve nothing. Francis I, in an imperial decision given at Zara on 2 May 1818, clearly demonstrated that he was not prepared to enlarge the vice-regal role. Indeed, the Emperor believed that the Viceroy had been given too many powers rather than too few.[8]

Under the terms of the imperial decision, the Viceroy acted as the King's representative only when present in Lombardy-Venetia itself. Outside the Kingdom he had no authority whatsoever; inside the Kingdom he was to spend an equal amount of time in Lombardy and Venetia, as a middleman between the governments of both lands. The governments were obliged to transmit their reports to Vienna through him and the Imperial offices to respond in a similar fashion. This, however, was a pro forma arrangement only; the Viceroy could not interfere in the decision-making process. Indeed, he could even be by-passed, for when he was in Milan, the Venetian government was empowered to deal directly with Vienna and inform the Viceroy later. The government of Lombardy could do the same when he was in Venice. The only power the Viceroy had was the power to comment: in cases when the governments of Lombardy and Venice were unable to agree on matters of mutual interest, he might attempt to reconcile them; if he failed, however, Vienna made the decision. His authority in judicial and military matters was much the same. He was to keep an eye on the administration of the army and the courts and when he suspected something was wrong, he was to inform the appropriate authorities. He constituted the 'appropriate' body only in matters of minor significance. He could award sums of money up to 200 guilder for courage displayed in emergencies, approve municipal land-buying up to sums of 12,000 guilder, and nominate the lowest rank of clerks if the 'authorities' agreed. If they did not, he had to refer the matter to the Emperor. It was his destiny therefore to be remembered by the lines:

Faró, vedró, diró,
Faró, quel che potró[9]

Years of Neglect, 1818–47

During most of the 1818–47 period the constitutional, if not the economic and social, problems of Lombardy-Venetia were neglected. After all, Metternich's Vienna had a peculiar

[7] For the constitutional position of the Viceroy, see Sandonà, *Il Regno Lombardo-Veneto, 1814–1859*, pp. 142 and 92–95.

[8] Joseph Alexander Freiherr von Helfert, 'Zur Geschichte des lombardo-venezianischen Königreichs', *Archiv für österreichische Geschichte*, vol. 98, 1909, pp. 1–382 (193); see also Haas, 'Metternich, Reorganization and Nationality, 1813–1818', p. 145.

[9] Heinrich Benedikt, *Kaiseradler über dem Appenin*, Vienna and Munich, 1964, p. 125: 'I'll do it, I'll see to it, I'll tell them, I'll do what I can'. In other words, he could only make vague promises.

way of regarding discontent; serious problems were viewed as the unfortunate results of revolutionary conspiracy; problems that were not serious became bogged down in bureaucracy. Vienna, therefore, for one reason or another, made no serious attempt until 1847 to deal with the constitutional grievances of her Italian subjects — the complete lack of power of the Central Congregations and the total subordination of the local imperial administration to the central administration (or *Hofstellen*) in Vienna. This is not to say, however, that no reforms were mooted between 1818 and 1847.

On 31 January 1819 the then Governor of Venetia, Count Peter Goess, submitted proposals to Vienna for the creation of a 'central chancellery' in Lombardy-Venetia.[10] It was his idea that such a body should be responsible for the administrative, financial and political affairs of the Kingdom as a whole and that it should be more or less independent of Vienna's control. Nothing came of the matter, but Goess's successor, Count Karl Inzaghi, adopted a similar stand in 1821 when he put forward more concrete proposals for the establishment of a *suprema giunta*.[11] Inzaghi, however, spelled out more clearly his desire that this central body should reside in the Kingdom, that it should communicate directly with the sovereign and that it should not come under the supervision of the *Hofstellen*. Such an arrangement, he argued, would expedite administration, simplify the task of government, reduce the number of bureaucrats, but, most important, it would create a positive impression within the Kingdom, make Austria popular again and reconcile Italians to her rule. Again, nothing happened. Thereafter Metternich merely discussed the situation with Italian visitors, although he clearly was not prepared to bore the Emperor with these matters to the same extent. Inzaghi looked on helplessly and when, in 1847, Metternich asked him (he was then Supreme Chancellor in the Court Chancellery) once more for his advice, he recommended a more probable but still very unlikely solution: '[the best thing to do] would be to abolish the vice-regal offices completely'.[12]

One of Metternich's visitors was Paolo di Capitani, a member of a Milanese noble family and a man who at one time had been a member of the vice-regal chancellery. He visited Metternich in 1832.[13] Di Capitani was the official who had warned Vienna in 1815 against the supposedly excessive powers of the Central Congregations; Metternich was, then, talking not to a radical but to a conservative. This perhaps explains the curious fact that during the conversation and in the report he drew up afterwards, di Capitani passed over the 'constitutional question' almost entirely, save to mention that four million Italians were not represented in Vienna. On the other hand, he knew where power lay and did not waste his time expounding the virtues of federalism. Metternich did not waste much time on the constitutional aspect of the Kingdom either:

> I have nothing to do with administration, you understand. That's the job of the Viceroy. His Majesty has unbounded confidence in his august brother. All that you say is a matter for the Viceroy. I have neither the leisure nor the time to bother about details of administration. My job is more important than that. Believe me, people complain about how a state should be run when all that is involved is office politics.[14]

[10] Sandonà, *Il Regno Lombardo-Veneto, 1814–1859*, p. 370, note 4.

[11] Ibid., pp. 370–71.

[12] See Joseph Alexander Freiherr von Helfert, 'Casati und Pillersdorff und die Anfänge der italienischen Einheitsbewegung', *Archiv für österreichische Geschichte*, vol. 91, 1902, pp. 249–520 (329).

[13] See Franco Arese, 'La Lombardia e la politica dell' Austria: un colloquio inedito del Metternich nel 1832' (herefter, 'La Lombardia e la politica dell' Austria'), *Archivo Storico Lombardo*, LXXVII, 1950, pp. 5–57.

[14] Ibid., p. 10.

This, of course, was nonsense. The Emperor had 'unbounded confidence' in his 'august brother' only because the Archduke Rainer had no say at all in the decision-making process. What Metternich was really saying was that from his point of view the constitutional position was quite satisfactory and that he had no intention of discussing other people's grumbles. Nor was he ignorant of what went on in the Kingdom. From 1826 onwards he had been allowed to attach diplomats from his own department and still under his own command to the staff of the Governors of Lombardy, a fact which may in itself explain his satisfaction. Between 1826 and 1848 his agents in Milan included Hofrat Joseph Edler von Sardagna, Count Heinrich de Bombelles, Cavaliere Peregrin de Menz and Count Alexander von Hübner. In times of crisis, for example, 1830 and 1847, he even sent down his designated successors, General Karl Clam-Martinitz and Ficquelmont, on special missions. All these people were sent, ostensibly, as diplomatic agents but they were expected to report on the local situation also. Moreover, it was always stressed by the Chancellor that they were under his direct orders despite the fact that they were on paper being assigned to the Lombard government.

Metternich's solution to the Italian problem was not to devolve power to the local authorities. It was rather to co-operate closely with a preferably 'strong' Governor of Lombardy (that is, one of a dependably autocratic political outlook) to ensure that all the information that could be secured there was quickly passed on to the Chancellery of State and to the *Polizeihofstelle*. Metternich was content to ignore the rest of the Italian government structure, which he regarded as a nuisance. He was only interested in making sure that his orders were carried out effectively beyond the Alps and that the secret police were able to rely on an efficient Italian information network. Given that from 1826 he could at least be sure of something like this, he probably felt that the situation was as close to ideal as possible. Since his links with Milan, however, are best understood from the position of these agents, I quote here part of the official instructions Sardagna was asked to submit to the Governor of Lombardy (they were dated 14 July 1826):

> Although foreign affairs are usually supposed to be conducted by the State Chancellery, given the way things are structured at the top in Milan, this could give rise to grievous delays. For reasons more or less like these the Court Counsellor is to remain, together with a delegation from the State Chancellery, attached to the Governor here in order to supervise affairs of this kind directly, affairs which will explain why the Court Counsellor is being attached to the present Governor of Milan and his relationship regarding the same.[15]

Sardagna, who, Metternich added, was attached to the Governor personally and not to the government, would have received another letter from Metternich reminding him forcefully that he was under the Chancellor's orders first and foremost. One of his successors, the Cavaliere Menz, certainly received such a reminder on 20 April 1833:

> It would, I believe, be superfluous to observe that your new destination, in placing you temporarily under the orders of the Governor of Lombardy in order to expedite those matters assigned to you, in no manner alters your relationship to me, since you are, according to the wording of the resolution of His Majesty, Court Counsellor in extraordinary service of the Court and State Chancellery and in that capacity you do not cease to remain directly under my orders.[16]

[15] Count F. A. Gualterio, *Gli ultimi Rivolgimenti italiani. Memorie storiche con documenti inediti*, 4 vols, Florence, 1852 (hereafter, *Gli ultimi Rivolgimenti italiani*), 2, pp. 278–79.

[16] Ibid., p. 284.

Other agents would have received the same kind of letter because, as Metternich wrote in the official instructions he had had drawn up for Menz: 'M. le Cavaliere de Menz will find in these instructions general rules of conduct which are not subject to variation, because they rest on fixed principles'.[17] The principles were those of a centralized state, and during the period 1818–48 Metternich was primarily concerned with the governance of Lombardy-Venetia as it affected imperial security; the secret police and international politics were his priorities regarding Italy.[18] His agents were to report on local affairs but Metternich was quite content to leave local administration to the Governor: 'There should be no need here for me to give instructions re *administrative* matters which form an important branch of the functions to which M. de Menz is being assigned. Nowhere can he study these matters better than in Milan under the direction of an administrator as enlightened as Count [Franz] Hartig'.[19] Hartig was a 'strong' rather than an 'enlightened' administrator: that was why he became Governor in 1830. He showed his strength again in 1848 when, as a member of the Staatsrat, he stiffened Metternich's resistance to constitutional change.[20]

Between 1830 and 1847 Metternich's agents concentrated their attention on the extermination of radicalism; they had little interest in reform but, like the Chancellor himself, they were aware of the need for good public relations. A common conclusion, therefore, was that La Scala might succeed where the Viceroy had failed. Menz put it in a nutshell: 'At the time of the Romans, the circus was the state secret that rendered Italians submissive to the government and modern Italians are no less difficult to please or less manageable in this respect'.[21] Perhaps there were some who thought it might work: after all, Mozart had been able, more than Metternich, to reconcile the spirits of Germany and Italy. Austrian rule perhaps had an element of comic opera in it anyway. Yet times were changing and Italian taste was becoming more nationalist: Verdi had overtaken Mozart; Pius IX had succeeded Gregory XVI.

Till 1845 Metternich could concentrate on police affairs in Italy relying for guidance on his endless, timeless clichés. In 1845 he received the Milanese Podestà in Vienna and gave him the customary treatment: 'Metternich was most amiable and received him with great courtesy, yet always avoided saying anything definite about our country; he always embarked on generalities and what he said had no more importance than talk about the nasty or beautiful weather. If Casati mentioned something regarding administrative affairs, it did not make any impression'.[22] The election in 1846 of Pope Pius IX, however, did and in the following year Metternich revived his interest in the administration of Lombardy.

[17] Ibid., p. 284.

[18] Metternich's preoccupation with the revolutionary side of Italian politics can be seen in his instructions to Bombelles and Menz. To the former he wrote: 'For anyone familiar with the internal condition of this peninsula, there can be no doubt that Italy amongst all the countries of Europe is the one that is most disposed towards revolution'. And to the latter: 'In order better to acquaint M. de Menz with the degree to which the security police is today linked with politics and indeed as it were *dominates the latter*, it will not be superfluous to make the following explanation: For many years all those who pointed to the existence of a *Comité directeur* working secretly for universal revolution were met everywhere only by incredulity: today it has been shown that this infernal propaganda exists; that it has its centre in Paris and that it is divided into as many sections as there are nations to regenerate [...]. Everything that refers to this great and dangerous plot cannot, therefore, be observed and surveyed with too much attention'. See Gualterio, *Gli ultimi Rivolgimenti italiani*, 2, pp. 280 and 286–87.

[19] Ibid., p. 285.

[20] Hartig, *Genesis of the Revolution in Austria*, p. 68.

[21] Gualterio, *Gli ultimi Rivolgimenti italiani*, 2, p. 314.

[22] See Carlo Casati, *Nuove Rivelazioni su i fatti di Milano nel 1847–48*, 2 vols, Milan, 1885, 1, p. 47.

At the very beginning of 1847 he despatched yet another agent to Milan in the shape of Hofrat von Philippsberg. The latter confessed to no great knowledge of the Lombard administration but after a few months, on 3 April 1847, he submitted a report on his 'observations' and 'impressions'. These, as he claimed, were fairly candid, though hardly profound and a sentence in his Foreword gave a foretaste of what was to follow: 'In a state like Austria the variety of nationalities, if properly handled, is a source of strength; still, it does make governing difficult'.[23] According to Philippsberg, complaints about the Viceroy and his chancellery were commonplace in northern Italy. People regarded the vice-regal office as 'yet another intermediary body' between the provincial authorities and Vienna; they were only too well aware that it failed to expedite matters. The excitable Italians, according to the report, were growing discontented with decisions, losing patience with delays and blaming everything on the Viceroy. They recognized his qualities of conscientiousness and scrupulousness, but it was exactly these qualities, in their opinion, that brought administration to a standstill.

What could be done? The Viceroy was, after all, the Emperor's brother. He could not be treated like 'an ordinary civil servant'. Philippsberg had left himself with only one way out. If the Viceroy could not go, his advisers could. In their place he proposed to bring in a 'statesman', a man who would know his way about in politics, administration and, of course, in police affairs. Alternatively Vienna could appoint a 'provincial chief' who had the necessary qualities of 'seriousness, strength and dependability', someone who would breathe life into the machinery of government and who could get all its branches working in harmony. Such a proposal, needless to say, reflected badly on Count Johann Spaur, the then Governor of Lombardy.

According to the report, Spaur was prepared to stand up to his critics: the *gubernia* had no power; the Viceroy was a nuisance. There was something to be said for this, according to Philippsberg, but it was hardly convincing. What really counted was character and Spaur did not have enough of it: some people might have all the power in the world but 'they would not know what to do with it [and] difficulties would only increase'. 'The post of Governor', the report continued,

> remains the most important in the land. In order to fill it properly, more is needed than an office [...]. The Governor of Lombardy must above all else be a statesman in the fullest sense of the word. Lombardy is a vulnerable, perhaps the most vulnerable, part of the Monarchy. If political life is to exist here at the outermost periphery as well as at the centre, in the heart of the Monarchy, the provincial chief cannot adopt an isolated outlook: [...] his perspective must reach beyond the boundaries of his province. Whether Count Spaur is up to this task, so defined, I do not know. He is very honest and just. Whether spirit, strength, decisiveness are there in sufficient quantity, whether these qualities are to be found to a greater extent in his department, I cannot judge from want of personal knowledge.[24]

On the other hand, if they had been there, presumably they would have been noticed. Spaur's staff was, apparently, also deficient. His leading adviser, Count Karl Pachta, was capable enough but had a scandalous reputation.[25]

As a final suggestion, the envoy proposed that Metternich himself take over the running of police affairs. Previously, or so he had been told, the supervision of police matters had been

[23] Vienna, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Staatskanzlei, Provinzen, Lombardei-Venezia (hereafter, HHSAPL-V), Karton 40. Von Philippsberg to Metternich, 3 April 1847.

[24] Ibid.

[25] He was known to be immoral and reputed to be a thief. He did, however, have very good connections in Vienna.

in the hands of a triumvirate consisting of the Governor, the Milan Director of Police and a Hofrat from the Court Chancellery. More recently, however, the Director of Police had been doing the job alone, a situation that gave cause for concern: he was ageing; he had 'no head for politics'; correspondence with neighbouring states had practically ceased. He was loved by the people, but that was the direct result of his slackness. According to Philippsberg, the situation would greatly improve if Metternich himself were to correspond directly with the Governors on police matters and to ensure army co-operation.

Taken as a whole the report was fairly timid: it called for no fundamental changes in the administration of the Kingdom; no enquiry was made into the distribution of power; all deficiencies were represented in highly personal terms. By implication the only problem was to find the right man for the right job, a strong governor or better still, a statesman whose experience would solve all the problems. Philippsberg had even, obliquely, referred to Metternich, and the Chancellor of State must surely have admired the report: not only did it flatter him personally; it confirmed his thinking of the past thirty years. As an analysis of the troubles of Lombardy-Venetia, the report was actually hardly profound; as a political paper, however, it had been ingeniously constructed. Designed to please, it persuaded Metternich to take some action. He sent Count Ficquelmont to Italy so that statesmanship might yet win the day.

The Ficquelmont Mission

Count Karl Ludwig Ficquelmont[26] was born on 23 March 1777 in Dieuze in Lorraine. Strictly speaking, therefore, he was born a Frenchman. The Ficquelmonts, however, had no desire to be French; they were part of that Lotharingian nobility who rejected Bourbon dynastic leadership when France annexed Lorraine in the mid-eighteenth century. Thus when Karl completed his education at the Collège de Nancy at the age of fifteen, he joined his father in the Régiment Royal-Allemand, emigrated with the rest of it to Austria and within a few years took up arms against France.

Of the family loyalty to the House of Habsburg there could be no doubt: Karl's brother died at Ulm; his father at Marengo. His own loyalty was rewarded: in 1805 he was appointed Adjutant-General to the Emperor; by 1809 he was a regimental colonel. By all accounts, his military talents were of a high order: Wellington, with whom he served in the Peninsular War, was later to remark that he had never known a better cavalry general.

[26] Historians of nineteenth-century Europe have tended to neglect the importance of Ficquelmont, Austria's leading diplomat of the Metternich era, after the Chancellor himself. Even Austrian scholars are far from innocent of this neglect and the historiographical gap has by no means been filled by two unpublished doctoral theses devoted to him by students of Vienna University. These are: Werner Kantor, 'Karl Ludwig Graf Ficquelmont: Ein Lebenshild mit besonderer Rücksicht auf seine diplomatische Mitarbeit bei Metternich', 1948; and, more recently, Florian Lorenz, 'Karl Ludwig Graf Ficquelmont als Diplomat und Staatsmann', 1966. Neither makes use of the documentary material on the Ficquelmont mission of 1847–48 which is found in the Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv in Vienna (Karton 23 of the Staatskanzleiakten, Provinzen, Lombardei-Venezia; hereafter, HHSAPL-V, K 23). All Lorenz can write, for instance, is: 'With difficulties mounting in Italy in 1847, Ficquelmont received the commission to go to Milan to support the Viceroy Rainer. Since the Viceroy was in Venice in August, he went there first and entered Milan only in October. [...] After only nine months at the side of the Archduke Rainer, Ficquelmont was called back to Vienna on 1 March 1848 to be President of the Aulic Council of War' (pp. 126–28). Yet the Ficquelmont mission is of crucial importance to any assessment of Metternich's Italian policies. The first three biographical paragraphs of this article follow Lorenz.

His diplomatic career began in 1805 when he was sent to the court of Sweden as ambassador extraordinary; in the same year he became a Privy Councillor. Five years later he paid his first official visit to Italy. He stayed in the north at first, moving from Turin to the courts of Tuscany and Lucca, but in 1821 he accompanied the Austrian army which restored the King of Naples and as Austrian ambassador remained at the Neapolitan court until 1829, when he became ambassador to Russia. In the diplomatic service, then, he had risen to a rank second only to Metternich himself. Indeed, he very nearly got Metternich's job. On 12 August 1839 the Chancellor suffered a stroke, and for a time it was thought he might die. Metternich had designated Clam-Martinitz to succeed him, but, because the general wanted Austria to take a line more independent of Russia, the leading members of the imperial family, the Archduchess Sophie and the Archdukes Ludwig and Franz Karl, brought Ficquelmont back from St Petersburg as a rival candidate. Fate, however, intervened. Metternich recovered and resumed his duties in November 1839. Clam-Martinitz was the one who died, quite unexpectedly, in 1840 at the age of forty-two. Thereafter everyone assumed that Metternich's successor as Chancellor would be Ficquelmont.

Ficquelmont liked Italy and when Metternich first held out the prospect of the Italian mission in mid-August 1847, he accepted the job with alacrity. According to Metternich's wife,[27] he even had thoughts of making Lombardy-Venetia his home.[28]

In Naples in the 1820s Ficquelmont had acquired the reputation of a conciliator, and so possibly he believed that he was uniquely qualified for the task before him.[29] However, reputations for 'conciliation' or even, 'liberalism' were easily acquired in Metternich's Vienna and Kolowrat, for example, although a self-confessed conservative,[30] was widely regarded as a

[27] See *Aus Metternichs nachgelassenen Papieren*, ed. by Richard von Metternich and Alfons von Klinkowström, 8 vols, Vienna, 1880–84, 7, p. 304. Princess Melanie records in her diary: 'He [Ficquelmont] is accepting the mission with pleasure and even intends to remain down there permanently'.

[28] Countess Ficquelmont, on the other hand, was distinctly less sanguine. See *Lettres du Comte et de la Comtesse de Ficquelmont à la Comtesse Tiesenhausen*, ed. by Comte F. de Sonis, Paris, 1911 (hereafter, *Lettres du Comte et de la Comtesse*). The Countess's letters from this period reveal a sense of foreboding: 'I have no great hopes, how bad things are' (Venice, 4 September 1847, p. 126); 'God inspire Ficquelmont and give him the means to be as useful as he desires, above all the physical strength, for his morale is always strong and unshakeable' (Venice, 4 September 1847, ibid.).

[29] Lorenz comments on Ficquelmont's activity as chairman of the conference of allied ambassadors in Naples: 'the results of Ficquelmont's interventions were admittedly modest, but none the less the worst excesses and a repetition of the 1799 restoration were prevented, something which must be judged a great success for Ficquelmont and the conference of ambassadors'. He was no liberal, however, but the darling of imperial circles at both Vienna and St Petersburg. Even in 1821 he was, according to Paul Schroeder, 'the Don Quixote of the Neapolitan Revolution'. See Lorenz, 'Karl Ludwig Graf Ficquelmont als Diplomat und Staatsmann' p. 49, and Paul W. Schroeder, *Metternich's Diplomacy at its Zenith, 1820–1823*, New York, 1962, p. 135.

[30] See Elisabeth Herzog, 'Graf Franz Anton Kolowrat-Liebsteinsky: Seine politische Tätigkeit in Wien, 1826–1848', unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Vienna, 1968, pp. 62–63. Kolowrat, who had come to the notice of Francis I by including even the name of his own father on a list of freemasons that he had sent to Vienna, replied as follows to a jibe of Metternich's that he was undermining the peace of the Monarchy: 'You are completely wrong about me and the people with whom I mix. You think that my principles are different from yours. That is wrong. I am an aristocrat by birth and by conviction and completely agree with you that people must strive after conservatism and do everything to achieve it. Yet we differ about means. Your means consist of a forest of bayonets and a fixed adherence to things as they are. To my mind, by following these lines we are playing into the hands of the revolutionaries [...]. Your ways will lead us [...] not tomorrow or next year, but soon enough, to our ruin'.

'liberal'; the only real difference, between a Ficquelmont or a Kolowrat and a Metternich was that, whereas the former were from time to time prepared to recognize the utility of an apparent concession, Metternich remained to the end of his days both politically and constitutionally an unbending reactionary.

An insight into Ficquelmont's approach to the Italian problem is provided in his letter to Metternich dated 20 August 1847 — two days before he received his instructions to go down to Milan. He wrote: 'There is nothing to change or reform in our administration. Results prove this — perhaps in Italy more than in any other part of the Empire'. Nevertheless, he wrote in the same letter: 'Is there something in our administration of such a nature as would produce the disaffection which is manifesting itself? Are we providing our enemies with ammunition that they could successfully employ against us? This question is important and deserves examination'.[31] It was the old conservative dilemma: on the one hand, there were no real problems; on the other, there was a persistent need for answers. The essence of Ficquelmont's method was to get round the difficulty by tinkering; that is, he provided answers which suggested that there had been no real problems in the first place.

In this particular instance his solution was to allow the Italian municipal system what he called its 'natural movement'. In other words, like Metternich, and most Germans of his day, he relied on the pride of Italians in their individual cities to occupy their minds to the exclusion of all nationalist political ideas. The only danger as Ficquelmont saw it was that Austrian interference in municipal affairs, however well-intentioned, might reconcile Italian rivals and so unite them in an independence movement. He therefore suggested that the municipal system of Francis I should return to its 'primitive value' and that the man to supervise this change should be the Viceroy: 'The Viceroy is the representative of imperial power. The powers which have been conferred on him must then give the authority to rectify in each special case the interference with the rights of the communes'.[32] His main task would be to see that 'satisfied and devoted' communes could decide for themselves how to use their revenue and increase their patrimony — a respectable plan on the face of things.

There was just one snag: Ficquelmont failed to comprehend the position of the Viceroy. Perhaps this was not his fault. He had written to Metternich only two days previously saying how 'absolutely indispensable' it was that he should know more about the Viceroy's power.[33] Metternich's reply is, however, unrecorded. Perhaps he did not reply at all. Perhaps he simply misled Ficquelmont in much the same way as he had earlier misled di Capitani. The point is this: as yet Ficquelmont did not understand the significance of his preconceptions. The only real authority the Viceroy had was the power to say 'No' when and if an Italian town

[31] HHSAPL-V, K 23, Ficquelmont to Metternich, 20 August 1847.

[32] 'The natural encroachments of an administration as active and as solidly organized as Austria's have already diverted these institutions from their original spirit. Neither property-owners nor communes find there the same guarantees of their interests any longer; the influence which had been accorded to them has been successively taken back [...]. If it is possible to win the affection of Italians by allowing them more latitude in municipal affairs, why not do so? Italian customs and habits centre on the municipality; it is their life. In taking them under our guidance even with the best of motives we run the risk of throwing them into the arms of those who say that they will free them from the foreign yoke'. Ibid.

[33] HHSAPL-V, K 23, Ficquelmont to Metternich, Vienna, 18 August 1847: 'This knowledge is the sole point of departure from which I can with certainty work out my line of approach to him. It is the sole means with which I may counteract the inertia or irresolution of his character; this will be a work of patience and prudence'. Clearly Ficquelmont was acquainted with the Viceroy's personality only.

proposed to spend money. Otherwise, he was a high-class master of ceremonies. True, other officials could also say 'No'; he shared even that authority; by asking the Viceroy to surrender this power, Ficquelmont was asking Archduke Rainer to administer himself out of existence. In fact, in his letter of 20 August, he was inadvertently ironic: 'Only in the position and action of the Viceroy can means be found of reattaching his Italian subjects to the Emperor and of having the Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia assume the influence it ought to have in Italy — not just as a separate political body, but as the richest, most satisfied part of Italy, which we must make immune to the conspiracies which people are forever organizing against us'.[34] He was really proposing to slit the Viceroy's throat at the foot of the scaffold in the promise of Heaven for all.

Metternich sent Ficquelmont his instructions on 22 August 1847. He had something to say about the diplomatic and military position of the Emperor's Italian Kingdom but failed to define the authority of the Emperor's brother. The aim of the assignment was described as follows:

> His Imperial Majesty feels it necessary to inform the Archduke Viceroy of his entire thinking on the position which he has now adopted and to which he intends to adhere. This is not, however, the only purpose which His Majesty intends for Your Excellency's mission. The Viceroy must, in the position in which he is placed, find comfort in the presence of someone who will be able to support him politically. Your Excellency possesses an intimate familiarity with the views of our cabinet and of their application to any circumstances that could arise. The Emperor commands you, therefore, to remain at the disposal of His Imperial Highness during the height of the crisis in the capacity of moral assistant. You will offer him assistance whenever it is called for by the Archduke or at your own discretion.[35]

Clearly Ficquelmont was not being given a position of power. His job was to be the moral adviser to a figurehead whose remaining authority he wished to abolish. At the time, however, no one saw this. The mission was conceived in an atmosphere of unreality and almost wilful self-deception. The body politic was sick: both Metternich and Ficquelmont believed that they could cure this sickness. Ficquelmont thought in terms of a backbone, Metternich in terms of a blood-transfusion.[36] Yet if all was not well, it was hardly on account of foreign bodies in the bloodstream: the nature of the disease was a circulatory system in which the heart was outside the body. In Vienna, however, this disease was unknown and the conventional medical wisdom of the Ballhausplatz retained its grip. Ficquelmont, who had arrived in Venice by the second week of September, reported confidently that the Viceroy had extended him his utmost confidence.[37]

[34] Ibid.

[35] HHSAPL-V, K 23, Metternich to Ficquelmont, Vienna, 22 August 1847. On 6 January 1848, Ficquelmont wrote in a letter to Metternich: 'I had the secret object of examining the whole system of government and administration'. How precise were his instructions to do so is not known. In any case, he was to act as if this secret object followed naturally from his instructions regarding the Archduke; that is to say, the result of his examination formed his advice to the Viceroy. Certainly, this 'secret object' conferred no special powers on him; and, indeed, it can be doubted whether his 'secret' object was his most important one.

[36] 'It has occurred to me in the light of the present situation that your Imperial Highness, whose position forms the central point of the administration of Lombardy-Venetia, must be afforded such help as can only be found in a genuine understanding of the situation. Police directives and administrative observations alone cannot fulfil this task. Italy is the only territory in which foreign forces are at work [...]. Only diplomacy can throw light on the matter'. Metternich to Rainer, Vienna, 3 September 1847. See *Aus Metternichs nachgelassenen Papieren*, 7, pp. 474–75.

[37] HHSAPL-V, K 23, Ficquelmont to Metternich, Venice, 8 September 1847.

Rainer was pleased about the mission. He told Metternich: 'I am now sure that arrangements made by me shall not conflict with the views of the central authority'.[38] If he expected nothing in the way of independence, he certainly looked forward to more co-operation. Everything, therefore, seemed to be off to a reasonable start. It was not long, however, before Ficquelmont concluded that the situation was somewhat graver than he had suspected. On his arrival he found 'a complete absence of sane ideas about our political position in Italy' and a 'great divergence of views' within the government.[39] Moreover, the Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia had not developed in the way intended by Austria and the Viceroy's position was no more than a façade:

> for some time the country has been able to delude itself and believe that all its interests were not being placed in far-off hands [...], yet for a long time the Viceroy has been no more than a simulacrum. His good qualities, his good and benevolent character, have won and retained for him the affection of the inhabitants, but he has no influence in the country because everybody knows that he can do nothing.
>
> The inevitable slowness of a complicated administration whose centre is far away gives daily and manifest proof that none of the decisions being waited for is being taken by the Viceroy, no matter whether they are decisions affecting general collective or individual interests. The memorandum which the Viceroy has just submitted to the Emperor and which I referred to in the report dated 28 September which I had the honour to send to you affords proof of this in itself.[40]
>
> The Viceroy has not even the authority to levy a local tax on bread or meat — even where there is no objection in principle to such a tax and given that such taxes are already levied in several localities.[41]

In his first letter of 1 October Ficquelmont struck a note of warning. In an empire like the Austrian 'the bonds of central administration' would never be able to unite lands and provinces separated by language, custom and material interest. The 'principle of sovereignty' alone could do that, and this principle, he pleaded, should 'make itself felt'. 'Sovereignty must not be reduced to abstractions', he wrote. The government of the Kingdom would have to be 'strengthened'.

His second letter was more forthright in tone and contained the outline of proposals that he was to forward on many occasions in the future. These proposals were all based on a false premise, for, when Ficquelmont wrote that 'the first thing to do' was to return to the Viceroy 'the powers he had been given on his installation', Ficquelmont was clearly unaware of how Francis I had viewed Rainer's position in 1818.

Ficquelmont argued that the Viceroy had originally been promised direct access to the Emperor and the support of a chancellery which would have had roughly the same powers as an aulic chancellery. In other words, he seems to have thought that Rainer already possessed in 1819 or 1821 the very institutions for which Goess and Inzaghi had then petitioned Vienna. Having so argued, he went on to assert that the *Hofstellen* had encroached upon the Viceroy's powers, had put themselves between the Archduke and the Emperor, and had thus frustrated his original intentions. The Viceroy had given up trying to report to the Emperor directly; and the vice-regal chancellery had declined into an ineffective, decrepit talking-shop. Indeed

[38] HHSAPL-V, Karton 5, Rainer to Metternich, Milan, 1 October 1847.

[39] HHSAPL-V, K 23, Ficquelmont to Metternich, Milan, 1 October 1847.

[40] Neither document is to be found in the archives.

[41] HHSAPL-V, K 23. Similar sentiments are stated in a second letter, Ficquelmont to Metternich, Milan, 1 October 1847.

Ficquelmont's description of the latter was horrific: three narrow-minded Hofräte were misleading a Viceroy on whom 'age and work' had 'taken their toll' and of whom it could be said: 'He surveys the movement of paper exactly; popular movements he does not understand'.[42]

In order to rectify this situation, Ficquelmont proposed to give the Viceroy a different type of chancellery, one that would be directed by a Minister of State who would have greater power than the governors. He was, however, careful to play down the implications of the scheme: it 'would not cost money'; abuse of authority 'would be easy to check, since it could never go unnoticed'; 'all that was needed' were 'a few well-chosen individuals'. He stressed that: 'The centre could make the changes I am proposing *by itself*, since no change would be made in existing procedure. This would be only a modification and strengthening of the Viceroy's chancellery'.[43] The plan did not really amount to very much if it 'involved no change in procedure' but 'only [...] a modification and strengthening of the Viceroy's chancellery'. The opposition to the *Hofstellen* which Ficquelmont had appeared to adopt in his rather Whiggish view of Lombard history had evidently lacked conviction. Indeed, one is driven to the conclusion that Ficquelmont was only resurrecting something like Philippsberg's proposals. True, there were certain differences between the two positions: Ficquelmont had opted to strengthen the Viceroy against the Governors, whereas Philippsberg had no clear choice for the 'strong man's' base, but in the end, it was of little matter; the link with Vienna was to remain unchanged.

In order to ensure that Metternich knew exactly what the Italians were complaining of, Ficquelmont provided him with some concrete examples.[44] There was, for instance, the stamp law which, since it appeared to operate in favour of the rich, was a powerful weapon in the literary armoury of the pamphleteers. Ficquelmont maintained that it had other disadvantages: it brought in little revenue; it was largely incomprehensible; and it was applied far too often. Again, there was the question of the customs. All goods passing through Milan had to pass through the entrepôt of the Palais Marino. Yet the Palais itself was inaccessibly located in a narrow street in the centre of the city and so impeded the flow of trade. The government had constructed depots outside the city but since the protection offered by these was small, the Milanese merchants had offered to build a new one. Their offer, still without response, had been submitted twenty years previously. Finally there was the question of the free navigation of the Po. Even the Spanish had realized that a profit could be made from linking the trade of Milan and Venice and after many years a linking canal had been constructed. Hopes had been high yet very little profit was made in the end because of the customs policies of Parma and Modena. Austrian influence in the Duchies was strong to say the least, yet it had never been exercised to make waterway traffic more profitable or Lombard-Venetians more pleased. The Viceroy himself had been no help either, even when he could have been. Milan, for example, had wanted to build a 'campo santo' as Bologna and Naples had done. The site had been chosen (in 1837) with the government's approval; however, after the architect had done his work and the plans had been submitted to the Viceroy, the latter rejected them on the dubious grounds that the project was too expensive; that the city did not need another cemetery; and

[42] HHSAPL-V, K 23, Ficquelmont to Metternich, Milan, 1 October 1847. He did have good qualities, but: 'People do not accuse His Imperial Highness of harshness because they know the goodness of his character; but he is accused precisely on that account of doing only what his advisers want him to do'.

[43] Ibid.

[44] HHSAPL-V, K 23, Ficquelmont to Metternich, Milan, 8 November 1847.

that the ground in question was too bumpy. Another example of his interference was the case of the so-called 'villa' — a burned-out ruin in the centre of Milan's city gardens. The municipality had decided to demolish this eyesore and build a 'teatro diurno'. Despite the fact that the cost was to be borne by the city itself, the Viceroy vetoed the scheme; Milan already had sufficient places of amusement. From all this, Ficquelmont concluded that not only was there a need for better communication with Vienna, but that, inside the Kingdom itself, there was also a need to reform the system whereby the Viceroy received advice.[45]

Metternich neglected to reply to such reports, a state of affairs that became quite customary. People in Milan wondered what Ficquelmont was up to. They chalked in doggerel on the side of his house:

> L'e duu mes che ghe l'èmm chi
> Gh'e cent scud per chi'sa di
> Coss' hal faa sto spaccamont
> Che se ciama Ficquelmont.[46]

Some people — Casati, for example — asked Ficquelmont to explain his mission, but 'he, as is the way with Austrians, on the one hand displayed reasonableness, on the other, sought to excuse the government, blaming some individual who was least of all to blame, and promising reforms, which could be granted only slowly and carefully'.[47] His wife still despaired:

> Nobody beyond the Alps can have any real idea; one needs to be here on the spot truly to understand the situation, and that, I assure you, is not rosy. We live in a very difficult and very serious time; indeed the atmosphere here weighs on me like a nightmare. I see daily how difficult, ungratifying and tiring Ficquelmont's work is, and it would break my heart to describe it to you. It will require the confidence I have in his superior wisdom, in his will-power and energy, to hope that he will achieve some good, but that cannot happen quickly.[48]

Meanwhile, Ficquelmont persevered. On 3 December 1847 he again expounded to Metternich his ideas concerning the administration of Lombardy-Venetia. This time, however, he explained matters at greater length and took as his starting point the unusual structure of the vice-regal chancellery.[49]

In the Austrian Empire of the *Vormärz* period, most government offices had collegiate structures; that is to say, decisions were taken not by the president of a board but by the majority vote of the counsellors. Even the Hofkriegsrat, the Aulic Council of War, was run along these lines. In northern Italy, on the other hand, although the *gubernia* were likewise administered, the vice-regal chancellery was not, something which in Ficquelmont's eyes constituted the 'chief fault', since there was no guarantee how the Viceroy arrived at any particular decision. In Ficquelmont's words:

> Thus a proposition of the Governor which has been the result of the collegiate deliberations of the *gubernium* finds itself modified or indeed rejected on the advice of one person alone. This happens

[45] Ficquelmont was especially unhappy about one of the Viceroy's three advisers, Hofrat San Pietro, 'an unenlightened and politically inastute' man.

[46] Casati, *Nuove Rivelazioni su i fatti di Milano nel 1847–48*, 1, p. 167, note 2: 'It is proposed to give an award of 100 scudi to anyone who can say what brings Ficquelmont to Milan'.

[47] Ibid., p. 168.

[48] Letter of 13 November 1847, *Lettres du Comte et de la Comtesse*, p. 133.

[49] HHSAPL-V, K 23, Ficquelmont to Metternich, Milan, 3 December 1847.

> all the time whether individual or general interests are concerned. For this reason, the Viceroy's chancellery inspires little confidence in the country and the work it sends on to Vienna is not accorded such consideration as the Viceroy's position should command. The Emperor Francis originally gave the Viceroy the authority of an aulic chancellery. Several essential restrictions were imposed on this authority, but he still had it. The organic weakness of his chancellery has, however, rendered difficult his use of this authority. The aulic chancelleries have gradually removed it from him. His duty was to protect the interests of the Kingdom against arrangements of the centre which often succeeded in damaging it, albeit unintentionally. He has not retained this power.[50]

This analysis was completely false and even Metternich, who could indulge in a fair amount of make-believe about Habsburg possessions in Italy, could not accept it. He scribbled down the word 'erreur' beside the appropriate passage of Ficquelmont's report. Francis I had never meant Rainer to be anything other than a glorified messenger boy and even then doubted that he would do that well. Ficquelmont was also wrong if he thought that Rainer could 'reject' or 'modify' the schemes of a Governor. He had no such powers, except in matters of very little account. When issues of substance or principle were raised, he might only transmit such proposals to Vienna along with suggestions of his own. Thereafter, it was the Vienna officials or the Emperor himself who was responsible for modifications. It was really of little importance how many vice-regal counsellors had been consulted. Ficquelmont's memoranda, in fact, were often contradictory: sometimes the Viceroy was pictured with no powers at all; at others, he had powers that were being subverted by his advisers.

In any case, Ficquelmont proposed to superimpose on the vice-regal chancellery what he chose to call a 'council of state', a body, which, he intended should have an impressive membership: a Minister of State or Aulic Counsellor at the head; a German Aulic Counsellor as director of chancellery and chief of the secret police; an Italian Aulic Counsellor as head of each administrative department of the chancellery; a military adviser; and a diplomatic adviser who would either be a delegate of the State Chancellery or an Aulic Counsellor. Ficquelmont was in a way avoiding a crisis: rather than sack the viceroy's cronies, he was preparing to submerge them in a flood of better men. Yet it was not merely a matter of personnel, for he was proposing to shift the balance of power within the north Italian Kingdom away from the Governors and nearer to the Viceroy: 'All necessary changes, administrative, judicial or financial which became necessary could, of course, be implemented by the council in session with the Viceroy'; and he added for good measure: 'This organization would appear complete to me if there were an Italian in the Council of State in Vienna as well as an Italian Aulic Counsellor in the Treasury and in the United Chancellery'.[51] The plan, therefore, was very much in the Metternich-Philippsberg tradition. Ficquelmont had a somewhat peculiar regard for the Viceroy, but that apart, his aim was to create a central point of authority in the Kingdom which Vienna could manage effectively. As he later stated:

> The government needs a new engine to give it energy without changing its organization. [...] The question which we have to solve, then, is as follows. How can we go on running the Kingdom as a *subject* province, but organize and above all govern it in such a fashion that we might present it as an Italian state to the hostile movement that the other Italian states want to stir up against us.[52]

It was cosmetic diversity all over again, the endless Austrian struggle to balance appearance against reality. As such, it was obviously meant to appeal to Metternich, and Ficquelmont, at

[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.
[52] HHSAPL-V, K 23, Ficquelmont to Metternich, Milan, 27 December 1847.

least at first, was inclined to believe that it had. This is known because in a letter to Metternich dated 15 December he refers to a previous letter from Metternich dated 9 December and writes: 'I am happy to see that Your Highness approves of the very simple measure I have proposed to the Viceroy in order to give his government the strength it has lost and to restore the confidence in it that has been completely destroyed in the country'.[53] Metternich's letter has not survived and it is impossible to say just how unambiguously his 'approval' was worded. It would have been in keeping with his characteristic verbosity if he had made an approving generalization only. His future actions, certainly, would by no means imply a firm commitment; historians, on the other hand, have always assumed just the opposite. A. J. P. Taylor, who examined the evidence, wrote in 1934: 'Metternich, however, welcomed Ficquelmont's plan [...]. There is a tone of great relief in Metternich's letters to Ficquelmont at being able to [...] concentrate on purely administrative reforms, which he had been urging for thirty years'.[54] Franco Arese, who never examined the evidence, could also write of an approval.[55] Ficquelmont's letter of 15 December, however, is quoted by neither.

None the less, it would have been curious for Metternich to have agreed to a collegiate constitution to spearhead the reaction in Italy; he simply did not believe in this type of administrative unit. It had always been his complaint, certainly as far as Vienna was concerned, that government stagnated for want of ministers, men with clear executive roles. That was his main reason, in 1817, for proposing a Ministry of the Interior. He had little use for collegiate constitutions and interminable committees; that was another reason for his rejecting federalization in favour of close co-operation with the governors — and of all the chancelleries in pre-March Vienna the only one to manage its affairs without a collegiate structure, was, significantly enough, the Haus-, Hof- und Staats-.[56]

It is difficult, however, to accept that Metternich approved of Ficquelmont's plan immediately for a much more concrete reason: beside a paragraph in Ficquelmont's report, asserting that this 'organic measure' in itself would end complaints, Metternich scribbled the word 'illusion'; he then submitted the report to two advisers who both rejected it, one on 9 December, the other on 20 December.[57] The first adviser was Hofrat Johann Pilgram, a high official who had lived in Italy for about ten years; the second was no other than the former Governor of Lombardy, Count Hartig. Ficquelmont would soon discover that even superficial reform was not on Metternich's agenda.

[53] HHSAPL-V, K 23, Ficquelmont to Metternich, Milan, 15 December 1847.

[54] Taylor, *The Italian Question in European Diplomacy*, pp. 21–22. As far as I know, Taylor is the only other historian to have examined the Ficquelmont papers in the archives; most writers on the subject are content to refer to the few scraps of correspondence included in the *Nachgelassene Papiere*, highly selected though they are. On the other hand, Taylor was more concerned with Metternich's external than internal policies and devoted scarcely half a dozen pages to the mission. He may be right none the less; the evidence regarding Metternich's policy, like most historical evidence, is open to more than one interpretation. I, however, prefer to stress the similarities in policy between Metternich and Ficquelmont; Taylor prefers to stress the differences. The argument hinges, in the end, on the sincerity of Metternich's commitment to reform during the years 1817–48.

[55] Arese, 'La Lombardia e la politica dell' Austria', p. 31.

[56] See Josef Karl Mayr, 'Geschichte der österreichischen Staatskanzlei im Zeitalter des Fürsten Metternich', *Inventare des Wiener Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv*, vol. 2, Vienna, 1935, p. 13.

[57] These are to be found in HHSAPL-V, Karton 23, attached to Ficquelmont's report of 3 December 1847.

The Failure of the Ficquelmont Mission

Neither Hartig nor Pilgram could accept Ficquelmont's idea of superimposing a Council of State on the vice-regal chancellery.[58] As Hartig put it, either the Council would dominate the Viceroy or the Viceroy would dominate the Council. In the first case, the Viceroy himself, 'and in his person, the ruling House', would come into disrepute; in the second, the Council would be 'useless'. In both eventualities, the civil servants on the council would be everyone's inevitable scapegoats and hence 'no independent, self-respecting man' could be expected to take on the job. Both Hartig and Pilgram, however, were eager for new blood in Milan and Pilgram spared none of the Viceroy's advisers: Hofrat Vincenz von Grimm, the Viceroy's 'right-hand man', was described as having been 'out of touch with reality for a long time'; his political adviser was 'learned' and 'talented', but a 'passionate intriguer'; his economic adviser was 'completely mediocre'. Two were 'despised' and one was 'hated'; a cry of jubilation would resound from the populace if they were removed. Still, like Ficquelmont, Pilgram and Hartig were all too aware that the Viceroy was loth to part with these men (this was, perhaps, the reason Ficquelmont had not advocated the abolition of the chancellery altogether) and that they would have to get round this problem. Hartig suggested, therefore, that the Viceroy and his advisers be called to Vienna, ostensibly to talk, but really to disappear and let Ficquelmont run the show; Pilgram, who thought, with good reason, that Ficquelmont was insufficiently familiar with Italian administration to do a job of that kind, proposed merely to recall the advisers and let the Viceroy get by with temporary replacements who, of course, would turn out to be permanent. What Metternich thought of either of these plans is unknown; he was playing his game close to his chest. However, in his last letter to Ficquelmont before 5 December, his tone had been most traditional: 'You never talk of Torrisani; I cannot discover any trace of his activity here. The police department receives nothing or the equivalent of nothing from Milan. I do not understand Torrisani [...]. Something is happening that I do not understand. Please tell me what you know about the man and his position'.[59] Karl Torrisani was Milan's Chief of Police.[60]

If Metternich was playing a waiting game, others were not, for in Milan a crisis was approaching. A. J. P. Taylor has suggested that part of the trouble was the Viceroy's attitude to Ficquelmont: 'The Viceroy and the bureaucracy regarded the mere presence of a special commissioner as a reflection on their capacity. They grudgingly accepted his advice on diplomatic matters, which were, after all, his affair; but they obstinately refused to take the slightest notice of his suggestions in the political field'.[61] This was not so. Ficquelmont was soon to find

[58] Ibid.

[59] HHSAPL-V, K 23, Metternich to Ficquelmont, Vienna, 24 November 1847.

[60] In his report of 3 December Ficquelmont answered this complaint, writing that, although the Chief of Police was as active as ever, he could no longer get the support he needed from his men or from the administration. For example, Torrisani had wanted to publish a poster outlawing such practices as the daubing on walls of nationalist slogans but had sought the permission of the Viceroy and Spaur before doing so. The Viceroy replied that he 'did not intend to involve [himself] actively in this matter since announcements of this kind properly speaking came under the jurisdiction of the police alone' (HHSAPL-V, K 23). Spaur added nothing to this when he passed the message to Torrisani who was clearly meant to bear the responsibility alone. He, therefore, let the matter drop.

[61] Taylor, *The Italian Question in European Diplomacy*, p. 22.

himself supporting Milan against Vienna, and, as far as the political proposals were concerned, his greatest supporter was the Viceroy, a fact that brought Metternich anything but relief.

According to Ficquelmont, the Viceroy had agreed with his plan from the start: 'A short time ago the Viceroy stopped deluding himself — it seems to me he recognizes the weakness of his personal position [...]. His Imperial Highness has expressed his agreement with this project and says that if the Emperor agrees, he believes that this would be the best means to adopt'.[62] In another letter, of 4 December 1847, Ficquelmont reported further: 'The Archduke arranged this morning for Baron von Grimm to tell me that he had thought more about the idea which I had developed to him and that he entirely agreed with it'.[63] Indeed Ficquelmont and Rainer had even been discussing who could direct the 'new' vice-regal chancellery (the proposed 'Council of State'). The Archduke had suggested Spaur but Ficquelmont had objected that he had lost all credit in the country and had not been up to the job of Governor; he had good qualities, but not the intelligence to deal with present problems. The Viceroy suggested therefore that Hartig was the only man for the job and Ficquelmont agreed. Ficquelmont thought that Hartig might do it. He could come to Milan, make an institutional success of the new position and return to Vienna to a higher and more suitable post. Thus, from Ficquelmont's viewpoint, all was going well as far as Milan was concerned: the Viceroy agreed not only with his plan, but also that Hartig was the man to carry it out.

He was encouraged for another reason also. All 'well-meaning men' in Milan and Venice had been telling him that, although 'nothing less was at stake than the maintenance of Lombardy', the majority of citizens were looking for a moderate reform of administration only.[64] This might then have been true, although it is doubtful. However, in mid-October 1847, Count Gabrio Casati, the Italian mayor of Milan in a letter to the Austrian court official Pillersdorff, had spoken on behalf of 'all those who love order and tranquillity and the well-being of the country', those who wanted to see 'the population pacific and content with its situation' and had written of 'Young Italy and similar stupidities'. He had gone as far as to write: 'Our country cannot have a form of government such as people elsewhere like to imagine; and all those who have a grain of good sense are not as blind as to believe that a constitution such as is the order of the day with other nations could be apropos for us'.[65] Thus, at any rate there was reason for hope, and optimism was the leading characteristic of Ficquelmont's remarks to Rainer: 'When your position is strengthened and your effectiveness increased as a result, things will change *as if touched by a magic wand*. The whole country will experience a new life and will have absolute confidence in you. All that is required is [the Ficquelmont plan]'.[66]

The Viceroy had by this time set his heart on the Ficquelmont reforms; on the other hand, he was much more apprehensive than Ficquelmont about the likely reaction of Vienna. Indeed, in spite of having been shown Metternich's letter of 9 December, he never accepted that he had indicated approval. That this was so emerges from a letter he wrote on 21

[62] See Ficquelmont's report of 3 December. The Viceroy had, then, agreed to the plan before Metternich had seen it.

[63] HHSAPL-V, K 23, Ficquelmont to Metternich, Milan, 4 December 1847.

[64] HHSAPL-V, K 23, Ficquelmont to Rainer, Milan, 15 December 1847.

[65] Helfert, 'Casati und Pillersdorff und die Anfänge der italienischen Einheitsbewegung', pp. 456–68.

[66] HHSAPL-V, K 23, Ficquelmont to Rainer, Milan, 15 December 1847.

December to the Chancellor himself, a letter that both reflected his frustration and pleaded his defence.[67] According to this document, Rainer had not only agreed with Ficquelmont from the start, but on 13 December had submitted to the Emperor a list of 'improvements' suggested by Spaur and Torrisani, relating to the immediate situation in Milan; he had returned to both subjects in another letter to the Emperor of 18 December; yet he had heard nothing about either communication despite his 'repeated' assurances that these steps would be welcomed in Lombardy. In order, therefore, to ensure that 'so highly important a matter' be given the 'quickest possible treatment', he added: 'Perhaps in the meantime the popular mood would improve by spreading it around that His Majesty is giving my chancellery a collegiate constitution and is disposed to approve the extension of my powers'.[68] He wrote nothing to indicate that Metternich had already approved the plan; the message of the letter was that Milan was being kept in the dark.[69]

Milan by this time was in a state of high excitement. On 8 December 1847, a deputy of the Lombard Central Congregation, Nazzari, had entered a motion on the record seeking an enquiry into Lombard grievances. The Governor, Spaur, had agreed to this (the Central Congregations, after all, had the right to voice the nation's discontents), and as a result a commission of deputies was formed to carry out the enquiry under the chairmanship of Count Pietro Porro. This commission in turn drew up a petition and on 30 December the deputies were due to take a vote on it. Ficquelmont and Rainer were therefore anxious to get approval before the end of the month.

Time had always been of the essence. In his letter of 4 December, Ficquelmont had told Metternich: 'I do not get alarmed easily but I am worried about our near future if we do not take some large-scale, firm and quick action; the moment is favourable [...]. There must be no more delay [...]. If we are seen to win back the Kingdom for the Empire we will put an end to the revolutionary movement in central Italy'.[70] He related the cautionary tale of Marshal Wirich Daun who lost Milan in 1746 on account of 'General Plus Tard', Charles VI, and ended: 'The whole of Lombardy is at stake and the opinion of most of Italy is against us. Let us, therefore, act wisely'.[71] When, towards the end of the month, still no news had been forthcoming from Vienna, Ficquelmont, by then somewhat desperate, wrote to Metternich of impending doom. The government in Milan 'was beginning to disintegrate' and the only remedy was reform:

> The activity of the police diminishes steadily every day. Monsieur Torrisani lacks support, it seems, and it would appear that he could do nothing about this even if he wanted to. The consideration that the judicial hierarchy and the police can only consist of Italians is in itself a proof of the obtaining necessity to adopt an Italian principle as the basis for government. To concentrate the whole administration in the court chancelleries in Vienna, far from guaranteeing the security of authority has the opposite effect of compromising it, for it is quite impossible to have judges and

[67] HHSAPL-V, K 5, Rainer to Metternich, Milan, 21 December 1847.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Metternich at this stage would only just have received Hartig's comments, if indeed he had already received them at all. Hartig's report was dated 20 December 1847.

[70] Ficquelmont argued on 4 December that the King of Naples was coming close to giving his support to a customs league with Austria and that only Sardinian pressure was preventing Metternich from 'carrying off a very important triumph over Lord Palmerston', HHSAPL-V, K 23, Ficquelmont to Metternich, Milan, 4 December. Administrative reform, therefore, could swing public opinion and help stiffen the Neapolitans.

[71] HHSAPL-V, K 23, Ficquelmont to Metternich, Milan, 4 December 1847.

police employees who are not Italian and it is in the faithful exercise of these functions alone that the basis of public obedience and security can be found.[72]

In fact, paralysis of government had become literal. By 30 December the Archduke Rainer was on the brink of a nervous collapse. The Nazzari motion had been bad enough; but with the Tobacco Riots of 3 and 4 January, during which Austrian troops clashed lethally with the mob, he went all but over the brink. So too did his 'right-hand man' the wretched Grimm; yet the nervous reaction experienced by Grimm took on an altogether more interesting form since Grimm assumed that, if nothing were happening, this was probably on account of Ficquelmont's lack of influence. He therefore decided to write straight to Vienna. He did not dare write to Metternich and so wrote instead to Hofrat Pilat,[73] an acquaintance who served the Archduke Ludwig, and also to Count Hartig.[74]

In his first letter to Pilat, dated 30 December, Grimm attacked Ficquelmont not quite directly, but with some bitterness: Ficquelmont, he wrote, had come to Milan with the promise that 'Vienna at long last would concern itself with our affairs here'; yet nothing had happened, despite the fact that the promise had been received with 'indescribable joy'. Grimm then resorted to imperatives rather than requests: more troops were needed 'as quickly as possible'. He even implied that Ficquelmont was a failure as a diplomat: the Pope, he wrote, was very much in a fix and might still require help. For all these reasons he begged his friend Pilat to pass on the news to Metternich because, according to the Viceroy, 'on him and him alone' depended the salvation of the Kingdom.[75] Not satisfied with this, Grimm then went on to commit an almost incredible blunder: he wrote to Hartig in the very obvious hope that he was about to replace Ficquelmont:

For a little time the rumour has been spreading here that Your Excellency is coming in the capacity of Minister of State-cum-Court Commissioner. What joy this rumour has aroused in Milan! With what happiness this news was received by His Imperial Highness! May it come true, indeed quickly, as quickly as possible!

His Imperial Highness, however, wants to retain Your Excellency not merely temporarily but forever as Minister of State in his presence and as 'someone to lean on' (the very words of His Imperial Highness), should things go wrong [*im Verhinderungsfalle*]. It would pain His Imperial Highness should Your Excellency not accept this post.

May Your Excellency allow me to use this occasion to present you with my most respectful wishes for 1848. Would that I could soon repeat this wish in person!

I respectfully remain
Your Excellency's humble servant,
Grimm[76]

The letter ended with a short postscript: Grimm had not penned this letter himself for which fact he apologized; he had the shakes and could not use his arm.

With the new year and the Tobacco Riots, Grimm once again took direct action. Writing to Vienna (to various Hofräte, perhaps including Pilat), he described the events of the

[72] HHSAPL-V, K 23, Ficquelmont to Metternich, Milan, 26 December 1847.

[73] Grimm's letters are to be found in HHSAPL-V, K 23 and K 5. They are almost illegible (his hand was shaking badly as he wrote) and not always dated.

[74] HHSAPL-V, K 23, Grimm to Hartig, Milan, 30 December 1847.

[75] HHSAPL-V, K 23, Grimm to Pilat, Milan, 30 December 1847.

[76] Ficquelmont's report to Metternich of 4 December 1847 (see above) had referred to a discussion between Ficquelmont and the Viceroy in which both men considered Hartig the best candidate to be Rainer's chief adviser in Milan.

beginning of the year, again with strident pleas for immediate action. People, he wrote, had viewed the riots as a kind of 'Büberei' (horseplay), 'but it was a much more serious affair this morning' (3 January 1848); on 4 January he once again reproached Vienna: 'If the troops promised us to have to march to Lombardy *on foot* and if we do not receive a *very great* increase in the number of troops, we might well be unable to hold out here. Everything depends on Vienna recognizing our situation and condescending to do something as soon as possible'.[77] The results of this correspondence were predictable. Metternich took up the matter with the Archduke Ludwig who had to pacify him with a letter on 8 January 1848. On the other hand, Ludwig's apology was by no means abject; possibly he had sympathy for Grimm:

> Grimm is an honest man, but infinitely nervous. I could tell you a host of stories to prove his timidity in everyday life. This anxiety is regrettable at the present moment when the police force seems not to be fulfilling its duty. As you rightly say, this trouble about cigars is really '*Büberei*'. On the other hand, it is an attempt on the part of the Party to see if it can set the mob in action and as such is not altogether to be ignored. If people can be forced into using weapons at a time when the newspapers represent everything in the worst light, things will become unpleasant.[78]

Grimm heard of Metternich's displeasure and wrote again to Hartig, this time assuring him that it had been not his own, but the Viceroy's, views that he had voiced:

> His Imperial Majesty has heard by letter from Vienna that what I wrote *privately* after the disturbances of January 1, 2, 3 and 4 to *you* and *Pilat*, has caused great offence in Vienna. I beg you to tell His Excellency, your chief, that I did not write without the *foreknowledge of His Imperial Highness*. However, His Imperial Highness was very much overawed by the menacing behaviour of the people — indeed he was *absolutely dejected* — and thought that by my letter he would receive a quicker reply. I assure you that this fine gentleman was, when he was alone with me, in a state that moved one to pity.[79]

The following day (14 January), Grimm repeated his assurances in yet another letter, adding plaintively that the Viceroy's condition gave concern to all.[80] This did not help Grimm, for he had defied the Chancellor's 'Italian principle' and was quickly pensioned off.[81] To put it succinctly, the 'Italian principle' meant: children should be seen but not heard.

The Grimm letters were only one result of the reassertion of the vice-regal element in government. Another was the Viceroy's scheme to pacify the populace with a proclamation, the first of his viceroyalty.[82] This he had drawn up on 4 January with Ficquelmont's help.[83] However, so concerned was he by the 'gravity of the situation' that he also asked the mayor, Casati, to issue an appeal for calm, an indication of his belief that neither his own authority nor that of any other Austrian could hope to secure the desired result.[84] Ficquelmont, once again, had been consulted and had once again agreed. He told Metternich: 'the innovation of having the mayor speak out [was] in itself no dangerous precedent since he [would] only say as much

[77] HHSAPL-V, K 5, Grimm to Pilat, Milan, 1, 2, 3, 4 January 1848.
[78] HHSAPL-V, K 5, Archduke Ludwig to Metternich, Milan, 8 January 1848.
[79] HHSAPL-V, K 5, Grimm to Hartig, Milan, 13 January, 1848.
[80] HHSAPL-V, K 5, Grimm to Hartig, Milan, 14 January 1848.
[81] HHSAPL-V, K 23, Ficquelmont to Metternich, Milan, 24 February 1848. Ficquelmont reported that Grimm wanted to retire with the title of 'Staatsrat'.
[82] HHSAPL-V, K 23, Ficquelmont to Metternich, Milan, 4 January 1848.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.

as he [was] permitted to'.[85] This was true since the viceroy's proclamation was much more controversial than Casati's. The key passage ran: 'I take this opportunity to renew to you *my profound hopes* that His Majesty will receive graciously and examine wisely those wishes that have been expressed in a lawful manner and that have already been or which are still to be delivered to the foot of the throne'.[86] Metternich was furious. Having an active Viceroy was obviously no blessing and in a caustic letter dated 9 January he at last replied to the Archduke's letter of 21 December.[87] The Chancellor was more verbose than usual: he lectured Rainer on the themes of 'time and space', 'the endemic and the epidemic', 'the needs of today and the needs of tomorrow' as well as many other old Metternich favourites. The sting, however, was in the tail. The Viceroy had referred in his proclamation to 'improvements in administration' and Metternich upbraided him for that:

> Improvements are always desirable and unfortunately often necessary. They must take place; but they must not be promised since party spirit always sees behind a promise an interpretation of its own, an interpretation which may not be that of the government, much less that which the party, so long as it itself is not responsible for government, considers to be *just*. *Making promises* is one of the surest perils of our times since by doing so the status quo [*das Halten*] is necessarily abandoned. No ruler has fallen into deeper trouble with promises than Charles Albert! The Pope is in the same position. Rulers must negotiate but never promise.[88]

Metternich reserved his greatest sarcasm, however, for Ficquelmont: 'Does no one consult you or tell you anything? You are a much better channel, a much shorter path to reach me by than M. Pilat! [...] My dear Count, you must make full use of your position [*emparer fortement*]; It is a simple one and therefore a strong one. If people do not consult you, demand to be consulted, and if they refuse, then protest and tell us about it'. The Chancellor complained that his Chancellery was being only fitfully informed of what was happening; more important, he gave a clue to what he really believed with regard to administration: 'you will understand from what I say to you that I must have recourse above all to my individual responsibility; it is for you and the course of events to confirm my impressions or to rectify them'.[89] On a slightly more hopeful note, however, Metternich wrote that the government was 'actively engaged' in finding remedies to its Italian problem. A courier would inform Ficquelmont about the 'immediate steps' to be taken; he would hear about 'organic measures' later.[90]

The courier arrived quickly with another proclamation and a letter for the Viceroy. Both were couched in the strongest terms and whereas the vice-regal proclamation had referred to 'improvements' and 'profound hopes' for change, the imperial proclamation stated:

[85] Ibid.

[86] See N. Bianchi Giovini, *L'Autriche en Italie*, 2 vols, Paris, 1854, 1, p. 277.

[87] HHSAPL-V, K 5, Metternich to Rainer, Vienna, 9 January 1848.

[88] Metternich had always been contemptuous of the King of Piedmont-Sardinia, Charles Albert's, promises. On 11 November 1847 the State Chancellor had written to Ficquelmont in the same vein: 'Of all the faults that can be committed by a man of power, the greatest is to *promise* public opinion that which can be presented as an *accomplished fact* [...]. To *publish* a law is a thousand times better than to undertake to enact one [...] however, the King obviously has not mastered his need for ovations'. HHSAPL-V, K 23, Metternich to Ficquelmont, Vienna, 11 November 1847.

[89] HHSAPL-V, K 23, Metternich to Ficquelmont, Vienna, 8 January 1848.

[90] Ibid.

> We regard it as a sacred duty to protect the provinces of Lombardy-Venetia against all attacks, no matter whence they come, with all the means that Providence has put at our disposal and to defend them vigorously. In this necessity we count upon the rectitude, judgement and the loyalty of our beloved subjects of the Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia, whose well-being and security in the enjoyment of their rights have always been admired both in this state and outside it. We also count upon the valour and loyal devotion of our troops whose principal glory has always been and will always be to show themselves to be solid supporters of our throne and a rampart against the calamities which rebellion and anarchy would bring upon the lives and property of peaceful citizens.

The letter to Rainer was more forthright:

> I have taken cognizance of the events which have occurred in Milan during the second and third days of this month. It appears to me that there exists, in the Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia, a faction whose aim it is to disturb public order and tranquillity. I have already done everything for Lombardy-Venetia that I believe to have been necessary to respond to the needs and desires of these provinces *and I am not disposed to make any further concessions*. Your Highness will make my sentiments in this regard known to the public. I trust in the majority of the inhabitants of the Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia and that no further such angry scenes will take place in the future. In any case, I have confidence in the devotion and valour of my troops.[91]

Both these documents were published on 17 January 1848. Both served to cut away the ground from under the feet of the moderates. Ficquelmont's hopes were dashed along with those of the Central Congregations;[92] relations between the Chancellor and his designated successor were henceforth strained.

In his letter of 8 January Metternich had told Ficquelmont to pull his weight. Presumably he meant by this that he should force the others concerned to take his advice. Metternich had always thought of the system working this way. And so it had, as long as the Chancellor and the Governor co-operated. That system, however, had now broken down. The Chancellor had so ignored his man in the middle that the bureaucrats had resorted to normal channels. Metternich was aghast at what had happened. Ficquelmont, however, was quite au fait with events and had reached the obvious conclusion: it was time for him to quit.

At first he was slightly diplomatic about his departure. He phrased his appeal to read as though he had finished the task assigned to him: the question of Ferrara had been settled; he had informed both Rainer and Radetzky of the Emperor's views; a military convention with Parma and Modena had strengthened Austria's hand; and since the Lombard-Venetian authorities were being kept abreast of what was happening elsewhere in Italy 'this intermediary position is no longer necessary [...], my official position has therefore lost its relevance'.[93] True, he had also had, 'besides this', the 'secret mission' of examining the government and administration of the country, but, he wrote to Metternich:

[91] See Bianchi Giovini, *L'Autriche en Italie*, 1, pp. 277–90.

[92] The proclamation was dated 9 January 1848 but its publication was delayed to respond to the demands of the Central Congregation, made on 14 January. These included: 1) A Council of State or an Italian Aulic Council to administer Lombardy-Venetia in concert with the Viceroy; this administration was to be separate from that of the rest of the Monarchy; 2) increased authority for the Central and provincial Congregations; 3) elected presidents for the Central Congregations; 4) more consultation by the government of the Central Congregations where law-making was concerned; 5) better education; 6) better codes of law; 7) restrictions on the police; 8) less censorship; 9) four reforms in favour of the poor; 10) customs reform; 11) abolition of the 'amodial' system; 12) reform of the stamp law; 13) reduction of the salt price; 14) guarantees about the administration of the 'Mont'; 15) a shorter period of conscription; and 16) Italian representation close to the Emperor.

[93] HHSAPL-V, K 23, see Ficquelmont to Metternich, Milan, 6 January 1848.

> My correspondence over the last four months will have demonstrated to you that in spite of the exceedingly delicate nature of the task, I have been able to fulfil it with an independence of mind that only my absolute devotion to the service of the Emperor has been able to give me. The official papers of the Viceroy and the successive reports that I have given you should have served to determine the solution already adopted. *I must presume so.*

He had, of course, to presume because he had no way of knowing what had been decided in Vienna: no one had had the courtesy to tell him. On the other hand, given that he had no real power anyway, he did not want to be saddled with the responsibility for measures that would not be his:

> Finding myself unable to influence governmental or administrative action, I can only be extraneous to the execution of these solutions; the time when I would have been able to give advice is already past; there is, then, nothing left for me to do. The prolonging of my mission would merely be misunderstood, falsely interpreted, for it would no longer relate in any way to my double position of statesman and soldier.[94]

In a second letter, written on the same day, he stated his position in a more straightforward manner:

> I asked the favour of Your Highness to be recalled. My position is one of extreme difficulty, compromising even for the state. Many people recently (several deputations yesterday) have questioned me on a variety of subjects. I am obliged to say, when a quick decision is called for, that I am in no position to take any. 'What, then, is my mission?' the public asks and if people believe I am an adviser they charge me with the responsibility for measures which are unknown to me and which I could not have prevented had I known about them. I do not believe, my Prince, that it could be part of your intention to leave me any longer in a position in which I can do no more and which today involves me in a situation of total powerlessness. The facts are there to prove it. One can be cast into the maelstrom at the beginning or in the middle of one's career; but at the very end, my Prince, that would be unworthy.[95]

Nor was he acting impulsively, for the next day he wrote: 'I beg Your Highness not to consider the request I had the honour to address to you yesterday as an impulse of the moment produced by the excessive indecision of the Viceroy in such a decisive moment'. The true motive behind his requests was his dissatisfaction with Vienna, the indecision of Metternich, not of the Viceroy:

> There are sudden squalls [...] which one must be prepared for. A miscalculation of even one or two days often renders this impossible. Such is the case here. I asked Your Highness to recall me because I have only the power to advise which amounts to nothing when the advice is not listened to or is resisted by those who possess the executive power; and since such is the case, already estranged from the course which could have made you think that I was acting on impulse, I today renew my request, my Prince, which is to be authorized to leave, as soon as the measures taken by Vienna are sent here.[96]

He had not resigned, but had obviously come close to it. Next day he again warned Metternich that the 'remedy [...] must come from Vienna'.[97]

By now the Viceroy was feeling equally frustrated. His 'thinking', he told Ficquelmont, had 'not been understood'; he had been confronted with 'delaying tactics'.[98] At a loss to know

[94] Ibid.
[95] HHSAPL-V, K 23, Ficquelmont to Metternich, Milan, 6 January 1848.
[96] HHSAPL-V, K 23, Ficquelmont to Metternich, Milan, 7 January 1848.
[97] HHSAPL-V, K 23, Ficquelmont to Metternich, Milan, 8 January 1848.
[98] HHSAPL-V, K 23, Ficquelmont to Metternich, Milan, 9 January 1848.

what to do, he spent his time 'detailing' and 'outlining more positively' the plans that Ficquelmont and he had already agreed on with regard to the vice-regal Chancellery. His support was still genuine: 'He regards the measure as essential for him personally and for the country; far from seeing in it a weakening of his authority, on the contrary, he would find in it a means by which to exercise that authority with more certainty and promptness'.[99] Ficquelmont, on the other hand, grew somewhat more liberal under pressure. He wrote to Metternich that while the reform proposals of the Central Congregation were by and large 'very reprehensible', they should by no means be ignored:

> it will be necessary, in our own interest [...] to do justice to demands based upon reason and right. Force alone has never ruled the world, today less than ever. To enslave is not to govern; it would, therefore, be in the best interest of the Monarchy for the Emperor, having commanded and spoken with respect to his dignity and the defence of his rights, [...] to deign to take the grievances of his Italian subjects into consideration and to order that Fortune remedy them.[100]

Yet the day after writing this letter, perhaps the day after that, he must have received only Metternich's sarcastic upbraiding, to which he replied with dignity. He paid tribute first to Metternich's judgement over the previous thirty years and to the pleasure he had had in working with him; but he then went on, more in sorrow than in anger, to tell him just how mistaken he was and at one point even felt called upon to remind the Chancellor of his original instructions:

> You will permit me to observe, however, that on one point, my Prince, you are wrong. That is with regard to the position in which I find myself. Your Highness tells me, 'My dear Count, use your position to the full; it is straightforward and, therefore, strong'. You made it a strictly political position, my Prince, which was simple and natural and in this sense I believe I have carried it out to the full. Permit me to transcribe for you the words which you had the honour to address to me on 11 September 1847 [...]. Thus, my Prince, my position was absolutely settled in advance; it was political and officially nothing more than that.

If Spaur or Grimm took less notice of him than he desired, it was not their fault: 'I did not and do not have the right to expect more [...]. I have been reduced to the role of a simple observer and when one is placed not beside but outside an administration one can have no other role'. The fault lay with Vienna, for he had, after all, pointed out the failings within the administration of Lombardy-Venetia, but had been given no powers to remedy these wrongs: 'advice is nothing when there is no authority [... Moreover], the time has come when deeds must take the place of observations. The system as it stands is such that decisions can be taken only in Vienna. It is there alone that the experience required can be of use [...]. You have seen, my Prince, that I have been unable to have implemented the one large-scale measure that I have been responsible for'.[101]

Metternich, however, had something else in mind. The next news from Vienna was the letter to the Viceroy and the imperial proclamation. A pattern had emerged that would continue until the outbreak of revolution: Ficquelmont would grow more outspoken in the pursuit of reforms, Metternich more determined not to grant them.

On 16 January 1848 Ficquelmont reacted to the news of the imperial proclamation, which had 'profoundly distressed' the Viceroy.[102] It was, he told Metternich, a document which

[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid.
[101] HHSAPL-V, K 23, Ficquelmont to Metternich, Milan, 14 January 1848.
[102] HHSAPL-V, K 23, Ficquelmont to Metternich, Milan, 16 January 1848.

could only have been a reaction to 'the general position in Italy, not to the events in Milan of the 2nd and 3rd'. In his view, the proclamation was a mistake; and so was the attitude behind it:

> You rightly declare yourself against anything that would have the character of concession; but my Prince, solutions to administrative questions, measures which have been solicited for years, cannot be called concessions; a country does not reach the pass in which the Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia finds itself today in a short space of time. Central Italy is heading for an explosion but the scene has been set for a long time.[103]

Ficquelmont saw many causes for this. The local governments, for example, had lacked the wisdom to deal with minor events in an appropriate fashion and this had 'encouraged the factions'. But factions or no factions, the main blame lay entirely with Vienna:

> [This discontent] has been produced by the neglect of the capital; the centre at Vienna does not recognize its policy failures; they remain in the boxes of the *Hofstellen* and hence, my Prince, you are unaware of the most essential and serious matters which concern the general interests of the country as well as particular administrative, financial and judicial matters, matters that governors have been submitting to the competent authorities for years but which have been neither investigated nor responded to.[104]

The result was that everybody in Lombardy put the blame on Vienna and that the sentiment was now 'universal in the country' that the Viceroy should receive extended powers and a reorganized Chancellery. Finally Metternich was warned against relying on force; if justice and right were ignored, Italians inside and outside the Monarchy would attempt an uprising anyway. This in itself might present no immediate problem, but a 'moral revolt' was more worrying than an armed one.

Two days later, Ficquelmont again took up the cause of the Central Congregations. 'To get things moving again' an 'organic measure' was needed, if the effect of the Emperor's proclamation was meant to be more than temporary. Things had to move again for the simple reason that they had 'stagnated, if not decayed, for twenty years or more'.[105] He once again outlined the grievances, mainly economic, and added that 'to take decisions on these different matters would not be to make concessions, but to render justice'. He elaborated this as follows:

> Certain of the demands made by this assembly will have to be firmly rejected as incompatible with the existence of the Kingdom as part of a *united Empire*; others could not be conceded without smacking of concession, and certainly the moment to ask for them is ill chosen — But there are some, my Prince, which are founded on reason and right. To consider these without delay, and to follow this consideration by decisions that would be fair, would not — I believe I have to repeat it — be to make concessions, but to satisfy genuine needs and to enter on a course that could lead to the pacification of the country.[106]

After four months in Italy Ficquelmont had established a coherent viewpoint with regard to Lombardy-Venetia; Metternich, on the other hand, was perplexed by this change of view. He could not accept that the Italian possessions had been stagnating for twenty years; on the contrary, they were part of an empire which, under his skilful guidance, had come to resemble the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth. Metternich wrote to Lützow in 1847:

[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid.
[105] HHSAPL-V, K 23, Ficquelmont to Metternich, Milan, 18 January 1848.
[106] Ibid.

> If people would only view our Empire impartially: everything there is progressing; everything that is good and useful is advancing [...] all the reasonable demands preached by progressives have been fulfilled by us. Our Empire acknowledges the perfect equality of citizens before the law; we have no privileges or feudal burdens; in our Empire is found equality of taxation and the independence of justice. All parts of the Empire have assemblies of estates and a municipal system much more liberal than that which exists in countries ruled by the modern representative system. In no other empire are the nationalities more respected than in ours; respect for the nationalities is, indeed, a necessary condition of our existence; nowhere is there less absolutist government than in our Empire, nor could there be.[107]

The Ficquelmont proposals had hardly been radical. If Ficquelmont himself had come to adopt a somewhat more critical position in the light of recent events and as a result of his frustration, the proposal to reorganize the vice-regal chancellery had been made in the Metternich spirit. Metternich, therefore, was able to contemplate its execution.

Indeed, when he received Ficquelmont's letter of 16 January 1848 he was so alarmed at the gulf that was developing between Milan and Vienna that he almost gave way. On 18 January he had instructions drawn up for Hartig that came very near to the Ficquelmont proposals: the Viceroy was to go to Verona; he was to be aided by counsellors who would not be his subordinates; the Lombard government was to be strengthened; and deputies of the Central Congregations were to be summoned to Vienna.[108] Metternich had already been discussing something like this with Hartig on the previous day anyway.[109] It had then been proposed to make the Viceroy the Emperor's 'alter ego'; to give him advisers of the highest grade for military, diplomatic, economic and judicial matters; but to make him responsible for the decisions of this 'giunta' only when he was overriding a majority. The plan never came to anything probably because Metternich convinced himself that it would solve nothing. Certainly it was a contradictory piece of thinking: how would the Viceroy become the Emperor's 'alter ego' if normally his advisers were meant to overrule him? This was the problem that had caused Hartig to reject the Ficquelmont proposals in the first place. It was, of course, not a problem at all, since the Viceroy appeared to be just as willing to be as dependent on others as he had always been; nevertheless, it was a non-problem Metternich could never really avoid.

He wrote to Ficquelmont on 23 January by which time he had probably not yet rejected his impulse; the impulse itself, as it turned out, had been occasioned as much by nostalgia as by Ficquelmont:

> Two things are absolutely necessary in the Italian provinces: they must be governed in the provinces themselves and represented at the centre of government in Vienna. This is what I begged the Emperor to do in 1815 and what I have not ceased to insist on for at least thirty-three years; it is at last going to be done [...]. Have a little patience, my dear Count, things will work out as they should and you will run no risk to your health.[110]

This was Metternich's standard alibi when he came under criticism; at other times he forgot about imperial reform. Another excuse contained in the letter ran: 'You would be

[107] *Aus Metternichs nachgelassenen Papieren*, 7, pp. 424–25. Metternich to Lützow (Austrian Ambassador to the Papal States), Vienna, 10 October 1847.
[108] *Aus Metternichs nachgelassenen Papieren*, 7, pp. 574–77.
[109] Ibid.
[110] HHSAPL-V, K 23, Metternich to Ficquelmont, Vienna, 23 January 1848.

confounded here by our impotence, which, I can assure you in all conscience, is not voluntary on our part [...]. Things often look very different at a distance. The concessions made by the Viceroy in granting his permission to the Central Congregations and those he seemed to make in his proclamations have produced a painful impression here'. In other words, Metternich was beginning to revert to type. His impulse to change had been unable to counter his fears regarding concessions. His fears regarding concessions in turn sustained his reliance on the military: 'If I alone had to formulate the *quid faciendum* the thing would be done quickly, but such is not the case, and, indeed, it could not be so. The same holds true for the future commander-in-chief of the army of Italy regarding this very portentous question'. All in all, Metternich's real impulse was to imprison the opposition and disperse the mob, if necessary by bullets; eventually, perhaps, there could be administrative change, but that was a red herring. This was the import of his letter of 23 January. In a second letter of the same date, he reinforced this conclusion by congratulating Ficquelmont on an important recent development: the Viceroy had agreed to a 'daily conference' with Ficquelmont, Radetzky and Spaur, the aim of which was to decide on measures to deal with civil unrest. Altogether, it seemed the answer to Metternich's prayers:

> Only by centralizing the action of the various branches of authority is it possible to establish its unity and hence its force. Power distributed is no longer power. The Emperor has adopted the same method here. A commission assembles continually under the presidency of Count Hartig to prepare the decisions to be taken by Conference to keep government action in touch with events in the Italian provinces and to ensure that the Emperor is also in touch with events and can take decisions speedily.[111]

The fulfilment of his Italian principle was at last within his grasp. Without any 'concessions', without any 'organic change', the outline of his proposals of 1817 appeared to be assuming reality. Italy was represented in the heart of government by the commission presided over by Hartig; in the provinces themselves Ficquelmont and Radetzky were in a position to bully the Viceroy. This was everything that Metternich had ever hoped for. The efficient centralization that had always been his aim was about to become reality. On 17 February he was to write to Ficquelmont: 'Here is what is needed: that what we order this side of the Alps should be carried out on the other; that people there should not seek to weaken our directives but to put them into effect exactly as ordered'.[112] Since he now believed that the authorities in Milan were in a position to co-operate and keep the mob off the streets, there was no reason at all for him to think about reform. Consequently, the plan of 18 January was never adopted.

In Milan, however, Ficquelmont and Rainer failed to grasp what was happening. The ad hoc arrangements that so signally appealed to Metternich were merely temporary expedients to them. They still awaited an 'organic measure' and since the Congregations were by this time to present their final demands, they awaited this with impatience. On 28 January Ficquelmont wrote again to Metternich, quoting some words of the Viceroy's: 'if Vienna had at least considered the most important issues which he had raised over a long number of years, there would have been no reason for the Congregations to have made the representations they had just submitted to him and the country would have had no reason to accuse the central

[111] Ibid. Ficquelmont had not referred to the daily conferences in his correspondence with Metternich; but Radetzky had reported their creation in his correspondence with the President of the Hofkriegsrat and Metternich had got word of it.

[112] HHSAPL-V, K 23, Metternich to Ficquelmont, Vienna, 17 February 1848.

administration of ignoring its interests'.[113] On 5 February he said much the same about his own memoranda, having once again outlined the Italians' grievances: 'All of these things', he wrote, 'should have been seen to at the right time'; and the 'right time', he stressed, would have been years ago.[114] He would even have outlined further grievances: 'but to what purpose? When the premise of every necessity, the thing that I have believed was most important to call to your attention ever since I came to Italy appears still not to be understood in Vienna'. Truly, he wrote, 'things are too serious, too difficult and too dangerous to be allowed to continue like this'.[115]

The Viceroy took up the matter with his brother, Archduke Ludwig. He asked him to ensure that the imperial reply to the demands of the Congregations be given careful consideration. Many of these demands would be unacceptable but some at least had 'long been the subject of official discussions' and everyone hoped for their approval. Rainer pleaded for a mild response. He did not want concessions, merely the speedy introduction of genuine improvements: 'It is becoming ever more urgent', he wrote, 'for Vienna to do something for the country so that the government retains the sympathy of the good and the calm'.[116]

Metternich eventually replied on 17 February in an attempt to refute Ficquelmont's charge, as he put it, that he was 'not bothering' about Italy.[117] He described this defence as 'une longue lettre de rabâchage', he did not mean this seriously, but the description was not off-beam. As a piece of Metternich prose, the letter was classic in its ambivalence. He liked to be seen to own up to the faults of the regime; and once again, therefore, there was the admission that 'the throne has been badly represented by a defective organization of the Viceroyalty in the Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia and [...] the country has been deprived of national representation at the centre of government'.[118] There was even the consolation that 'this fault must and will be remedied'. A vicious circle, however, was also evident:

> Every government which engages in concessions is a government placed on the slope to perdition. Good government does not rely on *concessions*. Goodness is not susceptible to concessions; it is evil that claims them. Many things which are just in themselves, which are useful in their application, become dangerous if, for whatever reason, they are subject to a false interpretation. So if I condemn real concessions I have to condemn also those which only seem like concessions. The Emperor cannot and will not make a concession. He will remedy evils which exist if they can be remedied, but he will do so spontaneously and of his own free will.[119]

Once again Metternich was the victim of his own mental trap. He would not be responsible for reforms until the situation had changed for the better. Everyone in Italy, on the other hand, was only too well aware that while nothing happened in Vienna, the situation could only deteriorate.

[113] HHSAPL-V, K 23, Ficquelmont to Metternich, Milan, 28 January 1848.
[114] HHSAPL-V, K 23, Ficquelmont to Metternich, Milan, 5 February 1848.
[115] Ibid.
[116] HHSAPL-V, K 5, Rainer to Ludwig, Milan, 6 February 1848.
[117] HHSAPL-V, K 23, Metternich to Ficquelmont, Vienna, 17 February 1848.
[118] Ibid. 'It is not an old practitioner who runs the risk of mistaking the results of a regime's failures when he has been dealing with them for twenty-five years'. A similar statement was included in his letter of 23 January: 'Does the administration of the Kingdom leave nothing to be desired? Who would dare permit himself to deny this? I at any rate will not be guilty of such an assertion'.
[119] Ibid.

Metternich's letter is, however, more important in another respect for it reveals the true source of Metternich's attitude. He really did believe what he had written to Lützow about the Habsburg Utopia; the Ficquelmont proposals were quite beside the point:

> The struggle in which we are engaged is not really a matter of our administrative failures, but of an attack directed by the Faction against the existence of Austrian power across and below the Alps. The attack against conservative power would have been the same if Lombardy had been governed without any administrative failure. The failures have facilitated the activity of the revolutionary contagion, but they play no serious role in the illness. I more than anyone have the right to make this remark, since nobody has pointed out to the throne more than I the faults committed in its name in the years since the general peace. I am not one of those men who take consolation in being proved right; evil in my eyes is never seen as good; I can also say candidly what I think and hence I express my conviction without reserve: what we are dealing with today is not the result of our failings, but the result of totally different causes of trouble and death.

The internal troubles of Italy had external causes and they would have to be solved from without:

> The remedy for the intolerable position we are in will come from outside. Italy is undoubtedly entering a period of open revolution; the masks will fall. You wrote to me: 'events in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies are destroying the *tête-à-tête* in which Austria finds herself with the Italian revolution'. I have adopted this phrase and am making full use of it in my despatches to courts. I ask you for a bill of indemnity in this respect.[120]

Events, he wrote, would prove him right. In two months the situation would have changed and by then he expected that the problems of Italy would be purely military. Reforms in these circumstances were clearly irrelevant. Not long afterwards, the proof he was waiting for began to arrive. On 24 February 1848 Louis Philippe was forced to abdicate and Metternich wrote triumphantly to Ficquelmont: 'You know what I have always thought about the solidity of the throne of July; I am not surprised by his fall [...]. Europe finds itself again in 1791 and 1792! Will there be no 1793?'.[121] The same letter asked Ficquelmont to ensure that the Viceroy removed himself to a place equidistant from Milan and Venice, where he could form the 'central point' of the two governments. It was pointed out, however, that the reason he was being removed should be 'clearly explained'. He was being sent away in anticipation, not of reform, but of 1793.

On the very same day that Louis Philippe abdicated in Paris, Ficquelmont penned his last letter to Metternich in which he touched on the reforms. He was departing Milan and leaving behind him a 'gulf' which, if it were not filled, would soon become a 'veritable danger'. He wrote: 'I am a link between elements which are absolutely separate and which have nothing to bring them together since they have been too long separated for that to be possible'.[122] He had done his best. He had proposed a plan to reorganize the vice-regal Chancellery, a plan which had been rejected. The situation had now changed: it was no longer a question of arguing about the effects that his plan might have had; it was a question merely of replacing him as adviser to the Viceroy. Metternich's reply was his directive of 1 March instructing Ficquelmont to send the Viceroy to Verona. Everything now depended on the army, which had its headquarters there. Ficquelmont was leaving for Vienna to become the president of the

[120] Metternich to Lützow, Vienna, 10 October 1847. See *Aus Metternichs nachgelassenen Papieren*, 7, pp. 424–25.
[121] HHSAPL-V, K 23, Metternich to Ficquelmont, Vienna, 1 March 1848.
[122] HHSAPL-V, K 23, Ficquelmont to Metternich, Milan, 24 February 1848.

Hofkriegsrat. This was ironic and as his wife pointed out: 'it is not the job he would have chosen'.[123] Hartig, who knew more about the Ficquelmont mission than Ficquelmont himself, later wrote that there would have been no point in appeasing Italian grievances, that Ficquelmont had been strung along all the time:

> the point in dispute was not the improvement of their condition under an Austrian government, but their actual separation from it; every concession, therefore, would have been misused to strengthen their means of opposing Austria. This was not suspected by the Austrian officials in the country, since they advised immediate compliance with the popular demands though it was at once perceived by the central authority in Vienna, who, in consequence of this conviction, and from an apprehension of the effects which concessions in the Lombardy-Venetian Kingdom might produce on other portions of the Empire, refused to withdraw from its customary cautious course *and declined to give a decisive answer.*[124]

The chief consideration in the mind of Vienna had been the unity of the Empire. 'What would be dangerous', Metternich had written, 'would be to transfer what is known here as a *chancellery* beyond the Alps, since the same thing would be immediately claimed by other parts of the Empire'.[125] Again, the last thing he wanted to see created in the Habsburg Empire was a federal state, and Ficquelmont had never advocated federalism: 'The question which we have to solve, then, is as follows. How can we go on running the Kingdom as a province but organize and above all govern it in such a fashion that we might present it as an Italian state to the hostile movement that the other Italian states want to stir up against us'.[126]

The real point at issue, therefore, between Ficquelmont and Metternich had been one of tactics. In what way and how far could the north Italian *gubernia* be disguised to look in some sense independent? Ficquelmont believed that some attractive modification was possible; Metternich, despite an occasional lapse, despaired and finally dissented. 'Whatever happens will be for the worse and therefore it is our interest that as little should happen as possible', wrote Lord Salisbury in 1887;[127] but Metternich had reached the same conclusion many decades before.

Ficquelmont believed that the Italians had genuine grievances, grievances that were capable of moderate solution. Metternich, on the other hand, did not. As far as he was concerned, the Italians' grievances were manufactured by the Faction; even if they were not, the Faction would exploit them. Instinctively, he knew that concessions were no way to deal with political nationalism. Nationalists believed in self-government or independence as a principle. Anything short of that would be unacceptable to them. No matter how many concessions were made to them, therefore, they would always ask for more — precisely what would happen in Hungary in 1848, in fact. In a supranational monarchy, therefore, political nationalism (as opposed to the cultural variety) had to be crushed.

The Ficquelmont mission had a double significance. It demonstrated not merely that Metternich was opposed to devolving government from Vienna, but also that even moderate nationalist political demands would be ignored. Palmerston grasped the situation accurately, when he told the Austrian ambassador in London:

[123] *Lettres du Comte et de la Comtesse*, p. 149.
[124] Hartig, *Genesis of the Revolution in Austria*, p. 68.
[125] HHSAPL-V, K 23, Metternich to Ficquelmont, Vienna, 23 January 1848.
[126] HHSAPL-V, K 23, Ficquelmont to Metternich, Milan, 27 December 1847.
[127] See C. J. Lowe, *Salisbury and the Mediterranean, 1886–96*, London, 1965, p. 1.

> Prince Metternich believes that he is a conservative by obstinately upholding the political status quo in Europe: we believe that we are conservatives by everywhere preaching and counselling reforms and improvements where these are designated and claimed to be necessary by the public. You, on the other hand, refuse everything. When order and tranquillity reign in your land, you say that concessions are useless; in moments of crisis and revolt you equally refuse them, not wishing to weaken authority, by appearing to bend before the storm. You also persist in refusing absolutely everything that public opinion demands in your country and in the lands in which you have influence and patronage; [finally you refuse] everything that is granted close or far from you. No, this immobility is not conservatism [...]. Your repressive and suffocating policy is also a fatal one and will lead to an explosion just as certainly as would a boiler that was hermetically sealed and deprived of an outlet for steam.[128]

Yet Metternich did not fear an explosion in Italy. The Italians, he believed, were scarcely human beings[129] and he counted on Radetzky's making very short work of them. The Austrian army might not be reliable elsewhere, but when it came to the crunch, it could always be relied upon in Italy. Insofar as Metternich had any solution to the Italian problem, it was the same solution he favoured anywhere else: repression. If people challenged the way society was run, the ruling class could always put them down. This was not to say, however, that Austrian rule was unenlightened or unsuccessful. Everyone in Italy, even the nationalists, agreed that Lombardy-Venetia, for all its faults, was the most prosperous, the most intellectually free, and even the best administered part of the peninsula.[130] That was the irony of it all.

[128] Erzsébet Andics, *Metternich und die Frage Ungarns*, Budapest, 1973, p. 274.
[129] Ibid., p. 37. Metternich described Italy as 'beautiful countries inhabited by human beings who are hardly worthy of this honourable title'.
[130] Denis Mack Smith, *Victor Emanuel, Cavour and the Risorgimento*, Oxford, 1971, pp. 7–9.