



Metternich: Councillor of Europe

Alan Palmer

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A glib assessment of Metternich might not be a favourable one, he was not without his ridiculous qualities, and yet he survived, more than survived, in fact, with the 'Age of Metternich' lasting for more than a generation, and giving Europe a measure of peace, albeit repressive, that was much needed after the Napoleonic convulsions.

Alan Palmer describes well Metternich's extraordinary longevity. 'Clement von Metternich held continuous office at the head of Europe's affairs for a longer period of time than any other statesman in modern history: he became foreign minister of the Austrian Empire in the autumn of 1809 and he did not resign until the spring of 1848. For thirty-three of these thirty-nine years his statecraft and philosophy of government determined the political pattern of the continent.

The 'Age of Metternich' , though often impatiently dismissed by historians as a mere interlude, lasted for twice as long as the 'Age of Napoleon' which preceded it and for half as long again as the 'Age of Bismarck' which followed in the closing decades of the century.'

Metternich was a statesman to his fingertips, practising 'the skills of diplomacy with greater fluency than any contemporary Talleyrand, from whom he had learnt many of the refinement of the game.'

How would he fare today? Probably quite well as he was, again in Alan Palmer's words, 'an early champion of federalism and a good European ...'

'As a work of history (it) cannot be faulted.' A. J. P. Taylor, *Observer*

'Well-written, well-researched, lucid and witty.' Philip Ziegler, *The Times*

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