

## THE MAIN PROBLEMS OF A MONOGRAPH ON IGNAZ VON PLENER

*Mechthild Wolf*

The author discusses a monograph of Ignaz von Plener which she is now preparing. This monograph will deal mainly with Plener's political activity in the years 1860—1873, during which period — first as Finance Minister and later as Minister of Commerce, but also as a parliamentarian — he played an important role in the decision-making process. Plener was put in charge of the Finance Ministry in 1860 through the offices of Count Agenor Goluchowski. He considered the difficult financial situation as only a question of Austria's credit standing, which was why he sought to gain the confidence of the high financial circles. He saw his ministerial activity in terms of serving their interests, and it was upon their urging that he became active politically and an energetic supporter of a constitution for Austria. Plener can be considered a prime moving force behind the February Patent. His operations in financial policy helped pave the way for Emperor Franz Joseph's decision in 1865 to adopt a more differentiated policy vis-à-vis Hungary and to dismiss the Schmerling cabinet. As a deputy in the Bohemian diet and member of the Reichsrat, Plener became the contact man between the German Liberals of Bohemia and the Belcredi and Beust governments as well as the supporters of a constitution in the various crownlands. Plener's importance as Minister of Commerce in the first Liberal government after the Ausgleich with Hungary lay in his role as a mediator between the emperor and the cabinet. He had perceived that the key to power in Austria was, in the last analysis, the Crown and that without taking its views into account, nothing could be achieved.

Plener was a politician of average ability. The fact that in this respect he scarcely differed from those who worked with him in the various governments makes a monograph on this man appear to be a promising approach to illuminating the political development of Austria in this period.