

Sismondi, a Citizen of Europe

I consider myself fortunate to have encountered Sismondi through Giovan Pietro Vieusseux during my time as director of the Centro Romantico by the Gabinetto Vieusseux, because their correspondence provides an introduction to the underlying issues besetting early 19th century Europe – in addressing those issues, both men refer constantly to such themes as trade or travel for personal observation, which they considered to be factors of crucial importance for Europe's progress – and above all, because Vieusseux's efforts in establishing and managing the Gabinetto Scientifico Letterario, which was to all intents and purposes a business, place their relationship firmly within a concrete, practical framework.

Moreover, they certainly did not look only at Europe's positive side or see it only in a positive light. For instance, a pamphlet by Jean-Emile Humbert (probably co-authored by Vieusseux) entitled *I Barbareschi e i Cristiani*, which Vieusseux published in 1822 and which was intended to sensitise the European powers meeting at the Congress of Verona, takes issue with the European nations' egotistical divisions, small-minded rivalries and moral pettiness towards the North African world. In a letter addressed to Humbert in 1823, Vieusseux points out that Europe is «unfortunately divided, and absorbed by such greater interests that it ignores barbarity, and the Bey of Algiers is going to have to impale a dozen Christians before it wakes up and takes notice».

This is the overall context in addressing which Vieusseux found in Sismondi a crucial referent, as we can see from Vieusseux's own *Journal-Itinéraire de mon voyage en Europe (1814-1817)*, edited by Lucia Tonini and published by the Centro Romantico in 1998.

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In my capacity as director of the Centro Romantico del Gabinetto Vieusseux, I was also involved in the conception and publication of books addressing the issue from a variety of different standpoints – volumes such as *Sismondi e la civiltà toscana* (2001, edited by Francesca Sofia); *Il Gruppo di Coppet e il viaggio. Liberalismo e conoscenza dell'Europa tra Sette e Ottocento* (2006, edited by Maurizio Bossi, Anne Hofmann and François Rosset); *Sismondi e la nuova Italia* (2011, edited by Letizia Pagliai and Francesca Sofia), and more recently *Giovane Pietro Vieusseux. Pensare l'Italia guardando all'Europa* (2013, edited by Maurizio Bossi).

So as Europe today still struggles to find its way forward, it is extraordinarily opportune to further the study and dissemination of this arduous and tormented European journey. Relations with the Associazione di Studi Sismondiani in that sense have been, and indeed continue to be, extremely fruitful. For my part, I am particularly grateful to Mirena Bernardini Stanghellini, Jacqueline de Molo Veillon, Francesca Sofia and Letizia Pagliai for their cooperation, at once productive and cordial, over so many years. The role entrusted to me as president of the Associazione di Studi Sismondiani is a great honour for me, and at the same time it prompts me to ensure the furtherance of the Associazione's work in the context of a scientific and loftily civic continuation of Sismondi studies for all of the reasons listed above.

RIASSUNTO

Saluto di apertura del neoletto presidente dell'Associazione di Studi Sismondiani, che sottolinea come l'intesa fra G.P. Vieusseux e Sismondi, nata dall'amicizia fra le rispettive famiglie, si manifesti soprattutto nel campo delle opinioni sul concreto operare necessario all'Europa nelle sue realtà più problematiche del primo Ottocento, e come ciò evidenzii aspetti rilevanti di entrambi.