

This is a matter for serious reflection. Let us not delay taking a decision until sudden and irresistible events disturb our judgement, and draw us in spite of ourselves in opposite directions. I now therefore propose to your Majesty, to regulate the present, and to secure the future, by means of a Congress.

Summoned to the throne by Providence and the will of the French people, but brought up in the school of adversity, it is perhaps less allowable for me, than for others, to ignore the rights of Sovereigns and the legitimate aspirations of peoples. Thus I am ready, without any preconceived system, to bring to an International Council a spirit of moderation and justice, the ordinary portion of those who have undergone so many different trials.

If I take the initiative in such an overture, I do not yield to an impulse of vanity, but because I am the Sovereign to whom ambitious projects have mostly been attributed. I have it at heart to prove, by this frank and loyal overture, that my sole object is to arrive, without convulsion, at the pacification of Europe. If this proposal be agreed to, I beg your Majesty to accept Paris as the place of meeting.

If the Princes, Allies and friends of France should think fit to enhance by their presence the authority of the deliberations, I shall be proud to offer them cordial hospitality. Europe will, perhaps, see some advantage in the capital, whence the signal of confusion has so often arisen, becoming the seat of conferences destined to lay the basis of a general pacification.

I take this opportunity of renewing to you the assurances of the high esteem and inviolable friendship with which I am,

Madame, my Sister,
Your Majesty's good Brother,
(Signed) NAPOLEON.

Paris, November 4th, 1863.

No. 2.

Extract of a Despatch from Earl Russell to Earl Cowley, dated Foreign Office, November 11, 1863.

MY LORD,

I HAVE to acquaint your Excellency that the Queen has received from the Emperor of the French a letter, dated November 4:

The Queen has stated, in reply to this letter, that the Emperor may be assured that any suggestion or proposal made by His Imperial Majesty will always command Her Majesty's most earnest and attentive consideration, and more especially when the general welfare of nations is concerned; that Her Majesty has, accordingly, directed her confidential advisers to submit to her the opinion which after due deliberation they may arrive at, in regard to the important measures which the Emperor recommends for adoption by his Allies; and that her Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs will, with as little delay as possible, authorise the Ambassador at Paris to make known to His Imperial Majesty's Government, the conclusion which, after weighing that opinion, Her Majesty may feel it her duty to adopt.

I am, &c.,
(Signed) RUSSELL.

No. 3.

From Earl Russell to Earl Cowley.

*Foreign Office,
November 12, 1863.*

MY LORD,

HER Majesty the Queen having been pleased to refer to her confidential servants a letter of the Emperor Napoleon, addressed to Her Majesty, on the subject of a Congress, I proceed to inform you of the view which Her Majesty's Government take of the proposal contained in it.

The letter invites Her Majesty to take part in a Congress, to be held in Paris, on the affairs of Europe.

I am commanded, in the first place, to inform your Excellency that Her Majesty's Government see in this step a proof of the interest taken by His Imperial Majesty in the welfare of Europe.

I will now proceed to remark on the ground stated for this proposal, and then examine the proposal itself.

His Imperial Majesty observes, that on all occasions when great convulsions have shaken the foundations, and deranged the limits of states, solemn compacts have been entered into, having for their object to reduce to order the new elements, and to recognise, while revising them, the changes that have been effected. Such was the object of the Treaty of Westphalia in the seventeenth century, and of the Negotiations of Vienna, in 1815. On this last foundation the political edifice of Europe now rests, and nevertheless, His Imperial Majesty observes, it is crumbling to pieces on all sides.

The Emperor goes on to state that, if the situation of the different countries is attentively considered, it is impossible not to admit, that, in almost all points, the Treaties of Vienna are destroyed, modified, disregarded, or menaced.

When so important a proposal as that which the Emperor has put forth, is made to rest on certain grounds, it is our duty to examine carefully the grounds themselves.

Nearly half a century has elapsed since the Treaties of 1815 were signed. The work was somewhat hurried by the necessity of giving repose to Europe after so many convulsions. Yet the changes made in this period of fifty years have not been more than might have expected from the lapse of time, the progress of opinion, the shifting policy of governments, and the varying exigencies of nations. If we take half a century from the Peace of Westphalia to 1700, or a similar period from the Peace of Utrecht to 1763, we shall find those periods marked by extensive changes, as well as the period which has elapsed between 1815 and 1863.

Yet it was not thought necessary, at the epochs mentioned, to proceed to a general revision either of the Treaty of Westphalia or of the Treaty of Utrecht.

It is the conviction of Her Majesty's Government, that the main provisions of the Treaty of 1815 are in full force; that the greater number of those provisions have not been in any way disturbed; and that on those foundations rests the balance of power in Europe.

If, instead of saying that the Treaty of Vienna has ceased to exist, or that it is destroyed, we enquire whether certain portions of it have been modified, disregarded, or menaced, other questions occur. Some of the modifications which have taken place have received the sanction of all the Great Powers, and now form part of the public law of Europe.

Is it proposed to give those changes a more general and solemn sanction? Is such a work