

E 21/57

*Le Chef du Foreign Office, Earl Granville,
au Chargé d'affaires de Grande-Bretagne à Berne, W.D. Christie*

*Copie**L*London, February 6th 1852

With reference to your despatches N. 5 and 7 of the 30th and 31 ultimo, reporting what passed between you and M. de Furrer on the subject of the note lately addressed by the French Minister to the Swiss Government relative to the French refugees in Switzerland¹, I have to desire you to point out to the Swiss Government the objections to an exaggerated resistance on their part to all the demands of the French Government.

You will observe to them that the declaration which was made by the Five Powers at Paris on the 20th November 1815² of by which they guaranteed the neutrality of Switzerland and the integrity and inviolability of its territory, had for its

1. Cf. N° 134, note 1.

2. RO I, p. 102–106.

object the promotion of peace in Europe, by rendering the condition of Switzerland conducive to the preservation of that peace. So long as Switzerland therefore abstains from any act and variance with her neutral character, she has the right to expect that the inviolability of her territory should be respected. If indeed the Swiss were to become aggressive towards their neighbours the guaranteed neutrality of Switzerland could not be held to protect them from being made to answer for such aggression. It unfortunately happens that those countries who are harsh neighbours to Switzerland consider their tranquillity threatened by the proceedings of the refugees who have found an asylum in Switzerland, and they argue that the neutral position which Switzerland is bound to maintain is thereby infringed now although Her Majesty's Government are far from adopting this argument as their own, they still cannot conceal the fact that its validity is maintained by all the other Powers who were parties to the declaration of the 20th of November 1815, and more particularly by those Powers whose geographical position as regards Switzerland would enable them to combine for the purpose of acting in conformity thereto.

You will clearly explain to the Swiss Government that Her Majesty's Government are far from wishing to induce the Swiss Government to do anything inconsistent with the position of Switzerland as an independant nation, but Her Majesty's Government considering the dangers which may accrue not only to the peace of Europe, but to the peace, liberty and prosperity of Switzerland itself, if the Swiss Government were not by all reasonable concessions to prevent any military occupation on the territory, would suggest to the Swiss Government whether it might not be possible to find means consistent with the swiss laws of satisfying the reasonable demands of France, and would counsel them above all things to abstain from language or measures irritating to the French Government and to exercise all the moderation which is consistent with the honour and dignity.³

3. *Le Conseil fédéral répond le 14 février*: Der Bundesrath verdanke die Mittheilung der Grossbrittanischen Regierung, welche ihm durch die k. Gesandtschaft gemacht worden sei, so wie die freundschaftlichen Gesinnungen Englands. Es sei immer in der Absicht des Bundesrathes gelegen, gerechten und billigen Forderungen Gehör zu schenken; allein die Forderung Frankreichs, welche der k. brittischen Regierung damals noch nicht bekannt gewesen, gehöre offenbar nicht in diese Klasse und habe daher abgelehnt werden müssen, was übrigens in einem ganz ruhigen und nicht herausfordernden Tone geschehen sei (E 1004 1/10, n° 565).