

Confidential

Berne. April 26 1853

Monsieur le Président,

In troubling your Excellency with the enclosed list of questions, I venture to repeat to you in writing the satisfaction which it would give me to be able to communicate confidentially to the Earl of Harcourt any project for the settlement of the Neuchâtel question which your Excellency might think likely to obtain the assent of the King of Prussia and of Switzerland.

I am aware that nothing can be agreed to by the Federal Council without the

previous sanction of the government of Neuchâtel
 and of the Federal Assembly. This adds materially
 to the difficulty of negotiations with Switzerland,
 and would render a confidential opinion
 previously given by your Excellency to Her Majesty's Government
 peculiarly valuable.

I trust I need not assure you that
 H. M. Government would be actuated, in all
 negotiations, by an earnest desire to contribute
 to the well-being and stability of the Swiss
 Confederation. The Federal Council must
 naturally desire to close a question which
 is a standing cause of embarrassment with
 foreign governments and to reestablish a
 good understanding with Prussia, where

friendship might ^{be} of material service to Switzerland
 in her relations with other Powers: and I
 am able to inform your Excellency that the
 Prussian Government, in a communication
 anterior to the Protocol of the 24th May 1852
 and forming part of the correspondence which
 led to that Act, declared to H. M. Government
 that it was "far from its intention to insist
 on conditions which could wear the appearance
 even of enfeebling the Confederation." It would
 I think, greatly increase the chances of
 an amicable and satisfactory solution, if
 Her Majesty's Government, taking the initiative,
 could make a proposal to Prussia which
 it should have reason to believe would
 be accepted by Switzerland.

It

It has always appeared to me that the
 most probable mode of settling this question
 amicably would be by an agreement to refer
 it to a vote in the Convention of Neuchâtel;
 and your Excellency has already encouraged
 me to hope that you would consider the
 mode in which such a vote might be
 taken; and the conditions which might be
 respectively annexed to a result either in
 favour of a return to the Prussian commission
 or in favour of the present state of things.
 In case of the latter result, might the Govern-
 ment of Neuchâtel be induced to offer to buy
 the King of Prussia's seigniorial rights in
 the

the Canton? Should a majority on the
 other hand pronounce in a return to
 to the connexion with the King of Prussia,
 would it be possible to adapt the Federal
 Constitution to this result?

I must inform your Excellency that
 these particular suggestions are entirely
 my own, and that I alone am responsible
 for them. The frank and conciliatory
 manner in which you have expressed yourself
 to me in our conversations on this subject
 has encouraged me to make them.

I avail myself with eagerness of this
 opportunity of renewing to your Excellency
 the assurance of my distinguished consideration

B. D. Christie