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*Le Chargé d'affaires de Grande-Bretagne à Berne, W.D. Christie,
au Président de la Confédération, W. Naeff*

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Confidential

Berne, August 21st 1853

Nearly two months have now elapsed since I communicated to your Excellency the reply made by Count Buol to the propositions submitted to him with your knowledge and approval by the Earl of Westmoreland, and informed Her Majesty's Government that that reply led your Excellency to hope for a speedy termination of the differences between Switzerland and Austria.¹

I have not failed to explain from time to time to Her Majesty's Government the causes of the delay which has arisen here, and to assure them that to no one has it caused more disappointment and regret than to your Excellency.

I have explained that the Federal Council have waited for the government of the Tessin to decide whether it will or will not give pensions for life to the expelled monks, that you had hoped that this would have been decided affirmatively some time since, and that, after an unexpectedly prolonged delay, it has latterly appeared probable that the Council of State of the Tessin would neither take on itself the responsibility of granting the pensions for life nor convoke the Grand Council to submit a proposal to that effect for its adoption.

It appears now to be understood that the Canton of the Tessin will not grant the pensions. Some influential members of the government of that Canton have made overtures to the Sardinian Chargé d'affaires to obtain from the friendship of the Sardinian Government the means of establishing the expelled monks in Sardinian convents, in the hope that Austria may be content with such a provision for them.

1. Cf. N° 183, *annexe*.

Much as I desire the success of this expedient, I do not entertain sanguine hopes of its success; and should it fail, the further loss of time which will have been incurred may be injurious to the interests of Switzerland.

I think then this a suitable moment for representing once more to your Excellency the anxious desire of my Government that the Federal Council should do everything in its power to accelerate an arrangement with Austria and with this view send some one on a special mission to Vienna, with full powers to make an arrangement.

I need not say that Her Majesty's Government is actuated only by a disinterested desire for the welfare of Switzerland. The Federal Council have received many proofs that Her Majesty's Government is anxious to render every assistance in its power to obtain for Switzerland what is just, and would never advise what is injurious to the honour of Switzerland.

It is perhaps still possible that, if the government of the Tessin see reason to doubt the success of their project of provision for the monks in Sardinian convents, they may consent to grant the pensions for life. But if this be hopeless, can no other proposal be made to the Austrian government by means of a special envoy? Could not some concessions on the part of Austria be suggested, which might induce the Government of the Tessin to part the pensions? The sending of a special envoy to Vienna would itself be a step entitling Switzerland to some corresponding consideration from Austria, — some benefit in the negotiation. I have always thought that by sending a special envoy to Vienna, Switzerland might gain very much more than a mere arrangement of the existing differences, which might perhaps be otherwise effected. Such an envoy might address perhaps to the Emperor of Austria himself explanations on many subjects now perhaps misunderstood by the Austrian government, might represent the wishes of Switzerland on many points for which the goodwill and cooperation of Austria are important, might lay the foundations of cordial relations for the future, and, I need not say, might at the same time materially ameliorate the arrangement actually to be made.

I have heard it said that to send an envoy to Vienna would be inconsistent with the honour of Switzerland and an act of self humiliation.

I will not give an opinion of my own on the differences between Switzerland and Austria, which your Excellency will hardly expect from me. But I will take the Swiss view, which is that the blockade of the Tessin has not been justified by any conduct of that Canton either in reference to the outbreak at Milan or with regard to refugees, that the blockade has violated a treaty, that the government of the Tessin had a right to expel the Lombard monks, that Swiss citizens have been ill-treated in the Austrian dominions or arbitrarily expelled from them without compensation, that, even if wrong was done, the expulsion of upwards of six thousand Tessinois has been an immoderate and cruel retribution, that Austria has by that act taken upon herself the responsibility of compensating the monks, and that as regards refugees you fulfill your international duties and deserve none of the reproaches cast upon you. Admit this view of the question, and what would there be humiliating in sending an envoy to Vienna to represent this view in dignified but conciliatory language, to state that he is sent in the hope that his explanations may remove misunderstandings and ill will which a long correspondence has failed to put an end to, and to point to his presence at Vienna as a proof at once of

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the confidence of Switzerland in the justness of her cause and of her readiness to make every honourable concession to avert war and establish friendly relations with Austria?

The forbearance and moderation hitherto shown by the Federal Council might be stigmatised as humiliating and there are those who have so characterized it. Her Majesty's Government, giving the Federal Council credit for a firm belief in the justness of their cause, have regarded their forbearance and moderation as proving an honourable desire for a peaceful solution, and have never doubted the readiness of Switzerland to defend her honour by arms, if unfortunately war should become necessary.

Let me then urge your Excellency and your colleagues of the Federal Council to devise some proposals to be sent to Vienna by a special envoy.

I have conversed lately with many members of the Federal Assembly of different political opinions and I have found that none of them objected to the plan of a special mission to Vienna for the arrangement of the differences.

I trust, after the time that has now elapsed, and after what has been said by Count Buol on the subject, that the Federal Council will not continue to insist on the envoy's first proceeding to Milan to confer there with the local authorities. Such a commencement of the mission at Milan would be a mere form. In reality it would be a waste of time. Will not your chance of obtaining concessions of real value be lessened by insisting on the concession of a point of form? If you are to perform a gracious act, is it not better to be completely gracious?

Your Excellency knows that any person whom the Federal Council may think proper to send to Vienna, will receive every possible assistance from the Earl of Westmoreland, who has already, under the directions of Her Majesty's Government, zealously exerted himself to promote an arrangement of the differences. If the Federal Council send a special envoy to Vienna, they will have established by this act of conciliation an additional claim on the good offices of friendly governments.