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Papers laid before the British Parliament respecting the

NEGOCIATION WITH FRANCE.

(Continued.)

No. XXXVI.

Extract of a letter from lord Hawkesbury to lord Whitworth, dated Downing-street, Feb. 9, 1803.

The most remarkable messages in this dispatch are the following:—The late treaty of peace was conducted on a basis not merely proposed by his majesty, but specially agreed to in an official note by the French government, viz. that his majesty should keep a compensation out of his conquests for the important acquisitions of territory made by France upon the continent. This is a sufficient proof that the compact was understood to have been concluded with reference to the then existing state of things; for the measure of his majesty's compensation was to be calculated with reference to the acquisitions of France at that time; and if the interference of the French government in the general affairs of Europe, since that period; if their interposition with respect to Switzerland and Holland, whose independence was guaranteed by them at the time of the conclusion of the treaty of peace; if the annexations which have been made to France in various quarters, but particularly those in Italy, have extended the territory and increased the power of the French government, his majesty would be warranted, consistently with the spirit of the treaty of peace, in claiming equivalents for these acquisitions, as a counterpoise to the augmentation of the power of France. His majesty, however, anxious to prevent all misunderstanding, and desirous of consolidating the general peace of Europe, as far as might be in his power, was willing to have waved the pretensions he might have a right to advance of this nature; and as the other articles of the definitive treaty have been in a course of execution on his part, so he would have been ready to have carried into effect the true intent and spirit of the 10th article, the execution of which, according to its terms had been rendered impracticable by circumstances which it was not in his majesty's power to controul. A communication to your lordship would accordingly have been prepared conformably to this disposition, if the attention of his majesty's government had not been attracted by the very extraordinary publication of the report of col. Sebastiani to the First Consul. It is impossible for his majesty to view this report in any other light, than as an official publication; for without referring particularly to explanations which have been separately given upon the subject of publications in the Moniteur, the article in question, as it purports to be the report to the First Consul of an accredited agent, as it appears to have been signed by col. Sebastiani himself, and as it is published in the official paper with an official title affixed to it, must be considered as authorised by the French government. It discloses, however, views of the highest degree injurious to the interests in his majesty's dominions, and directly repugnant to, and utterly inconsistent with the spirit and letter of the treaty of peace concluded between his majesty and the French government; and his majesty would feel that he was wanting a proper regard to the honor of his crown and to the interests of his dominions, if he should see with indifference such a system developed and avowed. His majesty cannot therefore, regard the conduct of the French government on various occasions since the conclusion of the definitive treaty, the insinuations and charges contained in the report of col. Sebastiani, and the views which that report discloses, without feeling it necessary for him distinctly to declare, that it will be impossible for him to enter into any farther discussion relative to Malta, unless he receives satisfactory explanation on the subject of the communication."

HAWKESBURY.

No. XXXVII. Extract of a dispatch from lord Whitworth to lord Hawkesbury, dated Paris, Feb. 17, 1803. This dispatch is not very interesting, as the subject of it is more fully explained in the subsequent number.

No. XXXVIII.

Paris, Feb. 21, 1803.

My Lord,

My last dispatch in which I gave your lordship an account of my conference with M. Talleyrand was scarcely gone, when I received a note from him informing me that the First Consul wished to converse with me, and desired I would come to him at the Thuilleries at 9 o'clock. He received me in his cabinet, with tolerable cordiality, and, after talking on different subjects for a few minutes, he desired me to sit down, as he himself did on the other side of the table and began. He told me that he felt it necessary, after what had passed between me and M. de Talleyrand, that he should in the most clear and authentic manner, make known his sentiments to me, in order to their being communicated to his majesty, and he conceived this would be more effectually done by himself than through any medium whatever. He said that it was a matter of great disappointment to him, that the treaty of Amiens, instead of being followed by conciliation and friendship, the natural effects of peace, had been productive only of continual and increasing jealousy and mistrust; and that this mistrust was avowed in such a manner as must bring the point to an issue.

He now enumerated the several provocations which he pretended to have received from England. He placed in the first line our not evacuating Malta and Alexandria as we were bound to do by treaty. In this he said that no consideration on earth should make him acquiesce; and of the two he had rather see us in possession of the Fauxborg St. Antoine than Malta. He then adverted to the abuse thrown out against him in the English public prints: but this he did not so much regard as that which appeared in the French papers published in London. This he considered as much more mischievous, since it meant to excite this country against him and his government. He complained of the protection given to Georges and others of his description, who instead of being sent to Canada, as had been repeatedly promised, were permitted to remain in England, handsomely pensioned, and constantly committing all sorts of crimes on the coasts of France as well as in the interior.

In confirmation of this, he told me, that two men had been within these few days apprehended in Normandy, and were now on their way to Paris, who were hired assassins, and employed by the Bishop of [illegible], by Georges, and by Dutheil, as would be fully proved in a court of justice, and made known to the world.

He acknowledged, that the irritation he felt against England increased daily, because every wind (I make use as much as I can of his own ideas and expressions) which blew from England, brought nothing but enmity and hatred against him.

He now went back to Egypt, and told me, that if he had any inclination to take possession of it by force, he might have done it a month ago, by sending 25,000 men to Aboukir, who would have possessed themselves of the whole country in defiance of the 4000 British in Alexandria. That instead of that garrison being a means of protecting Egypt, it was only furnishing him with pretence for invading it. This he should not do, whatever might be his desire to have it as a colony because he did not think it worth the risk of a war, in which he might, perhaps, be considered the aggressor, and by which he should lose more than he could gain, since sooner or later Egypt would belong to France, either by the falling to pieces of the Turkish empire or else some arrangement with the Porte.

As a proof of his desire to maintain peace, he wished to know what he had to gain by going to war with England.—A descent was the only means of offence he had, and that he was determined to attempt, by putting himself at the head of the expedition. But how could it be supposed, that after having gained the height on which he stood, he would risk his life & reputation in such a hazardous attempt, unless forced to it by necessity, when the chances were, that he and the greatest part of the expedition would go to the bottom of the sea? He talked much on this subject, but never affected to diminish the danger. He acknowledged that there were one hundred chances to one against him; but still he was determined to attempt it, if war should be the consequence of the present discussion; and that such was the disposition of the troops, that army after army would be found for the enterprize.

He then expatiated much on the natural force of the two countries. France with an army of 480,000 men, for to this amount, it is, he said, to be immediately completed, all ready for the most desperate enterprizes; and England with a fleet that made her mistress of the seas, and which he did not think he could equal in less than ten years. Two such countries by a proper understanding might govern the world, but by their strifes might overturn it. He said, that if he had not felt the enmity of the British government on every occasion since the treaty of Amiens, there would have been nothing that he would not have done to prove his desire to conciliate; participation in indemnities as well as in influence on the continent; treaties of commerce, in short, any thing that could have given satisfaction, and have testified his friendship. Nothing, however, had been able to conquer the hatred of the British government, and therefore it was now come to the point, whether we should have peace or war. To preserve peace, the treaty of Amiens must be fulfilled; the abuse of the public prints, if not totally suppressed, at least kept within bounds, and confined to the English papers; and the protection so openly given to its bitterest enemies (alluding to Georges and persons of that description) must be withdrawn. If war, it was necessary to say so, and to refuse to fulfill the treaty. He now made the tower of Europe to prove to me, that in its present state, there was no power with which we could coalesce for the purpose of making war with France; consequently it was our interest to gain, and if we had any point to gain renew the war when circumstances were more favorable. He said, it was not doing him justice to suppose that he conceived himself above the opinion of his country or of Europe. He would not risk uniting Europe against him by any violent act of aggression; neither was he so powerful in France as to persuade the nation to go to war unless on good grounds. He said, that he had chastised the Algerines, from his unwillingness to excite the jealousy of other powers: but he hoped that England, Russia and France would one day feel that it was their interest to destroy such a nest of thieves, and force them to live rather by cultivating their land, than by plunder.

In the little I said to him, for he gave me in the course of two hours but very few opportunities of saying a word, I confined myself strictly to the tenor of your lordship's instructions. I urged them in the same manner as I had done to M. Talleyrand, and dwelt as strongly as I could on the sensation which the publication of Sebastiani's report had created in England, where the eyes of France towards Egypt must always command the utmost vigilance and jealousy. He maintained, that what ought to convince us of his desire of peace, was on the one hand the little he had to gain by renewing the war, and on the other, the facility with which he might have taken possession of Egypt, with the very ships and troops which were now going from the Mediterranean to St. Domingo, and that with the approbation of all Europe, and more particularly of the Turks, who had repeatedly invited him to join them for the purpose of forcing us to evacuate their territory.

I do not pretend to follow the arguments of the First Consul in detail; this would be impossible, from the vast variety of matter which he took occasion to introduce. His purpose was evidently to convince me that on Malta must depend peace or war, and at the same time to impress upon my mind a strong idea of the means he possessed of annoying us at home and abroad.

With regard to the mistrust and jealousy which he said constantly prevailed since the conclusion of the treaty of Amien, I observed, that after a war of such long duration, so full of rancour, and carried on in a manner of which history has no example, it was but natural that a considerable degree of agitation should prevail; but this, like the swell after a storm, would gradually subside, if not risen up by the policy of either party, that I would not pretend to pronounce which had been the aggressor in the paper war of which he complained, and which was still kept up, though with this difference, that in England it was independent of government, and in France its very act and deed. To this I added that it must be admitted, that we had such motives of mistrust against France, as could not be alledged against us, and I was going to instance the accession of territory and influence gained by France since the treaty, when he interrupted me by saying, I suppose you mean Piedmont and Switzerland; "ce sont des bagatelles;" and it must have been foreseen whilst the negociation was pending; "Vous n'avez pas le droit d'en parler a cette heure." I then alledged as a cause of mistrust and jealousy, the impossibility of obtaining justice, or any kind of redress for any of his majesty's subjects. He asked me in what respect; and I told him that since the signing of the treaty not one British claimant had been satisfied, although every Frenchman of that description had been so within one month after that period; and that since I had been here, and I could say as much of my predecessors, not one satisfactory answer had been obtained to the innumerable representations which we had been under the necessity of making in favor of British subjects and property detained in the parts of France and elsewhere, without even the shadow of justice; Such an order of things, I said, was not made to inspire confidence; but, on the contrary, must create mistrust.—This, he said, must be attributed to the natural difficulties attending such suits, when both parties thought themselves right; but he denied that such delays could proceed from any disinclination to do what was just and right. With regard to the pensions which were granted to French or Swiss individuals, I observed that they were given as a reward for past services during the war, and most certainly not for present ones, and still less for such as had been insinuated of a nature repugnant to the feelings of every individual in England; and to the universally acknowledged loyalty and honor of the British government. That as for any participation of indemnities, or other accessions which his majesty might have obtained, I could take upon myself to assure him that his majesty's ambition led him rather to preserve than to acquire; and that with regard to the most propitious moment for renewing hostilities, his majesty, whose sincere desire it was to continue the blessings of peace to his subjects, would always consider such a measure as the greatest calamity; but that if his majesty was so desirous of peace, it must not be imputed to the difficulty of obtaining allies; and the less so, as those means which it might be necessary to afford such allies, for perhaps inadequate services; would all be contracted in England, and give a proportionate increase of energy to our own exertions. At this part of the conversation he rose from his chair, and told me that he should give orders to general Andreossi to enter on the discussion of this business with your lordship; but he wished that I should at the same time be made acquainted with his motives and convinced of his sincerity, rather from himself than from his ministers. He then, after a conversation of two hours, during the greatest part of which he talked incessantly, conversed for a few moments on indifferent subjects, in apparent good humour, and retired.

Such was, nearly as I can recollect the purport of this conference.

It must however be observed, that he did not, as M. Talleyrand had done, affect to attribute col. Sebastiani's mission *to commercial motives only*, but as one rendered necessary in a military point of view, by the infraction by us of the treaty of Amiens.

I have the honour to be, &c.

WHITWORTH.

P. S. This conversation took place on Friday last, and this morning I saw M. de Talleyrand. He had been with the first consul after I left him, and he assured me that he had been very well satisfied with the frankness with which I made my observations on what fell from him. I told him, that without entering into any farther detail, what I had said to the first consul amounted to an assurance, of what I trusted there could be no doubt, of the readiness of his majesty's ministers to remove all subjects of discussion, where that could be done without violating the laws of the country, and to fulfil strictly the engagements which they had contracted, in as much as that could be reconciled with the safety of the state. As this applied to Malta and Egypt, he gave me to understand that a project was in contemplation, by which the integrity of the Turkish empire would be so effectually secured as to do away every cause of doubt or uneasiness, either with regard to Egypt or any part of the Turkish dominions. He could not then, he said, explain himself further.

No. XXXIX.

Downing Street, Feb. 18, 1803.

My Lord,

Your excellency's dispatch, of Feb. 21st, has been received, and laid before the king.

I have great satisfaction in communicating to you his majesty's approbation of the able and judicious manner in which you appear to have executed the instructions which I gave to you in my dispatch of the 9th inst.

The account you have given of your interview with the first consul is in every respect important.

It is unnecessary for me to remark on the tone and temper in which the sentiments of the first consul appear to have been expressed, or to offer any observations in addition to those so properly made by your excellency at the time, upon several topics which were brought forward by the first consul in the course of your conversation; I will therefore content myself with referring your excellency to my dispatch to Mr. Merry of Aug. 28, 1802, in which the subjects of the complaints of the French government, respecting the freedom of the press, the emigrants, &c. are particularly discussed. I cannot, however, avoid noticing, that nothing approaching to explanation or satisfaction is stated to have been thrown out by the first consul, in answer to the just representations & complaints of his majesty, in consequence of the unwarrantable insinuations and charges contained in col. Sebastiani's report against his majesty's government, the officer commanding his forces in Egypt, and his army in that quarter: but that on the other hand, the language of the first consul has tended to strengthen and confirm the suspicions which that publication was peculiarly calculated to excite.

I shall now proceed to give you some farther instructions on the language which it may be proper for you to hold respecting the charge which has been advanced against his majesty's government, of their unwillingness to fulfil the treaty of Amiens. The treaty of Amiens has been in a course of execution, on the part of his majesty, in every article in which, according to the spirit of that treaty, it has been found capable of execution. There can be no doubt, that Egypt is at this time completely evacuated. The delay which had arisen in the evacuation of Alexandria, was owing to accidental circumstances, the particulars of which were explained to you in my dispatch of the 30th of Nov. last; and I had every reason to believe, from the communication which I had with general Andreossi on the subject, that the French government were perfectly satisfied with the explanation which he was authorized at the time to give them respecting it.

With regard to that article of the treaty which relates to Malta, the stipulations contained in it (owing to circumstances which it was not in the power of his majesty to controul,) have not been found capable of execution. The refusal of Russia to accede to the arrangement, except on condition that the Maltese langue should be abolished; the silence of the court of Berlin with respect to the invitation that has been made to it, in consequence of the treaty, to become a guarantying power; the abolition of the Spanish priories, in defiance of the treaty to which the king of Spain was a party: the declaration of the Portuguese government of their intention to sequestrate the property of the Portuguese priory, as forming a part of the Spanish langue, unless the property of the Spanish priories is restored to them; the non-election of a grand master: These circumstances would have been sufficient, without any other special grounds, to have warranted his majesty in suspending the evacuation of the island, until some new arrangement could be adjusted for its security and independence. But when it is considered how great the dominion, power, and influence of France have of late been extended, his majesty must feel, that he has an incontestible right, conformably to the principles on which the treaty of peace was negociated and concluded, to demand additional securities in any new arrangement which it might be necessary to make with a view of effecting the real objects of that treaty. And these considerations, sufficient as they might be in themselves to justify the line of conduct which his majesty had determined to adopt, have received additional force from the views which have been recently and undeservedly manifested by the French government, respecting the Turkish dominions, and the islands in the Adriatic (and which have been in a great degree admitted by the first consul, in his interview with your excellency)—views, which are directly repugnant, not only to the spirit, but to the letter of the treaty of Amiens.

From the postscript in your excellency's letter, it appears that a project was in contemplation, by which, according to the declaration of M. Talleyrand, the integrity of the Turkish territory would be secured, so as to do away every cause of doubt or uneasiness, either with regard to Egypt, or to any other part of the Turkish dominions. His majesty will consider the communication of such a project as indicating a disposition on the part of the French government, to afford him explanation and satisfaction

(Continued on last page.)