

RECEIPT

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Signed:

LETTERS TO THE EMPRESS EUGENIE (1870 – 1871)

The Empress Eugénie kept religiously some of the letters from Napoléon and today, they are in the archives of the Prince Napoléon in Brussels (Jérôme's son). The Prince gives us permission to publish some of the letters written the day before and the day after Sedan. (1)

Tuileries Palace, 18th July 1870 (2)

My dear Eugénie,

I have to stay here until 5 o'clock. I saw Mr Schneider (3) who warned me of a great agitation in the Chamber and that the majority, faced with my departure, thinks that the ministry is inadequate and does not inspire confidence. I told him that nothing would be more impolitic than a ministerial crisis in the present circumstances. He understood and promised me to use his influence to stop it. He must come at 4 o'clock to tell me what happened.

With tender love, Napoléon

What happened was the vote for an extraordinary loan of 500 million francs for war expenses and 140 000 men from the draft of 1870. The declaration of war was to be given to Bismarck in Berlin the following day.

- (1) This correspondence was given long ago by the Empress to Mr Fernand Giraudeau who, in his book "Napoléon III Intimate", has reproduced here and there few fragments. These quotations do not show the poignant emotions which could come from a larger publication.
- (2) The sovereigns were residing in St Cloud at the time. Napoléon used to go to the Tuileries every day from there.
- (3) President of the Legislative Body

Metz, 29 July 1870

My dear Eugénie,

The departure is always very sad and we all felt it yesterday. Louis is very well and, his first emotion over, seems very happy.

The journey was tiring because we received a very warm ovation in each station but when one is preoccupied by very serious thoughts, shouts and exaggerations bore you. Things are not as advanced as I thought. We will have to stay here for a few more days. If it is confirmed, I will let you know and perhaps we will be able to meet here.

Yesterday I wrote to Gramont about the conversation between Bismarck and the Prince Napoléon. I hope the War Minister will not give in and that he will advise that only reserve soldiers are sent in groups of 100 with an officer.

We are all well settled in the prefecture where we are living. I fear we have had our better days. I hope my health and my strength will last!

With tender love, Napoléon

On the 2nd September, at 11.30, the Sedan capitulation was signed. We will read, with anguish, the two letters so painfully written at 1 o'clock and in circumstances giving them invaluable historical value. The first was dated from the Chateau de Bellevue where the Emperor received the visit of the King of Prussia at 2pm on the day of the capitulation. The second letter was written by the sovereign who was now a prisoner when he arrived in Bouillon (Belgium) on the 3rd September.

Quartier Impérial, 2nd September 1870

My dear Eugénie,

It is impossible for me to tell you how much I suffered and am still suffering. We did a march contrary to all principles and common sense. It was to end up in a catastrophe. I would have preferred to die rather than witness such a disastrous surrender and however, in the present circumstances, it was the only way to avoid the butchery of 60 000 people.

And if only all my torments were only here! I am thinking of you, of our poor country, of our son. God protect them! What is going to happen in Paris?

I just saw the King who behaved in a very gentlemanly manner and who was even cordial. He had tears in his eyes telling me how much pain he thought I was feeling. He put one of his castles at my disposal but it does not matter where I go! I can feel my career broken; my name has lost his shine. I am in despair.

Farewell, with tender love

Bouillon, 3rd September 1870

My dear Eugénie,

After the irretrievable calamity I witnessed, I am thinking of the dangers you are exposed to and I am very worried about the news I received from Paris.

The catastrophe which happened was to be expected. Our march was of the utmost carelessness and on top of it, it was badly led. But I never thought that the catastrophe could be so awful. Imagine an army surrounding a fortified city and being in turn totally surrounded by very superior forces. After a few hours, our troops were scattered and wanted to enter the town but the gates were locked. They climbed them. Then the town was full of a very compact crowd mingling with all types of cars and on this huge number of heads, the shells fell from every side killing the people in the streets, breaking roofs, burning houses. In this most dire plight, the generals came to tell me that any resistance was impossible. No more army corps, no ammunitions, no food supply! We tried to make a sortie but it failed. The Maréchal MacMahon was injured at the beginning of the day. I gave the command to the Général de Wimpfenn. I stayed 4 hours on the battlefield. (1) Shells were falling from everywhere. D'Hendecourt was injured and disappeared (2). The Prince of the Moskowa, Courson and Trecesson (3) fell and were injured. Their horses were frightened by the amount of explosions. Never such a spectacle and such a resounding defeat had ever been seen. In my present position, I believe I must give you all powers as I am a prisoner. Today's walk in the middle of Prussian troops was a real torture.

Farewell, with tender love

The Castle of Wilhemshöhe was the ancient estate of King Jérôme (Napoléon I's younger brother) located 5km away from Cassel. It was designated as Napoleon III's residence. He arrived on the 5th of September at about 10pm. It is from there that he wrote this letter to the Empress.

- (1) Leaving on the 1st September at 6am from the Sous-Préfecture residence where he spent the night, the Emperor entered Sedan at midday only after having been exposed for a long time to firing near Balan's graveyard.
- (2) The Captain L-M, the Sargent d'Hendecourt, the Emperor's orderly officer were killed near Balan's church.
- (3) The Général de Division, the Prince of the Moskowa, the Emperor's aide de camp and master of the hound; the Général de Brigade M-L, A.-A. Courson de la Villeneuve, Palace warrant officer; Captain A.-A.-G. de Trecesson, the Emperor's orderly officer.

Wilhemshöhe, 17 September 1870

My Dear Eugénie,

I felt great comfort when yesterday evening and this morning I received for the first time your letters dated 3rd, 14th and 15th. The letter dated 3rd arrived late because it had been sent to the General de Boyen (4) who had left. The tender feelings from your letters did me a lot of good because I was very sadden by your silence. Admittedly the ordeal we are suffering is very great indeed but what makes it worse is the state of France faced with invasion and anarchy.

You are right to advise economy. I sold some of my horses and I will sell some more because the Queen (1) has sent me 6 horses for my use. I am very grateful but it bothers me. I have 260 000 francs, it is all I have at my disposal but, like you, I am proud to have fallen from the throne without sending money abroad.

I agree with you that I should do nothing apart from refuting the calumnies we are showered under. Admittedly, I would be very happy to be with you and Louis but we must wait for things to disentangle themselves.

With tender love, all yours

- (4) The Prussian General de Boyen, the King of Prussia's aide de camp, accompanied the Emperor from Bellevue to Wilhemshöhe. He left on the 6th of September to re-join the German army.
- (1) Queen Augusta of Prussia

Wilhemshöhe, 19 September 1870

My dear Eugénie,

Your letters are of great comfort to me and I thank you. What could I cling to if not your affection and our son's affection? You do not say anything about how much you are suffering, of the dangers you are facing. I heard about it in the newspapers. It was mentioned that you were ill when you arrived in England. Are you alright now? Everybody is praising your courage and your strength in such difficult times. I am not surprised.

When I think of all the brave people I saw dying needlessly, it breaks my heart. I am missing, amongst others, this poor General Margueritte, from the Chasseurs d'Afrique regiment, one of our best generals. I saw him brought back with a bullet through his face. I hope he will be saved (2)

I think that the convocation of the Constituent Assembly for the 3rd of October is a joke. The press should make people understand that elections are pure fiction when Paris is under siege, all the major cities in revolt and most people outside their département.

I understand your wish to find a little solace and I hope you will find it. I do not share your idea to live in Louis's villa near Trieste. I know, judging by my younger years' experience, that in our situation, we are better in free countries like England or Switzerland. Anywhere else, governments or subjects are all in fear of jeopardising their position even to be polite to you. So, when I will be free, I would like to go to England and live with you and Louis in a small cottage with bow windows and climbing plants. I have had fun to prepare a budget for the future which will agree with the income we could have. I am sending it to you.

The man who pretended to have compromising papers wanted to blackmail me. I have received also a request to buy some compromising papers of M... I have asked for an answer to be sent to tell him that having already been exposed to so much slander, one more did not matter to me. I was very surprised to receive the visit of Lady Cowley the day before yesterday; I was very moved. Napoleon (1) wrote to me offering to share my captivity. I refused.

Farewell, with tender love to you and Louis
All yours

(2) The Général de Division, J.-A. Margueritte, commanding the 1st Cavalry Division, had the cheeks pierced and the tongue cut by a bullet near the Auberge du Terme on the 1st of September. Carried to the sous-prefecture of Sedan at about 3pm, he was visited by the Emperor and died on the 6th of September.

(1) The Prince Jérôme Napoléon

Wilhemshöhe, 5th October 1870

My dear Eugénie,

Thank you for your letters. I received 2 of them yesterday evening. Clary (2) will leave tomorrow. I have already told you by telegraph that I asked Mr de Bismarck if he gave Mr R. (3) a mission and if he had his trust; he answered yesterday: "I did not know Mr R. before he arrived here, I did not give him any mission; he made me understand that he had one from the Empress. As soon as I knew what it was about, I dismissed him from the Headquarters." It is all very extraordinary (1)

I have not yet seen the letter from the General X., but I harden myself against all this cowardice. You might have seen the letter I wrote to Louis explaining that the Général MacMahon is not like the others, he is a loyal heart.

Thank you for sending me a view of the castle (2). I hope to be there one day with you.

With tender love from all my heart

- (2) The Count Joseph Adolph de Clary, Cavalry captain, the Emperor's Orderly Officer, then Aide de Camp of the Prince Impérial, accompanied him through the North of France and Belgium and took him to England. In September and in October, he went a few times from Hastings and Chislehurst to Wilhemshöhe for missions from the Empress.
- (3) This initial refers to Regnier. This adventurer, after having tried in vain to see the Empress in Hastings and getting photos signed by the Prince Impérial from Mr Filon, went to Ferrières near Bismarck then to Metz where he left on the 24th of September with Bourbaki. He arrived with him in Chislehurst on the 28th. The Empress was very overcome by this intrigue.
- (1) The Général de Monts published the dispatch from Napoléon III to Bismarck. He gives a slightly different text to the answer from the text we can read in the letter. This General, who had led a Corps d'Armée in the 1866 campaign was, in 1870, Governor of Cassel and responsible for guarding the prisoners in Wilhemshöhe.
- (2) The Empress and the Prince Impérial had settled in Camden Place, in Chislehurst, not long before.

Wilhemshöhe, 6th October 1870

My dear Eugénie,

It pains me to see that, in my last letter, you did not like my remarks. It is difficult to express one thought properly by telegraph or by letter. I do regret to have made you bad temper.

In the sad and difficult circumstances we are in, it is not extraordinary if people around us have different opinions and opposite assessments. Today there are three groups of exile Bonapartists: one in England, one in Geneva and a third one in Brussels. Unless I am mistaken, the first thinks there is nothing to do, that we must leave events run their course, give no sign of life, in other words, leave usurpation and treason finish their work without any protest and without confronting them. The two other groups think the opposite; they would like us to protest, to act, in one word, to prepare a restoration.

There is also something else not without importance; it is Mr de Bismarck who would like to have an agreement with us and to lead us to sign a disastrous peace (1)

What shall we do in these circumstances? I will start first of all to say what not to do:

1. As long as Paris's fate has not been decided, nothing must be said or done which would give the impression to damage the national defence for a dynastic interest.
2. I do not need to express to you my determination not to sign a peace which would not be favourable.

These two points set aside, what can be done? That is the question.

The only factor of salvation for our cause and for the country resides in the Metz army; it is only with it that we would be able, when the moment comes; to fly a flag to reinstate some order in so much turmoil. It is with it that we could set an innovative assembly facing a socialist assembly. But, in order to reach this result, we would need to be in contact with the Maréchal Bazaine and be sure of his energy. Finally, he would need to be able to resist until the end of the events happening on the banks of the river Seine. With a very different goal and ulterior motives in his interest, Mr de Bismarck has seen, I believe, what he could gain from Bazaine's position (2). So, I do not doubt that Mr Regnier has been sent to urge the Maréchal to negotiate peace preliminaries, supported by the Regent. Even if I discard this combination, we could, I believe, use Mr de Bismarck's good will to keep in touch with the Maréchal and wait for events.

I told you my thoughts. Clary will give you more details. I hope I do not displease you talking politics. It breaks my heart to see, in your letters, how wounded your heart is. I hope I will always have a place in it.

With fond love

- (1) In September, Napoléon III gave audience several times to Mr B.H. Helwitz, sent by Bismarck to start negotiations. The details of these talks were given by the General de Monts and Mr Paul Gueriot in their books on the Emperor's captivity.
- (2) All these ideas are found in the telegram from Napoléon III to Bismarck published by Augustin Filon in his "Memories of the Empress Eugénie" but he could not date it. This dispatch must therefore have been sent at the start of October 1870.

THE EMPRESS TO THE EMPEROR

14TH October 1870

My dearest,

Your letter today is very sad. How can you even think that nobody is thinking of you anymore?

Here is a letter from a young girl who is not 18 yet and who looks enthusiastic enough. I will send her photo another day and, besides my dearest, the thinner the circle around us becomes, the closer we will become and hand in hand, we will wait for God's will.

There is nothing left of the greatness keeping us apart. We are united, one hundred time more united, because our suffering and our hopes merge on Louis's dear little head.

The darker the future becomes, the bigger the need to lean on each other. Get better dearest and think of a time where we will be near each other again.

With all my heart, all devoted to you
Eugénie.

Louis wrote to Tristan (1). I was very happy yesterday to be able to give Arnaud, the man from Louis's police, news from his son. He is well but would like his address.

(1) Baron Tristan Lambert, Prince Impérial's friend,

Wilhemshöhe, 20th October 1870

My dear Eugénie,

I take the opportunity of Conneau's departure to write in details; I hope to be clearer than in the telegram. Talking about it, I pray you to be more precise when you write to me. First, I thought that the pass for Mr Gautier (3) was destined for Clary who had taken that name. Evans (4) wrote to me that he is in Luxembourg where a Mr Roullier has a parcel for me. I do not understand any of it. It would be so easy to write a letter to me. Even if Mr de Bismarck sees our letters, he will learned nothing that he already knows. So, why not write to me: "ask for a pass for Mr Gautier and another one for Mr Clary, etc... etc..." It would not have been dangerous and would have saved me a lot of troubles. In another hand, for an important business, you can send a reliable servant; he will come here straight away without being asked for any passport or anything else.

I am now talking of the important business. Praise God it ends well but I think it is getting off to a bad start. You told me, in one of your last letters, that you agreed on the three points I mentioned in the letter Clary brought you.

1. Not to sign any peace treaty which is not honourable
2. Do nothing and publish nothing as long as Paris is holding
3. Use the favourable arrangements showed by Mr de Bismarck to keep the Metz army intact.

The whole question at the moment was resumed in the third point. To succeed it should be enough for me to contact Mr de Bismarck and, without entering in the peace conditions, to let him understand that once Paris is taken, the Maréchal Bazaine would have full power to find with him the best way to achieve peace, that it was therefore in his interest to handle the Maréchal Bazaine tactfully and to leave him at the head of his army.

If I was you, I would not have written to the King of Prussia because he will be embarrassed to answer you and it is useless to embarrass the person we expect something from (1)

As for your idea to go to Metz, in case everything we have thought of would succeed, I am totally opposed to it. It is essential that everything happening in France looks like spontaneous and from political faith not from an intrigue we have weaved. I therefore believe that your action should limit itself, after the fall of Paris, to protest claiming the rights the Nation gave me. Afterwards, we should know how to achieve peace, which chamber should be convened to discuss the basis of it. On that subject, Conti (1) has the right ideas. I am sending you a letter from him on this subject.

Yesterday, in the heat of the moment, I wrote to you a letter a little harsh it seems. It is true that I do not believe that such a serious business should be dealt with in haste and without preliminary discussions. I have received here a German I have known for a long time who is very devoted to me, although well thought of in the Prussian Headquarters; he was ready to carry all communications I would I have to make (2).

I saw Salomé (5) who gave me good news of you and Louis. I think he will be happy to see his friends again (4)

With fond love

P.s. I am sending back all your papers. How do you expect me to guess who is this devoted friend waiting for Mr Gautier in Gent?

(3) Theophile Gautier fils, State Advisor.

(4) Doctor Evans, The Empress's dentist, saved her on the 4th September helping her to escape from Paris and stayed with her in England ever since.

(1) Charles-Etienne Conti, senator, Napoléon III's previous secretary

(2) Probalby Mr Helwitz he talked about earlier

(3) The Princess Achille Murat, born Princess Salomé Dadian

(4) The doctor Conneau took his son Louis with him, the loyal friend of the Prince, lately dead after having been in command as a Général de Division in a Cavalry Corps in the last war.

Wilhemshöhe, 29th October 1870

Dearest,

At last, I have received a letter from you. I do understand how much you must have suffered with such an ordeal (5) and I can understand that you did not have time to write to me; but on the other hand, when I did not receive any word from you for six days, I imagined all kind of painful things to explain your silence. When someone is unhappy, it is easy to worry and I can assure you that I have been very unhappy these past days because, besides the sad events happening, the idea to have brought your discontent made me suffer horribly. Luckily your letter I received today heartened me. I totally agree with you and the letter which crossed with yours will prove to you that, from far away, our thoughts and our hearts understand each other. Thousand times better to be forgotten and even being destitute than to owe one's rise to abandoning one's dignity or the interest of one's country.

But, if things were dragging on, I do not see why you would not come and join me here with Louis, even if it was for one month only! What do you think? But, for God's sake, look after yourself and calm down. All is not as desperate as you believe; the whole of the South and the North of France are not devastated and will be able to have good harvests and then, Providence will make shoots grow from a trunk with more strength, mutilated remains of a great oak! It is poetry if you want but it is reality also!

I do not understand anything of Mr de Bismarck's behaviour if all he wanted was that whatever power in charge will commit to make any concession he desires, without that, no conclusion.

What happened to Thomas and Clara? I have not heard from them anymore.

Farewell dearest, Please calm down If you can, think of those you love and of this eternal will hovering over our destinies we must obey.

With fond love to you and our dear child
Farewell. All yours

P.s. Pietri, the Police Prefect, is here

(5) The Maréchal Bazaine capitulated in Metz on the 27th October 1870

(1) These lines probably refer to the mission of the Général Boyer in Versailles and Chislehurst, Filon talks about in his memoirs.

Wilhemshöhe, 7th November 1870

My dear Eugénie,

I have asked that 15 francs be given to each injured soldier and prisoner in Cassel and on your behalf, 100 francs to the officer who did not have any greatcoat(2). They were all very grateful. They are happy and are staying in heated dwellings. To extend the help to the whole of Germany would cost a lot of money and to organise the distribution, I am thinking of sending to all the towns where I know there is an officer, the attached note if you agree with it (1)

I have found in a Swiss newspaper the small paragraph enclosed; it proves that truth wins in the end.

I hope you are keeping well and Louis also. The Général Boyer did not come to see me (2).

With fond love, all yours

- (2) Originally, The Empress was due to spend a few hours in Wilhemshöhe but she arrived on the 30th of October and stayed until the 1st of November in the evening.
- (1) Here is the note: I, The Empress Eugénie having founded a charitable society in England to offer officers and French soldiers prisoners in Germany some of the things they could need and in order to associate himself to this charitable society, the Emperor charges me to ask you what you need and, as far as you know, what could be the most useful to officers and soldiers where you live and how many of them there are.
- (2) The Général de Brigade Napoléon Boyer, aide de camp of the Maréchal Bazaine, was charged by him in October to go on a mission in Versailles. He went to London afterwards to meet the Empress.

Wilhemshöhe, 15th November 1870

My dear Eugénie,

I hope you received my letter yesterday and my little flowers today (3). They are not very nice but it was all I could find. My thoughts are with you and I am suffering to be far from you, more today than any other day. I am sending you two souvenirs from officers of the Guard. I have received others and I will thank them on your behalf. I still do not know where the Colonel of your regiment is. These men who are here wanted to write to you by telegraph; I stopped them and told them I would tell you about their good wishes.

In your last letter you told me about the last letter I was meant to have written to the Queen of Holland. I do not remember; tell me if you have read it and what was the content.

Yesterday I read in a Brussels newspaper (L'Echo du Parlement) an extract of Mr R....'s booklet; it honours you a lot. The Maréchale Bazaine has totally recovered from her anger; I found her very kind and reasonable (5) The Times nearly regrets the success of the Army of the Loire (6) because it will give more strength to the quarrelsome ardour of Mr Gambetta and even so, the result will be the same.

I hope to receive some news from you tomorrow because I have been a few days without any; it makes me sad.

With fond love, from all my heart
Give a kiss to Louis and to my niece

- (3) The 15th November was the Empress's day

- (4) The Colonel Sautereau du Part, Commanding the Empress's dragoon regiment, had been injured in Rezonville
- (5) The Maréchale Bazaine came to join her husband imprisoned in Cassel and as soon as she arrived, if de Monts is to be believed, she had a violent argument with him.
- (6) Coulmiers, 9th November 1870

Wilhemshöhe, 17th November 1870

My dear Eugénie,

I expect to have a charitable society in Brussels which will receive offerings to give French prisoners warm clothes and clogs. I will subscribe 10 000 francs from me and 5 000 from Louis. You won't need to do anything about the payment. It would be nice if the same thing could be done in London because the needs are so big and the number of prisoners so huge (1)

I have been three days without news from you which made me sad and then yesterday, I received three of your letters at the same time. You must think however that there is a subject of great interest to me in your letters. Things are far from becoming clearer in France and the domination of the red socialists grows more every day. Garibaldi chases priests more than the Prussians. If one day there is a famine in Paris, I fear the most deplorable excess; the municipal elections prove the strength of the socialists (2). How will we ever be able to cure France from this organic disease?

The personal letters I receive lead me to believe that a reaction is not far away because people are tired of these revolutionary excesses. Gricourt (3) came to see me, he is full of hope and see everything through rose tinted glasses. One must have a lot of imagination to see the rainbow like that in the middle of a storm.

Tell me how your health is, do you sleep better? I thank you for the tender affection you show in your letters. It is of the sweetest comfort for me.

Give a warm kiss to Louis on my behalf. With tender affection
Goodbye

- (1) This organisation had to be stopped after the article in the "Independence Belge" denounced the intrigues of Wilhemshöhe but the Emperor continued anonymously to help his soldiers through Mr Alfred Pommier, an important French industrialist residing in Leipzig.
- (2) Hint about the Mayors and Deputy Mayors elections in Paris which took place on the 5th of November
- (3) The Marquis de Gricourt, senator and the Empress's Chambellan.

Wilhemshöhe, 19th November 1870

My dear Eugénie,

Nothing pleases me more to know that our thoughts meet; I was surprised yesterday when I received your letter where you talk about the Councils because I had the same thought and I was going to write to you about it. It is really strange to see that so far apart, our reflexions lead us to the same result and at the same time.

In one hand, I was thinking that to call back the old chambers, it is to revive the bodies which let themselves fade away and which showed no energy and no patriotism. On the other hand, to convene a Constituent Assembly is to agitate the whole country, loose precious time and leading to a dangerous result because the elections would not be free and would be under pressure from terrorists.

Therefore, if we convene the Councils asking them to nominate amongst themselves 3 members in each département to be part of a National Assembly, we would have 270 MPs in 8 days stemming from universal suffrage, the Chamber would be well composed and it would represent truly the country.

But where I have not found a solution is how and who would convene this Assembly because it implies that there is a provisional government and how would we name it. It is the problem I cannot solve at the moment. Give me your opinion.

The note from Gortchakoff brings the Times on our side (1). It is starting to notice that I have left an empty place. Thinking about it, I urge you to read the articles in the Times more often. There are some very sensible articles nearly every day.

I do not need you to send me money, in the contrary. How is Louis?

With fond love to both of you
Napoléon

P.s. Enclosed a card from a kind man from Versailles who sent it to me for you to remember the 15th of November.

(1) On the 11th November, through a note addressed to all governments who signed the 1856 treaty and signed by the Chancellor Gortchakoff, Russia declared to free itself from the restrictions to its free movement in the Black Sea.

Letter from the Empress to the Emperor, 19th December 1870

Dearest,

I sent you a long letter yesterday; I hope you read it with interest. My health is getting better, my strength is coming back but what dominates is how impatient I am to see you again. These long exile days seem so sad! But I am sure God will give us better moments but when? I do not know.

My fondness and my affection towards you are growing. I would like, even if I had to offer a lot of sacrifices, to make your life better than the circumstances allows but the darker it becomes, the harder we must believe that everything will end, good days and bad days alike.

With fond love, yours for always, Eugénie

p.s. Louis is well and sends his regards

Wilhemshöhe, 21st December 1870

My dear Eugénie,

It is always very sad for me to disagree with you. But, in this circumstance, after having read your note, I regret to have to tell you that I completely disapprove of the idea it contains. I can very well conceive that the very sad spectacle of a France devastated and exhausted by the invasion and a government without scruples, arouses in all the generous hearts the ardent desire to end the fight and the ills it brings. But it is not enough for all serious minds to want to work towards a desirable goal. You must make sure that your intervention will be useful to the country, that you feel it is your duty and that the chance of success is reasonable. However, in the present circumstances, I do not hesitate to declare that your intervention, such as you are proposing in your note, can be neither useful nor true to the duty or to have any chance of success.

When Paris has surrendered, two things will happen. One: either the Government of National Defence will ask for an armistice in order to elect a Constituent Assembly or it will carry on with the war. In these two cases, I do not see how we can intervene. If there are elections, we could protest, remind people of past treasons, make people feel that the Assembly will not represent the country's real opinion but is anxious to reach a peace by whatever means, it will not be stopped by protestations or lack of plan and it will accept anything offered.

If in the contrary the Government of National Defence wants to continue an all-out war and if no manifestation in whatever form will change its decision, I cannot see how we could, without the support of people demonstrating, come to say that it is wrong to continue the fight and that it is necessary to accept with a yes or a no a peace whose conditions would not have been discussed publicly and which, unfortunately, can only hurt the national dignity.

After the peace of Paris, only three different authorities, but all French, can emerge from the following chaos. Either a kind of interim government settled in Paris under Prussia's influence, a Government of National Defence or finally a Government settled in a country town where a popular movement would take place.

Leave it aside for the moment and let's talk only about the third option. If the popular movement happened, I could conceive, up to a certain degree, that you could go there but, whatever honest your intentions are, whatever turn of phrase you use, people would only see a dynastic pretention and not a true devotion and unless we have a considerable material force available, the decisions we would take would not be obeyed nor respected.

Nevertheless, even if only one city called you, I can conceive that your duty would be not to mislead the hopes of those who still believe in the future Empire but, apart from this hypothesis, I cannot conceive, I say it again, how people can advise you to go to any French town without being sure in advance how to get there, how you will be welcome and how the rest of country will take this action.

Following the role we played in Europe, all our actions must show dignity and greatness in accordance with the situation we occupied; therefore we cannot risk these dangers which would lead to ridicule like being arrested by four police officers. However, in the present circumstances, if you went to France, it would be the first risk you would encounter.

But forget about that, you are in Amiens, half of France is occupied by Prussians forces, the other half is in the hands of the energetic demagogues who will prevent the country to answer your call. Whatever you say that you only want to bring the benefices of peace to France without a dynastic ambition, they would

answer in any way possible that the peace proposed is shameful, that they could get a much better peace if we did not paralyse the national momentum, etc.... etc.... and you would be in the harsh necessity either to go back abroad or ask for the Prussian's support. People say that you would convene the old Chambers but, first of all, it is probable that the MPs and Senators would not be able or want to answer the invitation they received and also, one must say, the legislative body would have no influence on the country. It has shown too little energy and it contains dangerous elements who, by themselves, would have some importance in the present circumstances. Peace cannot be in France advantage and can only be more or less disastrous. People pretend that the conditions from the King of Prussia imposed to us would be better than those imposed on the Republic but, in order for this assumption to be evident for everybody, it would have been necessary that he had given his pretensions towards the Government of National Defence, and until he has done so in a conspicuous manner, the Republicans will always say that their programme was: "not an inch of our territory nor one stone from our fortresses". I cannot see any advantage for us, as long as our duty does not force us, to show ourselves more accommodating than those who overthrew us.

To summarize, I pretend that as long as one town in France is not flying the Empire's flag willingly, our duty is to stay in obscurity and to let events run their course; that as long as the facts I just mentioned will not happen, our intervention cannot be of any use to the country and even if it happened, it will have no chance of success.

Our personal action aside, what are the future probabilities? I think that once Paris has fallen, the King of Prussia will try to establish a provisional government in Paris, that this government which will have to start with only municipal attributes, will be able, if well composed, to have a certain influence on the country's destiny and that perhaps it will be able to convene an Assembly to discuss the peace. A lot of people thought that an Assembly nominated by previous regional Councils would have more influence on the country than the legislative body. For new circumstances, new people are necessary and however, today's elections are impossible. With the regional Councils as a basis, people recognise the Universal Suffrage principle their members are issued from and if they nominate MPs between themselves, they will be new people fit for the circumstances. In this new Assembly, the Thiers, the Jules Favre, the Gambetta, the Rochefort will be excluded. In this scheme I can only see advantages.

I have just told you in short what I am thinking about. Please think about it and believe that if I am mistaken, I only saw the good for the country and try to keep your dignity and mine clean.

With my renewed sincere thoughts and my tender affection
Napoléon

p.s. I would like to answer an assertion in one of your letters I just remembered. You say that one should not hide behind an assembly to make peace. I think that in the contrary, one must present the conditions for peace to an assembly in order to let the country's representative discuss it with full knowledge of the facts. But to submit the peace treaty to the country with a direct vote with a yes or a no, it is to hide behind the inevitable country's answer which will accept, blindly, a question presented in an abstract form: peace or war.

Wilhemshöhe, 24th December 1870

My dear Eugénie,

You cannot imagine how much pleasure your letters give me when they are as tender as the last ones. Mr de Berville will have brought you my long factum.

We have -22 degrees but a lovely sun. I bought some fur and I am very hot with it when I walk. The (title and name illegible) as they write, believes that Paris cannot hold for more than three weeks. It is high time that this war ends. It was said today in a German newspaper that France does not fight any longer but that it is bleeding. This expression is cruelly true.

A newspaper pretends that a French soldier who wanted to escape was arrested and the papers found on his person showed that Tropmann has accomplices.

I receive information from all over the place showing that there is a great reaction in my favour.

With my renewed fond thoughts with all my heart

Wilhemshöhe, 26th December 1870

My dear Eugénie,

I am sending you some interesting letters: one from Pietri and the other one from Mr Levert; the latter was the previous Préfet of Marseille (1) He is a witty man, very devoted, who put his devotion and his fortune at my disposal. I have only accepted the first. He is going to settle in Brussels to be closer to the events. I am sending you also the nasty letter from X.... but, at least, he is fair to you and for that reason, I forgive him.

I cannot wait to receive your news and to know how you took my answer.

With fond thoughts to you and our son
All yours

p.s. do not forget one thing: new circumstances need new people

(1) After having been Préfet of Algiers and Préfet of Marseille, Mr Levert whose devotion to the imperial cause never faded, was MP for Pas de Calais and President of the parliamentary group "Call to People"

Wilhemshöhe, 29 December 1870

My dear Eugénie,

Thank you for your tender thoughts for the coming year; it is difficult to think that the New Year will be sadder for France than the year ending. It is why we must hope. As long as you and Louis are well, I can bear anything. I thank you for the small picture and the cigarette holder; the first one will bring me luck.

The escape of a lot of French officers, few rebellions in Mayence and Coblenz, are resulting in an increase severity against prisoners and travellers.

Farewell dearest, think of me sometimes. Kiss Louis tenderly most of all on New Year's Day.

I think that you must have seen in "Le Drapeau" on the 28th, the answer of the Capitaine de La Begassière to X's (1) is excellent. You will know that the Maréchale Bazaine gave birth to a boy 15 days ago. Davillier (2) will leave next Monday to see his wife in London.

With fond thoughts, all yours

(1) Le Drapeau was a Bonapartist newspaper which had just started and was printed in Brussels.

(2) The Comte Davillier was the Emperor's first equerry.

Wilhemshöhe, 30th January 1871

My dear Eugénie,

I am sending back your proclamation a little altered but, in the new circumstances, it will be necessary to modify few passages. I am also sending a proclamation project for me (3). I wish to have your opinion.

To convene a Constituent Assembly in such a short notice is a farce (1) However it will have the advantage to discuss the conditions for the peace and as these conditions will not be favourable, it is better that the Assembly deals with them rather than us. I therefore believe that before launching my proclamation, we must wait for the Constituent Assembly to sit. As for your proclamation, you should only show it if the circumstances are favourable to allow you to play a more active role. I cannot wait to see if your opinion matches mine.

People write to me from the provinces telling me that reactions in my favour are progressing but I confess I am letting myself go with the events without wishing ardently that they turn in my favour. The spectacle of a France devastated and weakened does not excite ambition. But as you said: "do what you can, what will be will be"

I hope your health is good and that your affection for me has not diminished.

With fond thoughts, all yours

(3) The armistice was signed on the 27th January 1871 in Versailles. The Empress's proclamation does not seem to have been published. As for the Emperor's proclamation, it was published on the 8th of February 1871.

(1) A decree dated 29th January 1871 convened voters for the 8th February. The Assembly elected was due to meet in Versailles on the 12th February.

LETTER FROM THE EMPRESS TO THE EMPEROR

30th January 1871

Dearest,

Today is our wedding anniversary. Sadly we will spend the day far away from each other but, at least, I can tell you that I am deeply attached to you. In happy times, these bonds did loosen. I thought they were broken but it only needed a stormy day to show me its strength and more than ever, I remember the words from the Gospel: the wife will follow her husband everywhere, in sickness and in health, for better or for worse.

You and Louis are everything for me and are my family and my country. France's troubles deeply touch me but I do not regret for one instant the brilliance of our past life. To be reunited at last, it will be my aim and my wishes. Poor dearest, I wish that my devotion can make you forget for one moment the trials your great soul had to overcome. Your adorable indulgence makes me think of Our Lord. You will have, believe me, your day of justice also.

In the meantime, Louis and I kiss you from all our heart.
All yours, Eugénie

Wilhemshöhe, 3rd February 1871

My dear Eugénie,

I was very sad to hear the news about Bourbaki (1); to refuse a passport for his sister is an infamy. I agree with you about the Constituent Assembly, it is a Pandora box. If only it dealt with the peace and nothing else!

I told people I knew that in spite of the irregularity of the convocation, one must be nominated even if one protests in case the Assembly wants to decide of the form of the government. It would be very useful to have few orators there but where can we find them?

You thought of our wedding anniversary and I thank you for your affectionate words. It is a great comfort for me to think that the misfortune brings us closer at least morally if not physically.

With fondest thoughts for you and Louis from all my heart

(1) On the 26th January in the evening, in Besançon, the Général Bourbaki, commanding the Vosges army, attempted to commit suicide by firing a bullet with his revolver to his temple.

Wilhemshöhe, 6th February 1871

My dear Eugénie,

Today I can see in your letter that you are very distressed. I would like to be near you to help you to calm down. Poor Louis's illusions must also sadden you. Like you, I wish I have space and some sun and to be with both of you.

I think that the conditions for the peace the newspaper are talking about are intolerable and I fear Prussia wants to force it. I sent my proclamation. I think it will make a great impression but I cannot ignore it will bring abuses and insults.

With fond thoughts from all my heart

Wilhemshöhe, 17th February 1871

My dear Eugénie

Like you I have read in the newspapers that Napoléon had been elected in Corsica but the direct news we receive do not mention it (1)

I can see dearest in your letter that our reflexions reach the same conclusions. As long as the country has not experienced a weak government unable to restore order and prosperity, the country will not come back to us. It must make a comparison to appreciate what it had. I received the most absurd propositions. Somebody advised me to ask today's master to intervene to give me back my properties. I answered that I was prepared to humiliate myself if it was necessary to get better conditions for France but that, for me personally, I would prefer to be a pauper rather than ask anything. I can conceive that some people do not understand that we must keep our dignity in our misfortune. I have not heard about Joachim's election.

Farewell dearest, I hope to see you soon.

With fond thoughts for you and Louis from all my heart

(1) The Prince Napoléon (Jérôme's son) did not apply for the 8th of February election

(2) The Prince Joachim Murat had been elected as MP for the Lot Département in the National Assembly.

Wilhemshöhe, 28th February 1871

My dear Eugénie

You must feel as I do when you heard the peace condition (3) I must admit that I thought we would keep Metz and that the war indemnity would not go above 3 billions. This peace can only be a truce and it prepares great misfortune for Europe. I am profoundly affected and my mind is totally absorbed with these misfortunes. If only France was unanimous in its feelings and if it had a government strong enough to work without respite towards a resurrection, we could hope but what do we see? mad people or selfish people. I am extremely distressed. Today I do not have any energy to talk about anything else.

I hope to see you soon and I cannot wait to hug you and Louis on my heart.

With fond thoughts

(3) The peace preliminaries were signed in Versailles by Thiers and Bismarck on the 26th of February at 4 o'clock in the afternoon.

Wilhemshöhe, 2nd march 1871

My dear Eugénie

News follows each other and looks alike. You will have heard of the Bordeaux declaration (1) I was expecting it. I will protest when I know how it happened.

I am sending you a letter from Conti I just received (2). I ignore when I will be set free. When I know I will let you know immediately.

With fondest thoughts to you and Louis. All yours

(1) On the 1st of March, following an incident in the sitting, the National Assembly voted a motion to confirm Napoléon III's deposition. The Emperor did protest in a letter dated 6th of March to the Assembly President.

(2) Mr Conti had been elected MP for Corsica

Wilhemshöhe, 9th March 1871

My dear Eugénie,

I am surprised not to have heard anything about my release from captivity. Until now, no prisoner has received any notification. I believe that the German government, worried about disturbances in Paris, does not want to hurry the prisoners' release. As soon as I know anything, I will let you know by telegraph. I will take the 9 o'clock boat in Ostend and arrive in Dover around 1pm.

A very good article was published in a semi-official Berlin Newspaper on the declaration of my deposition by the Assembly. The newspaper says that the French people should, like the children of Israel, take a scapegoat, that it would be fairer than charge those who govern them of all the misfortune and later recognise what I did for the French people.

I will be very upset not to be near Louis on his birthday but I have not lost hope.

I did thank you for your offer to come to meet me in Belgium but I prefer to meet you in England. I will stop in Ostend only to meet few people who asked to see me and I will cross Germany at night. Anyway opinions of me have changed in the last six months.

With fond thoughts, I love you with all my heart. Kiss Louis from me.

Wilhemshöhe, 10th March 1871

My dear Eugénie

Tomorrow, the 16th (Prince Imperial's birthday) I will not be amongst you. It saddens me greatly. The day after tomorrow, the General de Monts is due back and then I will know when I will be able to go.

This brave Giraudeau has sent me his book: "the truth about the 1870 campaign". It is the best writing which has been published. It is the most complete justification for my conduct and yours. Nothing would be more useful than to send this book in great number through France. I wrote to Levert about it. Giraudeau sent me a moving letter expressing his devotion. These testimonies make me happy.

As soon as I know for sure, I will write to you by telegraph. You will have to answer me the same way so that I know that my dispatch has arrived.

With fondest thoughts to you and Louis. Tell me the exact time the train leaves Dover.

All yours, Napoléon

The Emperor left Wilhemshöhe on the 19th of March at 12.15 to arrive the following day in Chislehurst via Ostend and Dover.