



The electronic version (PDF) of this article was scanned by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Library & Archives Service.

Journal Title: Telecommunication journal

Journal Issue: Vol. 32, no. 5(1965)

Article Title: International Telegraph Conference Paris, 1865 : Signature of Convention by twenty sovereign States opens era of international co-operation

Page number(s): pp. 180-184

INTERNATIONAL TELEGRAPH CONFERENCE PARIS, 1865

Signature of Convention by twenty sovereign States opens era of international co-operation

The International Telegraph Conference convened in Paris held its first meeting on 1 March 1865 in the Building of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

On the proposal of H.E. Prince Metternich (Austria), the chairmanship was conferred on H.E. Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys (French Minister of Foreign Affairs) who, after opening the meeting, outlined the purpose of the Conference.

He recalled first of all that the exchange of telegraphic correspondence between European States had been governed by two Conventions agreed in 1858 at Brussels and at Berne respectively, to which Powers which had not been contracting parties to the two international Acts, had subsequently adhered. Since then, France had taken advantage of the authority conferred by the last paragraph of Article 2 of the Berne Convention to conclude several new arrangements to reduce the charges for telegrams and to replace the area system by a single tariff rate. Nevertheless, the advance in science, the extension of lines and the multiplicity of telegraph communications had clearly revealed that the provisions of the Brussels and Berne Conventions no longer satisfied the needs and conditions imposed by the current situation. Wishing to put the lessons learned through experience to good use as soon as possible and recognizing the advantages to be derived in its international relations from a uniform telegraph arrangement, France had felt bound to propose, not only to the States signatories of the Conventions, but likewise to all European Powers, that a Confer-

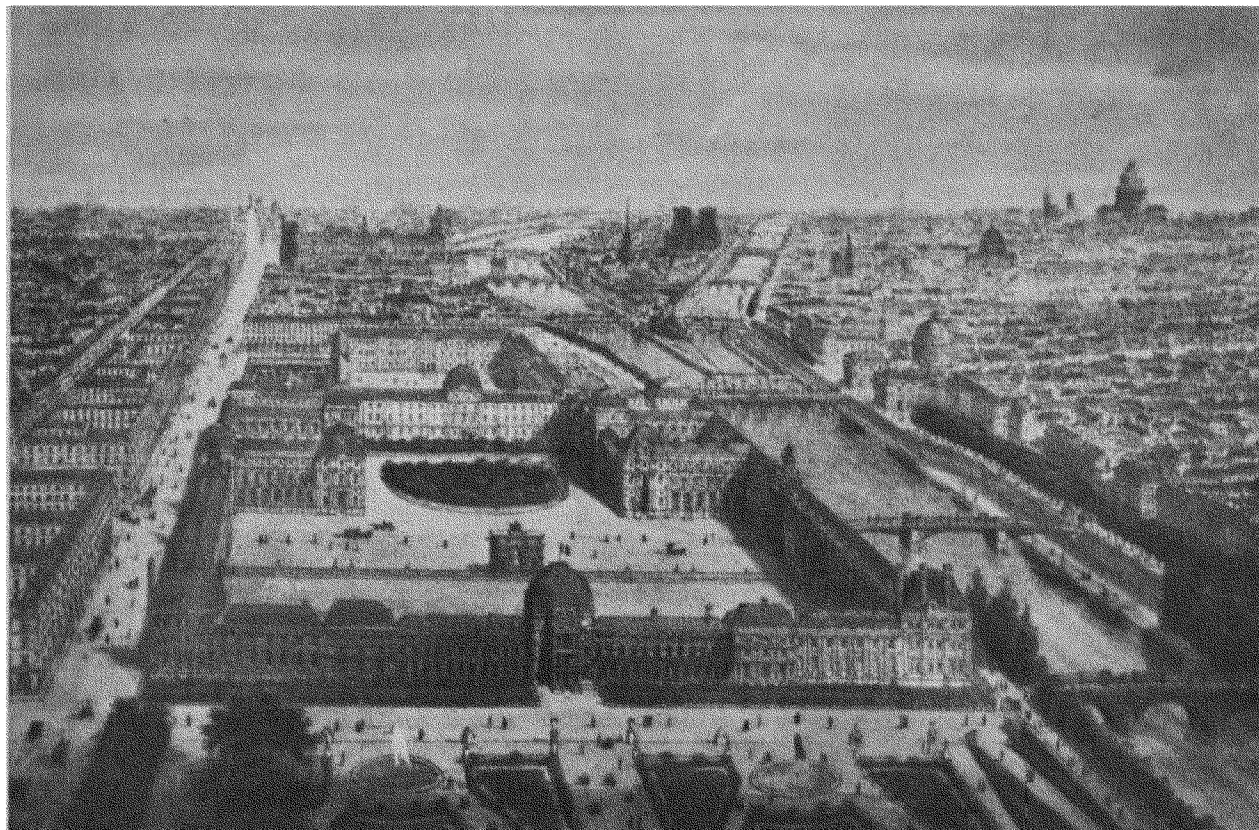
THE PARTICIPANTS AT THE MEETINGS

For Austria: H. E. Prince VON METTERNICH-WINNEBURG, assisted by Mr. BRUNNER VON WATTENWYL
For the Grand Duchy of Baden: Baron VON SCHWEIZER
For Bavaria: Baron VON WENDLAND, assisted by Mr. VON WEBER and Mr. VAN DYCK
For Belgium: Baron BEYENS, assisted by Mr. FASSIAUX and Mr. JULIEN VINCHENT
For Denmark: Count VON MOLTKE-HVITFELDT, assisted by Mr. FABER
For France: H. E. Mr. DROUYN DE LHUYS, assisted by Mr. HERBET, Viscount DE VOUGY and Mr. JAGERSCHMIDT
For Greece: Mr. PHOCION ROQUE, assisted by Mr. MANOS
For Hamburg: Mr. HEEREN
For Hanover: Baron VON LINSINGEN
For Italy: Cavaliere NIGRA, assisted by Cavaliere DI MINOTTO
For the Netherlands: Mr. LIGHTENVELT, assisted by Mr. STARING
For Portugal: Viscount DE PAIVA, assisted by Mr. DAMASIO
For Prussia: H. E. Count VON GOLTZ, assisted by Mr. DE CHAUVIN
For Russia: H. E. Baron VON BUDBERG, assisted by Mr. VON GUERHARD
For Saxony: Baron VON SEEBACH
For Spain: H. E. Mr. A. MON
For Sweden and Norway: Baron ADELSTROM, assisted by Mr. BRANDSTROM and Mr. NIELSEN
For Switzerland: Mr. KERN, assisted by Mr. CURCHOD
For Turkey: H. E. DJEMIL-PASHA
For Wurtemberg: Baron VON WAECHTER

ence be convened for the negotiation of a general Treaty. England alone had not been summoned; it was well known that the telegraph services in that country were in the hands of private companies; they would in any event, doubtless align their system with that accepted in the Act, the clauses of which it was the task of the Conference to determine.

The other countries approached had reacted favourably. That agreement was gratifying since it foreshadowed a happy issue for the negotiations.

It was true that Russia had made a reservation; that country had agreed to take part in the Conference only on condition that a departure would be made in its specific case from the absolute principle for the establishment of a uniform tariff: the enormous area of that Empire with its scattered population made it impossible to adopt a single rate. It had been felt that that request could equitably be granted—and the Conference would no doubt share that view—all the more so, since a similar exception had already been made in the case of Prussia, because of its geographical configuration, in the private treaty concluded between that State and France in January that year; in that treaty, arrangements had been made for two different sets of tariffs: one for the provinces stretching up to the Weser and one for those beyond that river. It should further be recalled that, with those two exceptions, the basis of the current negotiations consisted in the substitution of a single tariff



A general view of Paris at the period

for the existing system of payment by areas, so as to simplify as far as possible the use of telegraph communications. A rough draft of a Convention, prepared by the French Administration, had been submitted to each Member of the Conference; among the improvements suggested were those relating to the option of drafting telegrams in any of the languages used in the territories of the contracting States, the possibility of using cypher, the *registered* system whereby the accurate transmission of a telegram was assured, and many others. But the manifold questions entailed in the rearrangement to be made required detailed consideration as well as technical knowledge; it was to pave the way for a solution to those problems that the various Governments had designated special delegates to attend the Conference in Paris. He would consequently propose that a Committee established, with delegates as members, for the purpose of preparing a draft General Treaty for submission to the Conference. In that connection, he would note that the document drawn up by the General Administration of the Telegraph Lines of France was no more than a preliminary draft, intended to provide material for immediate discussion in the Committee, and therefore open to any amendments which might arise out of its debate.

The Members of the Conference unanimously approved the establishment of the Committee and,

★ on the proposal of H.E. the Ambassador of Austria, the Director-General of the Telegraph Lines of France, the Viscount de Vougy, was asked to act as Chairman.

H. E. Djemil-Pasha (Turkey) stated that the Ottoman Government supported in principle the views of the French Government, but only as far as the telegraph lines of European Turkey were concerned; he would have to make a reservation in regard to Asiatic Turkey because of the specific circumstances prevailing in that region.

H. E. Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys officially acknowledged the statement made by the Ambassador of Turkey. The reservations were unlikely to give rise to objection.

One vote per country

Mr. Kern (Switzerland) observed that, in the Committee just set up, the various States would be unequally represented; some had sent two delegates, while others had sent only one. To rectify that lack of balance, he would suggest that each country was accorded one vote only, irrespective of the number of delegates it had sent.

The proposal was approved.

H. E. Mr. A. Mon (Spain) announced that the Spanish delegation would be arriving shortly.

Baron von Waechter (Wurtemberg) made a similar announcement concerning the Wurtemberg delegation. ★

H. E. Djemil-Pasha announced that the Turkish delegate had left Constantinople and would shortly arrive in Paris.

After receiving those various items of information, Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys observed that the Conference had reached two decisions: first, it had asked a Committee, comprising all delegates and presided by Viscount de Vougy, to prepare and submit to him a Draft General Treaty; second, it ★

had ruled that, whenever a vote was taken, each State should be entitled to one vote only.

His Excellency added that it was for Viscount de Vougy to convene the members of the Committee of which he was Chairman. In setting the date of the meeting, allowance should be made for the fact that all States were not yet represented in Paris.

As there were no comments, the Conference adjourned until the work of the Committee was ready for consideration. ★

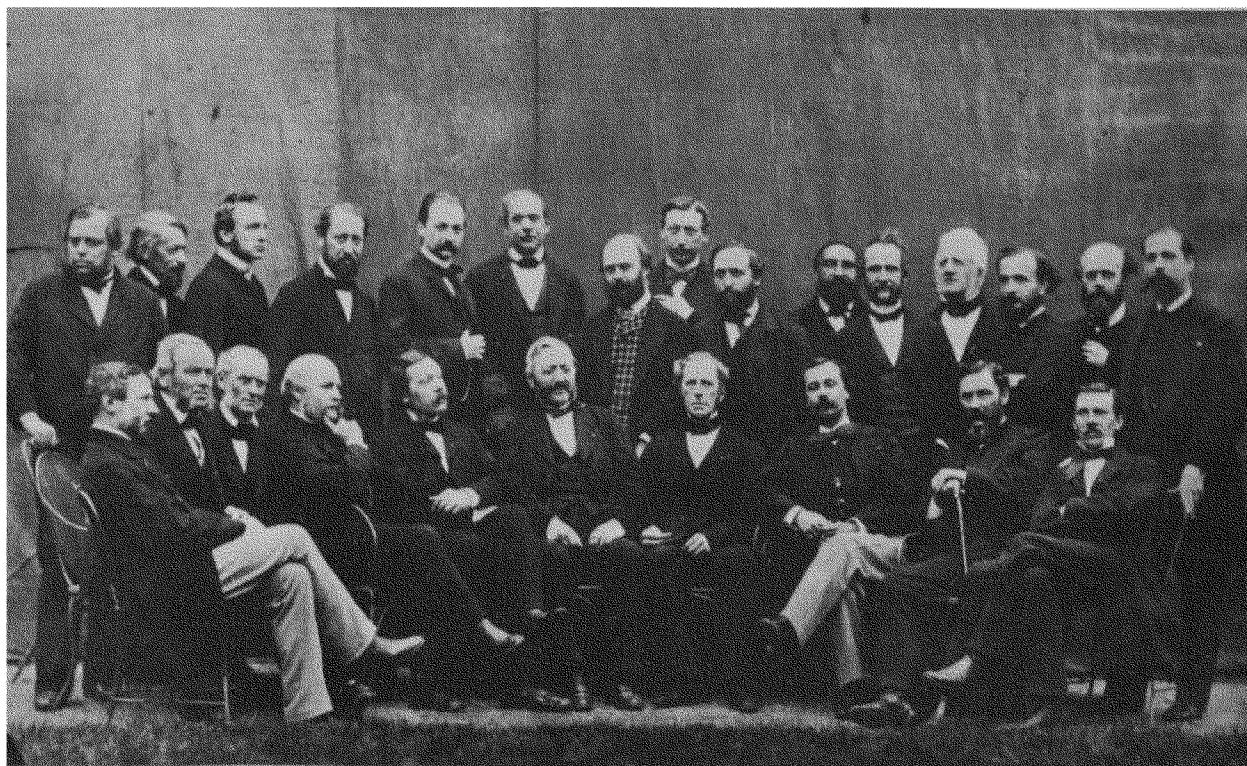
SECOND MEETING

The International Telegraph Conference met for the second time in the Building of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Thursday, 13 April 1865, under the Chairmanship of H. E. Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys. ★

After amendment and amplification of several sections, it had been adopted as a whole and constituted the final draft which was submitted for approval by the Conference.

H. E. the Foreign Minister opened the meeting and recalled that the Conference had set up a Committee, composed of the delegates and presided by Viscount de Vougy, Director-General of the Telegraph Lines of France, to draw up a draft Convention. His Excellency recalled also that, to facilitate the work of the Conference, the French Administration had prepared a preliminary draft to serve as a basis for discussion. Delegates had held sixteen meetings to consider that document. ★

The draft, added Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys, would introduce many important improvements in the international telegraph service. The provisions prepared by the delegates would be read out; some of them were particularly noteworthy. First of all there was the provision whereby, in each State, a standard charge system would replace the system of charging by area — a principle which was favoured by Russia, for all its possessions in Europe with the exception of the Caucasus, and by Prussia for its provinces on both sides of the



The delegates at the 1865 Conference

Weser, on the understanding that no advantage would be taken of the quite exceptional reservations that had been conceded to them in this respect. Other important provisions concerned the use of *registered* telegrams, which were to play the same role in the telegraph service as *registered* letters in the postal service, and of the *telegram to be forwarded*; the use of cypher for private telegrams, except in a few States which felt they were not yet in a position to authorize this means of correspondence; the recognition of the franc as the single monetary unit in establishing international tariffs. With regard to the tariffs themselves, the Committee had not confined itself to the establishment of principles, leaving the various Governments to arrive at mutual agreements for the reciprocal reduction of charges; despite the difficulties involved in such a work, it had succeeded in drawing up a general table (annexed to the Convention) which established a considerable reduction in the cost of telegrams. However, border States were not included in that table, since they had reserved the right to make their own special arrangements on all matters which were their exclusive concern.

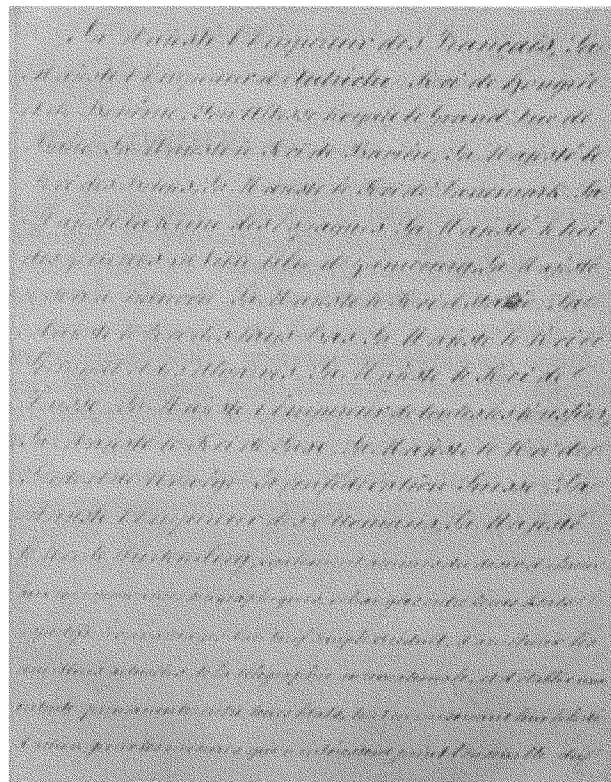
Independently from the Draft Convention, the Committee had prepared a set of International Service Regulations which amplified the provisions of the Convention. Those regulations, a simple administrative record, did not require the approval of the Conference and could not become binding until the draft submitted to the plenipotentiaries had been approved.

Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys went on to point out that the plenipotentiaries were already aware of the work being done: they had kept in constant touch with their respective delegates; they had followed every stage of the negotiations and had helped them to a successful conclusion; thus they were aware of the wise and generous spirit of compromise, the practical knowledge and comprehension of the interests to be safeguarded, shown by the delegates in accomplishing the difficult task entrusted to them. The Minister of Foreign Affairs thought that the Conference would wish him to express its sincere gratitude to the delegates.

"Peace Congress"

Apart from the results whose advantages were immediately obvious and from which the public would shortly benefit, the Conference had a more important reason to congratulate itself, for, as Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys said, "We have met here as a veritable Peace Congress. Although it is true that war is frequently caused by a mere misunderstanding, is it not a fact that the destruction of one of the causes makes it easier for nations to exchange ideas and brings within their reach this prodigious means of communication, this electric wire which conveys thoughts through space at lightning speed, providing a speedy and unbroken link for the scattered members of the human race?" Moreover, His Excellency continued, ★

there were mutual advantages to be gained from the meeting together of men of the highest rank, responsible for the great public services in their countries and representing every corner of Europe,



who could pool the results of their experience and form a sort of supranational instruction centre. It could truly be said that the personal relationships established among the directors-general of the telegraph services throughout the Continent would, in practice, foster official relations and help to overcome the difficulties that could not always be avoided even with the most carefully-designed regulations. In thanking the delegates for the part they had played in preparing the International Telegraph Code, his only desire was that they should take home with them the same happy impression that their visit of France would leave in his country.

H. E. Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys then asked Viscount de Vougy, Chairman of the Committee, to read out the Draft Convention.

The Director-General of the Telegraph Lines of France read out the document, which was approved by the Conference.

H. E. Prince Metternich, speaking on behalf of the Conference, expressed his warm thanks to Viscount de Vougy for the skill and courtesy with which he had guided the work of the Committee to such a successful conclusion.

H. E. Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys proposed that the plenipotentiaries should immediately initial the act to which they had just agreed, pending the preparation of the final documents for signature.

This formality was performed and at the same time several plenipotentiaries presented their cre-

dentials: Their Excellencies the Ambassadors of Prussia and Russia, the Ministers of Denmark, Hanover, Switzerland, Saxony and Wurtemberg.

It was agreed that those plenipotentiaries who did not present their credentials should do so at the signing of the Convention on a date to be decided later.

Before closing the meeting H. E. the Minister of Foreign Affairs thanked the plenipotentiaries for electing him their Chairman. Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys added: "Thanks to your kindness and co-operation my task was a sinecure that I was happy to fulfil."

The meeting rose at two o'clock.

THIRD AND LAST MEETING

The International Telegraph Conference met for the third time, in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Building, on Wednesday 17 May 1865, under the chairmanship of H. E. Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys.

After opening the meeting, the Minister of Foreign Affairs requested those plenipotentiaries who had not already presented their credentials to do so.

When all the credentials had been found to be in order and the various documents had been collated, the plenipotentiaries proceeded to sign the Convention which had been initialled at the previous meeting.

Before the Conference disbanded, H. E. Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys asked if he might make a couple of comments. First, he pointed out that since the Convention just negotiated had but one object — to establish regulations for an international tele-

graph service — the signing of the Convention would not have any political repercussions on the attitude of and relations among the various Governments.

His second comment related to the exchange of ratifications: he recalled the procedure adopted, to simplify matters, at the time of the ratification of the treaties on the surrendering of the Sound rights and the River Scheldt dues, and, following these precedents, the Conference decided that the Powers should exchange their ratifications through the intermediary of France.

On a proposal by H. E. Prince Metternich, the Conference unanimously passed a vote of thanks to H. E. Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys.

The minutes of the session were read and approved.

The meeting rose.

