While the plenipotentiaries were formalising their separation, their governments were only just responding to the news of the signing of the Preliminaries of Soledad, illustrating just how much the venture was beyond their control. The reactions of the governments to Soledad were to vary, however, once they received the reports from Mexico, and again when they heard the Convention had been suspended and the French representatives intended to act alone. This, of course, renewed suspicion of Napoleon’s intentions, and the blame for the rupture was attributed to the French plenipotentiaries and their support of Almonte.

The initial reaction of all three governments to Soledad was one of anger and disbelief that their representatives were continuing to negotiate with the discredited Juarez government. None of them could accept the idea of the Mexican flag being raised beside their own in the forts of Vera Cruz and St Jean d’Ulloa, which they had occupied, nor the stipulation that the allied troops would withdraw from their advanced positions if talks broke down. But when their envoys’ reports reached Europe the Spanish and British governments decided to approve their representatives’ actions, even though they would have preferred some of the articles of the Preliminaries to have been worded differently. The British government withdrew their objections relating to the Mexican flag on learning that the two forts would remain ‘under the exclusive military authority and control of the allied forces’.¹ To Wyke, Russell wrote: ‘This Convention will, it is to be hoped, dispel the fears entertained that the allies intended to interfere in the internal affairs of Mexico, and which, it must be admitted, was too much countenanced by the imprudent language held regarding the “regeneration of Mexico”’.² However, he also wrote privately, saying, ‘I am very glad to see the first article of General Prim’s Convention. The Emigrants at Paris had filled
the Emperor’s head with the notion of a monarchy, and the Empress’s with the hope of seeing the Holy Inquisition in Mexico." These remarks demonstrate that nothing would dispel the suspicions of Russell, nor of Palmerston, regarding the intentions of Napoleon.

The Emperor, though, was furious at the turn events had taken with Soledad, and his initial reaction was to recall Jurien and publicly repudiate his actions. An article in *Le Moniteur* criticised him, and a member of the *Corps législatif* wrote to Jurien that it seemed to have been authorised by the Emperor, who was not pleased with the results of the mission to Mexico City, ‘where, in his impatience he believed you had already arrived’. It appeared, he said, that the Emperor had not been made aware of the practical difficulties they would encounter as far as transport and supplies were concerned. He was preoccupied with the need for their prompt arrival in the capital in the light of recent successes of the Federal armies in America, and the opposition that French politics might encounter from a pacified United States. Jurien was advised that regardless of his original instructions he should reach Mexico City as quickly as possible, ‘for in our country, people do not take into account the difficulties, they are only concerned with success’. This advice was to be superfluous, however, as Jurien was instructed to return to his squadron.

The Emperor’s anger with Jurien may also have been prompted by a letter which Saligny had written in February to his friend General Rollin, the Adjutant-General of the palace, condemning Jurien and voicing his own disagreement with the decision to negotiate with Juarez. Saligny also blamed Jurien for the fact that their troops had been too poorly equipped to move inland immediately, and he had concluded:

*L’amiral, je l’avouerai, m’afflige et m’épouvante par ses irrésolutions, par son aveugle foi en nos adversaires, par sa confiance en lui-même et en sa fortune; confiance que je voudrais voir partagée par ses officiers et ses soldats. La mienne est tout entière dans l’Empereur, dans l’Empereur seul, dont la sollicitude saura, quoi qu’il arrive, aviser à toutes les mesures nécessaires pour sauvegarder l’honneur de notre drapeau.*

[The admiral, I must say, distresses and frightens me by his indecision, by his blind faith in our opponents, by his confidence in himself and in his good luck; confidence which I would like to see shared by his officers and soldiers. My confidence is entirely in the Emperor,