

Thomas More, Excerpt from Utopia, pp 58-59.

At this point, while all these mighty forces are being set in motion, and all these worthy gentlemen are producing rival plans of campaign, up gets little Raphael, and proposes a complete reversal of policy. I advise the King to forget about Italy and stay at home. I tell him that France is already almost too big for one man to govern properly, so he really needn't worry about acquiring extra territory.

I then refer to an incident in the history of Nolandia, a country just south-east of Utopia. On the strength of some ancient marriage, the King of Nolandia thought he had a hereditary claim to another kingdom, so his people started a war to get it for him. Eventually they won only to find that the kingdom in question was quite as much trouble to keep as it had been to acquire. There were constant threats of internal rebellion and external aggression. They were always having to fight either for their new subjects or against them. They never got a chance to demobilize, and in the meantime they were being ruined. All their money was going out of the country, and men were losing their lives to pay for someone else's petty ambition. Conditions at home were no safer than they'd been during the war, which had lowered moral standards, by encouraging people to kill and steal. There was no respect whatever for the law, because the king's attention was divided between the two kingdoms, so that he couldn't concentrate properly on either.

Seeing that this hopeless situation would continue indefinitely, if they didn't do something about it, the Nolandians finally decided on a course of action, which was to ask the king, quite politely, which kingdom he wanted to keep.

'You can't keep them both,' they explained 'because there are too many of us to be governed by half a king. Why, even if we were a lot of mules, it would be a full-time job looking after us!'

So that exemplary monarch was forced to hand over the new kingdom to a friend of his--who was very soon thrown out--and make do with the old one.

I also remind the French King that even if he does start all these wars and create chaos in all these different countries, he's still quite liable to find in the end that he has ruined himself and destroyed his people for nothing. I therefore advise

him to concentrate on the kingdom that his ancestors handed down to him, and make it as beautiful and as prosperous as he can, to love his own subjects and deserve their love, to live among them and govern them kindly, and to give up all ideas of territorial expansion, because he has got more than enough to deal with already.

Now tell me, my dear More, how do you think he'll react to my advice?