

Napoleon's Addresses, Letters and Proclamations during the Egyptian Campaign

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Napoleon's Addresses: Selections from the Proclamations, Speeches and Correspondence of Napoleon Bonaparte, edited by Ida M. Tarbell. (Boston: Joseph Knight, 1897).

Proclamation to the Troops on Entering Toulon, May 9, 1798

"Soldiers: ...You have made war in the mountains, plains, and cities. It remains to make it on the ocean. The Roman legions, whom you have often imitated, but never yet equaled, combated Carthage, by turns, on the seas and on the plains of Zama. Victory never deserted their standards, because they never ceased to be brave, patient, and united. Soldiers, the eyes of Europe are upon you. You have great destinies to accomplish, battles to fight, dangers and fatigues to overcome. You are about to do more than you have yet done, for the prosperity of your country, the happiness of man, and for your own glory."

**Proclamation to the Troops on
Embarking for Egypt, June, 1798**

"Headquarters on Board the *Orient*, the
4th Messidor, year 6.

Bonaparte, member of the National
Institute, General-in-Chief.

"*Soldiers*:—You are about to undertake a
conquest the effects of which, on
civilization and commerce, are
incalculable. The blow you are about to
give to England will be the best aimed,
the most sensibly felt, she can receive
until the time arrives when you can give
her her death-blow.

"We must make some fatiguing
marches; we must fight several battles;
we shall succeed in all we
undertake. The destinies are with
us. The Mameluke beys, who favor
exclusively English commerce, whose
extortions oppress our merchants, and
who tyrannize over the unfortunate
inhabitants of the Nile, a few days after
our arrival will no longer exist.

"The people amongst whom we are
going to live are Mahometans. The first
article of their faith is this: 'There is but
one God and Mahomet is His prophet.'
Do not contradict them. Behave to
them as you behaved to the Jews, to the
Italians. Pay respect to their muftis and
their imams, as you did to the rabbis and

the bishops. Extend to the ceremonies prescribed by the Koran and the mosques the same toleration which you showed to the synagogues, to the religion of Moses and of Jesus Christ.

"The Roman legions protected all religions. You will find customs different from those of Europe. You must accommodate yourselves to them. The people amongst whom we are about to mix differ from us in the treatment of women; but in all countries he who violates is a monster. Pillage only enriches a small number of men; it dishonors us; it destroys our resources; it converts into enemies the people whom it is our interest to have for friends.

"The first town we shall come to was built by Alexander. At every step we shall meet with grand recollections, worthy of exciting the emulation of Frenchmen."

Proclamation to the Egyptians, July, 1798

"People of Egypt: You will be told by our enemies that I am come to destroy your religion. Believe them not. Tell them that I am come to restore your rights, punish your usurpers, and raise the true worship of Mahomet. Tell them that I

venerate, more than do the Mamelukes, God, His prophet, and the Koran. Tell them that all men are equal in the sight of God; that wisdom, talents, and virtue alone constitute the difference between them. And what are the virtues which distinguish the Mamelukes, that entitle them to appropriate all the enjoyments of life to themselves? If Egypt is their farm, let them show their lease, from God, by which they hold it. Is there a fine estate? It belongs to the Mamelukes. Is there a beautiful slave, a fine horse, a good house? All belong to the Mamelukes. But God is just and merciful, and He hath ordained that the Empire of the Mamelukes shall come to an end. Thrice happy those who shall side with us; they shall prosper in their fortune and their rank. Happy they who shall be neutral; they will have time to become acquainted with us, and will range themselves upon our side. But woe, threefold woe, to those who shall arm for the Mamelukes and fight against us! For them there will be no hope; they shall perish."

Letter to The Directory in Paris

"Headquarters, Cairo, 6 Thermidor, year 4. (24 July, 1798.)

"*Citizen Directors*:—On the morning of the 2nd Thermidor we caught sight of the Pyramids.

"On the evening of the 2nd, we were within six leagues of Cairo, and I learned that the twenty-three beys, with all their forces, were entrenched at Embâbeh, and that their entrenchments were armed by more than sixty pieces of cannon.

"BATTLE OF THE PYRAMIDS.

"On the 3rd, at dawn, we encountered their vanguard, which we drove from village to village. At 2 o'clock in the afternoon we arrived before their entrenchments and found ourselves in the presence of the enemy.

"I ordered the divisions of Generals Desaix and Reynier to take up their position on the right, between Giza and Embâbeh, in such a manner as to cut off the enemy's communication with upper Egypt, which is their natural retreat. The position of the army was the same as at Battle of Chobiâkhyt.

"No sooner had Mourad-Bey perceived General Desaix's movements, than he resolved to charge them. He

despatched one of his bravest beys with a corps of picked men, who, with lightning rapidity, charged the two divisions. They were allowed to get within fifty feet, then we greeted them with a shower of balls and grape-shot which left many of their number dead on the battle-field. They dashed into the space formed by the two divisions, where they were received by a double fire which completed their defeat.

"I seized the opportunity and ordered General Bon's division, which was on the Nile, to prepare for an attack on the enemy's entrenchments. I ordered General Menon's division. Which was commanded by General Vial, to bear down between the corps that had just charged us and the entrenchments, in such a manner as to accomplish the triple end of,—

"Preventing this corps re-entering their entrenchments.

"Cutting off the retreat of those who occupied them

"And finally, if necessary, of attacking the entrenchments on the left.

"Directly the generals, Vial and Bon, were in position, they ordered the first and third divisions of each battalion to draw up in columns of attack, while the second and fourth retained their former

position, forming a square battalion, now only three deep, while they advanced to support the columns of attack.

"General Bon's columns of attack, commanded by the brave General Rampon, threw themselves upon the entrenchments with their usual impetuosity, in spite of the fire from a large quantity of artillery, when suddenly the Mamelukes made a charge. They emerged from their entrenchments on a full gallop, but our columns had time to come to a halt, to face all sides, and receive them on the points of their bayonets, or by a shower of balls. In an instant the field was strewn with the enemy.

"Our troops soon razed their entrenchments. The Mamelukes fled, precipitating themselves *en masse* upon their left, but General Vial was ready for them. They were obliged to pass within five feet of a battalion of our riflemen, and the butchery was awful. A large number threw themselves into the Nile and were drowned.

"After the numerous combats and battles that my troops have gained over superior forces, I should not think of praising their conduct and their *sang-froid* on this occasion, were it not that this new method of warfare has

required, on their part, a patience which contrasts with French impetuosity. Had they given way to their ardor they could not have gained the victory, which was obtainable only by great coolness and patience.

"The Mamelukes' cavalry displayed great bravery; they defended their fortunes, and upon every one of them our soldiers found from three to five hundred louis.

"It would be difficult to find a land more fertile, and a people more miserable, more ignorant, more abject. They prefer one of our soldier's buttons to a six-franc piece.

"In the villages they do not even know the sight of a pair of scissors. Their houses are made of a little mud. Their sole furniture is a mat of straw and two or three earthen pots. They eat and burn very little as a general thing. They do not know the use of mills; consequently, we frequently bivouacked on stalks of wheat without being able to obtain any flour. We live on vegetables and cattle. The little grain they do use, they grind into flour with stones, and in some of the large villages they have mills turned by oxen.

"We are constantly annoyed by clouds of Arabs; they are the greatest robbers and the greatest rascals on the face of the

earth, assassinating alike Turks and French, or anyone who falls in their way.

"Brigadier-General Mireur and several aides-de-camp and officers of the staff have been assassinated by these wretches. They lie in ambush behind banks and ditches on their excellent little horses, and woe to him who ventures to wander a hundred feet from the columns.

"By a fatality that I have often observed to follow men whose last hour approaches, General Mireur went alone, in spite of the remonstrances of the main-guard, to a little elevation about two hundred feet from the camp. Behind it were stationed three Bedouins who murdered him.

The Republic has met with a real loss. He was one of the bravest generals I have ever known.

There is very little coin in this country, not enough to pay the army. There is plenty of wheat, rice, vegetables, and cattle. The Republic could not have a colony better suited to its needs, nor of a richer soil. The climate is very healthy, owing to the cool nights.

"In spite of fifteen days' march, and all kinds of fatigue, the absolute deprivation of wine, in fact, of everything that could alleviate fatigue,

we have no one on the sick list. The soldiers have found a great resource in the *postèques*, a kind of watermelon that is very abundant here."

Order Respecting the Government of Egypt, July 27, 1798

"Headquarters, Cairo, 9th Thermidor, year 6

"Bonaparte, Member of the National Institute, General-in-Chief, Orders:

"Article I. There shall be in each province of Egypt a divan, composed of seven individuals, whose duty it will be to superintend the interests of the province; to communicate to me any complaints that may be made; to prevent warfare among the different villages; to apprehend and punish criminals (for which purpose they may demand assistance from the French commandant); and to take every opportunity of enlightening the people.

"Article II. There shall be in each province an aga of the Janissaries, maintaining constant communication with the French commandant. He shall have with him a company of sixty armed natives, whom he may take wherever he pleases, for the maintenance of good order, subordination, and tranquillity.

"Article III. There shall be in each province an intendant, whose business will be to levy the Miri, the feddan, and the other contributions which formerly belonged to the Mamelukes, but which now belong to the French Republic. The intendants shall have as many agents as may be necessary.

"Article IV. The said intendant shall have a French agent to correspond with the Finance Department, and to execute all the orders he may receive."

Letter to Tipu Saib, Jan. 25, 1799

Note: Tipu Sahib was the Sultan of Mysore in southern India and a long-time enemy of the British East India Company. He died in a battle in May 1799.

"You are, of course, already informed of my arrival on the banks of the Red Sea, with a numerous and invincible army. Eager to deliver you from the iron yoke of England, I hasten to request that you will send me, by the way of Muscat or Mocha, an account of the political situation in which you are. I also wish that you would send to Suez, or Grand Cairo, some able man, in your confidence, with whom I may confer."

**Proclamation to the Army on
Napoleon's Departure for France,
August 1799**

"The news from Europe had determined me to proceed to France. I leave the command of the army to General Kléber. The army shall hear from me forthwith; at present I can say no more. It costs me much pain to quit troops to whom I am so strongly attached. But my absence will be but temporary, and the general I leave in command has the confidence of the Government as well as mine."