

37. NAPOLEON'S PROCLAMATION TO THE EGYPTIANS

2 July 1798

[Translated from the French text in Napoleon I, *Correspondance*, 4: 191-92]

Napoleon issued the following statement immediately upon his triumphant entry into Alexandria, proclaiming himself the protector of Islam and savior of the Egyptian people. The identical theme, it will be readily recognized, was employed by Kaiser Wilhelm II in 1898 in his visit to Damascus and by Mussolini and Hitler four decades later in their respective efforts to win friends and destroy the influence of Britain and France in the Middle East. Ghorbal, *Beginnings of the Egyptian Question*, chap. 2; Charles-Roux, *Bonaparte* (also, the English translation by E. W. Dickes); Lacroix, *Bonaparte en Egypte*; Dennis, *Eastern Problems*, chap. 3; Ingram, "Preview of the Great Game in Asia"; Turki, *Chronique d'Egypte*; see also references to Doc. 36.

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

For a long time, the Beys governing Egypt have insulted the French nation and its traders. The hour of their punishment has come.

For too long, this assortment of slaves bought in Georgia and the Caucasus has tyrannized the most beautiful part of the world; but God, on Whom all depends, has ordained that their empire is finished.

Peoples of Egypt, you will be told that I have come to destroy your religion; do not believe it! Reply that I have come to restore your rights, to punish the usurpers, and that more than the Mamluks I respect God, his Prophet, and the Quran.

Tell them that all men are equal before God; that wisdom, talents, and virtues alone make them different from one

another.

But, what wisdom, what talents, what virtues distinguish the Mamluks, that they should possess exclusively that which makes life pleasant and sweet?

Is there a good piece of land? It belongs to the Mamluks. Is there a pretty slave, a fine horse, a beautiful house? They belong to the Mamluks.

If Egypt is their farm, let them show the lease which God has granted them. But God is just and merciful to the people.

All Egyptians will be called to administer all places; the wisest, the best educated, and the most virtuous will govern, and the people will be happy.

Of old, there used to exist here, in your midst, big cities, big canals, a thriving commerce. What has destroyed all this, but Mamluk avarice, in justice and tyranny?

Qadis, Shaykhs, Imams, Çorbacıs [commanders of Janissary regiments], tell the people that we are the friends of the true Mussulmans.

Did we not destroy the Pope, who said that war should be waged against the Mussulmans? Did we not destroy the Knights of Malta, because those insane people thought that God wanted them to wage war against the Mussulmans? Have we not been for centuries the friends of the Grand Seigneur (may God fulfill his wishes!) and the enemies of his enemies? Have not the Mamluks; on the contrary, always revolted against the authority of the Grand Seigneur, whom they still ignore? They do nothing but satisfy their own whims.

Thrice happy are those who join us! They shall prosper in wealth and rank. Happy are those who remain neutral! They will have time to know us and they will take our side.

But unhappiness, threefold unhappiness, to those who arm themselves for the Mamluks and fight against us! There shall be no hope for them; they shall perish.

ART. 1. All villages within a radius of three leagues from the locations through which the Army will pass will send a deputation to inform the Commanding General that they are obedient, and to notify him that they have hoisted the Army flag: blue, white, and red.

ART. 2. All villages taking up arms against the Army shall be burnt down.

ART. 3. All villages submitting to the Army will hoist, together with the flag of the Grand Seigneur, our friend, that of the Army.

ART. 4. The Shaykhs shall have seals placed on the possessions, houses, [and] properties belonging to the Mamluks, and will see that nothing is looted.

ART. 5. The Shaykhs, the Qadis, and the Imams shall continue to perform their functions. Each inhabitant shall remain at home, and prayers shall continue as usual. Each man shall thank God for the destruction of the Mamluks and shall shout Glory to the Sultan! Glory to the French Army, friend! May the Mamluks be cursed, and the peoples of Egypt blessed!