

By that alone can man be governed; without it he is but a brute.

December 30, 1802

My power proceeds from my reputation, and my reputation from the victories I have won. My power would fall if I were not to support it with more glory and more victories. Conquest has made me what I am; only conquest can maintain me.

Friendship is only a word; I love nobody; no, not even my brothers. Perhaps Joseph a little; even then it's a matter of habit, it's because he is my elder.—Duroc? Ah, yes, I love him; but why? His character attracts me: he is cool, dry, severe; and Duroc never sheds tears. As for me, you don't suppose I care; I know perfectly well I have no real friends. As long as I remain what I am, I shall have as many as I need so far as the appearance goes. Let the women whimper, that's their business, but for me, give me no sentiment. A man must be firm, have a stout heart, or else leave on one side war and government.

Saint Helena, March 3, 1817

In spite of all the libels, I have no fear whatever about my fame. Posterity will do me justice. The truth will be known; and the good I have done will be compared with the faults

I have committed. I am not uneasy as to the result. Had I succeeded, I would have died with the reputation of the greatest man that ever existed. As it is, although I have failed, I shall be considered as an extraordinary man: my elevation was unparalleled, because unaccompanied by crime. I have fought fifty pitched battles, almost all of which I have won. I have framed and carried into effect a code of laws that will bear my name to the most distant posterity. I raised myself from nothing to be the most powerful monarch in the world. Europe was at my feet. I have always been of opinion that the sovereignty lay in the people. In fact, the imperial government was a kind of republic. Called to the head of it by the voice of the nation, my maxim was, *la carrière est ouverte aux talents* without distinction of birth or fortune, and this system of equality is the reason that your oligarchy hates me so much.

Saint Helena, August 28, 1817

Jesus was hanged, like so many fanatics who posed as a prophet, a messiah; there were several every year. What is certain is that at that epoch opinion was setting towards a single God, and those who first preached the doctrine were well received: circumstances made for it. It is just like in my case, sprung from the lower ranks of society I became an emperor, because circumstances, opinion, were with me.



Visual Sources

Napoleon Crossing the Alps

Jacques Louis David

Jacques Louis David was a leading painter of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and one of the first great painters to consciously devote his talents to the art of propaganda. A republican during the French Revolution, he painted a number of pictures supportive of the revolution and what it stood for. David argued that "the arts should . . . contribute forcefully to the education of the public" and that art "should have grandeur and a moral"; if a painting is properly presented, the "marks of heroism and civic virtue offered the eyes of the people will electrify its soul, and plant the seeds of glory and devotion to the fatherland."

When Napoleon rose to power, David became a Bonapartist. In 1800 he was asked by Napoleon to paint a picture of him leading his army across the Alps. The result, *Napoleon Crossing the Alps* (figure 10.1), shows Napoleon in a heroic pose on a white charger following the glorious footsteps of Hannibal and Charlemagne (whose names are carved in the rocks below) across the Alps. Napoleon is pointing upward, probably both to heaven and to the top of the mountains, while a wind blows at his back—a traditional symbol of victory. Under the horse's belly are troops and cannon moving up

the trail. In reality, Napoleon wisely rode a sure-footed mule. He also posed only briefly for David, informing him that "it is the character and what animates the physiognomy that needs to be painted. No one inquires if the portraits of great men are likenesses. It is enough that their genius lives in them."

CONSIDER: The way this painting and the circumstances surrounding its execution by David illustrate connections between politics and art of the period.

Bonaparte Visiting the Plague Victims at Jaffa

Antoine-Jean Gros

Despite the British victory at Aboukir Bay in Egypt, which annihilated French sea power, Napoleon retained hopes of conquering the Near East by land. In February 1799, French forces moved northeast from Cairo to Gaza and Nazareth. Despite some victories, the campaign failed to establish French control over the area. Nevertheless, Napoleon tried to transform these disappointments by promoting paintings that created images of success in this campaign.

In 1804 Antoine-Jean Gros (1771–1835) presented a scene from the Near Eastern campaigns of 1799 that showed the

heroic Napoleon displaying humanism, charity, and nobility. The painting (figure 10.2) records Napoleon, after the battle of Jaffa, entering the mosque courtyard (with its horseshoe arches and pointed arcades) of a pest house (plague hospital) at the Palestinian city of Jaffa in the Holy Land on March 11, 1799. Within lay victims of the bubonic plague, which had recently broken out among Arab defenders of the city and spread to the French. When the plague struck, Napoleon at first had his chief medical officer Desgenettes (just behind and to the right of Napoleon, who stands at the center of the painting) deny the presence of the sickness. Here Napoleon tries to stop the panic and inspire his troops by showing that he is not afraid of contamination and that the victims will be well cared for. At this moment the apparently immune and clearly fearless Napoleon reaches out and even touches the dreaded buboes (an inflamed swelling of the lymphatic glands that usually preceded death) of a French victim, perhaps conveying a sense that his touch might miraculously heal the stricken man. Just behind Napoleon, to the left, a more cautious officer holds a handkerchief to his face to ward off the stench of disease and death. In the foreground lay the dead and the agonized dying. At the left, an Arab physician in white robes attends the sick and an assistant carries bread for distribution to the needy. To the right, a blind man, leaning against a column, tries to approach Napoleon, and on the extreme bottom right a doctor, while caring for a soldier, succumbs himself. In the background are the white cubic houses and rising minarets of Jaffa. High in the center from the top of a Franciscan monastery flies triumphantly the French tricolor.

The surrounding facts differ from the historical image presented by this painting. During the battle of Jaffa, Napoleon



FIGURE 10.1 © Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, NY

had agreed to protect the lives of enemy soldiers if they capitulated. But upon laying down their arms, Napoleon ordered the 3,000 prisoners massacred and plundered the town. By May 1799, French forces had retreated back to Egypt.

CONSIDER: The message the artist intended to convey to viewers; how high quality art might be used for propaganda purposes.



Secondary Sources

Napoleon: The Authoritarian Statesman

Tim Blanning

As with most charismatic figures, it has been difficult to evaluate Napoleon objectively. Even before his death, a number of myths were developing about him. Since then much of the de-

bate among scholars has dealt with whether Napoleon should be considered a defender or a destroyer of the revolution, and whether his rise to power reversed the revolutionary tide or consolidated it. In the following selection, Tim Blanning focuses on the consequences for France of Napoleon's rule and argues that he used statesman-like qualities to help create order.

CONSIDER: What Blanning considers Napoleon's accomplishments within France; why Blanning calls Napoleon "statesman-like"; whether the primary and visual sources support this interpretation.