

---

## **THE PREPARATORY STAGE FOR THE BRITISH CAMPAIGN AGAINST EGYPT 1897, ANALYTICAL STUDY**

**Mahmoud Ahmed Darwish**

Professor of Islamic Archaeology

Faculty of Arts, Minia University

[prof.mdarwish@gmail.com](mailto:prof.mdarwish@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

This research examines the preparatory stage for the British campaign against Egypt in 1897, through an analytical study. It does so by analyzing sixteen letters exchanged between the British political and military leadership and the campaign forces to prepare for the attack on Egypt. The aim was to achieve military objectives and occupy Egyptian ports, following coordination with the Ottoman Sultan and the Mamluks under the leadership of Muhammad Bey al-Alfi. These letters, dated between November 21, 1806, and February 28, 1807, encompass all preparations for the campaign.

The research addresses this topic through two main sections: the first examines the text of the sixteen letters, and the second presents an analytical study of the letters during the preparatory stage for the campaign against Egypt.

**Keywords:** the British campaign, Egypt, Egyptian ports, the Ottoman Sultan, the Mamluks, Muhammad Bey al-Alfi.

### **A. Text of 16 the letters [1]**

#### **1. The right Honourable<sup>1</sup> [2] W. Windham<sup>2</sup> [3], [4], [5], to General Fox<sup>3</sup>, (Most Secret),**

---

<sup>1</sup> The Right Honorable is a style of honor traditionally applied to certain persons and collegiate bodies in the United Kingdom, the British Empire and the Commonwealth of Nations. The term is mostly used as a pattern associated with the holding of certain senior public offices in the United Kingdom. It is called the members of the Privy Council of the United Kingdom, including current and former members of the Cabinet of the United Kingdom, as well as some other senior ministers. It means honorable or worthy of respect.

<sup>2</sup> William Windham (3 May 1750 – 4 June 1910) was a statesman elected to Parliament in 1784, joining the remnants of the Rockingham faction of Whigs, whose members included his friend Charles James Fox. He was an early supporter of the French Revolution, by late 1791, in July 1794, he had joined Pitt's government as Minister of War but had no control over war policy. He argued in the cabinet against a peace agreement with the French Republic. In February 1801 Windham followed Pitt in his resignation from the government over the King's rejection of Catholic Emancipation. He was the main opponent of the new Prime Minister Henry Addington's peace with France in late 1801 and early 1802. In the 1806-7 ministry of William Grenville, Windham became Secretary for War and the Colonies, dying in 1810.

<sup>3</sup> General Henry Edward Fox (4 March 1755 – 18 July 1811) was a general in the British Army. Appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean (1806-07) and Minister to Sicily. With his health failing, Fox passed command to his deputy, Lieutenant-General Sir John Moore. His force became smaller when Major

**21<sup>st</sup> November 1806** [6], [7]

Some late proceedings on the part of the Porte having rendered it indispensably necessary that measures of a prompt and decisive nature should be adopted towards the Turkish Government, I have it in command, therefore, to inform you that orders have been sent to Vice- Admiral Lord Collingwood to detach a sufficient squadron of the H. M. Ships, Government Ships, under the command of able and experienced officers, with directions to proceed without a moment's loss of time to the Straits of Constantinople and there to take up such an hostile position as will enable them (should representations suitable to the occasion, which Mr. Arbuthnot<sup>1</sup> has been directed to make to the Turkish Government, fail of effect) to act offensively against Constantinople.

I have it further in command to inform you that orders have been sent to Vice- Admiral Lord Collingwood to direct the Officer in Command of the Squadron above mentioned, in the event of strong measures becoming necessary, immediately on the commencement of hostilities to dispatch a fast- sailing vessel with intelligence of the same to you; and I am to convey to you the H. M. Ships Government 's pleasure that, without even waiting for such communication, you make all necessary arrangements and preparations for the transporting of a corps consisting of live thousand men under a suitable convoy to Egypt, and that on the receipt of such communication you give the necessary orders for carrying the measure into effect.

The object of the H. M. Ships Government in determining upon this measure is not the conquest of Egypt, but merely the capture of Alexandria for the purpose of preventing the French from regaining a footing in that country and of enabling the H. M. Ships Forces there to afford countenance and protection to such of the parties in that country as may be best disposed to maintain at all times a friendly intercourse with Great Britain. In choosing an officer to command this expedition, attention must, therefore, be paid not only to his military talents, but to those qualities which may best suit him for a civil or political trust of very considerable importance, which the service on which he is to be engaged must, from its

---

General Mackenzie Fraser was sent to occupy Alexandria. Fox and Moore also opposed the political machinations of Admiral William Sidney Smith, until Fox's poor health led to his recall by the British government and his replacement by Moore. Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (online ed.). "Fox, Henry Edward", Oxford University Press.

<sup>1</sup> Charles Arbuthnot was a British diplomat and Tory politician. He held a number of political positions. He served as Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Henry Addington from November 1803 to June 1804, was appointed on 6 June 1804 ambassador to the Ottoman Empire and left Constantinople on 29 January 1807.

nature, involve.

His interference in those party dissensions which generally agitate Egypt, or in those contests for power which are generally maintained amongst the Beys, will probably be unavoidable, and the precise line which it will be proper for him to take in the exercise of such interference would be difficult at this time and at this distance to point out; but on such questions it will be advisable that he should he should communicate with Major Misset and that he should pay such attention to the opinion of that officer as, from his local information and experience, it shall appear to merit [8].

### **2. Lord Howick<sup>1</sup> [9] to General Fox, 21<sup>st</sup> November 1806 [8]**

I write a line to, accompany the dispatches which will be conveyed to you by the Squadron destined to reinforce the Fleet under Lord Collingwood, to state that it is the wish of the H. M. Ships Government that you should use all possible dispatch in making the necessary preparations for the eventual expedition to Alexandria, but that you should not name any officer to command the Forces intended for this service till you hear further from hence. Mr. Windham's absence on account of his election is the cause of my having troubled you with this letter [11], [12], [13].

### **3. Lord Collingwood to William Marsden Esq<sup>2</sup>, Ocean, off Cadix<sup>3</sup> [14], 1 January 1807 [15]**

..... I have ordered Captain Hallowell of the Tigre to proceed to Sicily, and command the Squadron employed in its defense, in the absence of the Flag Officer<sup>4</sup>. To this officer I have given the charge to prepare the transports which may be wanted for the embarkation of (7000) troops and to consult with general Fox on the most commodious place for their embarkation. As there is no person who has a more perfect knowledge of the country where they are to debark, I purpose that we should conduct them thither .....

<sup>1</sup> Charles Gray, known as Viscount Howick between 1806 and 1807. In Lord Grenville's government Prime Minister he took over the Department of State for Foreign Affairs 24 September 1806 - 25 March 1807 after Charles James Fox, then Leader of the House of Commons Commons 24 September 1806 - 31 March 1807 after Charles James Fox, First Lord of the Admiralty 11 February 1806 - 24 September 1806 after Lord Barham.

<sup>2</sup> William Marsden was an orientalist, linguist, anglophone, and pioneer of the scientific study of Indonesia, during the years of conflict with France. In 1795, Marsden was appointed Second Secretary to the Admiralty, and later rose to First Secretary in that capacity. In 1805, Marsden received bitter news of the victory at the Battle of Trafalgar and the death of Admiral Horatio Nelson in action. He retired in 1807.

<sup>3</sup> Gadiz or Cadiz: One of the oldest coastal Spanish cities in southern Andalusia, it is the capital of the province of Cadiz and is built on a long, narrow peninsula that extends into a bay.

<sup>4</sup> Sir Sidney Smith, who was commissioner in Sicily, having been ordered to join Admiral Duckworth's squadron assigned to action against Constantinople.

#### **4. Major Missett to the Right Hon. W. Windham, Alexandria, 26<sup>th</sup> January 1807 [16]**

I have the honour to inform you that the Viceroy of Egypt lately received orders from his Court to put every vulnerable part of this province in a state of defense. I have been assured, and it is publicly stated, that he has also been directed to oppose, by every means in his power, the landing of British troops in this country.

The execution of those orders naturally attracts the public attention, and the Egyptians, ever sanguine in their expectations, consider the arrival of an Egypt army at Alexandria as an event by no means distant. But it is probable that the judicious part which the H. M. Ships's Ambassador at Constantinople took in the discussions which, a few months back, existed between the Russian Government and the Port, induced the latter to adopt certain measures of precaution for the protection of the Turkish dominions; but that the instructions to that effect did not reach the Viceroy for a long time after they had been issued.

Vain, indeed, would have been the efforts of the Ottoman Government to save this country, had those discussions terminated otherwise than amicably. In his preparations of defense, the Commandant of this town has been obliged to confine himself to the hasty repair of the walls of the city, to mounting a few guns on the forts and batteries by which the entrance into the old and the new port is defended, and placing in each an inconsiderable supply of ammunition. But the two principal forts, Cretin [17]<sup>1</sup> and Caffarelli [17]<sup>2</sup>, are in the most ruinous condition, and he does not possess the means, and is ignorant of the art of restoring those fortifications.

The garrison is wholly inadequate to the extensive line of works to be protected, and, in the event of an attack from a British force, could expect no assistance from the inhabitants. But, on the contrary, should the future circumstances of the present war render it necessary for H.M. to order Alexandria to be occupied by his troops, the support of several tribes of Arabs,

<sup>1</sup> Tabiyat Kretan: Tabiyat Kom al-Dikka, also known as Tabiyat Kom al-Damas, was built by the French during the French campaign and called it Tabiyat Crétin, after Colonel Cretan, the engineer supervising the fortifications, who supervised its construction. And this cob was built on a large artificial hill known as Kom Dimas, meaning the hill that contains baths, and it seemed from afar as part of Alexandria, and the cob was the target of heavy bombardment by the British during the bombing of Alexandria. Where Ahmed Orabi was meeting with the ministers to supervise the fighting. The hill was removed in 1952 to reveal the Roman theater.

<sup>2</sup> Tabiat Caffarelli: Tabiyat Kom al-Nadura, and it was called al-Nadura or al-Nadura - relative to the sight - for the use of the hill for observation, and there was a tower from the Islamic era overlooking the port, and at the time of the French campaign the French called it Le Fort Caffarelli, after Caffarelli, one of Napoleon's leaders and was supervising the Military engineering works in the French army, and he was killed during the siege of Acre. In the era of Muhammad Ali, the tower was renovated to become an observatory to monitor and guide the movement of ships.

with whose chiefs I have recently had personal interviews to that effect, might be depended upon, if required .....

**5. Vice- Admiral Sir John T. Duckworth [18], [19], [20]<sup>1</sup> to General Fox, Royal George, Malta, 29<sup>th</sup> January 1807 [10]**

As I could not justify anchoring at Palermo [21]<sup>2</sup> to have<sup>3</sup> undergone quarantine and other delays, it was in my power only to have communication by letter with the H. M. Ships Minister, Mr. Drummond, whilst off that bay; wherein he gave me reason to believe that it was his full conviction war had been declared by the Port against Russia on the 22<sup>nd</sup> December, though no official account had been received of it.

I consequently cannot but consider that if such declaration has taken place, the causes of the two countries are so involved that it must produce a direct adoption of hostilities on our side; and having reference to my instructions in such case, to communicate to you, Sir, as Commander in- Chief of the H. M. Ships Army in Sicily, such important and momentous intelligence, I beg to inquire whether you view the present state of Great Britain and the Port (should Mr. Drummond's intelligence prove authentic) as calling for that immediate commencement of hostilities, as to feel sanctioned to dispatch the Force necessary to take possession of Alexandria; for in case of those being your sentiments,

I shall forward directions to the Officer commanding the Squadron at Sicily (who I understood from Lord Collingwood was be Captain Hallowell) to embark and dispatch the troops, under the protection of all the naval force that can be spared from the perfect security of that island; and as Lord Collingwood directs me to regard that armament as acting within the sphere of my co-operation and to be prepared to give all the assistance in my power, I beg you to be as sured that when the services I am ordered on will allow, I shall not deley a moment in proceeding myself, or sending such detachment of ships as can be spared, under

<sup>1</sup> Sir John Thomas Duckworth, 1st Baronet in Command was an officer in the Royal Navy, Duckworth was appointed to second in the Mediterranean Fleet in 1805, commanded the squadron protecting the transports of the Alexandria Expedition in 1807, but was forced to withdraw after five months due to a shortage of supplies. Duckworth summed up this campaign, saying: "Our government comes to the miserable design of sending 5,000 soldiers, without a fleet, to Alexandria."

<sup>2</sup> Palermo: is the capital and largest city of Sicily. It is also one of the largest cities in the Mediterranean, Palermo is located in the northwestern part of the island of Sicily near the Gulf of Palermo in the Tyrrhenian Sea in southern Italy. Balram was originally a vast plain cut by many rivers and streams and vast wetlands, surrounded by high mountains. The Palermo plain overlooks the Tyrrhenian Sea, and the golden valley extends to the mountains behind it. It has a long coastal stretch, but it has relatively little penetration into the interior.

<sup>3</sup> Le texte n'est pas clair Le sens est sans doute: sde crainte d'avoir à suhir la quarantainc et autres delaisa.

a skilful officer, to cruize off Alexandria for that purpose<sup>1</sup>.

**6. Vice- Admiral Sir John T. Duckworth to General Fox, Royal George, Malta, 30<sup>th</sup> January 1807 [15]**

Feeling I should have effected anchoring last evening, I concluded my letter of that date, but, as I was unfortunately disappointed and am only just arrived, I think it of the utmost consequence that a moment should not be lost in adding to my letter the information of the arrival of the Russian Minister Mr. d' Italinski just after me in the H. M. Ships Frigate Active, which probably may operate strongly in your resolution.

**7. General Fox to Vice- Admiral Sir John T. Duckworth, Messina [22]<sup>2</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1807 [10]**

I have this day been honoured with your letters of the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> last month. Lieutenant General Sir John will have shown you a dispatch from Mr. Windham which is all the instructions I have received. By these instructions I am directed, in the event of your finding, on your arrival in the Straits of Constantinople, that strong measures are become necessary and your communicating the same to me and that hostilities are commenced, to send a corps of (5000) men under a suitable convoy to Egypt; and there does not appear to be any discretionary power left with me to deviate from them. Nor is Milo or any of the islands of the Archipelago mentioned therein.

Therefore, however desirous I may be to follow your suggestions, I do not see that it is in my power to make any detachment from this army until I hear from you upon your arrival in the Archipelago. But you may rest assured that everything shall be in the most complete readiness to embark at two hours' notice.

I must observe that (5000) men is the utmost extent of what I am ordered to detach, and indeed is the very most that I should feel it possible to send away, compatible with the defense and security of this island which has at all times been so strongly urged by the H. M. Ships Ministers.

---

<sup>1</sup> Duckworth then declares that he has a mission, in case of war with the Port, to establish a naval base in the Archipelago, to examine the value of the island of Milo in this respect, and asks Fox to he would be prepared to send troops to take possession of this island if necessary.

<sup>2</sup> Messina is an Italian city on the northeastern corner of the island of Sicily, on the western bank of the shore of the strait known by its name, the Strait of Messina. It is the third largest city in Sicily, and the capital of the province of Messina, and it is the third largest city, sandwiched between the Peloretania Mountains and the coast of the Ionian Sea, overlooking it with its port the great natural, commercial and military ruler of a small peninsula at the extreme north-east of Sicily.

It will therefore rest solely with the General Officer commanding the troops to decide how far that force may be diminished or any part of it detached to the Island of Milo, or any other naval station in the Archipelago. I trust it is unnecessary for me to say how desirous I shall be to co-operate most fully with you, in every operation in the Mediterranean, and nothing but the fear of unwarrantedly deriating from my instructions would for a moment prevent my acceding to what you propose.

**8. General Fox to Vice- Admiral Sir John T., Messina, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1807 [10]**

Upon further consideration of your two letters of the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> last month received this day and of Lord Collingwood's letter of the 13<sup>th</sup> last month, although I see the very great responsibility I take upon myself, and possibility of blame I may incur by deviating so widely from my instructions, yet from the urgency of your letter,

if, after a full conference with Lieutenant General Sir John Moore, it should appear to you both that it is decisively necessary for the H. M. Ships Service for the troops to proceed without waiting for your requisition on your arrival at Constantinople or the Archipelago as stated in my instructions from the Secretary of State, I shall be inclined to embark them; but, as I observed in my former letter of this day, (5000) men are the utmost that my instructions go to, and indeed that can be possibly spared from the defense of this island.

And as these troops are expressly ordered to garrison Alexandria, the detaching any part to the occupation of Milo or any other island or place on the coast of the Archipelago must rest solely at the discretion of the General Officer Commanding this Crops; for if they go. I do not conceive myself at liberty to allow of any detachment being made so as to endanger the defense of Alexandria.

**9. General Fox to Major- General Mackenzie Fraser, Messina, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1807 [23]**

In consequence of a dispatch received from His Majesty's Secretary of State (a copy of which I transmit herewith), your will proceed according to the H. M. Ships 's commands, with the troops mentioned in the margin, to Alexandria and follow, to the utmost of your power, the instructions contained therein.

As I presume the Commanding Officer of the Navy will dispatch a vessel ahead of the convoy to Alexandria, you will take that or any other opportunity of communicating with Major Missett, the H. M. Ships Consul- General there, requesting him if possible to join you on the appearance of the fleet off Alexandria, and in the meantime to send you such information as he has of the strength and disposition of the Turkish force and the state of the

batteries and defenses of Alexandria.

By this information and his advice, you will be guided in your debarkation and first operations, but you will not lose sight of the importance of getting at once possession of Alexandria without siege, I if the number and unprepared state of the enemy should justify your attempting it by a bold and rapid movement. You will of course hold out protection to the persons and property of the inhabitants, and by an exaggerated report of your numbers, take from the enemy all hope of resistance.

You will observe that the object of the H. M. Ships Ministers in directing this expedition is the immediate possession of Alexandria and their orders to this effect are peremptory. You will therefore not allow your attention to be diverted to any other object until this is fully accomplished; but, should any application be then made to you by the Admiral Sir John Duckworth, or by his order, for the occupation of any island in the Archipelago as a station for H. M. Ships in these seas, you will, at your discretion, detach such portion of the troops under your command as you may think adequate to the purpose and can spare without weakening your force too much and thereby endangering your position at Alexandria; but, after giving weight to the importance of such application, you are at liberty to refuse it unless you are of opinion that the detachment can be spared with safety, and in this you will be guided by local circumstances and information.

A considerable proportion of your force is composed foreign troops, but it cannot be avoided. They are all of a good description and two regiments well-disciplined and not doubtfully to be depended upon. But at the same time, I should recommend their being mixed in brigade with the British. You will take every opportunity of reporting to me; but if there is any communication likely to be made direct to England without touching here, you will, if anything of moment should occur, communicate with H. R. H<sup>1</sup>. The Commander-in-Chief, and the H. M. Ships Secretary of State for the War Department, taking the earliest opportunity of transmitting duplicates to me.

**10. Major Missett to the Right Hon. W. Windham, Alexandria, 6<sup>th</sup> February 1807 [16]**

I have the honour to announce to you that Mahomet Bey Elfi died on the 27<sup>th</sup> of last month.

---

<sup>1</sup> Royal Highness (abbreviated Royal Highness): is a title used to refer to some members of royal families, usually princes or princesses. Kings and their companions are usually styled majesty. When used as a direct form of address, spoken or written, it takes the form "Your Royal Highness." and in the plural, Their Royal Highnesses (TRH).

That event, which is attributed to the great exertions made by that Bey during a late partial engagement with the Albanians, may be productive of the most important consequences, as it may lead to a junction of the different Mamlouk parties. I have taken measures to ascertain what are the views of the successors of Elfi, and shall communicate to you without loss of time such intelligence as I may obtain on that interesting subject.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> instant was received here the first account of the war existing, since the middle of December, between Russia and the Port. This delay, which is to be ascribed to the detention at Rhodes of various vessels on board which are the Smyrna and Constantinople letters, leaves me wholly ignorant of the part which, at this juncture, the H. M. Ships Government is disposed to act towards the Ottoman Court, while I am thus compelled to remain an almost passive spectator of Alexandria how to improve the means of defense in his power. Had my repeated applications to Sir Alexander Ball for a small vessel, for the purpose of communicating with Constantinople and Malta, been attended with success, I should not now be condemned to a state of inactivity, very repugnant to my feelings, and which may eventually be injurious to the H. M. Ships Service.

**11. Major Missett to the Right Hon. W. Windham, Messina, 6<sup>th</sup> February 1807 [10]**

I have to acknowledge the receipt of your dispatch of 21<sup>st</sup> November, marked most secret, signed in your absence by Lord Howick, and conveyed by the H. M. Ships S. Ajax [24]<sup>1</sup> and subsequently by the packet) your duplicate of the 2<sup>nd</sup> December.

At the same time that I received the dispatch of the 21<sup>st</sup> November, I received another letter from Lord Howick, a copy of which I have the honour to enclose.

You may be assured that the (5000) men shall be ready for embarkation at a moment's notice, and, if they should be called for by the Admiral previous to my receiving further orders, they shall be instantly dispatched; I am already employed in embarking the ordnance provisions and heavy stores.

I should have been inclined to have sent Lieutenant- General Sir John Moore in command

<sup>1</sup> HMS Ajax was a Leander-class light cruiser, a third-rate ship of the British Royal Navy. Class of 74 guns. Built by John Randall & Company of Rotherhithe and launched into the Thames on 3 March 1798, Ajax took part in the Egyptian Operation of 1801, returning on 8 June 1802 after the signing of the Treaty of Amiens. It took part in the Battle of Cape Finisterre and the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, and on 1 February 1807 Ajax, commanded by Captain Henry Blackwood, joined Admiral Sir John Duckworth's squadron in Malta to take part in the Dardanelles operation. During the operation, an accidental fire destroyed Ajax. The fire began on the evening of 14 February, in which 250 of her troops lost their lives that night, including many of the crew, and exploded the next morning.

of this Force, as being the officer most competent to the purposes detailed in your dispatch; but on consideration of all circumstance, and the particular situation of affairs in this island, I feel his presence here so necessary, that, in the event of its being called for before I receive the further instructions relative to the officer who is to take the command of it (as stated in Lord Howick's letter herewith enclosed), I shall be inclined to send Major- General Fraser, an officer whose steadiness and good conduct point him out as well adapted for the situation. Upon receiving a letter from Admiral Sir John Duckworth off Palermo, stating that he should not come to an anchor there and that, as the winds were, he should go by the west side of the island to Malta and not come here, I immediately dispatched Lieutenant- General Sir John Moore to meet him at Malta to confer with him on future operations. He has returned this day, and I learn from him that he met the Admiral on the outside of the harbour under sail for his destination, and that he proceeds, fully assured both by my letter to him and his communication with Sir John Moore, that everything on my part will be ready upon his requisition.

A few hours after Sir John Moore's departure, I received another letter from Sir J. Duckworth dated Malta. My reasons for not immediately acquiescing in the proposal made by Sir J. Duckworth were that the weakening of the defense of this island by such a draft of men, before an absolute necessity required it, was unadvisable; that although not probable, there was still a possibility that a rupture with the Port might yet be prevented by the appearance of our Naval Force, and that at all events, the occupation of Alexandria, from its situation, could be undertaken with as great facility a short time hence as at present. Under these impressions, I thought it more expedient to adhere to the letter of my instructions.....

By a letter of sir J. Duckworth brought me by Sir John Moore, I find that, from the report he has received of the Island of Milo, he does not think it eligible for his purpose, and that he means to defer his plans respecting a naval station, till he makes a further investigation.

In the event of the Admiral representing the absolute necessity of occupying such station, I shall (although without instructions at present to that effect), feel myself authorized to give him such military co-operation as I may judge expedient to spare, either from the Force here, or from that detached to Alexandria.

**12. Vice- Admiral Sir John T. Duckworth to General Fox, Royal George [25] <sup>1</sup> With a**

<sup>1</sup> The H.M. Ships HMS Royal George was a Royal Navy ship carrying a hundred cannon. It was launched on 16 September 1788. It was the fifth ship in the Royal Navy to bear the name. In 1807, she served as the British

**contrary wind 8 leagues to leeward of Tenedos [26]<sup>1</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> February 1807 [23]**

Having been so fortunate as to fall in with Lieutenant- General Sir John Moore in the Apollo [27]<sup>2</sup> on the night of the 3<sup>rd</sup> instant just as I left Malta, I was honoured with your letter of the 31<sup>st</sup> last month, wherein you authorize me to consult with that officer as being perfectly in your confidence. He therefore perused copies of my letter to you of the 29<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>, and after conversing on their contents, and on the political intrigues of the Court of Sicily, with our Minster's supposition in his letter to you of the 27<sup>th</sup> that it was treating through the medium of Spain with France, Sir John Moore was of opinion that, as I had no intelligence of hostilities having commenced between us and the Port, no evil could arise to the H. M. Ships Service from deferring the detaching of the troops to take possession of Alexandria till that was ascertained to have taken place.

On this I admitted that the opinion I had written you could not be conclusive, and, as his sentiments would be consequently yours, I should give the earliest information in my power on the subject. I therefore have now to inform you that the Endymion [28]<sup>3</sup> joined me in the middle of last night (just out from Tenedos) were Captain Capel acquainted me that our Ambassador Mr. Arbuthnot with suite, and English merchants, had been forced to fly Constantinople on the 29<sup>th</sup> last month, in that ship, having cut her cables and pushed through the Dardanelles,

This completely deciding the point of hostilities between us and the Port, I send by this conveyance an order to the Commanding Sea Officer on the coast of Sicily to co-operate with you in embarking the troops which are to take possession of Alexandria, and to proceed, without a moments loss of time, with such naval Forces as the security of Sicily will admit, on that service, where, as soon as I have endeavored to effect the object of my mission at

---

flag ship and was captained by Admiral Sir John Duckworth during the Alexandria Expedition of 1807.

<sup>1</sup> Tenedos is a Turkish island in the northeastern part of the Aegean Sea. It is the third largest Turkish island after Imbros, which is located near the entrance to the Dardanelles and which was renamed in 1970 to Gökçeada, and Marmara Island, which is the largest island in the Sea of Marmara and the second largest island in Turkey after Gökçeada.

<sup>2</sup> HMS Apollo, the fifth Royal Navy ship named after the Greek god Apollo, a fifth-class frigate, of 38 guns, launched in 1805 and broken up in 1856 In 1807 she took part in the Alexandria Expedition in the squadron under Admiral Benjamin Hallowell. However, she and 19 of the transports (out of 33) accompanying her became separated from the rest of the expedition and arrived at Abu Qir Bay too late to take an active part. Seven and a half years later.

<sup>3</sup> HMS Endymion was the fastest sailing ship in the Royal Navy during the Age of Sail, had an armament of 40 guns and served in the French Revolutionary Wars, Napoleonic Wars; four Royal Navy ships were named HMS Endymion after the Greek hero Endymion.

---

Constantinople, I shall repair myself, or send a squadron to cruise.

Finding that Milo has neither Turkish troops nor inhabitants on it, and my time not admitting me to investigate the truth of the report of its being unhealthy and water bed, I must defer giving an opinion on the propriety of taking possession till some future opportunity. I cannot but feel highly sensible of the flattering mark of satisfaction you are so obliging to express at my being employed to serve in these seas, and I beg you to believe I shall be gratified at an opportunity to co-operate with you in everything that may tend to promote the H. M. Ships Service.

**13. Vice- Admiral Sir John T. Duckworth to General Fox, Royal George, near the Dardanelles, 9<sup>th</sup> February 1807 [10]**

By the Delight sloop of war I was yesterday honoured with your letter of the 18<sup>th</sup> ultimo, and as the Turkish Government has decidedly taken a part with France. I feel high satisfaction at the readiness you express the troops to be in to embark for Alexandria; and, as the zeal and ability of Captain Hallowell in performing his portion of service cannot be doubted, I have full reliance in their being by this time near the place of their destination, where, as soon as the damages of the Squadron are arranged after two severe actions in passing the Dardanelles, I shall proceed to render them every aid in my power.

**14. Major Missett to General Fox, Alexandria, 21<sup>st</sup> February 1807 [16]**

I have received, yesterday only, your Excellency's letter of the 14<sup>th</sup> September last. I sincerely regret that it did not reach me sooner, as I should have been happy to give you every information in my power respecting this country.

The only late occurrence that deserves to be recorded is the death of Mahomet Bey Elfi, which took place on the 27<sup>th</sup> last month; and even that event would have been of no political importance, had it not led to the reconciliation of the different Mamluk parties.

Although I look upon a war between Great Britain and Turkey as certain, I have determined to remain here where my presence may still be useful, in the confident hope that I shall soon be freed, by a British Force, from any restraint that may be put upon my liberty.

The garrison Alexandria does not amount to (300); and the inhabitants, who have long wished to see their country occupied by the H. M. Ships Troops, would give the former no assistance. In consequence of recent orders, the Commandant of this town has mounted a few additional guns on the batteries, but he has no gunners to work them, and he is totally destitute of ammunition. Under such circumstances, your Excellency will perceive how easy

it would be for a British Force to take possession of the city and forts of Alexandria.

Not doubting but the first efforts of her enemies would be directed against Egypt, the porte has sent orders to the Viceroy to put an end to the war which he has for so many years carried on against the Mamluks, and to restore to them the whole of their private property, in order to induce them to assist him in repelling the attacks of an invading army. It is not probable that the Beys, who consider themselves as the lawful possessors of Egypt, will rest satisfied with a dependant situation, but nothing could so effectually prevent a junction of their force with those of the Viceroy as the landing of a body of British troops in the country I therefore hope that, if your Excellency has any orders to that effect, you will cause them to be executed without delay, as by promptitude and vigour the country may be conquered almost without bloodshed.

**15. General Fox to Major- General Fraser, Messina, 27<sup>th</sup> February 1807 [23]**

In case of a good opportunity presenting itself on the service upon which you are at present ordered, of getting recruits for the Regiments of Roll and the Chasseurs Britanniques, you are hereby authorized to enlist men of any nation or country, that you think may be depended upon for increasing the strength of these Corps- allowing the usual bounty of five guineas. But no man is to be enlisted for the Sicilian Corps, as it is wished that that Corps should be entirely composed of Sicilians and I hope I shall be able to send them supplies of recruits by every opportunity.

**16. General Fox to Major- General Fraser, Messina, 28<sup>th</sup> February 1807 [23]**

As the expenditure of certain sums of money may be indispensably necessary for secret service, on the expedition on which you are about to proceed,

I think it necessary to acquaint you are authorized to expend money to such amount as you may judge expedient for the furtherance of the H. M. Ships Service, being at the same time perfectly assured that you will only do it in cases of urgent necessity and with the greatest attention to economy, and without a too lavish expenditure of the public money.

**B. Analytical study of the letters in the preparatory stage for the campaign against Egypt**

In his letter to Major-General Fox, Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, November 21, 1806, and noted (Top Secret). William Windham, Secretary for War and the Colonies, stated that orders had been sent to Lieutenant-General Lord Collingwood to detach a sufficient

squadron of ships of His Majesty's Government to the Strait of Constantinople, and to make all necessary arrangements and preparations for the removal of forces of five thousand persons in a suitable convoy to Egypt, and for placing this procedure in effect. He stated that the aim of the British government was not to conquer Egypt, but merely to seize Alexandria for the purpose of preventing the French from regaining their place there, and of enabling the British forces to provide security and protection for all parties who should remain on friendly relations with Great Britain. It stipulated that the leader of the expedition should not be chosen for his military talent only, but that he should have political experience, as he was likely to intervene in partisan quarrels or rivalries for power, especially among the beys, and that he should communicate with Major Messett.

Lord Howick, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (24 September 1806 – 25 March 1807) to Major-General Fox of 21 November 1806 adds that, at the wish of His Majesty's Government, he should make the necessary preparations for the campaign to Alexandria, and no officer should be named to command the forces prepared for this process.

Lord Collingwood's letter to William Marsden Isaac, First Secretary to the Admiralty, 15 January 1807, contained that he had ordered Captain Hallowell on the frigate Tiger to proceed to Sicily, and charged him with the task of preparing the transports for the embarkation of 7,000 troops and of consulting with Major-General Fox the most suitable place for their embarkation.

Major Messet's letter to Windham, of January 26, 1807, included that the governor in Egypt had recently received orders from the Sublime Porte to put every weak part on defence, and directing him also to resist the landing of British forces by all possible means. He asserted that the Egyptians considered the arrival of Egypt's army to Alexandria as a far-fetched event. Alexandria does not belong to the governor, but it is possible that the Sublime Porte, after negotiations with the British ambassador and between him and Russia, alerted him to take precautionary measures to protect Turkish property. But the instructions did not reach the governor. The letter also included that the governor of the city had been compelled, in vain, to confine himself to a hasty repair of the city walls, to the installation of a few cannons on the bastions and batteries at the entrance of the old and new harbor, and an unreasonable supply of ammunition. And that the two forts, Cretan and Caffarelli, were in a very ruined state, and he had neither the means nor the art of restoring them. Nor was the garrison inadequate, and any help from the population was ruled out in the event of an attack by the

British forces, but he was counting on the support of several Arab tribes.

Lieutenant-General Sir John Duckworth's letter commanding the squadron protecting the transports of the expedition, to Major-General Fox, 29 January 1807, indicates that he, in communication with the Minister to His Majesty's Government, Mr. Drummond, sent to inquire if the call to commence fighting at once, and to send the necessary force to take control of Alexandria; For, if there be, he will send directions to the commanding officer, Captain Hallowell, Squadron Leader in Sicily, to proceed to the dispatch of troops, under the protection of all naval forces. In another letter from Lieutenant-General Sir John Duckworth to Major-General Fox, of 30 January 1807, he added to his previous letter information of the arrival of the Russian Minister, Mr. Italinsky, on board the frigate Active.

Lieutenant-General Sir John Duckworth, on February 2, 1807, was sent by Major-General Fox, in reply to the two previous letters, stating that Lieutenant-General Sir John had sent John Duckworth a letter from Mr. Windham containing all instructions. and that in case he should discover, on reaching the Strait of Constantinople, that strong measures became necessary by sending a legion of 5,000 in a suitable convoy to Egypt; and that he would not make any detachment from this army until it reached the archipelago.

He was also reassured that everything would be in maximum readiness to start moving within two hours. He stated that 5,000 men was the maximum he was commanded to detach, which was firmly sanctioned by His Majesty's Ministers. He also stated that it would be up to the general officer who commands the forces to decide to what extent that force can be reduced or any part separated, and confirms the extent of his desire to cooperate in every operation in the Mediterranean, but he fears unjustifiably deviating from his instructions.

In another letter from Major General Fox to Lieutenant-General Sir John Duckworth, of 2 February 1807, he states that upon further consideration, of his letters of the 29th and 30<sup>th</sup>, and Lord Collingwood's of the 13th, after a consultation Complete with Lieutenant-General John Moore, it is so necessary for the service of His Majesty's forces to proceed, that 5,000 men being the most his powers could reach, these forces were expressly ordered to raise the garrison of Alexandria.

Here, Major-General Mackenzie Fraser appears for the first time as Major-General Fox addressed a letter to him from Messina, February 2, 1807, referring to the letter received from His Majesty's Secretary of State (with a copy included), that Fraser would proceed according to His Majesty's orders and follow directions Contained in it to the fullest extent,

and as far as he can.

And inviting him to take the opportunity to communicate with Major Messet, His Majesty's consul, there, asking him if possible to join him when the fleet appeared off Alexandria, and also to send him the information he had of the strength and condition of the Turkish force and of the batteries and defenses at Alexandria. He directs him to the importance of obtaining possession of Alexandria without siege, and that his mission ends with a bold and swift movement, while taking care to protect the people and property of the population. He advised him not to shy away from publishing an exaggerated report of his numbers, so as to snatch from the enemy all hope of resistance. He stated to him that the aim of His Majesty's ministers in directing this campaign was the immediate possession of Alexandria and he would not be allowed to divert his attention to any other aim until this had been fully accomplished. He revealed that the forces would include a large proportion of foreign troops, and recommended that they be mixed in a brigade with the British. And keep sending him reports, and to communicate with the Commander-in-Chief and Secretary of State for War in His Majesty's Government, and to send a true copy of his letters.

In Major Messet's letter to Windham, of the 6th of February, 1807, he notes that on the 4th of that month the first account of the war existing since mid-December between Russia and the Sublime Porte was received. Causing various ships to be detained at Rhodes, making him quite ignorant of what His Majesty's Government tended to do towards the Ottoman Sublime Porte. He also had no information on how to improve Alexandria's defenses [29], [30].

In another letter from Major Missett to Windham, of 6 February 1807, he informed him of the receipt of his letter of 21 November, marked Top Secret, and signed in his absence by Lord Howick. He reminded him that the 5,000 men should be on standby from this moment on, with heavy equipment and ammunition. He stated that he was inclined to send John Moore in command of this force, being the most competent officer for the purposes for the reasons he stated in his letter; but he would be inclined to send Major General Fraser, who was fit for the task. He cautioned that a rift with the Sublime Porte could still be prevented by the advent of the navy, and that, in any case, Alexandria could be conquered with great ingenuity in a short time.

In Vice-Admiral John Duckworth's letter to Major-General Fox, from the Royal George, of the 9th February, 1807, he wished only to mention a headwind of 8 leagues towards Tenedos,

and stated that he had sent an order to the commanding sea officer off the coast of Sicily to co-operate in supplying the troops, that will take over Alexandria.

and in Vice-Admiral Duckworth's letter to Major-General Fox, of 9 February 1807, he showed his pleasure at the commencement of war, and that he was relieved that the troops were on their way to Alexandria; and that he trusts Capt. Hallowell's zeal and ability to do the job, and, after passing the Dardanelles, will proceed to render all assistance in his power [31].

In Major Messett's letter to General Fox, February 21, 1807, he states that the event worth recording is the death of Mohamed Beg Al-Alfi, which occurred on the 27th of the last month; even this event would have no political significance, had it not led to reconciliation between the various Mamluk factions. He also mentioned that the Alexandria garrison did not reach (300); and the population, who had wished to see their country occupied by British forces, would not be of much help. The commander of this city has installed a few weapons in addition to the batteries, and he has no weapons and is completely destitute of ammunition. He emphasized how easy it was for the British forces to control the city and castles of Alexandria. The Sublime Porte sent orders to the governor to put an end to the war he had waged for many years against the Mamluks, and to return their private property to them, in order to urge them to help him repel the attacks of the invading army. Therefore, he hopes that the country will be conquered quickly and without bloodshed.

In Major-General Fox's letter to Major-General Fraser, of the 27th of February, 1807, he states that, in order to obtain recruits for the troops, he gave him the right to recruit men of any nation or state, to augment the strength of this corps, in return for a reward of five pounds sterling, but no recruits Any person in the Legion of Sicily, where the legion would be composed of Sicilians only.

and in Major-General Fox's letter to Major-General Fraser, of the 28th of February, 1807, he stated that the expenditure of sums of money might be necessary in the campaign, so he gave him permission to spend such sums as might be governed by an appropriate means of serving the army, being sure to do so only in cases of urgent necessity And with the utmost economy in expenditures, and without wasting public money [31] [32].

## **Conclusions**

- These letters begin with one from William Wyndham, Secretary of State for War and the

Colonies, to Major General Fox, Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean, dated November 21, 1806. He states that orders have been sent to Admiral Lord Collingwood to detach a sufficient squadron of His Majesty's Government ships to the Straits of Constantinople and to make all necessary arrangements and preparations for the transport of a force of 5,000 men in a suitable convoy to Egypt, and that this measure should be put into effect.

- The stated purpose of the campaign was that the British government's objective was not to invade Egypt, but simply to capture Alexandria in order to prevent the French from regaining their foothold there and to enable British forces to provide security and protection to all parties who should remain on friendly terms with Great Britain.
- The Governor of Alexandria was forced to limit himself to hasty repairs of the city walls, the installation of a few cannons on the forts and batteries at the entrances to the old and new harbors, and the placement of an unreasonable supply of ammunition in them. The forts of Cretan and Caffarelli were in a very dilapidated state, and he lacked the means and knowledge to repair them. The garrison was also inadequate.
- The Alexandria garrison numbered 300 men; the inhabitants, eager to see their country occupied by British forces, would not offer the expected assistance. The city's commander had installed a few guns and batteries, but possessed no weapons and was completely out of ammunition. He emphasized how easily the British forces could seize the city and fortresses of Alexandria.
- In a letter to Major General Fraser dated February 27, 1807, General Fox stated that, in order to recruit men for the legion, he had granted him the right to enlist men from any nation or country to increase the strength of this legion, in exchange for a reward of five pounds sterling. However, no one was to be recruited into the Sicilian Legion, which would be composed solely of Sicilians.

## References

- [1] Darwish, Mahmoud Ahmed. An analytical study of the introductions of the British campaign to Egypt (1801-1807), *International Journal of Academic Multidisciplinary Research (IJAMR)*, Vol. 7 Issue 6, June 2023, pp. 221-237.
- [2] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia\\_Britannica](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica)

- [3] David Wilkinson, 'Windham, William (1750–1810). *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press.
- [4] The Earl of Rosebery (ed.) (1913). *The Windham Papers*. London: Herbert Jenkins Limited, 1, p. 6, 2, p. 285.
- [5] Glover, Richard (1973). *Britain at Bay. Defence against Bonaparte, 1803–14*, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, pp. 139-140.
- [6] Archived in the portfolio, No. W.O. 6-56.
- [7] Wikipedia contributors. (2019, September 16). Charles Arbuthnot. In *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved 18:08, October 8, 2019, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Charles\\_Arbuthnot&oldid=915919688](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Charles_Arbuthnot&oldid=915919688)
- [8] Darwish, Mahmoud Ahmed. The Rakhito writes history, Great Britain's campaign against Rosetta in 1807, in light of British archives documents, *International Journal of Academic Multidisciplinary Research (IJAMR)*, Vol. 5, Issue 5, May 2021, pp. 1-17.
- [9] Phillips, John A., and Charles Wetherell (1995). The Great Reform Act of 1832 and the political modernization of England, *American historical review* 100, 2, pp. 411-436.
- [10] Archived in the portfolio No. W.O. 1-304.
- [11] Darwish, Mahmoud Ahmed (2017). *Encyclopedia of Rosetta*, 1, Cairo: The Arab Nation Foundation for Publishing and Distribution.
- [12] Marsden, William. (1838). *Brief Memoir of the Life and Writings of the Late William Marsden*. London: Cox.
- [13] Chisholm, Hugh, ed. (1911). "Marsden, William", *Encyclopædia Britannica*. 17 (11th ed.), Cambridge University Press, p. 766.
- [14] Wikipedia contributors. (2019, August 5). Cádiz. In *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved August 20, 2019, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=C%C3%A1diz&oldid=909487821>
- [16] Archived in the portfolio No. (W. O. 1-348).
- [17] Toson, Omar (2011). *On July 11, 1882*, Cairo: Hindawi Foundation for Education and Culture, p. 19.
- [18] Stanier Clarke, James, Jones, Stephen & Jones, John, (1805). *The Naval Chronicle for 1805 containing a general and biographical history of the Royal Navy of the United Kingdom, Volume the fourteenth (from July to December)*, Published by I. Gold, London, p. 261.

- [19] Brenton, Edward Pelham (1837). *The Naval History of Great Britain, from the Year MDCCLXXXIII. to MDCCCXXXVI.: From the Year MDCCLXXXIII. to MDCCCXXXVI.* Volume II, Henry Colburn Publisher, London, pp. 187-193.
- [20] Allen, Joseph, Esq. R.N. (1850). *New Navy Lists and General Record of Services of Officers of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines*, Greenwich Hospital, Parker, Furnivall and Parker, Military Library, Whitehall, London, p. VII.
- [21] Wikipedia contributors. (2019, August 11). Province of Palermo. In *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved: October 23, 2019.  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Province\\_of\\_Palermo&oldid=910320746](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Province_of_Palermo&oldid=910320746)
- [22] "Messina" (US) and "Messina". Oxford Dictionaries. Oxford University Press. Retrieved September 30, 2019.  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxford\\_Dictionaries](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxford_Dictionaries)
- [23] Archived in the portfolio No. (W. O. 1-303).
- [24] Wikipedia contributors. (2019, March 30). HMS Ajax (1798). In *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved 26 June 2019,  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=HMS\\_Ajax\\_\(1798\)&oldid=890100268](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=HMS_Ajax_(1798)&oldid=890100268)
- [25] Lavery, Brian (2003) *The Ship of the Line - Volume 1: The development of the battlefleet 1650-1850*. Conway Maritime Press, p. 179.
- [26] Wikipedia contributors. (21 June 2019). Tenedos. In *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved: 28 June 2019,  
<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Tenedos&oldid=902861192>
- [27] Winfield, Rif (2008). *British Warships in the Age of Sail 1793–1817: Design, Construction, Careers and Fates*. Seaforth, p. 171.
- [28] Wikipedia contributors. (24 June 2019). HMS Endymion (1797). In *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved 28 June 2019,  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=HMS\\_Endymion\\_\(1797\)&oldid=903177819](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=HMS_Endymion_(1797)&oldid=903177819)
- [29] Darwish, Mahmoud Ahmed. The Franco-British conflict after the withdrawal of the French campaign from Egypt (1801-1807), an analytical study, *International Journal of Cultural Inheritance & Social Sciences (IJCISS)*, Vol. 4 Issue 8, September 2022, pp. 110-122.
- [30] Darwish, Mahmoud Ahmed. The conflicts between the great powers after the withdrawal of the British campaign on Egypt (1806-1812) an analytical study, *International Journal of Cultural Inheritance & Social Sciences (IJCISS)*, Vol. 4 Issue 8

September 2022, pp. 147-163.

- [31] Darwish, Mahmoud Ahmed. The failed colonial campaign of the British army on Rosetta of Egypt in 1907 according to the English documents, International Journal of Cultural inheritance & Social Sciences (IJCISS), Vol. 1, Issue 1, March 2019, pp. 103-133.
- [32] Darwish, Mahmoud Ahmed. The Struggle of Political Forces in Egypt after the withdrawal of the French Campaign (1801-1807), An analytical study, International Journal of Academic Multidisciplinary Research (IJAMR), Vol. 6 Issue 12, December - 2022, pp.357-363.

