

## Fouché Justifies Bonaparte's Brumaire Coup

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When General Bonaparte returned from Egypt in October of 1799, he found a France in political turmoil. The ruling Directory was corrupt and very unpopular. Talk of a coup was in the air and there were at least two being planned. The more important group plotting a coup included Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès, Roger Ducos, Lucien Bonaparte among others. Among the 'others' was one Joseph Fouché, who was minister of police at the time. To be successful, the coup needed support of the army, and Bonaparte, who had known republican leanings, was the ultimate choice. Once the coup took place on 18 Brumaire (8-9 November 1799), Napoleon was installed as First Consul and the period of France known as the Consulate began. It fell upon Fouché to provide a public explanation and justification for what had happened. This very rare document is that explanation and justification, distributed to the French Public on 11 November, 1799. The scan of the document is followed by the translation by Dr. Bill Chew III. The engraving is from my personal collection, as is the document.





**LE MINISTRE**  
**DE LA POLICE GÉNÉRALE**  
**DE LA RÉPUBLIQUE,**  
**A SES CONCITOYENS.**

*Du 20 Brumaire, an 8 de la République française,  
une et indivisible.*

**C**ITOYENS,

LE Gouvernement était trop faible pour soutenir la gloire de la République contre les ennemis extérieurs, et garantir les droits des Citoyens contre les factions domestiques ; il fallait songer à lui donner de la force et de la grandeur.

La sagesse nationale, le Conseil des Anciens, en a conçu la pensée, en a manifesté la volonté.

Il a ordonné la translation du Corps législatif hors de l'enceinte où trop de passions grondaient autour de lui.

Les deux Conseils allaient proposer des mesures dignes des Représentans du peuple français.

Une poignée de factieux a voulu y mettre obstacle ; ils se sont livrés à une fureur que l'immense majorité des Conseils a rendue impuissante.

Cette majorité libératrice s'est réunie après la dispersion des factieux ; elle a chargé deux Commissions , prises dans le sein des Conseils , du dépôt de la puissance législative.

Elle a remis l'autorité exécutive entre les mains de trois Consuls qu'elle a revêtus des mêmes pouvoirs que le Directoire.

Elle a choisi les C.<sup>ens</sup> SIEYES, BONAPARTE et ROGER-DUCOS, et aujourd'hui ils entrent en fonctions.

De ce moment un nouvel ordre de choses commence. Le Gouvernement fut oppresseur parce qu'il fut faible ; celui qui lui succède s'impose le devoir d'être fort pour remplir celui d'être juste.

Il appelle, pour le seconder, tous les amis de la République et de la Liberté, *tous les Français*.

Unissons-nous pour rendre le nom de *Citoyen français* si grand, que chacun de nous, orgueilleux de le porter, oublie les désignations funestes à l'aide desquelles les factions ont préparé nos malheurs par nos divisions.

Les Consuls atteindront ce but, parce qu'ils le veulent fortement.

Bientôt les bannières de tous les partis seront détruites ; tous les Français seront ralliés sous l'étendard républicain.

Bientôt les travaux du Gouvernement assureront le triomphe de la République, au dehors par la victoire, sa prospérité au dedans par la justice, et le bonheur du peuple par la paix.

*Le Ministre de la Police*, FOUCHÉ.

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PARIS, DE L'IMPRIMERIE DE LA RÉPUBLIQUE.  
Brumaire an VIII.

EQUALITY – LIBERTY

**The Minister**  
of the General Police  
of the Republic,  
to His Fellow Citizens.

*Of the 20th Brumaire, Year 8 of the French Republic,  
one and indivisible.*

Citizens,

The Government was too weak to sustain the glory of the Republic against the external enemies, and guarantee the rights of Citizens against the domestic factions: it had become necessary to consider giving that government power and greatness.

The national wisdom, the Council of Ancients, conceived of this thought, and manifested the necessary will.

It has thus ordered the moving of the Legislative Body outside of the precinct marked by the presence of too many roaring passions.

The two Councils went on to propose measures worthy of the Representatives of the French people.

A handful of factious individuals wanted to block this; they gave themselves up to a fury that the great majority of the Councils rendered powerless.

This liberating majority came together after the dispersion of the faction; it has charged two commissions, formed from amongst the Councils, with the lodgement of the legislative power.

It has returned the executive authority into the hands of three Consuls which it has endowed with the same powers as the Directory.

It has chosen the Citizens SIEYES, BONAPARTE and ROGER-DUCOS, and they enter into their functions today.

From this moment on a new order of things begins. The Government was oppressive because it was weak; that which succeeds it takes upon itself the duty of being strong so as to fulfil that of being just.

For their support, it calls upon all the friends of the Republic and of Liberty, *all Frenchmen.*

Let us unite to make the name of *French citizen* so great that each of us, proud of bearing it, will forget the deadly designations through which the factions prepared our misfortune by dividing us.

The Consuls will attain this goal, because they desire it strongly.

Soon the banners of all the parties will be destroyed; all Frenchmen will be rallied under the Republican standard.

The works of the Government will soon assure the triumph of the Republic, outside by victory, its prosperity inside by justice, and the well-being of the people by peace.

*The Minister of Police, FOCHE*

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PARIS, BY THE PRINTING OFFICE OF THE REPUBLIC,  
BRUMAIRE, YEAR VIII