# The Development of Secularism in Turkey

NIYAZI BERKES

with a new introduction by
FEROZ AHMAD

First published in 1964 by
McGill University Press
Published in a facsimile edition in 1998
by C. Hurst & Co. (Publishers) Ltd.,
38, King Street, London WC2E 8JZ
Copyright © Mrs Anice Berkes, 1998
Introductory essay "Niyazi Berkes (1908-1988): the Education of an Intellectual" © Feroz Ahmad, 1998
All rights reserved.
Printed in India

ISBNs
1-85065-344-5
1-85065-349-6 *paperback*

Pages 71-85



THE PERIOD of progressive reforms following the Treaty of Kaynarca was ended by a conservative reaction and another war with Russia in 1787. This war, in which (with the outbreak of the French Revolution) Turkey was entirely isolated, was ended in 1792. It was a major incentive for launching the reforms projected under Selim III, who had come to the throne in 1789. This ruler realized the necessity of making more comprehensive reforms. Modernization, it was felt, would require a thoroughgoing examination of the basic traditional institutions themselves. It came to be realized that a policy of innovation could not be carried out while the traditional system remained entirely intact, and that it would necessitate some alterations in those institutions that were the main obstacles to change.

In addition to external challenges the new phase of reform was stimulated by certain economic and political trends which were products of the silent and indirect impact of the West: (*a*) the increasing impoverishment of the people, especially the peasantry, and the increasing financial difficulties of the government, (*b*) the rise of strong local lords to challenge the central authority, and (*c*) uprisings followed by movements for independence among the non-Muslim peoples.

The disintegration of the two important bases of the traditional political order, the *sipahi* and the Yeniçeri organizations, was closely connected with these trends. The impossibility of preserving these two bases, or of restoring them to their original form under the new conditions, had now become much more apparent.

Their decline would inevitably have repercussions for the future of the traditional system. The ruling institution would have to reorganize itself, partly by rearranging its constituent elements and partly by adding new ones.

## *Proposed Reforms*

From his youth Selim III entertained an admiration for French civilization. He was so imbued with the desire to carry out reforms that he embarked upon his New Order (Nizam-ı Cedid) immediately after the conclusion of the peace with Russia.

In spite of stately intentions, however, he was a man lacking in determination and foresight. From this personal weakness emerged something which we might call an innovation: his habit of organizing councils and committees to discuss the affairs of state, in which he invited his advisers to submit projects of reform and insisted on having them express their opinions in absolute freedom.

An advance to be credited to Selim's time, if not to his person, was the widening of scope in the view of what reforms were necessary. This included at least three major points: (*a*) that the problem of rehabilitation was not merely a matter of military reform but also a matter of civil reform; (*b*) that a comprehensive reform plan should be devised by deliberation and universal consent; and (*c*) that economic recovery should occupy a major place in the reforms.

Most of the reports were concerned, above all, with military reforms.[1] On this major topic the opinions fell into three groups: (*a*) that the Yeniçeris and other military orders must be restored to their original forms; (*b*) that modern methods should be introduced under the pretext of restoring them to their original

[1] The most important reports are quoted extensively by Cevdet Paşa from a text unifying and summarizing them. See Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih* (Istanbul, 1303), VI, 9. This text was published by E. Z. Karal, "Nizâm-ı cedide dair Lâyihalar," *Tarih Vesikaları*, I, No. 6 (April, 1942), 414-25; II, No. 8 (Aug., 1942), 104-11; II, No. 11 (Feb., 1943), 342-51; and II, No. 12 (April, 1943), 424-32. The two best reports are printed in full in *Tarih-i Osmanî Encümeni Mecmuası*: Şerif Mehmed, "Sultan Selim-i Salis Devrinde Nizam-ı Devlet Hakkında Mutalâat," VII, No. 38 (June, 1916), 74-88; Abdullah Tatarcık, "Selim-i Salis Devrinde Nizam-i Devlet Hakkında Mutalâat," VII, No. 41 (Dec., 1916), 257-84, VII, No. 42 (Feb., 1916), 321-46, and VIII, No. 43 (April, 1917), 15-34.





forms; and (*c*) that these traditional military institutions and their methods are not capable of reform and therefore must be abolished altogether and modern methods must be introduced.

The old military system was so inextricably connected with several other institutions that a radical change would necessitate far-reaching alterations in the whole body politic. Thus, a majority advised the pursuance of a dichotomous policy, that of continuing the training of new military forces and of gradually converting the entire military organization to the type of these new forces. Nearly all agreed on the absolute necessity of inviting more European military officers as trainers. The majority mentioned Prussians; others, French and English officers. Translations from European works on military science were also mentioned in some of the reports as one of the urgent needs.

Besides these basic points, the reports contained details about the needs of the various branches of the military forces, such as artillery, arms equipment, topography and map-making, shipbuilding and arsenals, etc.

A second major topic handled in many of the reports was the problem of reforming the *timars* and other benefices. However, there were no new and interesting proposals regarding the solution of the difficulties. As many repeated the necessity of enforcing the law (previously passed under Halil Hâmid) to reform the *timar* system, a modified form of the same law was prepared later following the suggestions given in the reports. Many of the reports emphasized the point that the benefices fallen vacant should not be sold or farmed (a practice which had given rise to the *mültezims* and *derebeys*); their revenues should be collected directly by the Imperial Mint.

The third major point discussed was the need for reforming the currency. The idea suggested was that of liquidating the debased currency and restoring the real value of coins. Yet Selim, under the economic pressure of the Russian war, had to resort to the old policy and issue debased money. Although this had secured some additional income to the Treasury, it led ultimately to further economic difficulties.

In spite of the general recognition that a change was absolutely necessary, and that no illusion could be entertained any longer about the soundness and vitality of the traditional institutions, the majority still reasoned in terms of an amelioration within the general framework of the medieval system. Those who could say something radical displayed no new conception of the modern

state and society in terms of which such radical change would have significance.

However, we find close agreement in the conviction that the West should be taken as the source and model of anything to be introduced. It can be assumed that these reports remained influential, since many of the proposals contained therein were realized in the succeeding years. The reports were incorporated in a document combining and classifying the various proposals, and it was sent for the approval of the Şeyhul-Islâm.

## *Towards A New Order*

The outstanding innovation in the thinking underlying the reports was the major place given to economic measures. Some of the measures considered will illustrate this as well as the inadequacy of the means chosen.

The idea of getting foreign loans as a remedy for the financial crisis was raised for the first time. However, receiving a loan from a European country met with opposition on the ground that it would be degrading for a Muslim government. Some suggested arranging a loan from a Muslim country, but there was found none able to lend. Secret negotiations with the representatives of the Netherlands met with no success. There remained, then, the three traditional fiscal methods: confiscation, compulsory donation, and the debasement of the coinage; however, these did not alter the conditions materially, but only led to inflation and the devaluation of the money paid by the government.[2]

The prohibition of export of precious metals and stones and the exploitation of mines were recommended by the reports in connection with the financial crisis. We find also at this period the rise, in primitive and rudimentary form, of the idea of state industrial enterprise. The founding of powder and paper mills were among the attempts made in this direction.

It was also recognized that the financial well-being of the country depended upon a favourable balance of trade, and, as the main source of the commerce was seaborne, it was believed necessary to create a Turkish merchant marine. One of the major problems occupying the minds of the statesmen was that of bringing Turkish commerce into the hands of the subjects of Turkey. Among the Muslims those who had money should invest in the merchant

[2] Cevdet, *Tarih* (1303), IV, 57-58.





marine; they should buy ships and establish companies.[3] However, as one obstacle to the realization of this idea, naval duty was traditionally the honoured prerogative of the Greek community, and attempts to create a new merchant marine coincided with the rise of a national separatist movement within the community.

None of the measures taken in accordance with the recommendations of the reports produced any tangible economic reform; they only implied the birth of consciousness that the lack of a modern national economy lay at the root of the troubles.

An effective implementation of a comprehensive reform needed, above all, an effective government, and that was believed to be dependent upon a new army. Selim's desire was to be rid of the Yeniçeri forces altogether once a dependable new force had been organized and trained.

The emphasis of the new measures was therefore upon new military and naval schools, the improvement of gun foundries and arsenals, and the establishment of a new army, called the Nizam-ı Cedid (New Order), independent of the Yeniçeri system.

In 1793 the Turkish government sent to Paris a list of the officer and technician positions it wished to fill from France. A similar but longer list was sent in 1795. (One of those who applied for service in Turkey was Napoleon Bonaparte.)

In 1769 the School of Engineering (Mühendishane) was re-established for training engineer-officers. This school expanded in 1792 and in 1795 under Selim III. Most of the teaching in this school was done by Turks. Foreign help was provided chiefly by Frenchmen, but we also find a few English and Swedish names among those listed as teachers and instructors in the military establishments. Two foreign languages, Arabic and French, one representing the traditional Islamic sciences and the other the new European sciences, were compulsory for all students.

The subject-matter of the courses during the four-year program of study was as follows:

First Year: Calligraphy, Dictation, Drawing, Elementary Geometry, Arithmetic, Arabic, French.
Second Year: Arithmetic, Geometry, Geography, Arabic, French.
Third Year: Plane Trigonometry, Algebra, Topography, Geography, Military History.
Fourth Year: Conics, Differential and Integral Calculus, Dynamics, Mines, Ballistics, Fortifications, Astronomy.[4]

[3] *Ibid.* (1303), VI, 57-58.

[4] Mehmed Esad, *Mir'at-ı Mühendishane* (Istanbul, 1896), pp. 9-26, 30-31.

Selim III took a direct interest in the books and library. He donated some instruments and a number of books on mathematical sciences. He was particularly interested in artillery and had even written a treatise on the subject while still a prince. He encouraged the translation of books from French; one was a work by Vauban, the French engineer of fortifications that were considered inpenetrable in Louis XIV's time.[5] Selim was a frequent and outspoken admirer of Vauban's book as well as of the new military techniques of the Europeans.[6]

It was at this time that books in Western languages came into use. The engineering school had an attached library. Most of its holdings were in French. Dictionaries and works on mathematics and military sciences predominated. It is reported that there was also a set of the French *Encyclopédie*. While written at a later date, the following foreign account of the engineering school will give some idea of the atmosphere there:

> In their school of engineers, we find Turks engaged in mathematical studies; also a library, with all our best treatises on such subjects; instruments of geometry and astronomy, and all the details of fortification, within and without the body of a place. Selim III was its founder. . . . The school of engineers and miners contains forty pupils, who devote a number of years to the acquisition of skill in their occupation. They learn mechanics, elementary mathematics, fortification, the theory of mining, and the drawing of maps, of which they have a collection indifferently well executed. . . . In one of our visits to the school of Solidze [Sütlüce] we met with the head of the establishment. He showed us different works on fortifications, and elementary mathematics, composed by himself, and printed at Scutari. One of the maps which he unrolled before us was that of Europe. . . . He told us, with a smile, that he presented nothing with which we were not fully acquainted. . . . Both he and the other professors seemed overjoyed at meeting persons to converse with on these subjects. The physiognomy of all the individuals in this sanctuary of the sciences denoted the beneficial influence of instruction, in a physical and moral point of view. Religion, here, had not lost its sway over the mind; it had only shaken off its fanaticism. . . . I learned that the . . . ulema . . . are by no means averse to the diffusion of knowledge. . . . Both young and old felt the most lively interest in our conversation. . . . The most enlightened, however, as well as the most ignorant, seemed alike insensible to any danger of downfall in their empire.[7]

[5] Sébastien Vauban, *Traité des mines* (Paris, 1740 and 1790), Turkish trans., *Fenn-i Lağımda Risâle* (Istanbul, 1793).

[6] On the state of scientific knowledge see Adnan-Adıvar, *Osmanlı Türklerinde İlim* (Istanbul, 1943), pp. 186-92.





Among the various reports under discussion, one penned by Raşid advised "sending men to Europe to study and observe European methods." Following this advice, permanent embassies were established in 1793 at the leading European capitals (London, Paris, Vienna, Berlin, and Madrid). This widened the window to the West first opened by Çelebi Mehmed. Henceforth, there were to be found at least a few Turks who had resided for some time in Europe and experienced life there. Ambassadors were instructed to study both the military situation in the countries to which they were assigned and the administration and civil organization. To each were to be assigned a few young men to learn the language of the country and other knowledge useful to the state.

The ambassadors' reports show that they were eager to learn about the countries to which they were assigned and that they were not at all negatively disposed towards European life. On the contrary, the dominant note was that of admiration. It was through these men that an early first-hand knowledge about European affairs began to accumulate. Some wrote detailed reform proposals. One by Ebubekir Ratib was of this order. Having been sent to Vienna in 1791, he submitted information on the military and civil services of the Austrian Empire and characterized the modern state as possessing: (*a*) a disciplined army, (*b*) ordered finances, (*c*) enlightened, honest, and patriotic public officials and (*d*) popular security and prosperity. Selim seems to have been particularly impressed by Ratib's report. He sought to implement it by founding a special council composed of ten young men.[8] About these men and in the new schools was a handful of younger men who, fitted not only with interest, but also through some study and knowledge, were in a position to be the real supporters of reforms in the new period. During the eighteen years of Selim's reign, the European way of life came a little closer to the Turks. Many of the unconscious changes in the Turkish mind, which

[7] Charles Pertusier, *Picturesque Promenades in and near Constantinople and on the Waters of the Bosphorus*, trans. from the French original (London, 1820), pp. 46-49. Pertusier was an artillery officer who had been in Turkey from 1812 to 1815.

[8] E. Z. Karal, "La transformation de la Turquie d'un empire oriental en un état modern et national," *Cahiers d'histoire mondiale*, IV, No. 2 (1958), 431.

were expressed concretely only later, may be said to have their beginnings in this period. The increasing number of foreign residents inevitably led to the infiltration of some European ways of life. Contemporary writers such as Âsım, and later Cevdet, speak of the spread of French "fashions" among the Turkish upper classes, but, strangely enough, their references are far from concrete or tangible.[9] This, however, might possibly be taken as an indication of the unconscious character of the process. These writers stressed that the innovations were openly supported and encouraged by Selim's entourage. Âsım speaks about the increased desire among the youth to learn French.

A tiny group of secular intellectuals was formed under Selim's reign. Some of these new men assumed importance in public affairs with the reforms attempted by Selim III; some survived the latter's downfall and went to Egypt to work under Mehmet Ali. At this stage, however, the intellectuals who had received even a modicum of secular education were insignificant both in quantity and in quality. We need notice only two men who distinguished themselves in the naval engineering school. One was a mathematician Gelenbevî (1730-91); the other was Çelebi Mustafa Reşid (*d.* 1807) who played an important role in the reforms planned by Selim and was the director of the engineering school.

Meanwhile, some of those educated in the new schools, or in contact with European life through other means, began to write on scientific subjects in French and also in Turkish. Perhaps the most typical case is that of Seid Mustapha (Seyyid Mustafa).[10] In the Preface to his book, he related how he became interested in mathematics, how the perfection of the European works on mathematics led him to study French, how within a short time he acquired enough knowledge of this language to read the works of the French authors, and, how finally these works gave him an intense desire to go to France to study. However, since Selim had founded the School of Engineering, he decided to study at that school. Seyyid Mustafa described the reaction of the people to the teachings of the school. It was then for the first time, he said,

[9] Âsım, *Tarih* (Istanbul, 1865), I, 375.

[10] His book was written in French; Seyyid Mustafa, *Diatribe de l'engénieur sur l'état actuel de l'art militaire, du génie et des sciences à Constantinople* (Istanbul, 1803). Reprinted in Paris in 1807 and 1810.





that the ignorant people had heard these public lessons in mathematics and saw the geometricians work in open assembly; the voice of lack of skill and ignorance arose from all sides; we were molested, almost persecuted; people screamed at us saying, 'Why do they draw these lines on the paper? What advantage do they think they are getting from them? War is not waged by compass and ruler', and we were overwhelmed by a thousand other words like these.

In spite of such reactions, he noted, it was possible, thanks to Selim's patronage and active interest, to apply modern mathematics to the arts of war and to develop knowledge and skill in making fortification plans, topographic maps, etc. He believed that the school was a success.

After this Preface, Mustafa made some interesting new comments on the causes of the decline of learning in the East. Once the seat of learning, the East had been surpassed by the scientific and technical advancement of the West, and this technical superiority had given the West military supremacy. Thus, he says, strength and valour were matters of bygone times. According to him, religious fanaticism and superstition were the main bulwarks against progress and innovation. Selim understood this point and his reforms were designed to overcome their inertia. The ruler encountered several difficulties in carrying out his innovations, he resisted these forces and knew how to overcome them; he was compelled to use force to do it. The rest of the book is a description of the military institutions and improvements undertaken by Selim.

We see, as Adıvar says, that "this little book was a good illustration of the enthusiasm felt by the youth of the time which had been created by the introduction of modern science into Turkey at the beginnings of the nineteenth century."[11] L. Langlès, the French orientalist who wrote the Preface to the edition of Seyyid Mustafa's book published in 1807, when Selim was still in power, says:

If we are to judge by the activity and energy that this people has expended to second the prudent and vigorous measures suggested and directed by an ambassador whose military gifts are not inferior to his diplomatic ability, then the brilliant success of these measures, to which the capital of the Ottoman Empire and the Empire itself owe their salvation, suffices to justify our author in the eyes of his

[11] Adıvar, *Osmanlı Türklerinde İlim*, p. 187.

compatriots; he proves to them how well founded was his enthusiasm for the arts and sciences of Europe.[12]

Another example of the new intellectuals anxious to educate themselves in the institutions of European civilization under the regime of Selim III, and enthusiastic supporters of the reforms, was Mahmoud Rayf (Mahmud Râif).[13] Like Seyyid Mustafa, Râif wrote a book in French to describe the achievements of Turkey in his time. Unlike Seyyid Mustafa, he had been in Europe. He went to London in 1793 as a member of a diplomatic mission. At that time, very few Muslim Turks knew any European language, and, therefore, it was a custom of Turkish diplomacy to attach Greek dragomans to the service of the Turkish representatives abroad. Selim sent young Turks to Europe with his ambassadors, ordering them to learn European languages and get acquainted with European institutions. Mahmud Râif was one of these.

His book—written in French, published in 1797 by the press of the new Mühendishane, and entitled *Tableau des nouveaux règlements de l'empire ottoman*—is interesting for the information it gives about the author, as well as for the information it gives about the Ottoman Empire. Râif's preface tells how he became increasingly interested in European political institutions during his studies in Turkey, how he felt the need to learn a European language in order to widen his knowledge about European affairs, and how he felt frustrated so long as he did not have the chance to visit Europe. It tells how he learned French and studied French books in order to learn about political conditions, financial methods, military institutions, and public law of the European powers.

Mahmud Râif occupied important positions in Selim's administration later on and, like Seyyid Mustafa, was murdered by the Yeniçeris when they rose against Selim's reforms. The Yeniçeris claimed that men like Mahmud Râif intended to dress them like Europeans and to introduce European headgear. In Turkish history he was nicknamed Ingiliz Mahmud (English Mahmud), which shows the attitude of the people towards men who had become somewhat associated with European life.

[12] Seyyid Mustafa, *Diatribe de l'engénieur* (Paris, 1807), Preface.

[13] Ihsan Sungu, "Mahmund Râif Efendi ve Eserleri," *Hayat*, I, No. 16 (March 17, 1927), 309-12; also Ahmet H. Tanpınar, *XIX. Asır Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi* (2nd ed.; Istanbul, 1956), I, 22; and Adıvar, *Osmanlı Türklerinde İlim*, pp. 187-88.





The enthusiasm and optimism, but especially the rationalistic attitude towards progress as expressed by Seyyid Mustafa and Mahmud Râif, may explain to us the meaning of the sense of alarm about the spread of French ways of behaviour which had been one of the causes for the reaction against the reforms that Selim had only partially implemented.

Selim seems to have been heedless of the psychological disturbances created among the people by his innovations. There are indications that his ambitions were wider than his achievements. Langlès, writing about 1810, two years after Selim's death, claimed that besides his desire to have a modernized army Selim intended to crush the resistance of the Ulema, and that he wanted to restrict the authority of the Şeyhul-Islâm in order to be an independent enlightened monarch; and finally, that he wished to benefit from the developments which the Europeans had achieved in sciences and arts. In view of the circumstances, it is questionable whether he would have been capable of carrying out these intentions. In spite of the advancement in the views of reform, the traditional state had no established machinery for applying decisions, and little strength to enforce them. The traditional government organization was still intact, and in its corrupt and incompetent version.

But one thing seems to have been certain: the trend which had started from the beginning of the eighteenth century seemed to have reached a turning-point. External conditions were not yet as dangerously complicated as they were going to be very soon. Friends, as well as adversaries, of Turkey were anxiously expecting the launching of genuine reorganization and reforms. The ideas as to what had to be done seemed to have reached a stage of clarity, if not maturity. The existing forces for change and reform were not negligible, as may be seen from the fact that after Selim's downfall, whatever was introduced in the line of reforms, first by Mehmet Ali in Egypt during the first quarter of the nineteenth century and afterwards by Mahmud II in Turkey, was carried through, at least initially, by those men and by the ideas that had been the products of Selim's time and that had been salvaged from the terrific storm of reaction and destruction.

# *The Fall of the New Order*



The forces of opposition were enormous; the whole program of reform was swept away in bloodshed and destruction in 1807. A new reaction set in to reign for two decades, not only to banish every element of progress, but also to carry to virtual completion that process of decline brought about by the forces of fanaticism, ignorance and corruption.

Instigated by the Ülema, the Yeniçeris, the *derebeys* and *âyans*, and even by some of Selim's ministers, a mutiny started on May 29, 1807, and led to unprecedented killing, plunder, and devastation. The climax was reached in the accusation that Selim was no longer the defender of Islam, but was under the control of the Frenks.[14]

The despair created by this uprising, is well reflected by Cevdet Paşa's comment:

> As it was impossible to administer the state under these conditions, all of those who wanted the well-being of the state, and even those fanatics who thought that the revolution would turn conditions to the better, fell into despair and helplessness.... Several causes, each of which was alone sufficient to destroy a state, then existed in Turkey, and there seemed to be no solution to any of them under normal conditions. It is not unknown to the historian that among the states of the past there have been several that succeeded in surviving great crises, but among them there is none that has ever succeeded in saving itself after having fallen into such fatal and so numerous dangers all existing at the same time.[15]

This judgment does not seem to be groundless in the case of Turkey, as we can safely assume that the end of Selim's reign meant in reality the end of medieval Turkey.

Several factors contributing to the downfall of Selim's reforms have been enumerated by Âsım, the contemporaneous chronicler.[16] Following him, Cevdet Paşa later elaborated on them.[17] Briefly, they were the ruler's personal weakness and lack of determination; the treason of his men; the agitations of the Yeniçeris; the distress of the people under the weight of rising prices; the fears and confusion created by the uprisings in both ends of the Empire (in the Balkans, and in Arabia by the Wahhabis), the propaganda created by the French and Russians as well as by Phanariot Greeks; the penetration of French ideas; and the spread of atheism and heresy.

[14] For details see Cevdet, *Tarih* (1303), VIII, 129-45.

[15] *Ibid.*, 163, 280.

[16] Âsım, *Tarih*, II, 2-19.

[17] Cevdet, *Tarih* (1303), VIII, 115 ff.





Of these the last two concern us particularly. What was the nature of that French influence—the penetration of French ideas and ways? Did it mean the impact of the ideas of the French Revolution, or, at least, the philosophy of the Enlightenment insofar as that philosophy contributed to the ideas of the French Revolution? And was that philosophy reflected in the atheistic or heretic ideas that Âsım and Cevdet mentioned as being openly expressed, and as being responsible for antireform reaction?

It has been stated that the French Revolution was influential upon the contemporary Muslim peoples in general, and upon those of Turkey in particular, and that the ideas of the Revolution found an echo among the Muslim and Turkish intellectuals.[18] The available documents give no evidence of the penetration of the ideas of the French Revolution. In view of the stage of development of the idea of reform in Turkey towards the end of the eighteenth century, such influence would be almost miraculous.

In their criticism of the French penetration, the appearance of the Frankish manners and ideas, both Âsım and Cevdet spoke rather vaguely.[19] Cevdet, for example, wrote:

> In Istanbul appeared many French affairs and several European things which were necessities of civilization. The grandees of the sultanate and too-eager government officials exceeded reasonable limits and initiated French ways in everything. They began to follow European ways, necessarily or unnecessarily.[20]

Neither Âsım nor Cevdet said specifically what they meant by "many" and "several". It seems that they echoed the opinions of those who interpreted all deviations from tradition as denial of

[18] Cf. Bernard Lewis, "The Impact of the French Revolution on Turkey," *Cahiers d'histoire mondiale*, I, No. 1 (1953), 106.

[19] Âsım, *Tarih*, *I*, 62, 374, 375-6.

[20] Cevdet, *Tarih* (1303), VIII, 122-3.

the Şeriat. We have no written document showing a favourable treatment of the ideas of the Revolution by any Turkish or Muslim writer of the time. For this we have to wait until the fourth decade of the nineteenth century. Even then we shall see that these ideas did not seem to have come directly from the ideology of the French Revolution.

It is certain that increasing contacts with Frenchmen did contribute to the widening mental outlook, to a better realization that the Western world had superior knowledge, technology, industry and economic power. There was a further relaxation of the hold on traditional beliefs. However, both widening outlook and relaxing traditionalism had started much earlier than the outbreak of the French Revolution. The growth of what one might call a materialistic or a deistic spirit was evident from the Tulip Era. Some knowledge of modern European science, mostly as represented by European non-conformists and deists, had come in chiefly through Ibrahim Müteferrika. The difference now was that the change in outlook assumed wider proportions. Now freethinkers, sceptics, rationalists, men who believed in the supremacy of the modern European sciences, men who were erroneously identified as atheists and followers of Voltaire, presented an additional threat. It would be too much, however, to claim that this implied an ideological impact of the French Revolution.

We find no indication during this period of the existence of the ideas of liberty, equality, fraternity, or of the idea of nationality, represented either by an individual writer, or by an intellectual or political movement, or by any social class. These ideas reached the Christian peoples of the Empire, but even that came at a later time. It is true that the traditional ideas, which were the complete opposites of those principles of the revolutionary ideology, were in the process of breaking down one by one, but new ideas to take their places were far from being accepted.

Before the penetration of revolutionary ideas into the field of the Turkish reformists, further steps were required to prepare a receptive ground for them, and they had to be taken by the very authority against which these ideas were to turn, as will be seen later when we pass over to the following period of reforms.

If the French Revolution had any impact on the reforms of Selim, this was not to their good, but to their detriment. The Revolution was indirectly responsible for the downfall of Selim's reforms by sharpening and accelerating international rivalries between the great powers of Europe and by leading to a policy





of invasion, or of partition of the Ottoman territories.[21] The Napoleonic expedition to Egypt had given the chance to the conservatives in Turkey to revive the custom of identifying the reformists with French perfidy. The reform movement came to an impasse and remained in abeyance for about a quarter of a century.

[21] On the details of French-Turkish relations see E. de Marcère, *Une Ambassade a Constantinople, la politique orientale de la révolution française* (2 vols.; Paris, 1927). See T. J. Djuvara, *Cent projets de partage de la Turquie* (Paris, 1914), for a history of France's designs on Ottoman territories.