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THE IMPACT OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION ON TURKEY

Some Notes on the Transmission of Ideas

by

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THE French Revolution was the first great movement of ideas in western Christendom that had any real effect on the world of Islam. Despite the long confrontation of Christendom and Islam across the Mediterranean, and their numberless contacts, in peace and in war, from Syria to Spain, such earlier European movements as the Renaissance and the Reformation awoke no echo and found no response among the Muslim peoples. It may at first seem strange that Islamic civilization, which in its earlier stages was so receptive to influences from Hellenism and Iran, even from India and China, nevertheless decisively rejected the West. But an explanation is not far to seek. When Islam was still expanding and receptive, the Christian West had little or nothing to offer — but rather flattered Islamic pride with the spectacle of a culture that was visibly and palpably inferior. Furthermore, by the very fact that it was Christian, it was discredited in advance. The Muslim doctrine of successive revelations, culminating in the final mission of Muhammad, enabled the Muslim to reject Christianity as an earlier and imperfect form of something which he alone possessed in its entirety, and to discount Christian thought and Christian civilization. After the initial impact of eastern Christianity on Islam in its earlier years, Christian influence, even from the high civilization of Byzantium, was reduced to a minimum. Later, when the advance of Christendom and the decline of Islam created a new relationship, Islam was crystallized — not to say ossified — and had become impervious to external stimuli, especially from the millennial enemy in the West.

All this does not mean that there was no Western influence at all on the Islamic world. The guns with which Mehmed the Conqueror battered the walls of Constantinople; the naval charts and square-rigged sailing-

* Article commandé par le Professeur Ralph E. Turner.
vessels of the Ottoman fleet; the printing-press of Ibrahim Muteferrika and the Italianate architecture of the Nuruosmaniye mosque in Istanbul all testify to Western influence of one kind or another. But it was always limited, material; often it was restricted to the circle of the Western-born renegades and adventurers through whom it came. Not until the French Revolution do we find a great movement of ideas penetrating the barrier that separated the House of War from the House of Islam, finding a ready welcome among Muslim leaders and thinkers, and affecting to a greater or lesser degree every layer of Muslim society. The success of Western ideas in the Islamic world in the 19th century is often attributed to the advance of the material might of the West — to the establishment of European economic, political, and, eventually, military supremacy in much of the Islamic world. The Muslim, no less than other men, is inclined to listen with greater sympathy and respect to the beliefs of those whom God has favoured with power and wealth in this world, and the visible success of the West was certainly a contributory factor, if not indeed a prerequisite, to making Western ideas acceptable to him. But this is not a sufficient explanation. The age of the Renaissance and the Discoveries saw great Christian advances in the Western Mediterranean and in Asia, which, if to some extent offset by the still formidable power of the Ottomans, might nevertheless have produced some effect on the Muslims of the invaded areas, had they alone been sufficient to impel acceptance. Nor do European wealth and power explain why the ideas of the French Revolution, rather than any other of the competing Western modes of thought, should have won such wide acceptance. The initial attraction of these ideas — which were later modified to respond to the political needs of the time and place — is rather to be found in their secularism. The French Revolution is the first great social upheaval in Europe to find intellectual expression in purely non-religious terms. Secularism as such has no great attraction for Muslims, but in a Western movement that was non-Christian, even anti-Christian, and whose divorce from Christianity was stressed by its leading exponents, the Muslim world might hope to find the elusive secret of Western power without compromising its own religious beliefs and traditions.

During the century or so that followed the first percolation of these new ideas from Europe, the channels of transmission became broader and more numerous, the trickle grew to a river and then to a flood. While Western material culture transformed the structure and aspect of Islamic society — often for the worse — new ideas from the West were affecting the very basis of group cohesion, creating new patterns of identity and loyalty and providing both the objectives and the formulation of new aspirations. These new ideas may be summarised in three words: liberty, equality, and — not fraternity, but what is perhaps

1. Established in 1729 by a Hungarian renegade (see F. Babinger, Stambuler Buchwesen im 18. Jahrhundert: Leipzig: Deutscher Verein für Buchwesen und Schrifttum, 1919). This was the first Muslim printing press in the Middle East.
its converse, nationality. Before 1800 the word liberty in the languages of Islam was primarily a legal term, denoting the opposite of slavery. In the course of the 19th century it acquired a new political content from Europe, and came to be the war-cry of the struggle against both domestic despotism and foreign imperialism. Organized liberty required constitutions, representative government, the rule of law — and these in turn involved secular authority and legislation, with a new class of lawyers and politicians, different from the Doctors of the Holy Law and the agents of autocratic rule of former times. Equality tended to take on a different meaning. Social and economic inequality were not major grievances. Islamic society did not know the rigid social barriers and caste privileges of pre-revolutionary Europe; its undeveloped economy limited the opportunities both of acquiring and of spending wealth, and thus prevented the growth of glaring disparities between rich and poor. To some extent the gulf between the two was still bridged by the corporative structure of society and the moral and charitable traditions of Islam. But if appeals to the individual had little effect, appeals to the group struck a more responsive chord. Soon the demand was raised for equality between nations, in time linked with the new Western principle of national self-determination. The Western concept of the nation as a linguistic, racial and territorial entity was not unknown to the Islamic Orient, but was never the primary basis of group identity. This was the brotherhood of faith within the religious community, reinforced by common dynastic allegiance. To this day the Western notions of patriotism and nationality have never entirely superseded the older pattern — indeed, though dynastic loyalties have faded, religious loyalty is in our own day showing renascent vigour. The history of the reform movements in the 19th and early 20th centuries is largely concerned with the attempt by Western-educated intellectuals to impose a Western pattern of secular political classification and organization on the religious community of Islam. It is instructive to examine the development of the Turco-Arabic words for fatherland and nation — 

2. In our own day the spread of Western techniques and amenities and the breakdown of the traditional system of social responsibility have combined vastly to increase the real and visible disparity between rich and poor.
3. Thus, in the theocratically conceived polity of Islam, God was to be twice replaced: as the source of sovereignty, by the people; as the object of loyalty, by the nation. It is no doubt due to the failings of our common humanity that the second was easier to accomplish than the first.
4. It is not without significance that this kind of sentiment is especially to be found in Syria and Palestine in the period of the Crusades.
the Turkish Ambassador to the Directoire, in describing French arrangements for the care of disabled soldiers, speaks of men who had suffered "in the cause of the Republic and out of zeal for their 
\textit{vatan}" — new notions for his time. By the middle of the century Turkish dictionaries include the equation \textit{vatan} = \textit{patrie}, together with new derivatives for patriot and patriotism, and examples of their use which are purely Western, and in the second half of the 19th century these words are already in common usage. The word \textit{millet} originally meant a religious sect or community, more especially the community of Islam. In the Ottoman Empire it came to be applied to the organized and legally recognized religious communities, such as the Greek Christians, the Armenian Christians and the Jews, and by extension also to the different "nations" of the Franks. There was a Muslim \textit{millet}, but no Turkish or Arab \textit{millet}, and it is not until a comparatively late date that one encounters the idea of national entities transcending religious boundaries. Even then the idea is still recognizably alien, with dubious rights of domicile.

In the following pages I propose to examine the first impact of the ideas of the French Revolution on Turkey, the leading state of Islam, in the period up to the deposition of Selim III in 1807 — that is, while the Revolution itself was still in progress, but before the movement of Western influences assumed the proportions of a flood. The problem is considered in two parts: I) the channels through which these ideas were transmitted from France to Turkey; II) the immediate response to these ideas of the Turks in this period, as revealed by contemporary Turkish documents.

\section{I. \textit{CHANNELS OF TRANSMISSION}}

By far the most important of these was military instruction. From Renaissance times onwards Islam was the pupil of Christendom in the arts of war, especially in the more technical branches such as engineering, navigation, and artillery. For some time the imposing military façade of the Ottoman Empire masked a growing internal decline in skill and inventiveness, which found expression in the prominence of Western renegades or employees among the gun-founders and gunners of the Ottoman armies and the shipwrights and navigators of the Ottoman fleets. By the 18th century the rulers of the Empire, stimulated by a series of defeats at the hands of their despised Christian adversaries,

5. Ahmed \textit{Refik} (ed.) "Morali Esseyid Ali Efendinin Sefaretnamesi ", \textit{Tarih-i Osmanl\i Enj\'anemi Me\'mnu\'at} (1329, [1911], p. 1459). In this and other transcriptions from Ottoman Turkish, I have used the modern Turkish orthography, with two modifications: Turkish \textit{c} and \textit{\c{c}} are replaced by \textit{j} and \textit{\c{j}}, in accordance with common English usage. Titles of works published in modern Turkish are given as printed.

6. Even as applied to the Frankish nations, the term was at first understood as having a primarily religious sense. Thus, the English were the "Lutheran nation", and non-English Protestants were regarded as being under English protection.
began to give intermittent attention to the need for modernizing the
equipment and training of their armies. A first project, for the formation
of a corps of foreign engineer officers in the Ottoman army, was submitted
to the Porte in 1716 by the Frenchman De Rochefort, but came to
nothing. During the reign of Mahmud I (1730-1754) a more serious
attempt was made by another Frenchman, the Count de Bonneval,
who, after service in the armies of France and Austria, became a general
of artillery in the Ottoman forces. De Bonneval, known after his con-
version to Islam as Humbaraji Ahmed Pasha, initiated a programme of
military and technical reform, as a result of which a school of military
engineering was established in Skutari in 1734, and a "corps of mathem-
ticians" created under the command of his adopted son Suleyman.
Neither of them lasted very long. The Janissaries were of course bit-
terly opposed to any such new-fangled notion, and despite an apparent
attempt to keep the project secret from them, they found out about the
school and forced its closure. The effort was not however entirely
wasted. Some years later, a new attempt was made on the initiative
of the Grand Vizier Raghib Pasha, an admirer of European science who
is credited with having desired the translation into Turkish of a treatise
of Voltaire on the philosophy of Newton. With the assistance of the
Baron de Tott, an artillery officer of French nationality and Hungarian
origin, a school of mathematics for the navy was opened in 1773, to
which a number of pupils from the earlier school were transferred. This
new school was expanded and developed in the following years. We
have a contemporary description from the Venetian priest Toderini.
The first teacher, he tells us, was an Algerian who, besides Arabic
and Turkish, knew English, French, and Italian, was expert in naviga-
tion and nautical instruments, and well-read in European books. When
Toderini visited the school, he found it well equipped with European
maps and appliances, and with a library of European books, some with
Turkish translations. In October 1784 a new training course was
instituted, with two French engineer officers as instructors, working
with Armenian interpreters. One of these French instructors, Jean de
Laffite-Clavé (1750-1792) wrote a treatise on castrametation and tem-
porary fortification, which was issued in Turkish in 1787 by the press of
the French Embassy in Constantinople. The same press issued a work
in Turkish on naval manoeuvres and tactics in 1788, by the French Admi-
ral Laurent-Jean-François Truguet, and a manual of Turkish in French
in 1790. After the outbreak of war with Austria and Russia in 1787
the French instructors were recalled, as their continued presence was
regarded as a breach of neutrality. This, and the strains of the war

7. Giambattista Toderini, Letteratura Turchesca, I (Venice: Storti, 1787),
p. 130.
8. Ibid., I, p. 177 ff.
Buchwesen, p. 27-28, and Selim Nüzhet Geryč, Türk Matbaacılığı, I, Mütteferrika
work reproductions will be found of the title-pages of all three books.
itself, hampered the development of the new schools. The restoration of peace in 1792 gave to the new Sultan Selim III the opportunity to plan and execute a large-scale reform of the Ottoman armed forces, intended to bring them up to the level of contemporary Western armies in technical equipment, training, and skill. A central place in Selim's projects was assigned to his new military and naval schools, which provided training in gunnery, fortification, navigation, and ancillary sciences. In these schools Selim relied very heavily on French help. French officers were recruited as teachers and instructors, and a library of some 400 European books acquired, most of them French, and including, significantly, a set of the Encyclopédie. The change of régime in France in no way discouraged the Sultan from seeking French aid. In the autumn of 1793 the Ottoman government sent to Paris a list of officers and technicians whom it wished to recruit from France; as late as 1795 the Reis ul-Küttab (foreign minister) Ratib Efendi addressed a similar but longer list to the Committee of Public Safety. In 1796 the French ambassador General Aubert du Bayet (or Dubayet) brought a whole body of French military experts to Constantinople with him. French cooperation in the Ottoman military reform was interrupted by the war of 1798-1802, but was later resumed, and reached its peak with the mission to Turkey of General Sébastiani in 1806-7. Though the pure wine of revolution was by now diluted with Caesarism, this more familiar flavour, with the added spice of victory, can only have made it more palatable.

The result of all this was to create a new social element — a class of young army and naval officers, familiar with some aspects of Western civilisation through contact, reading, and personal contact, acquainted

10. But not exclusively. Swedish and British instructors are also named, the latter including a certain Campbell, known to the Turks by the double incongruous title of Ingiliz Mustafa. See A. DE JUCHEREAU DE SAINT-DENYS, Révolutions de Constantinople en 1807 et 1808, I (Paris, Brisot-Thivars, 1819), pp. 72-73.


with at least one Western language — usually French 15 — accustomed to look up to Western experts as their mentors and guides to new and better ways. These men could not, like most of their contemporaries, despise the infidel and barbarous West from an altitude of comfortable and unassailable ignorance — on the contrary, for reasons both of inclination and of interest they were aligned with the Westernisers, against the reactionaries. But these neophytes of Western culture, filled with an often naive enthusiasm for things Western 16, soon found that the West had more to offer than mathematics and ballistics, and that their knowledge of French enabled them to read other things besides their textbooks. Some of these other things were available to them in their own college library. We may assume that others were brought to their notice by French instructors who, after 1792, were chosen and appointed by the government of the French Republic. 17

During the same period, another of the reforms of Selim III opened a second window to the West — that of diplomacy. Until the end of the 18th century the Ottoman Empire maintained no permanent diplomatic representation in foreign countries. From time to time a special mission was sent to one or another foreign capital, for a specific purpose — but less than twenty of these are recorded in the whole period up to 1792. For its normal dealings with foreign powers the Empire preferred to rely on the foreign ambassadors resident in Constantinople. Even with those, business was carried on chiefly through the intermission of local Christian dragomans. Very few even of the highest officials of the state had any knowledge of a Western language or any direct experience of Europe. 18 In earlier times a very important role had been played by renegades, men of European birth and education, who often rose to the highest positions in the Ottoman service, and brought with them invaluable skills and knowledge. These were however rarely transmitted, and in any case by the 18th century ex-Christians had ceased to play any significant role in the councils of state, which were now more and more monopolized by the Muslim Turks.

15. Italian too was fairly well known, however, especially in the navy. Many of the earlier European loanwords in Turkish are Italian in form.
16. An example of the outlook of these people will be found in the *Diatribe de l'ingénieur sur l'état actuel de l'art militaire, du génie et des sciences à Constantinople*, printed in Scutari in 1803 and reprinted in Paris in 1810. The author, Selim Mustafa, was a graduate and later a teacher of the School of Engineering. He was killed in the reactionary rising of 1807-8. See *A. Adnan, La Science chez les Turcs Ottomans* (Paris: G. P. Maisonneuve, 1939), pp. 156-7. Mustafa describes his early enthusiasm for European science, and remarks: « aussi je me suis formé l'idée de m'en rapprocher; et sans perdre de temps je m'appliquai à l'étude de la langue française, comme la plus universelle, et capable de me faire parvenir à la connaissance des auteurs qui ont écrit sur les belles sciences », *Diatribe* (Paris edition), pp. 16-17.
18. In 1770, when a Russian fleet under Admiral Spiridov sailed round western Europe into the Mediterranean and attacked the Turks in the Aegean, the Porte, apparently still using mediaeval maps, protested to Venice against their permitting the Russians to sail from the Baltic into the Adriatic. See J. H. KRAMERS, « Djughrafiya », *Encyclopaedia of Islam Supplément* (Leiden, Brill, 1938).
It was no doubt with the intention of securing more direct and reliable information on European countries and affairs, as well as bringing Turkey into line with the normal practice of Western states, that in 1792 Selim III resolved to establish regular and permanent Ottoman Embassies in the major European capitals. The first were in Vienna and Berlin, followed by London, and, later, Paris, where in 1796 Seyyid Ali Efendi arrived as the first Ottoman ambassador to the French Republic. Most of these first diplomats were Ottoman palace or chancery officials of the old school, ignorant of Western languages and conservative in outlook. Most of them, to judge by their dispatches, learned little about the countries to which they were sent, and were not greatly impressed by what they learned. But they did not travel alone. Besides the inevitable Greek dragomans, they took with them young secretaries, whose duty it was to study the languages of Europe, and especially French — and to learn something of the ways of Western society. One of them may serve as an example — Mahmud Ra’i, chief secretary to the Embassy in London, known after his return as Ingliz Mahmud. He was the son of an inspector of granaries, and served on the staff of the Grand Vizier before going to London. After his return he held various official positions in Istanbul, and from 1800 to 1805 was Reis il-Küttab. In 1807 he was killed by mutinous troops while he was endeavouring to persuade them to wear European-style uniforms. He was thoroughly proficient in French, in which language he wrote an account of the Ottoman reforms, a work on geography, and a description of his journey to London. His son, Ibrahim Efendi, was an official at the Porte.

The tour of duty of Ali Efendi in Paris ended in 1802, when Amed Ghalib Efendi came on a special mission to sign the peace with France. The name is worth noting. Unlike his predecessor, he is revealed by his letters as a clear-sighted and intelligent diplomat. In 1806 he succeeded Vasif as Reis il-Küttab in Egypt, and subsequently became Grand Vizier. He was a convinced reformer, and is regarded as the founder of the political school that included the great Ottoman liberal reformers of the


20. On these embassies see J. W. Zinkeisen, Geschichte des osmanischen Reiches, VII, p. 55; Enver Ziya Karal, Selim III’ün Hâdî Hümayunlari, p. 103 ff.; F. Babinger, Die Geschichtschreiber der Osmanen und ihre Werke (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1927), pp. 331-2, where a bibliography of published documents is given. Many of the dispatches and reports of these ambassadors have since been published and examined by Enver Ziya Karal, Ismail Hakki Uzunçarşılı, and other Turkish scholars. Among other duties the ambassadors were instructed to study the institutions of the countries to which they were accredited, and to acquire “languages, knowledge and sciences useful to the servants of the Empire” (Karal, op. cit., p. 79).

21. A. Adnan, La Science, p. 157; Mehmed Sâreyya, Şijilli-Osmanî, IV (Istanbul, 1308-1315-[1899-1908]), pp. 329-330. The first two works of Mahmud were printed in Scutari in 1797 and 1804. The description of England is still in manuscript in the Saray library in Istanbul (no. 3707 of the Ahmed III collection).
19th century. From 1802 to 1806 the regular Turkish ambassador in France was Halet Efendi. After a brief visit in 1806 by Mehmed Emin Valid, Muhibb took over as regular ambassador until 1811. Though these visitors — notably Halet — were anything but friendly to the French Revolution, their missions, and similar missions to other countries, gave an opportunity to a number of young men to reside for a while in a European city, master a European language, and make the acquaintance of some of the revolutionary ideas current among their European contemporaries. Some of them, on their return, became officials at the Porte, where they formed a Westward-looking minority among the bureaucratic hierarchy, similar to that created among the officers by the military and naval reforms.

So far we have spoken only of Muslims — but there were of course other elements in the Empire, Christian and also Jewish. The Jews seem to have been surprisingly little affected by Western influences in this period, and with one or two exceptions play no significant role. The Christians on the other hand — especially the Greek and Armenian élite of the capital — had for long been on terms of familiarity with the West, and thanks to their monopoly of the knowledge of Western languages had managed to gain an important position in the Ottoman state and economy. In the late 17th century the Phanariot Greeks gradually ousted the renegades and Levantines who had hitherto served as interpreters in dealings with foreign embassies. The Greeks, and to a lesser extent the Armenians, were familiar enough with Western culture — many of the wealthier families had for long been in the habit of sending their sons to be educated in Italian universities, especially in Padua. They were thus prepared, both linguistically and intellectually, to receive the new Western ideas of their time. On the whole, however, the influence of the ideas of the Revolution on the Christians of Constantinople was not considerable. The churches of course used their authority against it — the wealthy and conservative Greek aristocracy, recognizing the danger to the existing Ottoman order, preferred at first to preserve a régime in which they had so considerable an interest. Some converts to French ideas were found, however, among the Christians, more especially when the French began to address themselves directly to Greek and other national aspirations. Some of these — as for example the famous Armenian dragoman Mouradjea d’Ohsson — may have played some small part in influencing Ottoman policy towards the French Republic; later they certainly played a vital role in bringing the ideas of the Revolution, with explosive effect, to the peoples of the Balkans. But their role in bringing Western ideas to the Muslim Turks is small and

indirect, and is in the main limited to their functions as interpreters, language-teachers and translators. As Christians and as subject-peoples they were doubly discredited, and unlikely to gain much of a hearing for any new ideas they might attempt to convey — the more so since their own secular and religious leaders were opposed to them. If anything the minorities acted as a cushion — absorbing the impact of regular Western commercial and diplomatic activities in Turkey, and thus protecting the Turks from direct contact. What they did do, however, was to provide a nucleus of people familiar, on the one hand, with Turkish, on the other, with French or Italian, and thus able, when required, to translate Western books, to act as interpreters for Western instructors, to teach Western languages to aspiring Turks.

If the channels through which the ideas of the revolution might flow into Turkey existed, their movement was not left to chance, but was the subject of sustained efforts by the French. Partly out of general missionary enthusiasm, partly in order to secure the support of the still not negligible Ottoman power at a critical time, the French devoted much attention to winning sympathy in the Ottoman capital and provinces. From the first an important section of the French community in Constantinople adhered to the Revolution, and aroused the ire of the Austrian and Prussian embassies by the wearing of revolutionary emblems and the holding of revolutionary meetings. In June 1793 citizen Descorches (ci-devant Marquis de Sainte-Croix) arrived in Istanbul as emissary of the French republic, with the double mission of winning Ottoman support for French policy and Ottoman sympathy for the French Revolution. The 14th July was made the occasion of a public celebration, culminating in a salute from two French ships moored off Seraglio point. They flew the colours of the Ottoman Empire, of the French and American republics, "and those of a few other powers that had not soiled their arms in the impious league of tyrants". Descorches was a fervent missionary of the Revolution, who did all he could to bring its message to the Levant. Among those who assisted him in this task was Mouradgea d'Ohsson, author of the Tableau Historique de l'Empire Ottoman. An Armenian by birth, Mouradgea d'Ohsson became prominent as dragoman to the Swedish embassy, and in 1796 became Swedish minister. As early as 1792 he is reported as being in close touch with French Jacobin circles in Istanbul, and as doing all in his power to induce the Porte to recognize the French Republic. Knobelsdorf, the Prussian Chargé d'Affaires, believed that he was instructed "to make the Porte favourable

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to the French Revolution". In the years that followed, d'Ohsson seems to have collaborated closely with the French ambassadors Descorches, Verninac, and Aubert du Bayet, and as late as 1798 we find him assisting the French Chargé d'Affaires, Pierre Ruffin, in his forlorn attempt to explain away the Egyptian expedition. It is hardly surprising that after the outbreak of war with France the Porte asked the Swedish government to remove him 28.

But France did not have to rely on local Christian support, generally neither strong nor effective, in making herself known to the peoples of Islam. During the 18th century the whole system of recruitment and training of interpreters for the French diplomatic and consular services was radically reorganized. In place of a more or less haphazard local recruitment of Levantine and oriental Christians, young Frenchmen were chosen and trained from an early age. By an order of 1721, the twelve scholarships at the Royal College of Louis-le-Grand, formerly granted to young Armenians for training as Catholic missionaries, were henceforth to be given to French boys, who, on completing their course in Paris, would proceed to the French Capuchin College in Constantinople for more advanced training. The "jeunes de langue", as these cadets were known, received the normal classical education of the College, and in addition were instructed in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish by the best Orientalists in France 27. For more than a century the dragomans of France in the Levant were recruited in this way, and the revolutionary and napoleonic governments were thus able to draw upon a corps of officials who on the one hand were men of education and culture by the standards and in the spirit of metropolitan France, and on the other had a knowledge of the world of Islam that was both practical and scholarly. Such were Pierre Ruffin (1742-1824), who served in Constantinople during much of the revolutionary and napoleonic period 28, Amédée Jaubert (1779-1847), the translator of Idrisi's geography into French and emissary of Napoleon to the Porte, Venture de Paradis (1742-1799), dragoman in Constantinople and later chief interpreter to the French expedition to Egypt, Daniel Kieffer (1767-1833), and Xavier Bianchi (1783-1864), authors of the famous Turkish-French dictionary; as well as many others. While some of these, such as Antoine Fonton, rejected the Revolution and passed over to the camp of the allies, most continued to serve the new masters of France. In 1795, when Raymond Verninac took over the French Embassy in Constantinople, no less than four of


the five Frenchmen constituting his staff were former "jeunes de langue". 29.

The importance attached by the Republic to training in oriental languages is illustrated by the foundation in 1795 of the École Nationale de Langues Orientales Vivantes in Paris.

That propaganda was conducted for the French republic is clear from the instructions and activities, as well as from the personal histories of the first three republican ambassadors to Turkey. All three of them were fervent revolutionaries. Descorches, who arrived on 7th June 1793, besides attempting to influence the Porte, held meetings and distributed literature in favour of the ideas of the Revolution 30. Verniac, his successor from 14th April 1795, and Aubert du Bayet, who served in Constantinople from 2nd October 1796 until his death on 17th December 1797, continued this work. All three were men whose public careers began with the Revolution. Aubert du Bayet, it is interesting to note, was born in New Orleans and had fought in America under Lafayette. He had joined the Revolution from the start and sat in the Legislative Assembly as deputy for Grenoble.

On 4th April 1795 the Foreign Ministry in Paris informed Descorches that the Committee of Public Safety had decided to re-establish the French printing press in Constantinople, and announced the despatch of Louis Allier, director of the French Imprimerie Nationale, to take charge of it. Three other assistants were sent, together with two presses and a quantity of French type. The ambassador was instructed to use this press to the best advantage of the Republic. The French printing press in Constantinople was already active, under the direction of an Armenian dragoman called Battos, and had printed a number of pamphlets, news bulletins, and the like. On 27th July 1795 Verniac, who had meanwhile succeeded as ambassador, placed the expanded press with its staff under the control of Charles Houel, who, with the assistance of Allier and his colleagues, began a new campaign of activity. The press, in Verniac's words, "devait servir à remplir deux objets également intéressants, celui d'instruire les nationaux établis en Levant des affaires de la République et celui de donner aux Turcs connaissance des intérêts qui occupent l'Europe et de leur inspirer par la publication de quelques livres élémentaires le goût des sciences qu'il leur importe le plus d'apprendre ". An attempt to secure Turkish type and to print in Turkish failed, but a fortnightly bulletin of news from France, of six to eight octavo pages, was printed in French and distributed throughout the Levant. In 1796 another publication appeared — the Gazetle française de Constantinople, of 4-6 octavo pages. This seems to have appea-

29. J. Dehérain, Pierre Ruffin, I, p. 103. At a gathering of the French colony in Constantinople on 14th July 1795, one of them, the chancellor Charles Adamson, made a speech, "dans lequel il fit un tableau énergique et fidèle du 14 juillet ".
red irregularly, at intervals of about a month, for about two years, until September 1798, when, on the outbreak of war with France, the French Embassy staff were interned and the press confiscated by the Turkish authorities. After the peace of 1802 it was restored to the French and again put to use for the printing of propaganda and bulletins of various kinds. In this period some of its publications appear to have been bilingual.

In France, too, propaganda was translated into oriental languages, and printed in the oriental section of the Imprimerie Nationale, under the direction of the Orientalist Louis Langlès. Such for example was the address of the National Convention to the French people of 9th October 1794, translated into Arabic by Pierre Ruffin and published in a quarto brochure with the French and Arabic texts on opposite pages. We have some Turkish reactions to these activities. Halet Efendi, the Turkish ambassador in Paris from 1802 to 1806 reports: in the early days of the republic the French, in order to seduce the simple-hearted and stir up sedition, tried to present themselves as Muslims, and claimed that it was for that reason that they had destroyed churches. Finding this of no avail, they published certain works of Voltaire. According to certain reports, the French then realized that, since the people of the Ottoman Empire did not know French, this too was without effect, and they therefore had a number of books translated into Greek, Armenian, and Turkish, asserting the advantages of republicanism and liberty, and tried to disseminate these in the Ottoman dominions; in addition, they sent one or two special agents each to most of the Mediterranean islands, to stir up evil. Halet goes on to suggest that an investigation be made in the islands, and that orders be issued, through the Church hierarchy, to prevent the Christian subjects from reading such books should they appear. A minute added in Constantinople to Halet's dispatch shows that "seditious manifestoes" had already been found among the Greeks, and that the Greek patriarch had been instructed to suppress them. On the receipt of Halet's letter, a similar order banning such writings was sent to the Morea and to Crete and the other Greek islands.

That such propaganda was addressed to the Greeks is of course well known. The reference to tracts in Turkish finds confirmation in a story related by Asim, the imperial historiographer of the Ottoman Empire for the years 1791-1808. In 1807, he tells us, "a most strange and extraordinary pamphlet" was introduced from France. Written in French, it was translated into both Turkish and Arabic, and printed in Paris in these languages for distribution in the Ottoman Empire. The pamphlet was entitled "Address of the Muezzin Osman to his coreli-

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gionists", and purported to be written by a Muslim. Asim however was not deceived, and pours contempt on this crude and ineffective piece of propaganda. The text of the pamphlet, which is given in full, consists of attacks on Russia, which is depicted as the eternal enemy of Islam and the Turks, while the French, and especially Bonaparte, are lauded as the allies and friends of Islam. Its purpose was obviously to encourage the Turks to fight against Russia — presumably before the meeting at Tilsit. For Asim, it represented an attempt to confuse and mislead the Islamic community, and he likens it to the publications issued to "deceive and corrupt and pervert... the numskulls of Bedouins and peasants in Egypt" at the time of the French expedition.

Far more important than any pamphlets, bulletins, or newspapers was the effect of the unrecorded efforts of individual Frenchmen in Constantinople and elsewhere, who abandoned the mutually agreed exclusiveness that had kept Franks and Muslims from all but formal contacts in the past, and for the first time sought the intimacy and cultivated the friendship of Muslim Turks. Turkish-speaking Frenchmen and French-speaking Turks formed a new society in the capital, in which the ideas of the time were freely discussed, and the enthusiastic optimism of revolutionary France found a ready response among a new generation of Turks that looked to the West for guidance and inspiration.

II. — THE TURKISH REACTION

Thanks to the invaluable work of Turkish historians in publishing and analyzing documents from the Ottoman archives, it is now possible to examine the reaction of the Ottoman Turks to the French Revolution, as revealed in contemporary documents. The Revolution seems to


35. Two quotations may suffice to illustrate the state of mind of both sides: "It is certainly a good Maxim for an Embassadour in this Country, not to be over-studious in procuring a familiar friendship with Turks; a fair comportment towards all in a moderate way, is cheap and secure; for a Turk is not capable of real friendship towards a Christian." Paul Rycaut, The History of the Present State of the Ottoman Empire (London, 4th edition, 1673), p. 164: "Familiar association with heathens and infidels is forbidden to the people of Islam, and friendly and intimate intercourse between two parties that are to one another as darkness and light is far from desirable." Asim, I, 376.

36. The contemporary Turkish historians are discussed in Babinger, Geschichtschreiber, and in O. M. von Schlechter-Wasenried, "Die osmanischen Geschichtsschreiber der neueren Zeit", Denkschriften der phil. hist. Classe der Kd. Akademie der Wissenschaften, Vienna, VIII (1856), p. 1 ff. The most important published chronicle is that of Ahmed Efendi (? 1755-1819), who wrote the official annals of the Empire for the years 1791-1808. (Asim Tariki, 2 vols, Istanbul, n. d. On Asim see Babinger, pp. 339-40, Schlechter-Wasenried, p. 10-11, and the article on Asim in the Turkish Encyclopaedia of Islam, contributed by M. Fuad Köprülü.) A far profounder treatment is that of Ahmed Jevdet Pascha (1822-1893), whose twelve-volumes history of the Ottoman Empire from 1774 to 1826 must rank as one of the
have made little immediate impression on the Turks, who, like other contemporary observers, at first regarded it as a purely internal affair of no great consequence. Even when the Revolution spread by war to the neighbouring countries and convulsed Western Europe, the Turks still regarded it as an internal affair of Christendom, having no relevance to the Ottoman Empire, which as a Muslim state was immune to this contagion. Diplomatically, the preoccupation of the Christian powers with the revolutionary wars was even of benefit to the Porte. Ahmed Efendi, the Privy Secretary of Selim III, noted in his journal in January 1792 that the disorder and upheaval in France had aroused the cupidity of England, Prussia, and Austria who, under pretext of restoring order and re-installing the king, sought to seize this leaderless country for themselves. Russia, seeing in this an opportunity to secure a free hand in Poland, encouraged the western powers in this campaign and tried to keep them busy with French affairs. In order to leave herself completely free for action in Poland, she made quick and easy terms with the Porte. After noting that thanks to these events the Porte had thus got off lightly, Ahmed Efendi concludes: "May God cause the upheaval in France to spread like syphilis to the enemies of the Empire, hurl them into prolonged conflict with one another, and thus accomplish results beneficial to the Empire, amen." The same reasoning led the Porte to reject Russian overtures after the treaty of Jassy and to return an evasive answer to a joint Austrian, Prussian, and Russian demand for a ban on the flaunting of tricolour cockades and other revolutionary emblems by the French in Turkey. A characteristic conversation is recorded by Jevdet Pasha:

"One day the Austrian chief dragoman came to the Reis ul-Küttab Rashid Efendi and said, 'May God punish these Frenchmen as they deserve; they have caused us much sorrow. For heaven's sake — if only you would have those cockades stripped off their heads.' To this request Rashid Efendi replied: 'My friend, we have told you several times that the Ottoman Empire is a Muslim state. No one among us pays any attention to those badges of theirs. We recognize the merchants of friendly states as guests. They wear what headgear they wish on their heads, and attach what badges they please. And if they put baskets of grapes on their heads, it is not the business of the Sublime Porte to ask them why they do so. You are troubling yourself for nothing.'"

The greatest achievements of Ottoman historiography. Jevdet's history is based to a very large extent on archive documents, many of which he quotes in extenso. Since the foundation of the Ottoman (later Turkish) Historical Society in 1919, Turkish historians have published an increasing number of studies and editions of documents from the State Archives, which have meanwhile been rehoused and reorganized. For a brief account see my "The Ottoman Archives as a Source for the History of the Arab Lands", Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, October 1951, p. 139 ff.

40. Jevdet, VI, pp. 118-9. In June 1815, when the Porte, recognizing
Protests and warnings from Austria and Russia against the French Revolution could only arouse Turkish sympathy for that movement, at least for as long as it seemed to involve no danger of any kind to the Empire itself. Though, with characteristic caution, the Porte delayed diplomatic recognition of the Republic until Prussia had provided a precedent, relations between the two states remained friendly, and there is some evidence that the reforming Sultan was not without sympathy for the creators of the new order in France. Supplies of various kinds were shipped from Ottoman to French ports; the invitation of military and naval experts from France to Turkey continued, irrespective of the colour of the French régime that appointed them. Verninac, formally installed as ambassador of France, began to work for a Franco-Turkish alliance, and his proposals received serious consideration in the Divan.

When Aubert du Bayet arrived in 1796, the warmth of his reception by the Turks was such as to arouse widespread comment, and brought a warning from Yusuf Agah, the ambassador in London, against the possible consequences.

A new phase began with the partition of the territories of the Republic of Venice by the treaty of Campo Formio of 17th October 1797. By the fifth article of this treaty, the Ionian Islands, together with the former Venetian possessions on the adjoining coasts of Albania and Greece, were annexed to the French Republic. France, the traditional ally of the Ottoman Empire, had become her neighbour — and ancient friendship could not stand the shock. Soon alarming reports began to come in from the Morea — of liberty and equality on the borders of the Empire, of speeches and ceremonies recalling the ancient glories and liberties of Hellas and promising their restoration — of French intelligence with rebels and dissidents in Ottoman Greece and French plans to annex Morea and Crete. French reassurances failed to comfort the Divan, and when General Tamara, the new Russian ambassador, repeated the warnings of his predecessor against the dangers of revolutionary

Louis XVIII, demanded of Ruffin that he suppressed the tricolour cockade, he replied: «Cette prétention est également un néologisme et une inconvenance et dans les usages et dans la langue des Ottomans. Jamais, ainsi que répondit en semblable occasion un célèbre ministre de la Porte, elle ne s'est immiscée dans la coiffure ou chaussure de ses hôtes et d'après l'expérience que j'ai dû acquérir pendant cinquante-six ans dans le Levant, je ne puis me conformer à votre langue, que c'est une innovation que l'on cherche à y introduire. » J. Dehérain, Pierre Ruffin, II, p. 118. The allusion, misunderstood by Dehérain, is obviously to the above-quoted conversation.

42. Jevdet, VI, p. 192 ff.
45. On the reports of Hasan Pasha, the Vali of Morea, see Karal, loc. cit., p. 113 ff.; cf. Jevdet, VI, pp. 248-9 and 282-4.
France, he was listened to with greater attention 46. Before long still more alarming reports began to arrive 47 of French naval preparations in Toulon, and of a projected French attack on the Ottoman dominions. In the spring of 1798 the Reis ild-Küttab, Ahmed Atif Efendi, was instructed to prepare a memorandum for the Divan on the political situation, and on the invitation extended by the Allies to the Porte to join an anti-French coalition. His report, which was printed among the appendices to the history of Jevdet Pasha, is worth quoting at some length. He begins with a general account of the French Revolution, clearly intended to remove any illusions of his readers as to the real purport of the events in France.

"It is one of the things known to all well informed persons that the conflagration of sedition and wickedness that broke out a few years ago in France, scattering sparks and shooting flames of mischief and tumult in all directions, had been conceived many years previously in the minds of certain accursed heretics, ... In this way: the known and famous atheists Voltaire and Rousseau, and other materialists like them, had printed and published various works, consisting, God preserve us, of insults and vilification against the pure prophets and great kings, of the removal and abolition of all religion, and of allusions to the sweetness of equality and republicanism, all expressed in easily intelligible words and phrases 48, in the form of mockery, in the language of the common people. Finding the pleasure of novelty in these writings, most of the people, even youths and women, inclined towards them and paid close attention to them, so that heresy and wickedness spread like syphilis to the arteries of their brains and corrupted their beliefs. When the Revolution became more intense, none took offence at the closing of churches, the killing and expulsion of monks, and the abolition of religion and doctrine: they set their hearts on equality and freedom, through which they hoped to attain perfect bliss in this world, in accordance with the lying teachings increasingly disseminated among the common people by this pernicious crew, who stirred up sedition and evil because of selfishness or self-interest. It is well known that the ultimate basis of the order and cohesion of every state is a firm grasp of the roots and branches of holy law, religion and doctrine; that the tranquillity of the land and the control of the subjects cannot be encompassed by political means alone; that the necessity for the fear of God and the regard for retribution in the hearts of God's slaves is one of the unshakably established divine decrees; that in both ancient and modern times every state and people has had its own religion, whether true or false. Nevertheless the leaders of the sedition and evil appearing in France, in a manner without precedent, in order to facilitate the accomplishment of their evil purposes and in utter disregard to the fearful consequences, have removed the fear of God and the regard for retribution from the common people, made lawful all kinds of abominable deeds, utterly obliterates

46. E. A. Karal, loc. cit., p. 116 ff., where the official Ottoman record of the conversations with Tamara is given.

47. But not from the Turkish ambassador in Paris, Ali Efendi, who continued to relay to his government the soft answers of Talleyrand. Even when the news reached him of the French capture of Malta, he wrote a dispatch suggesting that this was evidence of the Directoire's friendly intentions towards the Porte, since by occupying Malta the French had removed a thorn from the side of Turkey and liberated many Muslim captives. In a marginal comment the Grand Vizier remarks that the French had somehow succeeded in hoodwinking Ali up to the very last moment. The Sultan's minute is briefer: "What an ass the man is." (E. Z. Karal, Fransstä-Muhr, p. 176-7).

48. The reader of Atif's own words and phrases will understand his contempt for such a manner of writing.
all shame and decency, and thus prepared the way for the reduction of the people of France to the state of cattle. Nor were they satisfied with this alone, but, finding supporters like themselves in every place, in order to keep other states busy with the protection of their own régimes and thus forestall an attack on themselves, they had their rebellious declaration which they call 'The Rights of Man' translated into all languages and published in all parts, and strove to incite the common people of the nations and religions to rebel against the kings to whom they were subject. 48

The French Revolution was clearly regarded by Atif Efendi as a danger which threatened the Ottoman Empire as well as the Christian states. For him the need to overcome it overrode both the traditional enmity between the Porte and her neighbours Austria and Russia and the traditional friendship between the Porte and France.

The French landing at Alexandria on 1st July 1798, and the subsequent activities of the French in Egypt and Palestine confirmed Atif's reasoning. The long-term effects of the impact of revolutionary France on the Arab peoples are well known. But even the immediate effects were disturbing enough to induce the Ottoman government to embark on what in our time is called psychological warfare. In a proclamation distributed in Arabic in Syria, Egypt, and Arabia, the following condemnation of revolutionary doctrines was offered:

"O you who believe in the unity of God, community of Muslims, know that the French nation (may God devastate their dwellings and abase their banners) are rebellious infidels and dissident evildoers; they do not believe in the unity of the Lord of Heaven and Earth, nor in the mission of the intercessor on the Day of Judgment, but have abandoned all religions, and denied the after-world and its penalties. They do not believe in the day of resurrection, and pretend that only the passage of time destroys us, and that there is nothing but the womb that emits us and the earth that swallows us, and that beyond this there is no resurrection and no reckoning, no examination and no retribution, no question and no answer. So that they have pillaged their churches and the adornments of their crucifixes and attacked their priests and monks. They assert that the books which the prophets brought are clear error, and that the Quran, the Torah and the Gospels are nothing but lies and idle talk; and that those who claimed to be prophets, as Moses, Jesus, Muhammad and others were not true, and that no prophet or apostle has ever come to the world, but that they lied to ignorant people; that all men are equal in humanity, and alike in being men, none has any superiority or merit over any other, and every one himself disposes of his soul and arranges his own livelihood in this life 49, "

It is interesting to note which characteristics of the French Revolution were most shocking to Atif Efendi and to the author of the proclamation. Neither makes any reference to the execution of Louis XVI, which had such an effect on Christian Europe. Von Knobelsdorf, the Prussian Chargé d'Affaires in Constantinople, reported in a dispatch of 11 March

49. JEVDET, VI, p. 311 ff.
50. The Turkish text, from a document in the Istanbul archives, is given by KARAL, Frana-Misir, p. 108 ff. The Arabic text, as brought to Acre by Sir Sidney Smith, is given in an Arabic biography of Jazdar Pasha (British Museum Ms. Oriental 3013, fol. 48a ff.). There are some variations between the two. I have followed the latter, as probably preserving the version actually distributed.
1793 that "le Grand Seigneur, instruit jusqu'aux moindres détails de ce crime affreux, en fut si affecté, qu'il en a été malade; tout le Divan, tout le peuple en est saisi d'horreur." That the Sultan was sick with horror at the execution of his royal brother is likely enough, but the violent death of a sovereign was too familiar a feature of political life in Constantinople to arouse much comment. Nor did even the abolition of the monarchy attract much attention. The Ottomans had been familiar for centuries with republican institutions in Venice and Ragusa, and there was nothing in the mere establishment of a republic to alarm them. What really did disturb the ruling circles in Constantinople was the secularism of the Revolution — the separation of state and church, the abandonment of all religious doctrines, the cult of reason. The attempt of the French to carry favour with the Muslims by stressing their rejection of Christianity and affecting a sympathy for Islam awoke some response, but soon — with Russian and Austrian assistance — the rulers of the Empire realized the dangers that this proffered friendship held for the traditional Islamic order and principles. Some indication of the degree of French success in this propaganda may be gathered from the frequent hostile allusions to it in Ottoman sources. At the same time, they began to appreciate the explosive content of equality and liberty though it seems that the latter was at first regarded as a danger to the Christians subjects of the Porte rather than to the Turks themselves.

While France and Turkey were at war, the communication of French ideas to the Turks was at a disadvantage. Nevertheless, the swift and easy success of an army less than 30,000 Frenchmen in conquering and ruling Egypt for over three years did not fail to impress, nor did the tolerance and sympathy shown by the French rulers of Egypt. By the terms of the peace, France withdrew from the Ionian islands as well as from Egypt, and thus terminated her brief tenure as a neighbour of the Porte. The voice of France, no longer shouting in Greek and in Arabic, became more audible in Constantinople. While Brune, Ruffin, and Sébastiani worked to restore French Influence at the Porte, a new Turkish ambassador, Mehmed Sa'id Halet Efendi, served in Paris from 1802 to 1806. Halet was a convinced reactionary, and a hater of all things Western.

Of the rulers of France, he writes: "Since the French had no king, they could have no government; furthermore, as a result of the interregnum which occurred, most of the high positions are held by the scum of the people, and though a few nobles remain, effective power is still in the hands of the vile rabble. Thus they were unable to organize a republic. Since they are no more than an association of revolutionaries, or in plain Turkish a pack of dogs, it is in no way possible for a nation to expect loyalty or friendship from these people." Napoleon he describes as "a savage dog, striving to reduce all states to the same disorder as his own accursed nation," Talleyrand as a "parody of a priest" and the rest as mere brigands. But even Halet's strictures on Frangistan, as he calls it, reveal how strong French influence was.

Despite Hale's encouragement of the reactionary party in Istanbul, French influence continued to grow. The French victories of 1805 and the humiliation of Austria and Russia delighted the Sultan, and decided him to recognize Napoleon as Emperor. In August 1806 Sébastiani returned to Constantinople, and was soon able to involve the Porte in war with both Russia and England. The repulse of an English naval squadron from Constantinople, thanks in no small measure to the energetic intervention of Sébastiani and a number of French officers and volunteers, gave the French ambassador a position of unparalleled ascendancy at the Porte. But it was this very victory of French influence and the prominence of Frenchmen in the defence of Constantinople that outraged Muslim sentiment, and helped to provoke the reactionary rebellion that culminated in the deposition of Selim III on 20th May 1807 and the massacre of the partisans of reform 54.

It was a year or so after these events that Ahmed Asim Efendi, Imperial historiographer, wrote his chronicle of the years 1791-1808. From his narrative we can draw a clear impression of the general effect of French influences in Turkey during these years. Asim approves of the reforms, which he hoped would restore the military strength of the Empire, and in an interesting passage he describes how Russia emerged from weakness and barbarism to the status of a great power by borrowing the sciences and techniques of the West 55. But he is bitterly anti-Christian, considering all Christian powers as inveterate enemies of Islam, and foreseeing nothing but evil consequences from agreements with them. In particular he detests the French, and reviles the pro-French party in Turkey as deluded fools 56. His references to the internal affairs of France are few and hostile.

The republic was "like the rumblings and crepitations of a queasy stomach" 57, its principles consisted of "the abandonment of religion and the equality of rich and poor" 58. Of French activities in Turkey he has more to say. In a lengthy discussion of the successes and failures of the reforms of Selim III and the causes and circumstances of his fall, Asim Efendi devotes a great deal of attention to French influence. The French had presented themselves as friends and even as prospective converts to Islam, assuring the Turks of their hostility to Christianity and their intention of following the teachings of Muhammad. By intensive propaganda they had confused the minds "not only of the great ones of the state but also of the common people." To spread their pernicious ideas, they had sought the society of Turks, beguiling them with protestations of friendship and goodwill, and thus, through familiar and intimate social intercourse, had found many victims. "Certain sensualists, naked of the garment of loyalty, from time to time learned politics from them; some, desirous of learning their languages, took

55. Ibid., pp. 76, 175, etc.
56. Ibid., p. 78.
57. Ibid., p. 62.
58. Ibid., p. 374-6; cf. Jevdet, VIII, p. 196 ff., where an account is given of the influence of European instructors and experts, the exaggerated respect for European ideas and practices among young Turks, the aping of European manners and customs, the appearance of "heresy and materialism" in Istanbul.
French teachers, acquired their idiom and prided themselves... on their uncouth talk. In this way they were able to insinuate Frankish customs in the hearts and endear their modes of thought to the minds of some people of weak mind and shallow faith. The sober-minded and far-sighted, and the ambassadors of the other states foresaw the danger of this situation; full of alarm and disapproval, they reviled and condemned these things both implicitly and explicitly, and forewarned of the evil consequences to which their activities would give rise. This malicious crew and abominable band were full of cunning — first sowing the seed of their politics in the soil of the hearts of the great ones of the state, then, by incitement and seduction to their ways of thought, undermining — God preserve us — the principles of the Holy Law. 

By the summer of 1807 the Emperor Napoleon was in alliance with his imperial brother in Russia; the Sultan Selim III was dethroned and the party of reaction in power in Constantinople. The French Revolution seemed dead in the land of its birth, and its influence stifled in Turkey. But the cutting from the tree of liberty had struck root in the soil of Islam. It was to bear both sweet and bitter fruit.

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