

On the 100th Anniversary of His Death

Ömer Seyfettin

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1884 - 1920

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Ömer Seyfettin

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Editor

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Bahtiyar ASLAN



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Tel: 0 266 717 01 17

Fax: 0 266 717 00 30

www.bandirma.edu.tr trbanuyayinla

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Associate Professor Bahtiyar ASLAN

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ÖMER SEYFETTİN AND FREEMASONRY

Rahim TARIM*

Introduction

Ömer Seyfettin, in a pamphlet he wrote in 1911 entitled "Vatan! Yalnız Vatan..." (Fatherland! Only Fatherland...), mentions a newly launched newspaper called *Güneş*. This newspaper, which contained articles in Turkish, French, Greek and Yiddish, announced that it sought to promote "the idea of humanity; that is, the idea of internationalism." In fact, the first issue of the newspaper published an article entitled "What Are the Reasons That Connect Freemasons Around the World?" The French section of the same issue of the newspaper also refers to mysticism.

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Ömer Seyfettin wrote this treatise to warn the Turkish people and protect them from falling into the trap of such international games, as evidenced by the sentence "Let us beware of international secret societies and international secret goals!"³ he placed on the cover of this treatise, titled "Homeland! Only Homeland...".

Ömer Seyfettin begins his article by stating that he will not approach Freemasonry with conservatism, but rather will address its political consequences, namely "internationalism" and "humanitarianism," and attempt to prove how dangerous these are for the homeland. According to him, when the idea of internationalism spreads, it turns into "enmity towards the homeland (*anti-patriotism*)" and "enmity towards the military (*anti-militarism*)", which "stateless people" who say "My nation is humanity, my homeland is the face of the earth" will never be able to understand. (⁴)

* Prof. Dr., Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, Faculty of Science and Literature, Department of Turkish Language and Literature, Lecturer, email: rahimtarim@gmail.com

¹The four rules of the "New Language" are also recalled on the inside cover of this 34-page pamphlet, published in 1911 by the Young Pens Publishing Board as the second booklet in the New Life Books series. See Ömer Seyfettin, *Complete Works: Articles 1*, (ed. Hülya Argunşah), Dergâh Publications, Istanbul, 2001, p. 141.

², *op. cit.*, p. 141.

³ The author's exact words are: "Let us beware of international secret societies and international secret aims!" R.T.

⁴ Ömer Seyfettin, *Complete Works: Articles 1*, (ed. Hülya Argunşah), Dergâh Yayınları, Istanbul 2001, p. 143. This line belongs to Şinasi. (See: Mehmet Kaplan (et al.), *New Turkish Literature Anthology*

In this booklet, Ömer Seyfettin mentions Max Nordau and how his widely published book *The Lies of Our Civilisation* ⁵led many inexperienced young people and foolish intellectuals in Europe astray. In this book, Max Nordau rebelled against the aristocracy and monarchies on behalf of the people, whom he claimed were drugged by religion. He is also the second most prominent figure after Theodor Herzl, one of the founders of the World Zionist Organisation. As is well known, Theodor Herzl was the Zionist leader who requested land in Palestine from Abdulhamid II for Jewish settlement in exchange for covering the Ottoman Empire's external debts.

The entire Jewish community was not in agreement regarding the decisions taken at the first Zionist Congress held in Basel, Switzerland, in 1897, at which Max Nordau also participated and gave a speech. Some Jewish religious leaders did not support this movement, believing that such a move would draw attention to the Jewish community.⁷ Therefore, Ömer Seyfettin's mention of Max Nordau is by no means an anti-Semitic approach. His aim is simply to draw attention to the games being played on the homeland's soil. After all, just as there are Hungarian Kunoş types among Turkologists, there are also those who defend Turkishness in their writings under the pen name Tekin Alp.⁸

Ömer Seyfettin also touches upon this subject in his article entitled "Jews and the World War." After reminding us that Christianity has been at odds with the Jews throughout history, he states that while anti-Semitism existed in almost every city in Europe, it did not exist in Turkey. However, he states that rapidly growing Zionism is working against Turkey and that Britain is about to give Jerusalem to the Jews. (9)Ömer Seyfettin says that certain bigots in our country accuse everyone of being Freemasons without understanding or listening, and that this article, published in this newspaper under a Turkish name, will give them ammunition and strengthen reactionary forces.

Volume I: 1839–1865, Marmara University Faculty of Science and Letters Publications, Istanbul 1988, p. 498.) However, in his poem "Haluk's Creed," written after the Second Constitutional Era, Tevfik Fikret expresses humanist thought, stating, "The land is my homeland, humanity is my nation..."

⁵ Max Nordau became known in our country through his work *Degeneration/Degeneration (Dégénérescence)*, in which he accused English and German poets of corruption. See: Rahim Tarım; "A Name Forgotten in Decadence Debates: Max Nordau," *A Window to Turkish Literature: A Tribute to İnci Enginün*, (Editor: Hülya Argunşah), Turkish Culture Research Institute Publications, Ankara, 2014, pp. 479-488.

⁶ For detailed information, see Çiğdem Ör, *The Issue of Migration to Palestine in British Public Opinion during the Reign of Abdülhamid II (1876-1908)*, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Marmara University, Institute of Turkish Studies, Istanbul, 2012, pp. 133-134.

⁷ For example, Emanuel Kara-su (Carasso), master of the Macedonia Risorta Masonic lodge in Thessaloniki, did not take a stance against Zionism, but he did not feel any affinity towards it either. See Angelo Iacovella; *Gönye ve Hilal: İttihad-Terakki ve Masonluk* (Trans. Tülin Altınova), Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, Istanbul 1998, p. 40.

⁸ Ömer Seyfettin, *Complete Works: Articles 2*, (ed. Hülya Argunşah), Dergâh Publications, Istanbul 2001, 217.

⁹ , *op. cit.*, p. 71.

Because those who work for the advancement of Turkish nationalism are enemies of Freemasonry and its internationalist and humanist ideas. Therefore, the person who publishes the article under a Turkish name must be a Levantine cosmopolitan.⁽¹⁰⁾

‘Humanity’, that is, humanism and the idea of human brotherhood, is as deceptive and misleading as it is appealing. That is why many Western thinkers, intellectuals, diplomats and scholars oppose it, says Ömer Seyfettin, referring to Gustave Le Bon’s statement that this idea is ‘a social wound in France’. Referring to the ideas of thinkers such as Alfred Feuillet and Alfred Fouillée, who also believed that humanism worked against nations, Ömer Seyfettin argues that this idea, which is now being introduced into our homeland, breeds hostility towards the homeland and the army, creates a major obstacle to progress, and serves the interests of imperialist Europe.¹¹ Ömer Seyfettin points out that Emile Zola, one of Europe’s most famous novelists, glorifies France’s occupation and invasion of Africa in his work *Fertility*, and quotes Gustave Le Bon as saying that humanists are more dangerous than bandits.

Ömer Seyfettin says that someone he calls the "wisdom seeker of Istanbul" mentioned that most young people were Freemasons, but that this proportion was negligible. Those who mislead the "Istanbul sage" are either uneducated or unable to comprehend what they read. The ideas of Max Nardau they refer to are mere hearsay; what this group, devoid of critical thinking, understands is Western imitation, following fashion, gambling, and chasing women.⁽¹²⁾

According to Ömer Seyfettin, while Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro, and Greece, not daring to fight us openly, slaughtered civilians with their secret organisations and gangs, their civilians also spread false news in the cities and paid European journalists to publish the news they wanted. While it is necessary to counter these propaganda efforts internally, it is also necessary to fight against those who seek to spread Masonic ideas such as humanism and world brotherhood.

Those who seek to extinguish nationalism and love of country with nonsense like humanism wish to achieve their goals by spending a little money to help international secret societies. Ömer Seyfettin says that if they achieve their aims, the Turkish nation will first become enslaved and then be erased from history.¹³

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

¹¹ Ömer Seyfettin, *Complete Works: Articles I*, (ed. Hülya Argunşah), Dergâh Publications, Istanbul 2001, p. 145.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 151.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 154, 156.

At the end of the treatise, Ömer Seyfettin also warns that they are not acting against Freemasonry in order to slander and discredit people like those who act with simple logic; their aim is to prevent the unknown ambitions of such secret organisations from harming the idea of homeland and nationalism; and that they would endeavour to expose dangerous ideas, as they did in this pamphlet, in order to protect the concept of the homeland.⁽¹⁴⁾

Illumination and Progress and Freemasonry

While Tahir Alangu appreciates Ömer Seyfettin's efforts to awaken Turkish youth who had been drugged under the guise of Freemasonry and world brotherhood, he cannot refrain from asking the following question:

"Ömer Seyfettin knew how Freemasonry spread among the Selanik elite and enlightened youth. But in Macedonia, did he not hear that the 'Rizorta' and 'Veritas' lodges, affiliated with the 'Italian Orient', played a major role in the establishment and development of the 'Union and Progress' society? It was also known that Freemasons played a role in the proclamation of the 1908 Revolution."⁽¹⁵⁾

It is impossible for Ömer Seyfettin not to be aware of these facts, but he can do nothing but write. For this reason, I think it is useful to elaborate on this subject a little, as there may be others who think like Alangu: Freemasonry has a long history in our country. Freemasonry was popular among state officials after the Tanzimat, and it is known that Freemasons were influential in the accession of Murad V to the throne. After the bloody Greek uprisings that began in 1821, Cléanthes Scalieri, a member of the French L'Union d'Orient, personally established contact with the Sultan and expressed his desire to find a solution to both these uprisings and the Eastern Question.

After Monastir and Kosovo, Thessaloniki, the third city of the Rumeli Vilayet-i Selâsesi, was one of the places where the pressure of the Abdülhamit II period was felt the least. During this period, Thessaloniki was also the city where Masonic lodges spread most easily. Among the reasons for this were the city's status as a port and trading city with a population exceeding 100,000 at the time, as well as the presence of a large majority of Sephardic Jews and a minority of "converts" who had later embraced Islam. On the other hand, as almost all the uprisings in the Balkans were planned and financed in Thessaloniki, the city was also home to all kinds of secret organisations. A Law School, local and foreign schools, night classes

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

¹⁵ Tahir Alangu, *Ömer Seyfettin: The Novel of an Idealist Writer*, May Publications, Istanbul 1968, p. 190.

¹⁶ Şükrü Hanioglu, *The Ottoman Union and Progress Society and Young Turkism (1889-1902)*, İletişim Publications, Istanbul 1986, pp. 76-87.

With its abundance of conferences, theatres, and magazines and newspapers not even found in Istanbul, it was a cosmopolitan city of culture that embraced all kinds of thought⁽¹⁷⁾

At the beginning of the 20th century, there were a total of six Masonic lodges in Thessaloniki: two French, two Italian, one Greek and one Spanish. Veritas and l'Avenir de l'Orient were French, Macedonia Risorta and Labor et Lux were Italian, Philippos was Greek, and Perseve-rancia was affiliated with the Grand Orient of Spain. Shortly before the proclamation of the Second Constitutional Monarchy, the number reached seven with the establishment of Steaoa Salonicului, affiliated with the Grand National Lodge of Romania. After the Second Constitutional Monarchy, about ten more lodges would be added to these. However, the oldest and most influential lodge among them was Macedonia Risorta: ⁽¹⁸⁾

Towards the end of 1900, the Italian lodges in Turkey were awakened from their slumber by Ettore Ferrari, assistant to Grand Master Ernesto Nathan, who conveyed his message. ¹⁹Among these was Macedonia Risorta in Thessaloniki. Emanuel Karasu, a lawyer and Sephardic Jew, played a major role in the awakening of this lodge. Karasu/Carasso, the lodge's 33rd Degree Worshipful Master, not only established the connection between the Grand Orient of Italy and the Committee of Union and Progress, whose headquarters were in Thessaloniki at the time, but also allowed the committee to hold its meetings in the lodges. Thus, the lodge's "Waiting Room" would soon become the centre and archive of the Young Turks. Among the organisation's most powerful members were Talat Pasha, Manyasizade Refik Bey, Rahmi bin Rıza, and Midhat Şükrü, who were members of the lodge. Cavit, a financier from Thessaloniki, belonged to the Perseverancia lodge, affiliated with the Spanish Grand Orient. Twenty-three high-ranking officers serving in the Second and Third Corps in the region were also among the lodge members. In 1906, due to an increase in applicants, a second lodge called Labor et Lux was established. Between 1901 and 1908 alone 188 people were "initiated" and accepted into the lodge.

Becoming a Freemason had become so fashionable among young people in pursuit of freedom that Ali Canip Yöntem states that, although almost all young people were Masons at the time, Ömer Seyfettin, Ziya Gökalp and himself stayed away from Freemasonry because they opposed this cosmopolitanism under the guise of humanism:

¹⁷ Tahir Alangu, *Ömer Seyfettin: Ülkücü Bir Yazarın Romanı* (Ömer Seyfettin: The Novel of an Idealistic Writer), May Yayınları, Istanbul 1968, p. 168.

¹⁸Paul Dumont, *Ottomanism, Nationalist Movements and Freemasonry*, (Trans. Ali Berktaş), Yapı Kredi Yayınları, Istanbul 2020, p. 64; .

¹⁹ Masons refer to lodges that have suspended their activities for a certain period as "asleep" and those that have resumed activities as "awakened". Being put to sleep and awakened must be carried out in accordance with the instructions of the Grand Orient. R.T.

²⁰Angelo Iacovella, *Compass and Crescent: İttihad-Terakki and Freemasonry*, (Trans. Tülin Altınova), Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, Istanbul 1998, pp. 38-42.

The Committee of Union and Progress had greatly benefited from Masonic lodges in its activities prior to the Constitutional Era. At that time and afterwards, Freemasonry was quite widespread in the city. So much so that among our friends, there was no one left who was not a Freemason except for Ziya, Ömer, and myself. We were opposed to Freemasonry's cosmopolitan tendencies under the guise of humanitarianism."⁽²¹⁾

Tahir Alangu states that a letter was sent to him by the General Headquarters of the Committee of Union and Progress, along with a decree of appointment sent to Ali Canip Yöntem, stating that he had been allocated ten lira for both this position and the editorship of the *Young Pens* magazine, and that the style of this letter was also that of a "Masonic mouthpiece".²²

It is known that a group around Ahmet Rıza, one of the leaders of the Committee of Union and Progress, were also Freemasons and worked for the reinstatement of the constitution. Although not a Freemason himself, even the positivist Ahmet Rıza, in his article titled "Freemasons," praised the support and efforts of the Freemasons in their struggle against the autocracy. In this response to the Young Turks' call to join forces, Ahmet Rıza states that Freemasons are working to eliminate oppression and tyranny everywhere, and therefore they must be cautious of Abdülhamid II. In 1906, the Ottoman Freedom Society, which would later be named the Terakki ve İttihad Cemiyeti Dahilî Merkez-i Umumîsi (Progress and Union Society Internal General Centre), was organised within two important Masonic lodges.²³ Prince Mehmet Ali Bey, who had a close relationship with Ahmet Rıza, was the leader of the Egyptian Freemasons, and his colleague Talat Pasha also became a member of the Macedonia Risorta lodge on 4 July 1903.²⁴

Indeed, Masonic lodges played a major role both in the proclamation of the Second Constitutional Monarchy and in the deposition of Abdülhamid II and his exile to Thessaloniki. Prince Sabahattin also gave a speech praising the Freemasons for their contributions to the constitutional movement at a Greek Masonic lodge called Isiodos on 12 September 1908.⁽²⁵⁾

"After the proclamation of the Second Constitutional Monarchy, the pressure exerted by the Committee of Union and Progress in the government and, as mentioned above, the increase in Freemasonry among high-ranking officers and certain changes made in the military field, as well as the excessive freedom in the press, caused great unrest in society.

²¹ Ali Canip Yöntem, *Ömer Seyfettin (His Life and Works)*, Remzi Publishing House, Istanbul 1947, p. 22.

²² Tahir Alangu, *Ömer Seyfettin: The Novel of an Idealistic Writer*, May Publications, Istanbul 1968, pp. 159-160.

²³ Şükrü Hanioğlu, *The Ottoman Union and Progress Society and Young Turkism (1889-1902)*, İletişim Publications, Istanbul 1986, pp. 89-90, 91-92.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

The many events that took place between the proclamation of the Second Constitutional Monarchy and the 31 March Incident are sufficient to demonstrate the extent of this unrest.²⁶

Using the 31 March Incident, which broke out on 13 April, as a pretext, the Commander of the Third Corps, Mahmut Şevket Pasha, the Governor of Thessaloniki, the Director of Telegraphs, and other prominent figures in the city, fearing a possible coup against the sultan, sent threatening telegrams to the Ministry of the Interior, led by Emanuel Karasu, addressed to the "Honourable Master".⁽²⁷⁾

Shortly after Mahmut Şevket Pasha entered Istanbul and suppressed the uprising, the parliament decided on 25 April 1909 to depose the sultan. It is significant that Emanuel Karasu was among those who went to inform Abdülhamid II of his deposition on 27 April 1909. As can be understood from all this, the relationship between the Committee of Union and Progress and the Masonic lodges was much more than just providing them with a working environment.

The Tripoli War and Freemasonry

With the support of Britain and France, Italy suddenly declared war on the Ottoman Empire on 29 September 1911 and began bombarding Tripoli with warships. On 5 October 1911, Tripoli fell. Between 11 and 20 October 1911, many coastal cities such as Derna and Benghazi were occupied. The Italians, with their superior naval power, also prevented the Ottomans from sending troops and ammunition to Tripoli. Despite all the adversity, the government sent its elite soldiers, including Mustafa Kemal, Enver Pasha, Fethi Bey, and Kuşçubaşı Eşref, to Tripoli to organise the local population against the occupation and provide military training. Indeed, even with this support, the local population did not allow the Italians to gain a foothold in many regions. For this reason, in the spring of 1912, the Italians occupied some islands in the Aegean Sea and bombed Ottoman trading ports such as Izmir and Beirut.

The Italian Freemasons, whose influence and contribution were significant in the proclamation of the Second Constitutional Monarchy, along with "international Freemasonry," remained silent regarding the Italian occupation of Libya. Given the known links between the Grand Orient of Italy and the Committee of Union and Progress, newspapers referred to Freemasons in Turkey as "Muslims" and "cryers of democracy," citing the official statement issued by the Grand Master of the lodge on the day the war began.

²⁶ For detailed information, see Faik Reşat Unat; *The Proclamation of the Second Constitutional Monarchy and the Thirty-First March Incident: The Memorandum of Ali Cevat Bey, Second Abdulhamid's Last Chief of Staff*, Turkish Historical Society Publications, Ankara 1985, pp. 158-188.

²⁷ Angelo Iacovella, *Compass and Crescent: Union and Progress and Freemasonry*, (Trans. Tülin Altınova), History Foundation Yurt Publications, Istanbul 1998, p. 38.

²⁸ Faroz Ahmad, *İttihat ve Terakki: 1908-1914* (The Committee of Union and Progress: 1908-1914), (Trans. Nuran Yavuz) Kaynak Publications, Istanbul 1984, pp. 170-171.

They said that the rhetoric was anti-Italian. For this reason, Italian Freemasonry tried to clear itself of accusations by organising aid campaigns for the families of Italian soldiers who died in the war. The Committee of Union and Progress, on the other hand, called on its Italian "brothers" to use all their power to lobby through the Grand Orient of Italy to stop this unjust war and prevent the annexation of Tripoli. However, the response from the Italian Grand Vizier would have a shocking effect on the leaders of the Committee of Union and Progress:

On 2 November 1911, during the 257th session, Grand Master Ettore Ferrari read a letter sent to him by Turkish Freemasonry; in summary, it lamented 'today's conflict, which has severely wounded all Freemasonry and delighted its enemies' and spoke of 'the close unity of two Masonic families in this difficult situation'. The Council responded to this letter by stating that the Grand Orient of Italy 'could not take any action that could be considered an attack on the interests and dignity of the country; that they were content, and had to be content, with fulfilling their humanitarian duty by helping the families of the dead and wounded.'²⁹

This situation showed that the Committee of Union and Progress greatly exaggerated the importance of Freemasonry. Their efforts to use Masonic channels to lobby Italy in their relations with that country seemed to have ended with this war. The Ottoman-Italian War would end with the agreement signed in Lausanne in 1913, but then the First World War would break out.

The First Turkish Child

The best example of Ömer Seyfettin's struggle against the harmful ideas spread by Freemasonry and similar cosmopolitan associations is his story "Primo Türk Çocuğu" (The First Turkish Child). Ali Canip Yöntem states that this story was written in response to the Italian attack on Tripoli because the most powerful Masonic lodge in Thessaloniki belonged to the Italians. Ali Canip Yöntem also states that Ömer Seyfettin's booklet "Vatan! Yalnız Vatan..." (Fatherland! Only Fatherland...), which we attempted to evaluate in the introduction to our article, was written to reveal the true face of Freemasonry:

We were opposed to Freemasonry's cosmopolitan tendencies, which were disguised as humanitarianism. We had considered publishing other worthless pamphlets besides the *Genç Kalemler* magazine. One such pamphlet we wrote, titled 'Vatan, Yalnız Vatan' (Homeland, Only Homeland), fiercely attacked the mindset of 'humanity' and 'internationalism' and, incidentally, 'Freemasonry'. It was at this time that the Italians occupied Trabzon.

²⁹ Angelo Iacovella; *Gönye ve Hilal: İttihad-Terakki ve Masonluk* (Trans. Tülin Altınova), Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, İstanbul 1998, p. 54.

lusgarp. The strongest Masonic lodge in Thessaloniki was the Italian lodge. Following our attack on the ideas of 'humanity' and 'internationalism', the Italians fired into the city and, as soon as they entered the town, hanged innocent people they had captured, which shocked our friends who were Masons. Ömer Seyfettin wrote 'Primo' in great despair and anguish. This story, published in the 13th issue of *Genç Kalemler*, was not only a beautiful work filled with national sentiment, but also showed that it was the product of a skilled propagandist writer who understood how and where to strike the idea of 'internationalism' to be most merciless. The artistic magic in his pen prevented the story from being mere propaganda, giving it the value of an exquisite literary work."⁽³⁰⁾

Due to the popularity of the story, Ömer Seyfettin wrote a sequel three years later, titled "Primo Türk Çocuğu: Nasıl Doğdu? Nasıl Öldü?" (Primo, the Turkish Child: How Was He Born? How Did He Die?).⁽³¹⁾ The first part of this second story summarises the first story, while the second part describes Primo's situation after he became aware of his Turkish identity. The author's decision to begin this second story with a summary and numbering has been interpreted as his desire to serialise this popular story and turn it into a novel. However, the outbreak of the First World War affected publishing life, and unfortunately, the story was never continued.⁽³²⁾

The first story is directly related to Freemasonry. Kenan Bey, who studied in Paris, has been a member of the Italian lodge in Thessaloniki for nine years and believes in no other value than the universal 'humanity' instilled by Freemasonry. He married his Italian wife Grazia in Izmir on the condition that he would not see his own family and relatives and that he would raise his future children as Italians. Fulfilling all these conditions, Kenan Bey named his newborn son Primo, which means 'first' according to Italian custom. Living in a fantasy world, far removed from reality, with his wife and son Primo, alienated from his own culture and identity, Kenan Bey is deeply shaken by the Italians' sudden and unjustified attack on Tripoli. Experiencing an identity crisis, Kenan Bey cannot go home and stays in a hotel. Unable to sleep, Kenan Bey spends the night reflecting on his life and, upon returning home, informs his wife of his decision to separate. They also give Primo the freedom to choose his own path. Primo, who does not speak Turkish, has been seeing Orhan, the son of a pasha, at his French school, and Orhan tells Primo about Turkishness.

³⁰ Ali Canib Yöntem, *Ömer Seyfettin (His Life and Works)*, Remzi Publishing House, Istanbul 1947, p. 22.

³¹ *Turkish Word*, issue: 5, 8 May 1914.

³² Ömer Seyfettin, *Turan Masalları (Turan Tales)*, (ed. Nazım Hikmet Polat), Ötüken Yayınları, Istanbul 2017, pp. 26-27; Tahir Alangu, *Ömer Seyfettin: Ülkücü Bir Yazarın Romanı (Ömer Seyfettin: The Novel of an Idealistic Writer)*, May Yayınları, Istanbul 1968, p. 193, note 10.

he transcended his consciousness through the French language. Primo used the decision left to him by his mother and father in favour of Turkishness and, shouting "I am... a Turkish child... I am not Italian... I am a Turkish child...", chose to stay in Thessaloniki with his father rather than go to Italy.

Unable to shake off the shock of the Italians' attack on Tripoli, Kenan Bey will only be able to come to terms with himself two days later. Through this internal reckoning, we also learn Kenan Bey's views on the intoxicating effect of Freemasonry, as expressed by Ömer Seyfettin:

"...The common poetry of those lazy, cowardly, and sick thinkers who always lived in fantasy without touching reality was the illusion of 'humanity'. (...) He had been a Freemason for nine years... An extreme and uncompromising follower, he was convinced with all his conscience that there could be no truth in the world other than Freemasonry. He recognised neither tradition, nor the past, nor homeland, nor ethnicity. (...) Yes, he was a very devout Freemason, possessing significant influence and prestige among his loyal brothers and 'comrades', three-quarters of whom were Jewish and Levantine! He was soon to become a 'grandmaster'! (...) He was also a member of the Italian Masonic Lodge in Thessaloniki..."⁽³³⁾

The Italian attack on Tripoli opened Kenan Bey's eyes. He now fully understood that imperialist Europe was the one dividing Africa and Asia with its "humanity/humanism" rhetoric, creating Greece out of nothing, imposing the Straits and Eastern Questions, and stirring up rebellions in the Balkans and Arabia. But he still struggled to understand one thing: how could the Italian prime minister, who was also a Freemason, allow such a massacre of the innocent people of Tripoli, who knew nothing about it?

"Weren't Italian Prime Minister Giolitti and Foreign Minister Saint Julian, like most government officials in Europe, Freemasons? Where was Freemasonry, with its famous grand masters, Masonic rulers, Masonic princes, Masonic lords, Masonic millionaires, proclaiming 'Only humanity, nothing else!'?"⁽³⁴⁾

At the end of this internal reckoning, Kenan Bey feels the need to question his own identity. He fully understands how he fell for the "humanity" game of Freemasonry, which he joined as a result of his admiration for Europeans, and served them like a captive. Because Europeans only expressed their imperialist ideas materially.

³³ Ömer Seyfettin, *Turan Masalları*, (Ed. Nazım Hikmet Polat), Ötüken Yayınları, İstanbul 2017, p. 68.

³⁴ Ömer Seyfettin, *Turan Tales*, (Ed. Nazım Hikmet Polat), Ötüken Publications, İstanbul 2017, p. 72.

not only in the physical realm but also in the cultural realm. Thus, they easily implement their own desires through people who have become alienated from their own culture:

"... Did he not worship Europeans, European customs, traditions, manners, etiquette, circles, and societies? How could an insignificant badge or medal received from foreigners drive him mad with joy and pride? These predatory and insatiable Europeans, who sought to divide the Turks and their homeland into pieces and dismantle them materially, did not neglect their spiritual attacks either. For a century, through their language, education, morals, manners, and customs, they have formed a formidable 'colourless army' within us, of which only the names 'Turkish' and 'Eastern' remain. ^{They} attack our resistance with these 'colourless' people, weakening us, suffocating the idea of nationality and Turkishness with the myth of Freemasonry (world brotherhood). Until yesterday, he himself was not ashamed to say, 'I am Turkish'?"⁽³⁵⁾

Rıza Tevfik, also known as Efruz Bey

The person referred to as the "philosopher of Istanbul" in Ömer Seyfettin's essay entitled "Vatan! Yalnız Vatan..." (Fatherland! Only Fatherland...) must be Rıza Tevfik Bölükbaşı. This is because Rıza Tevfik was the person who was interested in many subjects such as philosophy, literature, Sufism and politics during those years.

Rıza Tevfik, who joined the Committee of Union and Progress in 1907, was one of the most ardent defenders of the Second Constitutional Monarchy. After the declaration of the Constitutional Monarchy, he was tasked with maintaining public order in Istanbul by the revolutionary committee and delivered speeches to the public during these turbulent days on the themes of "freedom, equality, and brotherhood." Shortly after entering parliament as the deputy for Edirne in the first elections, Rıza Tevfik fell out with both the Turkist and Islamist wings of the Committee of Union and Progress and resigned from the society, joining the "Hizb-i Cedit" movement, which was the internal opposition within the party. This movement, which brought the Committee of Union and Progress to the point of division, was led by Miralay Sadık Bey and Abdülaziz Mecdi Efendi.

Colonel Sadık Bey was the son of Filibeli Abdullah Efendi, an important religious figure during the reign of Abdülhamid II, and the nephew of Filibeli Halil Efendi, one of the religious scholars who accused Cemalettin Afganî of irreligion. He was recruited to the party because he was a Melâmi and was thought to have many supporters among the officers. Unable to accept his failure to rise to prominence during the Second Constitutional Era, Miralay Sadık Bey came from Thessaloniki to Istanbul and accused his Unionist friends in parliament of being Freemasons.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

He gathered conservatives around him and launched the "Hizb-i Cedit" movement, convincing 110 of the 160 members of parliament in a short time, but he was unsuccessful.

Abdülaziz Mecdi Efendi, the second leader of the "Hizb-i Cedit" movement and a Melâmi like Miralay Sadık Bey, lashed out at Unionists such as Talat Pasha, Cavit Bey, and Musa Kâzım Kadri, saying that Freemasonry was a trap set up to destroy religion.³⁷ However, Rıza Tevfik was also a Freemason; he even openly declared himself a Zionist in a speech he gave at the Young Jews Association in Istanbul on 11 March 1909. In speeches he gave in Izmir on 3 July and in Budapest on 31 October of the same year, he would also state that he was a Zionist, but that he used this term not in the sense of establishing an independent Jewish state, but in the sense of supporting Jewish immigrants in finding a homeland.

Shortly after the "Hizb-i Cedit" movement, on 21 November 1911, the Freedom and Union Party was founded at the suggestion of Damat Ferit, together with a group that included names such as Lütü Fikri, Rıza Nur, Ahmet Reşit Rey, Hüseyin Siret Özsever and Miralay Sadık Bey. In fact, a newspaper called *Teşkilât* was published under the privilege granted in the name of Rıza Tevfik.³⁹ Miralay Sadık Bey was on the executive committee of the Freedom and Union Party in the "True Muslims" wing, while Rıza Tevfik, a Bektashi and a Freemason, was in the "Münevveran Takımı" (Enlightened Group), which was labelled as "atheists".⁽⁴⁰⁾

Miralay Sadık Bey and Gümülcineli İsmail Bey, who controlled the financial management of the Freedom and Union Party, which had various doubts about its financial resources, worked on behalf of British intelligence during the First World War, raising the suspicion that the British were behind the movement. It is known that Miralay Sadık Bey received a monthly salary of 40 British pounds from the British throughout the war, and that copies of the newspaper published by Gümülcineli İsmail in Thessaloniki against the Turkish government were dropped by British aircraft onto the army and the people of Anatolia.⁽⁴¹⁾

³⁶ Tahir Alangu, *Ömer Seyfettin: Ülkücü Bir Yazarın Romanı* (Ömer Seyfettin: The Novel of an Idealistic Writer), May Yayınları, Istanbul 1968, p. 191.

³⁷ For further details, see Yücel Yiğit; "Internal Opposition within the Committee of Union and Progress: The Hizb-i Cedit Movement", *Journal of Contemporary Turkish Studies*, XIV/28 (Spring 2014), pp. 103-125; Faroz Ahmad; *İttihat ve Terakki: 1908-1914*, (Trans. Nuran Yavuz) Kaynak Yayınları, Istanbul 1984, p. 150.

³⁸ Mim Kemal Öke, *Zionists and Freemasons in the Holy Lands*, Çağ Publications, Istanbul 1990, p. 140.

³⁹ Ali Birinci, *The Freedom and Agreement Party: Those Who Opposed the Committee of Union and Progress During the Second Constitutional Era*, Dergâh Publications, Istanbul 1990, pp. 46, 48, 224, 76.

⁴⁰ Ali Birinci, *The Freedom and Agreement Party: Those Who Opposed the Union and Progress Party During the Second Constitutional Era*, Dergâh Publications, Istanbul 1990, p. 94.

⁴¹ It is said that İsmail of Gümülcine received espionage payments not only from the British but also from the French and Greeks, and that Evrenoszade Sami Bey and Bedirhanî Süreyya Bey, also from the same party, were spies. See Ali Birinci, op. cit., pp. 46, 82-83, 219.

The Freedom and Agreement Party, founded on the belief that the constitutional monarchy had failed to meet expectations, won the strong sympathy of minorities who believed that, since Rumelia had not yet been lost, granting them new rights would ensure their loyalty to the state. They entered the 1912 elections, known as the "Stick Elections," with the belief that "we can govern better" and with the full support of the alliance of Greeks, Armenians, Bulgarians, Albanians, and Socialists.⁽⁴²⁾

The Konya branch of the party was inaugurated with a memorial service for the martyrs of Tripoli, while the Sivas branch was opened with a prayer by a Rûfâî Sheikh. In the elections, the people of Eskişehir were urged to gather under the banner of Freedom and Union, wary of the irreligious, and many were arrested in the ensuing events. In response, the Committee of Union and Progress, in order to show that it did not take a stance against religion, held religious speeches in mosques and tried to explain that they were anti-Masonic and pro-Turkish with publications such as Ömer Seyfettin's aforementioned treatise entitled "Vatan! Yalnız Vatan..." (Fatherland! Only Fatherland...).

Meanwhile, Rıza Tevfik, who was arrested and imprisoned for 25 days for failing to report a conference he gave on Büyükkada before the elections to the authorities, returned to the campaign trail as soon as he was released from prison. On 23 March 1912, while returning from a visit to the Greek Metropolitan in Gümülcine, he was beaten by supporters of the Committee of Union and Progress and sent to Istanbul by train.⁴⁴

The main issues used by the Freedom and Agreement Party in the elections were the Albanian and Greek uprisings and the Italian occupation of Tripoli. According to them, the Committee of Union and Progress was responsible for this war started by the Zionists. Most of the soldiers in Tripoli were demobilised, leaving the city defenceless. Bosnia-Herzegovina was also handed over to Austria by the Unionists.⁽⁴⁵⁾

The Liberals and Unionists also attempted a coup d'état known as the "Taklib-i Hükümet" during the Balkan War, but the Committee of Union and Progress, having been forewarned, seized control of the situation with the Bâbüâli Raid on 23 January 1913. It is said that this coup attempt was supported by the Greek deputies Boşo and Kozmîdi Efendi, and that the financial backing came from another Greek citizen, George Scaliery. The Bâbüâli Raid

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 85, 56, 137-141, 129, 224.

⁴³ Ali Birinci, *Hürriyet ve İtilâf Fırkası: II. Meşrutîyet Devrinde İttihat ve Terakki'ye Karşı Çıkanlar*, Dergâh Yayınları, İstanbul, 1990, pp. 69, 146, 144.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 150. Abdullah Uçman states that after this beating incident, Tevfik Fikret wrote the poem "Hakikatin Yıldızı" ("The Star of Truth") in *Halûk's* Defieri for Rıza Tevfik, but there is no such information on the relevant page of the source he cites. See "Ömer Seyfettin-Rıza Tevfik", *On the 100th Anniversary*, Marmara University Faculty of Science and Letters Publications, İstanbul, 1984, p. 131.

⁴⁵ Ali Birinci, *The Freedom and Union Party: Those Who Opposed the Committee of Union and Progress During the Second Constitutional Era*, Dergâh Publications, İstanbul, 1990, pp. 131, 134.

After that, it is hardly possible to speak of the Freedom and Union Party.⁴⁶

As can be understood from the information provided thus far, the aim of Ömer Seyfettin and the Turkists was to prevent anyone who supported the Committee of Union and Progress from being portrayed as a Freemason, and to explain to the Turkish people why they should not trust figures such as Rıza Tevfik, who were orators, writers, and influential figures with the power to sway the masses, by turning them into objects of ridicule. Indeed, the events that followed in the years after this demonstrate how right they were. Rıza Tevfik, who was among those who signed the Treaty of Sèvres, donated the pen he used to sign it, along with his books, to Robert College, to which he had previously donated his books.⁽⁴⁷⁾

Considering that the National Struggle was initiated and organised by Unionist officers, or that it was "built on the foundations they left behind"⁽⁴⁸⁾, it should come as no surprise that Rıza Tevfik was included in the list of the 150s after the War of Independence. For cosmopolitan intellectuals of this kind, with their writings in newspapers opposed to the National Struggle, have for years thoroughly confused the minds of a people who have lost their sons as martyrs on the battlefields and no longer trust the state or the army. Rıza Tevfik, on the other hand, was a powerful figure who could influence the masses with his speeches and writings, as well as a philosophy teacher who knew many foreign languages and had national and international Masonic connections, and was a poet belonging to the Bektashi order. On the other hand, the emphasis placed on Melamism and Bektashism in our article is particularly on the belief of Bektashi dervishes in world brotherhood, similar to the Freemasons:

"It is interesting that the dervishes equate themselves with Freemasons and are inclined towards brotherhood with them. (...) Some writers have suggested that there is or was a connection between European Freemasonry and Bektashism. Richard Davey mentions that he has heard rumours that the order established close ties with some French Masonic lodges. In 1867, he recorded that some of his Muslim friends were Freemasons in Europe."⁽⁴⁹⁾

Paul Dumont also mentions that many Bektashi disciples joined Masonic lodges, noting that their rituals were very similar to those of the Freemasons:

"It can be assumed that he belonged to the Bektashi order, which is known to have an ideology and rituals quite similar to those of Freemasonry, and whose numerous disciples joined Masonic lodges towards the end of the 19th century. At this point, the end of his existence

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 198, 204-205, 202.

⁴⁷ Tahir Alangu, *Ömer Seyfettin: The Novel of an Idealist Writer*, May Publications, Istanbul, 1968, p. 283.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 441.

⁴⁹ Angelo Iacovella, *Gönye ve Hilal: İttihad-Terakki ve Masonluk* (Trans. Tülin Altınova), Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, Istanbul, 1998, p. 39, note 28.

The *Pro-dos* lodge in Istanbul, which had a prominent Bektashi among its members during those years, can also be cited as an example.⁽⁵⁰⁾

For this reason, Ömer Seyfettin directly targets Rıza Tevfik in his novel *Efruz Bey* and in his stories "Hürriyet'e Lâyük Bir Kahraman" (A Hero Worthy of Freedom), "Bilgi Bucağı'nda" (At the Corner of Knowledge), "Efruz Bey'in Açık Hava Mektebi" (Efruz Bey's Open-Air School), "Gayet Büyük Bir Adam" (A Very Great Man), and "Şîmeler" (Signs). Using a humorous tone, Ömer Seyfettin caricatured and mocked Rıza Tevfik and those who thought like him, attempting to show that he was also opposed to the Turkish nationalism movement.⁽⁵¹⁾

In response to the harsh criticism levelled against him, Rıza Tevfik also wrote articles against the Turkish nationalists. The most notable of these is "Cemaat ve Efrâd'da Şîmeler: Şîme-i Muhabbet ve Şîme-i Husûmet" (Cemaat and Efrâd in Şîmeler: Şîme-i Muhabbet and Şîme-i Husûmet), written before World War I, in which he draws attention to the financial aspect of war and accuses those who talk about being able to fight in such a period of being boastful, frivolous, and thuggish:

"In addition, there is also a financial aspect to the matter. It is good to challenge the world, as certain individuals and groups do, but it does not intimidate anyone; on the contrary, it is a foolishness that makes everyone laugh. Today, the means of victory and the tools of true triumph are not bravado, nor courage! It is science and technology, it is money. An indomitable ship costs two and a half million pounds sterling. We fire a cannonball for two hundred and eighty pounds. (...) If the desire to declare war on the whole world is not mere rhetoric but serious, this is what it costs."⁽⁵²⁾

Ömer Seyfettin will respond to this article with his story "Şîmeler," which is a kind of continuation of the novel *Efruz Bey*. The story begins, "This gentleman, whom everyone called 'a very great man'..." This story mentions Rıza Tevfik's opposition to the "New Language" and "New Life" movements and how he attributed Turkish nationalism to "two or three hack writers":

"The great man was also a very great writer (a newspaper columnist). He wrote many articles against Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islamism in the leading columns of liberal newspapers. In fact, this magazine was against the 'New Language' and 'New Life' movements, attributing the nationalist movement to two or three hack writers. The great writer could not bear it. He immediately sent a letter, expressing his appreciation: 'I am completely of your opinion. The Turkish movement is very harmful to the homeland and the nation (!)' In his opinion, the goal of philosophy, science, and technology was to separate individuals from their communities, to make them free and independent.

⁵⁰Paul Dumont, *Ottomanism, Nationalist Movements and Freemasonry*, (Trans. Ali Berktaç), Yapı Kredi Yayınları, İstanbul, 2020, p. 92.

⁵¹ On Ömer Seyfettin and Rıza Tevfik, see Abdullah Uçman, "Ömer Seyfettin-Rıza Tevfik," *On the 100th Anniversary of Ömer Seyfettin's Birth*, Marmara University Faculty of Science and Letters Publications, İstanbul, 1984, pp. 127-148.

⁵² *İçtiha*d, no. 95, 27 February 1329/12 March 1914, pp. 2121, 2126.

It was about leaving behind. An individual who was not alien to science and philosophy did not recognise either their nationality or their religion; they regarded the followers of all religions as brothers. The whole earth was their homeland. Their nationality was humanity. Only those who understood this delicate and civilised point were truly human... Otherwise, a man who acted with the spirit and governance of a community bound to an institution like nationalism, a relic of savagery and darkness, who forgot his own desires, could never be considered human. And this 'mob (crowd) that could not be considered human' tried to make the people resemble themselves, making a dangerous noise, shouting 'Turan, Turan, Turan'."⁽⁵³⁾ In this story, Rıza Tevfik, who signed his writings "Bacon's Shakir-i Marifeti"⁽⁵⁴⁾ how many languages Rıza Tevfik knew, how he became such close friends with the Greek MPs Kozmidi and Boşo that he vouched for them in elections and asked for their votes, his hostility towards nationalism and Turkism, his defence of the idea of 'humanity' instead, and even his confession of being a Zionist. are discussed:

Nations were doomed to die. When communities disintegrated, national consciences would also cease to exist; everyone would act according to personal desires rather than under a general administration, and then only 'humanity' would remain. (...) Kozmidi and he were inseparable. During the elections, he had presented Boşo to the people as 'He is reliable... He is more patriotic than me, a more devoted Ottoman than me'.⁽⁵⁵⁾ How beautifully he had defended the cause of 'Ottomanism, equality, justice, law, law, law again, and then law again...' together with the former troublemakers who were now ministers of the Albanian Kingdom! Now, 'Elhamdü'l-Bacon ve'l-Spencer' (Praise be to Bacon and Spencer), these supporters of nationalism and fanaticism had emerged from within the Ottoman Empire. (...) As the Turkish-Ottomans wrote in a nationalist rag published in Thessaloniki five years earlier, Greek, Bulgarian, Serbian, Russian, French, English, German and Italian blood flowed in their veins. And they could never accept 'Turkishness'. Indeed, since the proclamation of the Constitutional Monarchy, he had claimed affiliation with five or six nationalities. In fact, at a conference he gave in Balat, he had shouted: "I myself am a Zionist..."⁽⁵⁶⁾

As can be seen from this example from the story, even though Ömer Seyfettin's stories, written in a humorous style, deal with very serious issues at their core. His pen battles with Rıza Tevfik and these

⁵³ Ömer Seyfettin, *Ashab-ı Kehfimiz*, (ed. Nazım Hikmet Polat), Ötüken Yayınları, İstanbul, 2017, pp. 151-152.

⁵⁴ See Hilmi Ziya Ülken; *Türkiye'de Çağdaş Düşünce Tarihi (History of Contemporary Thought in Turkey)*, 2nd ed., Ülken Yayınları, İstanbul, 1979, p. 254.

⁵⁵ Nazım Hikmet Polat states that Ömer Seyfettin also addressed this issue in his article titled "New Language and Ugly Attacks": See Ömer Seyfettin, *Ashab-ı Kehfimiz*, Ötüken Yayınları, İstanbul, 2017, p. 152, footnote no. 3.

⁵⁶ Ömer Seyfettin, *Ashab-ı Kehfimiz*, (ed. Nazım Hikmet Polat), Ötüken Yayınları, İstanbul, 2017, pp. 152, 153, 154.

The stories he wrote were not merely sterile polemics; they revealed the true character of Rıza Tevfik and depicted the important events of the period, while also serving a national mission, calling on the Turkish people to be vigilant against such cosmopolitans and to defend their national identity and homeland.

Conclusion

There are rare occasions in history when nations face extinction. In such times, intellectuals and writers play a major role. It is the duty of intellectuals to enlighten society about how to escape the situation their nation has fallen into, to inform them of the dangers ahead and their sources, and to show them the way forward.

Ömer Seyfettin was a writer who, during a period when the Turkish nation was on the brink of extinction, analysed the historical and social crisis of the society in which he lived and took on the great mission of protecting his nation from all dangers and enlightening them, without confusing universal values with national values.

At a time when the Turkish nation was in the midst of a fiery circle, it was necessary to fight against the harmful ideas spread by cosmopolitans who, while fighting on the front lines, confused the minds of the people with certain values that were considered universal, and to warn the people against them.

With this awareness, Ömer Seyfettin attacks Freemasons and cosmopolitans, who had become something of a fashion during his lifetime, in his treatise entitled "Vatan! Yalnız Vatan..." (Fatherland! Only Fatherland...). Ömer Seyfettin attempts to expose the damage that the secret ambitions of international organisations such as Freemasonry and Freemasons cause to the concept of fatherland and nationalism. In his literary works and prose, Ömer Seyfettin focuses his criticism on Rıza Tevfik, whom he sees as the most typical representative of such ideas in Turkey. This is because Rıza Tevfik is not only a certified Freemason who has even admitted to being a "Zionist," but also an orator and writer with the power to influence the public. On the other hand, Rıza Tevfik is a turncoat who flits from party to party, as well as a cosmopolitan with international connections. The ideas he promotes under the guise of humanism and his opposition to war not only harm Turkish nationalists but also confuse the minds of a people who have lost their sons as martyrs on the battlefields for years, dampening their fighting spirit.

Ömer Seyfettin caricatures Rıza Tevfik, either implicitly or explicitly, in his novel *Efruz Bey* and in his stories "Hürriyet'e Lâîk Bir Kahraman" (A Hero Worthy of Freedom), "Bilgi Bucağı'nda" (At the Corner of Knowledge), "Efruz Bey'in Açık Hava Mektebi" (Efruz Bey's Open-Air School), "Gayet Büyük Bir Adam" (A Very Great Man), and "Şimeler" (Shadows). The main purpose of these stories, written in a humorous style, is not to defame anyone or to make the reader laugh. Each of Ömer Seyfettin's stories, which are products of intelligence, has a serious background. Ya-

The main purpose of the satire is to expose the errors of Rıza Tevfik and those who think like him, and to open the eyes of the public against such cosmopolitans.

The events that unfolded after the death of Ömer Seyfettin, who worked to protect his homeland and nation from all kinds of danger with the many works he produced in his short life, serve as proof of how right he was in his thinking. May his soul rest in peace.

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