

The program of the conservative circle which had formed around Paul before his coronation was primarily intended to procure fundamental laws which would define the imperial power; it was partly carried out by the acts of April 5, 1797. Emperor Paul, who reigned five years, from 1796 to 1801, came to the throne with many interesting ideas about Russian policies, domestic as well as foreign, but his despotic caprices marred all efforts to realize these plans. A law of succession to the throne was promulgated, laws concerning the imperial family (the internal organization of the imperial house), and, finally, a decree which limited serf labor for the landowner to three days a week. The government of Emperor Paul also began reforms in the administrative departments, with the aim of replacing collective responsibility by personal leadership. The government of Emperor Paul succeeded in taking advantage of this opportunity in a manner which gave its foreign policy special importance in the history of Russian diplomacy. The guiding principle was the extension of Russian influence in the eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea, by means not of war but of cordial relations with Turkey. This last was the first serious attempt at imperial legislation to restrict serfdom. The decree was of small practical importance, since the government did not have enough agents to secure enforcement, but it had great significance as a matter of principle. Simultaneously, the privileges granted by Empress Catherine to the nobility were suspended. The anti-Turkish policy of Empress Catherine had secured for Russia the northern coast of the Black Sea. Meanwhile there arose the possibility of developing relations with Turkey on entirely new lines. At the time of his accession Paul was mentally unbalanced. The Reign of Emperor Paul. Foreign policy under Emperor Paul was significant, particularly with respect to the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. This had very great value for the development of Russian trade and the prosperity of agriculture in the south. In 1798 Russia and Turkey 150