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SOVIET RUSSIA AND TURKEY: THE QUESTION OF MILITARY AID (1919–1920)

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Abstract. *Introduction.* In 1919–1920, the Russian Civil War and the Turkish National Struggle unfolded as interconnected historical processes. During this period, relations between Soviet Russia and the Ankara Government were shaped by shared geopolitical interests. In the context of confrontation with the Western powers, the issue of military and financial assistance gained particular significance. However, the scale and importance of this aid have been interpreted differently in historiography. Therefore, analyzing the actual nature of Soviet assistance on the basis of documentary and industrial data constitutes a relevant scholarly task. *Goals and objectives.* The goal and objectives of the study are to reassess the actual volume and historical significance of the military and financial assistance provided by Soviet Russia to Turkey in 1919–1920, based on historiographical interpretations and an analysis of primary sources. In addition, the study is aimed at the systematic examination of archival documents, as well as a comprehensive analysis of statistical indicators of arms production. *Results.* The findings demonstrate that Soviet assistance to Turkey in 1919–1920 was significantly more limited than commonly asserted in historiography. Statistical data on arms production reveal a substantial decline in Soviet military-industrial capacity due to war-related disruptions. Archival evidence indicates that military aid was irregular, delayed, and modest in scale. Nevertheless, Soviet support played an important political and diplomatic role for the Ankara Government. It contributed to strengthening its international legitimacy and expanding its diplomatic flexibility. Therefore, Soviet assistance should not be considered a decisive military factor but rather a strategic and political instrument within the broader context of Soviet foreign policy and anti-imperialist alignment. *Conclusion.* This study reassesses Soviet Russia’s aid policy toward Turkey in 1919–1920 through archival evidence and analysis of military-industrial capacity. The findings

demonstrate a sharp decline in arms production due to the Civil War, labor shortages, and economic crisis. Consequently, military assistance to Turkey was limited in scale and irregular in delivery. Claims in Russian historiography regarding the decisive role of Soviet aid appear significantly overstated. Nevertheless, this assistance carried substantial political and diplomatic importance. It strengthened the international standing of the Ankara Government and contributed to the development of Soviet–Turkish cooperation within the broader geopolitical context of resistance to the Allied Powers.


Keywords: World War I, Soviet Russia, Communist Party, Turkish Government, Allied Powers, Middle East, material and weapons aid, weapons factory.

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КЕҢЕСТІК РЕСЕЙ ЖӘНЕ ТҮРКИЯ: ӘСКЕРИ КӨМЕК МӘСЕЛЕСІ (1919–1920)

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Аңдатпа. *Kırcıne.* 1919–1920 жылдары Ресейдегі Азамат соғысы мен Түркияның Ұлттық күресі қатар өрбіген күрделі тарихи кезең болды. Осы уақытта Кеңестік Ресей мен Анкара үкіметі арасындағы байланыстар ортақ геосаяси мүдделер негізінде қалыптасты. Батыс державаларының қысымына қарсы тұру жағдайында әскери және қаржылық көмек мәселесі өзекті сипат алды. Алайда бұл көмектің нақты көлемі мен маңызы тарихнамада әртүрлі бағаланады. Сондықтан аталған кезеңдегі кеңестік көмектің шынайы сипатын деректік және өндірістік мәліметтер негізінде талдау ғылыми тұрғыдан маңызды болып табылады. *Зерттеудің мақсаттары мен міндеттері* – 1919–1920 жылдардағы Кеңестік Ресейдің Түркияға көрсеткен әскери және қаржылық көмегінің нақты көлемі мен тарихи маңызын тарихнамалық тұжырымдар мен деректік материалдар негізінде қайта бағалау. Сонымен қатар зерттеу архивтік құжаттарды жүйелі талдауға және қару-жарақ өндірісінің статистикалық көрсеткіштерін кешенді түрде қарастыруға бағытталған. *Нәтижелер.* Кеңестік Ресейдің 1919–1920 жылдардағы Түркияға көрсеткен көмегінің көлемі тарихнамада көрсетілгендей ауқымды болмағанын дәлелдейді. Қару-жарақ өндірісінің статистикалық деректері әскери өнеркәсіптің айтарлықтай әлсірегенін, өндірістік қуаттың күрт төмендегенін көрсетеді. Архивтік құжаттар әскери көмектің шектеулі, тұрақсыз және кешіктірілген сипатта болғанын айқындайды. Соған қарамастан, кеңестік қолдау Түркия үшін маңызды саяси және дипломатиялық мәнге ие болды. Ол Анкара үкіметінің халықаралық беделін нығайтып, сыртқы саясаттағы маневрлік


мүмкіндіктерін кеңейтті. Демек, кеңестік көмек әскери емес, стратегиялық-саяси фактор ретінде бағаланады. *Қорытынды.* Бұл зерттеу 1919–1920 жылдардағы Кеңестік Ресейдің Түркияға қатысты көмек саясатын әскери-өнеркәсіптік мүмкіндіктер мен архивтік деректер негізінде қайта бағалайды. Зерттеу нәтижелері кеңестік қару-жарақ өндірісінің Азамат соғысы, кадр тапшылығы және экономикалық күйзеліс салдарынан күрт төмендегенін көрсетеді. Осыған байланысты Түркияға көрсетілген әскери көмектің ауқымы шектеулі әрі жүйесіз болғаны анықталды. Сонымен қатар, кеңестік тарихнамадағы көмектің шешуші рөлі туралы тұжырымдар асыра бағаланған. Дегенмен, бұл көмек саяси және дипломатиялық тұрғыдан маңызды болды. Ол Анкара үкіметінің халықаралық беделін нығайтып, кеңестік-туркиялық ынтымақтастықтың қалыптасуына негіз қалады.

Түйін сөздер: Бірінші дүниежүзілік соғыс, Кеңестік Ресей, Коммунистік партия, Түрік үкіметі, Одақтас державалар, Таяу Шығыс, материалдық және қару-жарақ көмегі, қару-жарақ зауыты. **Дәйексөз үшін:** Досымова М.К., Топал Н., Жылқышыбаева Қ. **Кеңестік Ресей және Түркия: әскери көмек мәселесі (1919–1920)** // Asian Journal “Steppe Panorama”. 2026. Т. 13. № 2. 400–413 бб. (Ағыл.). DOI: 10.51943/2710-3994_2026_13_2_400-413.


СОВЕТСКАЯ РОССИЯ И ТУРЦИЯ: ВОПРОС ВОЕННОЙ ПОМОЩИ (1919–1920)

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Аннотация. *Введение.* В 1919–1920 гг. Гражданская война в России и Турецкая национальная борьба разворачивались как взаимосвязанные исторические процессы. В этот период отношения между Советская Россия и Анкарское правительство формировались на основе общих геополитических интересов. В условиях противостояния западным державам вопрос военной и финансовой помощи приобрёл особую актуальность. Однако масштабы и значение данной помощи по-разному интерпретируются в историографии. В связи с этим анализ реального характера советской помощи на основе документальных и производственных данных представляет научный интерес. *Цель и задачи исследования* заключаются в переоценке реального объёма и исторического значения военной и финансовой помощи, оказанной Советской Россией Турции в 1919–1920 гг., на основе историографических выводов и анализа источниковых материалов. Кроме того, исследование направлено на системный анализ архивных документов, а также на комплексное изучение статистических показателей производства вооружения. *Результаты* исследования показывают, что помощь Советской России Турции в 1919–1920 гг. была значительно ограниченнее, чем утверждается в

историографии. Статистические данные по производству вооружений свидетельствуют о резком снижении промышленного потенциала вследствие Гражданской войны и экономического кризиса. Архивные материалы подтверждают, что военная помощь носила нерегулярный, ограниченный и запаздывающий характер. Вместе с тем советская поддержка имела важное политико-дипломатическое значение для Анкарского правительства, способствуя укреплению его международного статуса. Таким образом, помощь СССР следует рассматривать не как решающий военный фактор, а как элемент стратегического сотрудничества и внешнеполитической тактики. *Заключение.* Данное исследование переоценивает политику помощи Советской России Турции в 1919–1920 гг. на основе архивных данных и анализа военно-промышленного потенциала. Результаты показывают резкое снижение производства вооружений вследствие Гражданской войны, кадрового дефицита и экономического кризиса. В этих условиях объем военной помощи Турции был ограниченным и нерегулярным. Утверждения в российской историографии о решающей роли советской помощи представляются завышенными. Тем не менее помощь имела значимое политико-дипломатическое значение. Она способствовала укреплению международных позиций Анкарского правительства и формированию советско-турецкого сотрудничества в условиях противостояния с державами Антанты.

Ключевые слова: Первая мировая война, Советская Россия, Коммунистическая партия, Турецкое правительство, Союзные державы, Ближний Восток, материальная и военная помощь, оружейный завод.

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Introduction

Following the October Revolution of 1917, the Bolsheviks, who seized power under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin, established a new political order in Russia, while the country was soon plunged into a profound civil war. This struggle between the Red Army and the White Army directly affected not only Russia's internal dynamics but also the international power relations that were taking shape after the First World War. The military and logistical support provided by the Allied Powers to the White Army prompted the Soviet administration to seek new alliance options in its foreign policy pursuits.

During the same period, the National Struggle that began in Anatolia constituted an independence movement against imperialist occupation. The Ankara Government, organized under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, possessed extremely limited resources both militarily and financially. In this context, the contacts established with Soviet Russia carried strategic significance for both parties. A basis for cooperation emerged against the Allied Powers, viewed as a common enemy; issues of political recognition, diplomatic rapprochement, and military assistance came to the forefront.

In the literature, there exist differing assessments regarding the scope of the assistance provided by Soviet Russia to Turkey and its impact on the outcome of the Greco-Turkish War. While some Russian historians assert that a significant portion of the weapons and ammunition used during the National Struggle consisted of Soviet aid, archival documents and military industry data from the period demonstrate that Russia's production capacity was severely constrained under conditions of civil war and economic collapse. Particularly when examining the production volumes of major arms factories such as Tula, Izhevsk, Sestroretsk, and Kovrov between 1916 and 1920, it becomes evident that the conditions of war and civil war substantially deteriorated the industrial infrastructure.

This study aims to assess the actual extent of the alleged military and financial assistance provided by Soviet Russia to the Government of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey between 1919 and 1921, in light of Russian archival documents, diplomatic correspondence, and military production statistics. Furthermore, the background of diplomatic negotiations between the two governments will be analyzed within the framework of Soviet foreign policy's Eastern strategy and

the objective of establishing communist influence in Turkey.

Thus, the study aims to reveal the quantitative and qualitative level of Soviet assistance and, based on historical data, to seek an answer to the question of whether this assistance was decisive in the military success of the National Struggle.

Materials and Methods

In this study, the material and military aid provided by the Soviet Russian government to the Turkish government in 1920–1921 was examined. The main purpose of the research was to reveal the scope, nature, and actual dimension of the assistance provided by Soviet Russia to Turkey’s National Struggle. Within this framework, the relationship between the weapons production capacity in Soviet Russia and the military equipment allegedly sent to Turkey was evaluated.

The research was based on the historical method; primary and secondary sources were used together. Primary sources included Russian archival documents, correspondence between Soviet administrators and Turkish representatives, official reports of the period, and memoirs of well-known politicians. Secondary sources consisted of academic studies, monographs, and articles by Turkish and Russian historians on the subject.

An important part of the study examined the military industrial production status of Soviet Russia between 1916–1920. In this context, production data from the Tula, Izhevsk, Sestroretsk, and Kovrov weapons factories were analyzed in tabular form. The quantities of rifles, machine guns, pistols, artillery ammunition, and steel products manufactured in these factories were comparatively evaluated; the effects of the First World War and the Russian Civil War on industrial production were taken into consideration.

A comparative analysis method was used in the analysis of the data. By comparing the production volumes of 1916 with the production levels in 1919–1920, the capacity loss of the Soviet military industry was revealed. Additionally, the causes of production decline were addressed in the context of fuel, raw material, and skilled labor shortages, as well as the destruction caused by the civil war.

The findings obtained were interpreted to question the nature of the aid provided by Soviet Russia to Turkey despite its own military and economic difficulties. Thus, the realistic dimension of the assistance provided by Soviet Russia to the Turkish National Struggle was evaluated within the framework of production capacity and historical conditions.

Discussion

Production Volume of Russian Weapons Factories from 1916–1920. Tula Arms Factory

The Bolsheviks seized power in October 1917 and established the Soviet government. The White Army was formed in opposition to the Soviet Red Army, and civil war subsequently broke out in Russia. At that time, the governments of England, France, and Japan, which had formed an alliance with Russia during the First World War, opposed the Soviet regime and supported the White Army, which consisted of forces of the former Russian Empire. These states supplied weapons and ammunition to White Army formations under the command of Admiral Kolchak in the East and General Denikin in the South.

While these developments were taking place, the Turkish national movement was engaged in armed conflict with Greece. Soviet leaders closely observed the emergence of the National Struggle in Anatolia. Both Anatolia and Soviet Russia faced the Allied Powers as a common enemy. At the same time, the Allied Powers were transferring weapons to the White Army through Istanbul, which they had occupied. This situation significantly concerned the Soviet leadership. As a result, the two sides gradually developed cooperation against their common enemy, the Allied Powers.

It is known that Soviet Russia began to provide Anatolia with financial assistance and military supplies during this period.

According to some sources, the Soviet government sent weapons, money, and gold to Turkey despite widespread famine in the Volga region and other areas, while millions of people in Russia experienced severe material hardship (Nezhinskiy, 2004: 95).

The Russian historian Tsyplin Vitaliy Gennadievich, based on materials cited by scholars such as A. Shamsutdinov, V. Sheremet, I. Drogovoz, and S. Bagdasarov, states that “every fourth rifle, every fourth weapon, and every third bullet originated as assistance from Soviet Russia” (Tsyplin, 2019: 69–75).

Thus, Russian historiography suggests that one of the significant factors contributing to Turkey’s victory in the Turkish–Greek War of 1919–1921 was material and military assistance provided by Soviet Russia within the framework of bilateral cooperation.

During this period, this study examines the extent of Soviet Russia’s influence on Turkey’s National Struggle by analyzing memoirs, works of contemporary politicians, additional scholarly sources, and Russian archival documents. However, it should also be noted that archival documents remain limited. Therefore, in order to verify claims regarding the transfer of military equipment to Turkey, it is necessary to examine the production volume of weapons factories.

The crisis that emerged in 1914 also affected the military-industrial sector. In its report dated 16 March 1920, the Central Organization of Soviet Military-Industrial Artillery Factories stated that, despite severe deterioration at the end of the First World War, weapons factories attempted to intensify production during the Russian Civil War period (Soviet Military, 2005: 161).

Meanwhile, to assess the scale of military assistance allegedly provided by Soviet Russia to the Turkish government, it is necessary to examine the production output of Russian weapons factories between 1916 and 1919, including the Tula Arms Factory, the Izhevsk Arms and Steel Works, the Sestroretsk Arms Factory, and the Kovrov Machine-Gun Plant.

The Tula Arms Factory produced rifles, pistols, machine guns, and lafettes (medium machine-gun transport carts). In 1916, the factory produced 61,000 rifles, 17,000 pistols, 1,200 machine guns, and 1,000 lafettes. However, production at the Tula Arms Factory declined significantly by 1919, indicating a slowdown in weapons manufacturing¹ (Soviet Military, 2005: 135).

Table 1: Volume of Production at Tula Arms Factory in 1919

1919 year	Rifles	Handguns	Machine guns	Machine tools
January	20000	6500	480	500
February	24000	5300	500	560
March	16000	5060	420	340
April	16000	5000	325	328
May	25800	8000	390	480
June	26300	7500	500	601
July	30000	6000	720	750
August	23310	6200	895	492
September	30225	7500	690	800
October	32004	8000	618	800
November	18023	5500	456	500
December	27010	6800	562	600
Requirements				
November	27000	5000	400	800
December	27000	6000	500	600

It can be observed that the volume of products manufactured in April and May decreased, and in October, November, and December, the production volume fell to as low as 10% and 15.56%. This is explained by shortages of fuel, steel, etc.

Izhevsk Weapons and Steel Factory. The Izhevsk factory consists of two factories: a weapons factory and a steel factory. The first one, the weapons factory, produced rifles and shields for machine guns. The second one, the steel factory, produced tool steel and gun barrels. During the war years,

¹ No. 63. From the report of the Central Board of Ammunition Factories on the state of factories as of January 1, 1920. Soviet Military-Industrial Production (1918–1926): Collection of documents. The compilation of documents was carried out within the framework of the “Archives of Russia” program / ed. V. A. Zlotarev; comp. T. V. Sorokina. Moscow, 2005. 135 p.

both factories produced shrapnel, hub assemblies, and military equipment, etc. In 1916, the Izhevsk weapons factory produced monthly - 53,200 rifles, 154,700 gun barrels, 110,588 barrel housings, 21,000 easel tools, 46,000 decorative steel pieces, and 6,800 pieces of shrapnel (Soviet Military, 2005: 136–137).

Table 2: Volume of products manufactured at the Izhevsk arms and steel factory in 1919.

1919 year	Rifles	Weapon barrel draft	Weapon barrel draft box	Clip	Box	Shields	Marten steel	Crucible steel
January	19215	33422	22208		8259			
February	26183	52156	33380	3412	16919			
March	27677							
April	9000							
May								
June	22000							
July	3000		1000					
August	8000	12600						
September	18000	16000	21.690.000	1071800	587	178	22767	4257
October	21600	15940	21274	1161678	1200	53	10180	3851
November	16000	No definitive data						
December	20800	No definitive data						

As shown in the table, the Izhevsk weapons factory began to be evacuated on 8 April 1919. As a result, it produced only 9,000 rifles in April. In June, the factory ceased operations following the arrival of the White Army. At the same time, despite the damage sustained, production was resumed after the return of the Red Army, and two thousand rifles were produced. In October, output increased to twenty-one thousand rifles.

It can be observed that the efficiency of the facility declined in November and December. This decline can be explained by two main factors. First, due to the destruction caused by the White Army, two turbines with a capacity of 2,560 kW and two diesel engines with a capacity of 400 horsepower each were damaged. In addition, two water turbines with a capacity of 1,240 horsepower and several small steam workshops sustained minor damage.

Second, when the White Army occupied the Izhevsk factory, up to 10,000 people left with them, and during their subsequent retreat, 8,000 workers, including all skilled specialists, qualified personnel, as well as administrative and clerical staff, also left. Although the factory management attempted to reorganize the workforce and formed a labour force of 17,000 people, it was unable to replace the lost skilled personnel. The newly recruited workers were inexperienced and, consequently, unskilled. This situation inevitably affected the decline in production output and the deterioration of product quality.

Sestroretsk Arms Factory. The Sestroretsk weapons factory produced a maximum of 14,000 rifles and 50 explosive devices per month in 1916. During the emergency evacuation in 1918, 50% of the weapons production equipment was removed, and subsequently, some of it was returned. From December 1918 onwards, it operated solely as a rifle repair factory.

As of October 15, the number of employees at the factory consists of: technical personnel - 0, engineers, technology, foremen, office workers 125, company employees 518, managers 130, workers 450 (Soviet Military, 2005: 137-138).

Table 3: Volume of products manufactured by the Sestroretsk weapons factory until December 31, 1919.

Months	Russian rifles	Japanese rifles	Machine guns	3-line rifle	Components of 3-line rifle	Petrograd harbor cannon	Fixed pistols
January	2945		14				
February	3118		12				
March	899		32				

April	1071		142				
May	1258		153				
June	450	385	184	%1	3000		
July	281		125	%3			
August	101	158		%7	269	260	260
Toplam 33							
September	79	36	153	%7	189	189	189
October	2571	431	192	%9	46		

Kovrov machine gun factory. The Kovrov machine-gun factory began its operations on 15 December, following a decision of the Supreme Council of the National Economy dated 8 July 1919. The factory was designed with a 1,250-unit power plant capacity, 1,166 pieces of new machinery, 89 machines for production purposes, and 497 machines that were powered and awaiting installation. In addition, nine residential buildings were constructed for workers. A two-storey building with sixty-four rooms was built for four families and single workers. Despite these developments, the number of employees remained very low. The factory employed 60 skilled workers and trainees, which was insufficient to meet operational requirements. The workforce needed to be increased four to five times. Consequently, by the end of December, the factory was unable to produce even a batch of 160–180 rifles and light machine guns (Soviet Military, 2005: 138).

During the war years, the Russian Empire had to mobilize a large portion of its population for military service, which led to a rapid decline in factory production. Despite this, the government mobilized approximately 14 million people under arms. To equip the military, Russia relied heavily on loans from England and France. Although Russia borrowed approximately 3 million from Britain alone, it was unable to fully arm its military forces (Kurat, 2020: 446).

During the First World War, the intensive operation of weapons factories severely deteriorated manufacturing equipment. For this reason, the Main Artillery Directorate decided to replace all machinery with new equipment after the war and placed orders in the United States. Some of this equipment had already begun to arrive; however, the Civil War prevented its implementation. Due to the urgent need for war materials, the authorities were forced to operate old, damaged, and worn-out machinery intensively once again. Despite all efforts, the quality of production was so low that rifles were not considered suitable for combat service even under the mildest conditions. As a result, as in the Tula Arms Factory, there was a risk of complete shutdown of production facilities. To avoid such difficulties, the operational program of weapons factories was reduced² (Soviet Military, 2005: 163).

Thus, in 1919, evidence indicates that ammunition production was significantly weaker compared to 1916 due to the First World War, the Civil War, shortages of qualified specialists and administrative staff, as well as fuel shortages. As a result, production of guns, rifles, and pistols accounted for only 21.3% and 41.3% of previous levels. However, these weapons were not suitable for use even in minor military operations. Consequently, as reported on 1 January 1920, due to the severe weakening of Russia's economic situation, Soviet weapons factory output had fallen to only one-fifth of its previous level (Soviet Military-Industrial Production (1918–1926):204).

On 21 November 1920, Moscow Ambassador Ali Fuat Pasha (former Commander of the Western Front) stated regarding Russian industry: "Russian industry, which was already behind European military industry, had fallen into an even worse condition due to the destruction of many factories during the revolution. Bolshevik war materials and equipment were both scarce and of low quality. Sixty percent of pre-war locomotives had been destroyed" (Cebesoy, 1982: 12).

Meanwhile, it is known that Russian weapons factories were unable to supply arms to Turkey under such conditions. According to archival records, only five Maxim machine guns and seven

² No. 67. Memorandum sent on March 16, 1920 by the Central Board of Ammunition Factories to the War Industry Council regarding the need to establish a Shortened structure due to weapon release programs aimed at improving product quality. Soviet Military-Industrial Production (1918-1926): Collection of documents. The compilation of documents was carried out within the framework of the "Archives of Russia" program / ed. V. A. Zlotarev; comp. T. V. Sorokina. Moscow, 2005.. 163 p.

hundred boxes of ammunition were sent from Russia to Anatolia³ (RSASPH. F. 85. Inv. c–Turkey. C. 61. P. 72).

The Decision of the Soviet Russian Government to Provide Weapons and Gold Aid to the Turkish Government. Although Russian historians claim that one in four rifles, one in four weapons, and one in three shells sent to Turkey by the USSR People's Commissars constituted aid from Soviet Russia, based on archival data and the tables presented above, the operational capacity of Russian weapons manufacturing factories between 1916 and 1920⁴ can be clearly observed (Turkish Revolution History, 1972: 85). Additional bibliographical data on procurement volumes of money, weapons, and military equipment can be found in Russian archival sources (Turkish Revolution History, 1972: 93–94).

Colonel Kazım (Özalp), Commander of the 61st Division, established contact with Bolshevik representatives in Istanbul. In a proposal from a Russian envoy translated by Emrullah, who later served in educational inspectorates and acted as interpreter for the Russian representative who came to Balıkesir, it was stated that if Anatolia maintained friendly relations with Soviet Russia, the Bolsheviks would provide weapons, ammunition, money, and even Turkestanian soldiers, if necessary, in the quantities requested by the Turkish side⁵ (Özalp, 1988: 74).

Some sources suggest that Mustafa Kemal Pasha, who arrived in Havza from Samsun on 25 May 1919, held a meeting with a Russian delegation. It is further stated that during this meeting, the Soviet Government requested that Turkey engage in struggle against the Allied Powers in exchange for assistance in the form of cannons, rifles, ammunition, and gold rubles. It is reported that after Mustafa Kemal Pasha accepted this proposal, the first deliveries of Soviet military assistance gradually began to arrive (Mudderisoglu, 1974: 523–524).

In Russian sources, it is suggested that assistance to Turkey, which was engaged in the National Struggle against the occupying forces, began even before Turkey sent representatives to Soviet Russia to establish an alliance (Kheifets, 1968: 81–82).

It is already understood that rapprochement between the two governments would be mutually beneficial in the future.

In his report to V. I. Lenin dated 16 May 1920, G. V. Chicherin stated that after the Politburo adopted directives regarding Turkey, he held a three-hour meeting with Turkish representatives Ali Fuat Pasha and Halil Pasha. During the meeting, Halil Pasha requested military assistance in the form of ammunition and financial support. In return, he conveyed that Russian representatives would be allowed to operate in Turkey and that printing houses, libraries, journals, and publishing houses could be established⁶ (RSASPH. F. 159. Inv. 2. C. 57. P. 1).

Chicherin further conveyed in his report that rapprochement with Turkey would strengthen Soviet Eastern policy. Turkish cooperation was expected to support Soviet interests in Afghanistan and India, thereby expanding Bolshevik influence in the Middle East. He emphasized the necessity of close cooperation with Turkey, including the use of Armenian railways for transport purposes. He also stated that agreements would need to be concluded with relevant actors, and that, if necessary,

³ Moscow, July 8, 1921 date. RSAPH. F. 85. Inv. C-Turkey. C. 61. P. 72.

⁴ Hacı Muhittin Çarıklı, President of the Balıkesir and Alaşehir Congresses. *The Balıkesir and Alaşehir Congresses and Hacı Muhittin Çarıklı's Memoirs of the National Forces*. Turkish Revolution History, Institute Publications, Ankara 1972. 85 p.

⁵ Colonel Kazım Özalp, the 61st Division Commander who organized the Kuva-yi Milliye (National Forces) in the northern region of Western Anatolia, did not specify the date when this event occurred, and the identity (name) of the Soviet official is not clear. However, M. Perinçek writes: "Selek heard about this event from Özalp and estimates the date of these events as June 1919. According to Selek's source, the Politburo of the Communist Party of Soviet Russia decided on July 9, 1919, to send a representative named Yusupov to Turkey. Perinçek explains that Yusupov was from Turkestan and it is likely that the Soviet representative who met with Kazım Özalp was Yusupov." (Mehmet Perinçek. *Ataturk's Meetings with the Soviets*. Kaynak Publications. pp. 42-43). Özalp, Kazım, *National Struggle 1919-1922*, Volume I. Turkish Historical Society Printing House, Ankara 1988. 74 p.

⁶ Georgi Vasilyevich Chicherin (Георгий Васильевич Чичерин), the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of Russia. Russian Marxist revolutionary, Soviet politician, diplomat, and historian. People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union between 1918-1930. Report note from Soviet Foreign Minister G.V. Chicherin to Lenin about his meetings with Halil Pasha and Doctor Ali Fuat (RSAPH. F. 159. Inv. 2. C. 57. P. 1.).

pressure could be applied to Georgian forces under British influence to secure transport routes. Military assistance to Anatolia could be delivered through Azerbaijani channels (RSASPH. F. 159. Inv. 2. C. 57. P. 1).

Chicherin also noted that this policy of rapprochement aimed to fundamentally transform the political and economic structure of society in line with Soviet Eastern policy. Soviet Russia's agreement to provide material and military assistance to Turkey was therefore viewed both as cooperation against Western imperialism and as an opportunity to extend Bolshevik ideological influence.

This approach was based on the assumption that Turkish society consisted mainly of workers and small- and medium-scale farmers, while large landownership remained weak. Economic difficulties were further exacerbated by inadequate export capacity and insufficient transportation infrastructure caused by an irregular railway system. Agricultural productivity remained low due to the lack of scientific methods and mechanization (Mudderisoglu, 1974: 525). There was no significant industrial base in Turkey. The country's main economic institutions — including railways, banks, ports, tram systems, steamship companies, and factories — were largely controlled by foreign interests⁷ (Yerasimos, 2000: 225).

As a result of negotiations between Soviet and Turkish delegations, it was decided that Soviet Russia would provide weapons and gold assistance to support the Turkish National Struggle. At the same time, Shalva Zurabovich Eliava was appointed as ambassador to Turkey⁸ (Yavuz, 1997:324).

During a session of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey held on 8 July, Mustafa Kemal stated that the Soviet Republic had promised to provide all necessary material support, including weapons and financial assistance⁹ (Heyfes, 1968: 82).

In his letter to Lenin, Chicherin emphasized the importance of appointing Shalva Eliava as ambassador to Turkey, noting that he would play a key role in managing delays in assistance and maintaining diplomatic balance between the two sides. He also stated that Eliava would contribute to negotiations and enhance Soviet prestige¹⁰ (RSASPH. F. 159. Inv. 2. C. 57. P. 4).

In 1919, the Russian Soviet Government, which was at war with the Allied Powers on various fronts, sought to establish contact with the Ankara Government. On September 4, 1919, Shalva Eliava, who was the Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet Russia's Caucasian Bolshevik Armies, was secretly sent to Istanbul to examine the latest situation in Turkey (Ottoman Empire). Through the national organization in Istanbul, Shalva Eliava made contact with the representatives of the Anatolian movement and declared that they would fully recognize Turkish national rights against the imperialist front and would begin providing all kinds of material and moral support to the eastern nations (Cebesoy, 1982: 76).

In a letter written by Chicherin to the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party on 28 June 1920, he reported that despite the decisions adopted by the Politburo, military assistance to Turkey had not yet been delivered. He emphasized that the implementation of the promised weapons support should be carried out without delay. He further noted that, just as the previously promised gold and equipment assistance to Afghanistan had not been fulfilled within the expected timeframe, a similar situation should not occur in relations with Turkey. According to him, it was necessary to implement the Politburo's decisions immediately, since a failure to do so would damage Soviet

⁷ Moscow, May 24, 1920, taken from the report given by Fuat Ali to G. V. Chicherin. Yerasimos, Stefanos, *Turkish-Soviet Relations During the War of Independence 1917-1923*, Boyut Publishing Group, Istanbul, 2000, p. 225.

⁸ At its meeting on June 28, 1920, the Politburo appointed Shalva Zurabovich Eliava as the first Ambassador to Ankara. RSASPH. F. 159. Inv. 2. C. 57. P. 2. However, he could not come to Turkey due to illness. Instead, a Russian delegation of two hundred people came to Ankara, led by Upmal Angarski, the embassy's first secretary. Aslan, Yavuz, *The Foundation of the Turkish Communist Party and Mustafa Suphi*. Turkish Historical Society, Ankara 1997. 324 p.

⁹ In A.N. Heifets's work titled "Soviet Diplomacy and Eastern Peoples", it is mentioned that when Mustafa Kemal announced at the Turkish Grand National Assembly meeting that Soviet Russia had promised to help them, he was drowned in "Bravo applause". Heyfes, A.N. *Soviet Diplomacy and the Peoples of the East 1921-1922*. Moscow: Nauka, 1986. 82 p.

¹⁰ September 28, 1920 The necessity of appointing Shalva Eliava as ambassador to Ankara, as mentioned in Chicherin's letter to Lenin. RSASPH. F. 159. Inv. 2. C. 57. P. 4.

credibility in Mustafa Kemal’s eyes and could result in a loss of political trust (RSASPH. F. 159. Inv. 2. C. 57. P. 2-2).

Furthermore, communications attributed to Shalva Eliava and Sergey Mironovich Kirov, as well as Western radio broadcasts, report that Turkish forces suffered heavy casualties due to the severe shortage of military equipment during the National Struggle. Should this situation result in the victory of the Allied Powers, the restoration of the Sultan’s authority in Anatolia would lead to Muslim fanaticism and could consequently confront us with a large revolutionary Muslim mass. This would imply the possible separation of Baku, Turkestan, and even our Eastern region. Therefore, Turkey’s success was considered of paramount importance for us, and it was concluded that the promised financial and military assistance should be provided as soon as possible. The Turks reportedly stated during their meeting with our military that they had requested 250,000 rifles with ammunition. However, our military explained that in their meeting with Halil, they had agreed on 60,000 rifles (RSASPH. F. 159. Inv. 2. C. 57. P. 3)¹¹.

In Yerasimos's bibliography “Turkish-Soviet Relations in the War of Independence”, it is written that in their meetings with War Commissar Kamenev, Turkish representatives agreed to receive aid consisting of 1,000,000 gold liras, 60,000 rifles, 180 million cartridges, 108 field artillery pieces, and 12 heavy artillery pieces. It states that it was decided to keep this aid agreement confidential and not to disclose it (Yerasimos, 2000: 145).

Some sources mention that the Soviets promised assistance to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, which included approximately 60,000 rifles, 112 light machine guns, 10 heavy artillery pieces, and 2,000,000 liras, half of which was in gold¹² (Turkish War of Independence, 1965: 103).

In his report to the Honorable Rushtu, Ali Fuat stated that he had arrived in Moscow together with Halil Pasha, and that as a result of their meetings with the Bolshevik authorities, the question of assistance—particularly the amount of financial support—was ultimately settled at one million gold lira. He further explained that the military assistance consisted of sixty thousand rifles (twenty thousand Russian, twenty thousand French, and twenty thousand English), with two to three thousand rounds of ammunition per rifle, one hundred and twelve field guns, and ten heavy artillery pieces¹³

¹¹ Letter from Chicherin to Lenin dated September 27, 1920: “The dire situation of the Kuva-yi Milliye (National Forces) due to lack of military equipment”. RSAPH. F. 159. Inv. 2. C. 57. P. 3.

¹² The full text in the bibliography states: “The Soviets announced that a Soviet delegation would depart from Moscow around June 10, 1920, to meet with the Government of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, traveling via Baku-Tbilisi-Kars to Turkey, and that they would provide as initial aid 60,000 rifles, 112 light machine guns, 10 heavy artillery pieces, and 2,000,000 liras, half of which would be in gold. However, considering the external situation of both Turkey and the Bolsheviks, there was no need for action against Armenia, and it was possible to resolve Turkey's borders peacefully in the manner Turkey desired...” Turkish War of Independence Volume III Eastern Front (1919-1921). Ankara, General Staff Printing House, 1965. 103 p.

¹³ Moscow, June 3, 1920. Letter and Report from Fuat Sabit in Moscow to Honorable Ruştu (a brief document about how they persuaded the Soviets to provide weapons and financial aid): “We met with the Bolshevik leaders and explained the situation of our country. We clarified that establishing relations with Soviet Russia was the aspiration of the Anatolian revolutionary movement, and that our duty and authority was not to establish this relationship but to prepare the groundwork by explaining the Anatolian situation. We explained that the determination and establishment of the principles of this relationship would be through authorized individuals with directives from both sides, and if there was anything we could say now, it was that Anatolia needed money, weapons, and ammunition, and that discussions about the form and extent of relations would take place with a representative of the Soviet Republic who would travel to Anatolia with these supplies. Foreign Affairs Commissar Chicherin said that they had the desire to help the National movement in Anatolia, that although the nature of Bolshevism was social revolution, they had accepted the principle of approving and assisting national revolutions in the East, but this had its limits. He added: 'For example, we are strengthening the National movement in Afghanistan, helping Amanullah Khan. But we are not sure that tomorrow these weapons will not be used against us.' I understood the subtlety in this and explained how the National movement in Anatolia emerged from specific needs, and that Turkey's historical and social situation was quite different from Europe's. That is, because Turks have been nationally crushed both materially and spiritually under external pressure, revolutionary movements did not differentiate between classes and did not deviate from national principles, and that the interests and goals of the National revolution always aligned with the interests of the oppressed classes and the world revolution, and that there was no place for adventurist policies with extreme mentalities among Anatolian revolutionaries. They asked me to report this explanation in the form of a report...”. Karabekir, Kazım, *Our War of Independence*, Merk Publishing A.S., Istanbul 1988. 755-756 pp.

(Karabekir, 1988: 755–756).

In his letter to Mustafa Kemal Pasha, Halil Pasha wrote that, after expressing his sincere respects, he had arrived in Moscow to secure possible Bolshevik assistance regarding the internal situation. Together with Ali Fuat, who had been assigned from Erzurum to Baku, he held discussions concerning Mustafa Kemal Pasha and the general situation with Deputy Foreign Minister Karakhan, Foreign Minister Chicherin, and Kamenev, who held a leading position in Moscow. It was agreed that assistance would be provided to the National Movement and its operations. However, the Soviet side was not in favor of publicly announcing this assistance at that time. This was considered necessary both from their own strategic perspective and possibly due to concerns that Mustafa Kemal Pasha might not approve such disclosure.

The agreed terms of assistance included:

1. Two million lira, half of which would be provided in gold.
2. A total of sixty thousand rifles—twenty thousand English, twenty thousand Russian, and twenty thousand Japanese—with two to three thousand rounds of ammunition per rifle, intended for three corps.
3. For three corps, the formation of one regiment each, including a total of one hundred and eight English field guns with sufficient ammunition for three field artillery regiments, each consisting of three battalions with three batteries.
4. Additionally, one heavy artillery battalion consisting of twelve guns was to be supplied from existing English howitzers (approximately 10.5 cm caliber).
5. It was also considered to push Russian forces back to the former border in order to avoid conflict with Armenian forces, which had not yet been integrated into the Soviet system and remained under Dashnak control. This arrangement would facilitate the resumption of railway transportation. During these developments, Mustafa Kemal Pasha’s proposal to the Soviet Government in Moscow was delivered through Ibrahim Efendi and his companion Hulusi Efendi. The proposal was received favorably by the Soviet authorities. Consequently, the War Ministry was instructed to immediately send weapons and ammunition to Baku. It was further indicated that the financial assistance might be increased. However, there was hesitation regarding the deployment of the 15th Corps against Armenia, due to both Turkish and Soviet foreign policy considerations. The Soviet side feared that such an action might create the perception that a previously oppressed Turkey had become an oppressor¹⁴ (Karabekir, 1988: 765–766).

Results

This study is relevant due to the need to reassess historiographical claims regarding the scale and significance of Soviet aid to Turkey in 1919–1920. Existing scholarship has largely emphasized political and diplomatic dimensions, while the industrial capacity of Soviet Russia has remained insufficiently examined. In this context, the present research compares declared volumes of aid with actual arms production data.

Within this framework, military and financial assistance provided by the Soviet Russian Government to the Turkish Government between 1916 and 1921 has been analyzed on the basis of archival documents, production statistics, and contemporary testimonies. The study introduces and systematizes data from major arms-producing centers, including the Tula, Izhevsk, Sestroretsk, and Kovrov factories. The findings demonstrate a significant decline in weapons production in 1919–1920 compared to 1916, primarily due to shortages of fuel, raw materials, skilled labor, and technical equipment, as well as the destructive impact of the Civil War.

Despite these limitations, Soviet Russia pursued strategic cooperation with the Turkish National Movement, perceiving it as a common front against the Allied Powers. A political decision was made to provide weapons, ammunition, and financial assistance, even under conditions of severe economic crisis and industrial decline. However, a comparison of production capacity with reported aid volumes indicates that claims in Russian historiography — such as the assertion that “one in every four

¹⁴ Moscow, June 4, 1335/1919 date. Letter written by Halil Pasha to Mustafa Kemal Pasha. Kazım Karabekir. *Our War of Independence*. Merk Publishing Inc. Istanbul, 1988. 765-766 pp.

weapons used in Turkey was of Soviet origin”— are significantly overstated.

Archival evidence and diplomatic correspondence suggest that the actual volume of military aid was limited, irregular, and often delayed. Nevertheless, its importance was primarily symbolic and political rather than military. Soviet assistance contributed to strengthening the international legitimacy of the Ankara Government, enhancing its moral standing, and expanding its diplomatic maneuverability.

Soviet aid did not constitute a decisive factor in determining the military outcome of the Turkish War of Independence. Rather, it should be understood as a component of a broader geopolitical strategy aimed at countering Allied influence in the East and incorporating Turkey into the framework of Soviet Eastern policy. This study thus refines the understanding of Soviet–Turkish relations during the National Struggle by grounding its analysis in material and industrial realities.

Conclusion

This study provides an analysis of the aid policy of Soviet Russia towards the Turkish Government in 1919–1920, within the framework of the military, economic, and political conditions of the period. The research has revealed that Soviet Russia attempted to develop relations with Turkey despite conditions of civil war, economic collapse, destruction of industrial infrastructure, and severe famine. However, it is understood that claims frequently expressed in Russian historiography that “the main military power of the Turkish National Struggle was based on Soviet aid” need to be critically evaluated in light of industrial production data and archival documents.

Production tables from weapons factories clearly show that Soviet military industry suffered serious capacity losses between 1916–1920. Production volumes of the Tula, Izhevsk, Sestroretsk, and Kovrov factories declined significantly due to reasons such as civil war, White Army attacks, loss of skilled workforce, and insufficient fuel and raw materials. It has been determined that the weapons and ammunition produced were limited in both quantity and quality, and often not even suitable for war conditions. This situation demonstrates that it was technically impossible for Soviet Russia to provide large-scale and regular military aid to Turkey.

Nevertheless, Soviet Russia's aid policy towards Turkey was shaped as part of a broader geopolitical and ideological strategy, not limited solely to military capacity. The Allied Powers' support for the White Army, their shipment of weapons via Istanbul, and the encirclement of Anatolia by Western powers led Soviet leaders to move closer to the Ankara Government. In this context, the Turkish National Struggle was viewed by Soviet Russia as a potential balancing element that could be established in the East against Western imperialism.

Soviet documents and memoirs of politicians of the period show that an agreement in principle was reached between the two governments regarding aid in weapons, money, and gold. However, it is understood that not all of the promised aid was actually delivered on time, and that the aid was limited and irregular. For the Ankara Government, Soviet support carried diplomatic and psychological value rather than military consequences, and was important in showing that Turkey was not alone in the international arena.

Soviet Russia's aid policy towards the Turkish Government in 1919–1920 was not a decisive factor determining the fate of the Turkish National Struggle as is often claimed, but rather a limited yet strategic cooperation based on mutual interests. These relations laid the groundwork for Turkish–Soviet friendship agreements in the following years and took their place as an important historical experience in shaping the foreign policy of the early Republican period.

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