



## Russian General Dmitry Nikolayevich Dubensky's Evaluations of Turkish Land Forces Before the First World War

*Rus General Dmitriy Nikolayevich Dubenskiy'nin Birinci Dünya Savaşı Öncesinde Türk Kara Kuvvetlerine Dair Değerlendirmeleri*

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#### Abstract

According to war historians, the First World War spread over vast areas incomparable with the wars that preceded it, leading to devastating results with social turmoil. When examined in terms of their dimensions, dynamism, repercussions and consequences, many issues stand out, from the collapse of empires to mass migrations, the deaths of millions of civilians and soldiers to international crimes and epidemics.

The information about the land military power of the Ottoman Empire in the work titled "Yearbook of the War" which Tsar Nikolai II of Russia, Alexandrovich Romanov had General Dmitriy Nikolayevich Dubenskiy personally write the war day by day was meticulously examined in this study. The work, which has not been translated into different languages other than Russian, is an essential work to be taken into consideration by the scientific circles and subjected to a comparative analysis in terms of reflecting the knowledge and views of Tsarist Russia about the war.

**Keywords:** General Dmitriy Nikolayevich Dubenskiy, World War I, Turkish Land Forces, War Yearbook, Tsarist Russian Press.

#### Öz

Harp tarihçilerine göre, Birinci Dünya Savaşı kendisinden önceki savaşlarla kıyaslanamayacak ölçüde geniş alanlara yayılmış, toplumsal hercümerçlerin yaşandığı tahrip edici sonuçlar ortaya çıkarmıştır. Boyutları, dinamizmi, yankıları ve sonuçları bakımından incelendiğinde ise imparatorlukların çöküşünden, kitlesel göçlere, milyonlarca sivil ve asker ölümünden uluslararası suçlara ve salgın hastalıklara değin birçok mesele göze çarpar.

Bu çalışmada; Rus Çarı II. Nikolay Aleksandroviç Romanov'un General Dmitriy Nikolayevich Dubenskiy'e bizzat savaşı gün be gün görsellerle kaleme aldırıldığı "Savaş Yıllığı" isimli eserinde Osmanlı Devleti'nin kara askeri gücüne yönelik aktardığı bilgiler mercek altına alınmaktadır. Rusça neşriyatı dışında farklı dillere çevrilmeyen eser Çarlık Rusya'nın savaşa dair bilgi ve görüşlerini yansıtmaları açısından ilmi cephelerde kaile alınması ve de mukayeseli analize tabi tutulması elzem bir eserdir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** General Dmitriy Nikolayevich Dubenskiy, Birinci Dünya Savaşı, Türk Kara Kuvvetleri, Savaş Yıllığı, Çarlık Rusya Basını.

## Introduction

Although the causes of the spark that started the First World War have been analyzed in different ways by war historians, one of the theoretical debates that determined the fate of the war is undoubtedly the socio-political developments in Russia. The size of the geographical area of Tsarist Russia and the excess of its population were remarkable. But this situation also had disadvantages for the Russian administration. Determining and implementing policy in strategic areas such as agriculture, industry, transportation and security could pose difficulties. Moreover, in the system where more than a hundred ethnicities took their place in a single body, streams of thought, no matter where they originated, could have brought the administration come face to face the people. Russia, which wanted to protect itself from the stream of ideas, did not hesitate to interfere in the internal affairs of the neighboring empires with the same stream of thought. In order to realize the "Greek Project" (Markova, 1958, pp.52-78) at the end of XVIII century, Russian Tsarina II. Katerina had prepared the intellectual infrastructure for obtaining the sphere of influence in the Balkans and took concrete military steps. As a matter of fact, the Serbian Revolt of 1804 enabled the revolts of the Balkan non-Muslims living under the Ottoman nation system. The 1821 Peloponnesian Revolt and the 1827 Navarino Raid not only gave the Greeks independence, but also excited the Russians in their Balkan policies. England, on the one hand, did not like Russian expansionism, but on the other hand, due to the dominance of Germany, it unwillingly preferred to get closer with Russia in global politics. In addition, the French's German expansionism (weltpolitik) (Fischer, 1967, pp.7-11) concern started to shape diplomacy between Paris and St. Petersburg. At the beginning of the 20th century, a two-block structure emerged. Britain, Russia and France on the one hand, and Germany, Italy and Austria-Hungary on the other. The Ottoman Empire, whose foreign policy angle narrowed in global politics, was in an effort to carry out international balance diplomacy in a position that was pro-peace but prepared for war.

The assassination of Archduke F. Ferdinand, the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne by Gavrilo Princip on a 19-year-old Serbian nationalist affiliated with the revolutionary, nationalist, separatist and anarchist Young Bosnia Organization on 28 June 1914 had finally ignited the awaited war between the blocks. The Austro-Hungarian Empire's declaration of war on Serbia after this event caused the July Crisis in the European arena. (A.İ.Kuznetsov, Y.A. Raykov and V.V. Samoylenko, 2017, p.330) Then, with Germany's declaration of war on Russia and France, the war spread rapidly through the Balkans, first to Europe and then to the world. It was a complete mystery how long this war would last and what kind of destruction it would cause. The war lasted four years, three months and ten days. It drew more than one and a half billion people in thirty-eight countries into the disaster. Ten million people lost their lives. Twenty million people were injured, three and a half million of whom could not walk again. Hundreds of cities and thousands of villages were wiped from the face of the earth. Four great empires collapsed. In Europe and America, this war was called the "Great War". Monuments were erected for the victims of the war. In the Soviet War Hystography, this war was called the "Imperialist War". In the USSR, there was no commemoration ceremony for this war or an exhibition in museums, and no monuments reflecting the bitter face of the war were erected in any of its cities. (A. D. Yanovskiy and İ.L. Juravskaya, 2014, pp.3-4) However, it sacrificed many officers and soldiers, especially in their struggle with the Germans.

During the Russian Federation period, valuable works about the First World War began to be written. Especially between 2014-2018, broadcasts were made under the title of "Forgotten War" and international events were also organized. The most basic feature of unearthing such beautiful works by Russian War Historians is that there are quite a number of documents in the state archives. Interstate

correspondence, memoirs and notes of frontline commanders and officers, articles written in newspapers and magazines and the things written by war correspondents are among the leading ones.<sup>1</sup> (Rozenberg, 1914, p.21) Apart from these, it is also noteworthy that the Tsarist Russian Administration itself wrote the yearbook of the war. At this point, the work of General Dubenski, who was commissioned by Tsar Nikola II., called "The Yearbook of War", consisting of 132 issues and 2120 pages in total and covering the years 1914-1917, is worth researching.

### **Biography of General Dmitriy Nikolayevich Dubenskiy**

Dmitry Nikolaevich Dubenskiy was a general, war writer and publisher. He was born on October 26, 1857 in Tsarist Russia. In 1877, he started his military service. He graduated from the Alexandrovskoye Military School and the Mikhailovskoye Artillery School in St. Petersburg. In 1880, he was promoted to officer in the 3rd Grenadier (bomber) Artillery Brigade. In 1884, as a young officer, he enrolled in the Nikolayevskaya General Staff Academy, Russia's highest military institution, but a year later, he left school and transferred to the General Staff, where he served for almost twenty years. In the General Staff, besides counting the military horses; he was also tasked with controlling horse breeding in the Caucasus, Kalmykia, Kyrgyz, Siberia, central Russia, southern Russia and even steppes of the Polish Kingdom province. He became a member of the Russian Geographical Society in 1892. Dubenskiy was appointed as the assistant officer of the Chief of General Staff in 1904 and worked in this title for the next 5 years. Although he was promoted to Brigadier General in 1909 at the age of 52, he resigned. (<http://biografii.niv.ru/doc/encyclopedia/biography/fc/slovar-196-57.htm>)

From 1900 Dubenskiy published a folk newspaper called 'Russkoe Ctenie' (Russian Reading). The newspaper gained wide popularity among the peasants and the army. He published a weekly magazine called 'Letopis Voyn s Yaponiey' (The Yearbook of the War with Japan), which had impressive pictures during the Russo-Japanese War. Apart from all these activities, Dubenskiy's many national and military books and paintings attracted attention in Tsarist Russia. The most famous of them are: 'Istoriya Rossii v Kartinah' (History of Russia in Pictures, 3 volumes), 'Kartiny Rodiny' (Pictures of the Fatherland, 3 volumes), 'Istoriya Russkogo Soldata' (History of the Russian Soldier), 'Tsarstvovanie Doma Romanovykh' (Tsarist Period of the Romanov Dynasty), 'Suvorov' and 'Skobelev'. (<http://biografii.niv.ru/doc/encyclopedia/biography/fc/slovar-196-57.htm>)

During the First World War, he was the publisher and editor of an illustrated magazine entitled 'Letopis Voyn 1914-1917' (The War Yearbook 1914-1917). He was an official historian in the Emperor's court. Four issues of the work titled "Ego Imperatorskoye Veliçestvo Gosudar Emperor Nikolai Alexandrovich v Deystvuyushey Armii za 1914 – Fevral 1916" (Majesty the Emperor and Sovereign Emperor Nikolai Alexandrovich in the Army between 1914 and February 1916) which was prepared by Dubenskiy were published. For his efforts, he was awarded the Order of St. Anna in 1898, St. Stanislav in 1906 and St. Vladimir in 1914. But after the 1917 Revolution, Dubenskiy had to leave Russia and lived the rest of his life as a refugee in Germany. He died on 5 July 1923 in Wiesbaden.<sup>2</sup> (<https://historitime.ru/author/dubenskiy-dmitriy-nikolaevich>)

<sup>1</sup> Newspapers and journals published in Petrograd in 1914: "Boyevye Izvestiya, Bratskaya Pomoş, Velikaya Osvoboditel'naya Voyna, Velikaya Oteçestvennaya Voyna, Vernaya Misl, Vestnik Dnya, Vestnik Narvskoy Zastavi, Veçernee Zveno, Veçerniy Kurer, Voskresenie, Vsemirne Telegrammi Voyni, Gazeta-Kopeyka, Jivaya Misl Truda, Naş Listok Rabotntsi, Naşa Raboçaya Gazeta, Peterburskaya Molva, Peterburskiy Kurer, Raz v God, Rodnaya Gazeta, Russkiy İnvaid, Slavyanin, Utrenniy Vestnik"..... For detailed information can be viewed; VI. Rozenberg, *Letopis Russkoy Peçati*, Moskva 1914.

<sup>2</sup> Dubenskiy reflected his interest in horses and nature in his works. Towards the end of his life, he published on the causes of the Russian Revolution. In 1889-1890, he wrote his work titled "Horse Breeding and Tools of European Russia". Again, "Draft History of Horse Breeding in Russia", "Stable Farms of the Russian Empire, 1896", "Visial Determination of the Age and Flaws of the Horse, 1898",

### **The Importance of the “Yearbook of the Great War “ for War Historians**

There were some reasons behind the fact that General Dubenskiy made writing his profession. These include the ability to write history, interest in international current developments, and the popularity of his works from Russian intellectuals. Imagination and expression power are among the factors that attract the attention of the reader. His assignment by Tsar Nicholas II can also be considered as a disciplinary reason for transferring the diary of the war to the public. The researcher, whose style is quite fluent and meticulous, also has a detail-oriented aspect that does not bore the reader. This detail is so balanced that it does not hinder the reader's attention. What the diligent author conveys is not historical forgery and fabricated texts. Of course, for Russia, it is so clear that it does not need to be explained in terms of historical methodology, reflecting the defeats on the fronts on the pages with shallow expressions under the influence of censorship. Even if the mentioned work is scrutinized within the strict rules of the science of history, it still has importance with its function in producing comparative information. In addition, giving instant information about the internal affairs of the states and the fronts they fought on arouses the curiosity of the other parties participating in the war. The author has managed to summarize almost all aspects of the war and a huge amount of basic information about its historical setting in the pages of his journal, and has provided a neat, lively and curious story of events. He tells the events solemnly, but does so in a lively manner. Indeed, he was able to convey information on the subject in an easily understandable manner. He appeals to large masses of people, without going to the extremes of simplifying the subject for the public, and without oversimplifying the intricate problems he has to deal with. Dubenskiy's work was included in the bibliography of Russian War Historians in terms of covering all fronts where the Russians fought or did not fight, without concentrating on just one front.

In the introductory part of the magazine, the first issue of which was published on August 23, 1914, there are some lines about Nikolay's address to the Russian people and the world about the beginning of Russia's war with Germany such as *"With the Help of God, We, Nicholas II, Emperor and ruler of all Russia, Tsar of Poland, great lord of Finland and other and other and other ..."* (Dubenskiy, 23.8.1914, p.4)

In the paragraph given under the title of "From the editor" ; *"We are starting to carry out the journalism business in the great days of this armed struggle, in which our peace-loving homeland is withdrawn without its own will and the peoples have an unprecedented dimension in the past. By understanding the importance of our duty and our responsibility, we want to be a calm and impartial narrator of the great events we witness and contemporary. We would like to be the author of the great war that has begun. The name "The Yearbook of the 1914 War", which we chose for our magazine, clearly indicates this.* (Dubenskiy, 23.8.1914, pp.2-3) After the wishes were conveyed, the yearbook of the war began to be written. However, as stated below, the plan of the work is also presented to the reader.

*"Our magazine will write wholeheartedly what our God will send to our beloved homeland, to the holy Russian land, at this extraordinary time. We are sure that the army of Tsarist Russia, which is our pride, and the armies of the French, British, Belgian and Serbian allies will again win brilliant victories and achieve unprecedented successes. We will consider our task completed if all the news*

*How Did the Revolution Happen in Russia? Notes Diaries, Russian Chronicles, Vol. III., Paris 1922"* For detailed information can be viewed; <https://historitime.ru/author/dubenskiy-dmitriy-nikolaevich> (17.11.2021)

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*about the great struggle of Russia and its allies in Europe is impartially transmitted to our readers by our magazine.*” (Dubenskiy, 23.8.1914 p.2-3)

The editorial board will do its utmost to ensure that our journal bears not only the informational definition but also the definition of a work of art. It is written according to the program presented below:

1. Official departments and government instructions
2. Official war messages
3. Writings explaining the situation
4. News of the war
5. Echoes of the war in the Russian regions
6. Relations with foreign countries
7. Information notes and writings on war events
8. Other information
9. Announcements (Dubenskiy, 23.8.1914, pp.2-3)

The journal has determined its basic rules before starting its publication life. These rules are as follows: *“Each issue of the magazines shall be prepared not fewer than sixteen pages and shall be prepared in such a way as to include paintings, portraits, plans, maps, sketches, and the works of famous painters of the war. The Broadcasting Board will make the necessary statements on the subject gradually with the support of military experts, realizing that our reader who has nothing to do with the war may have difficulties in the face of special military terms. The solemnity of the moment, the awakened patriotism of Russian society, the gratitude of God and faith that will not damage the sanctity of the just cause that Russia is striving for, the hope for the victorious Russian weapon gives us the means and strength for the task that demands responsibility and patriotism.”* (Dubenskiy, 23.8.1914, p.3)

Another feature of the magazine is that it gives information about the commanders, troops, weapons, the ethno-cultural texture of the lands where the fronts take place, the seasonal conditions and the logistics status of the countries.

There is no information about the circulation of the journal. However, considering the curiosity of a warring society on the developments on the fronts, it can be estimated that there is a substantial number of them. With the Turks bombarding the Russian ports in the Black Sea and Russia's declaration of war on the Ottoman Empire, a negative perception towards the Turks again began to spread rapidly in the Russian society. As the developments in the Caucasian Front and the Black Sea were seen in the Russian press, this work often began to provide information about the situation in the Caucasus Front, the Black Sea and Istanbul.

### **Evaluations of the Turkish Land Forces on the Eve of the War**

For the Ottoman Empire, which could not have technological products due to its economic situation before the First World War, the policy of balance between the European great powers had become a necessity rather than a choice. It was struggling with serious problems in transportation, food and health within the borders of the country. Their silos only had grain to feed their army only

for ten months. Intercity roads were quite inadequate and inconvenient. Railways, on the other hand, extended only as far as Ulukışla in the east of Anatolia. There was no doubt that this situation would cause handicaps regarding the transport of soldiers and ammunition in a possible Turkish-Russian war. The decision not to build railways in eastern Turkey was a clause imposed by the Russians on the Ottoman Empire in the Berlin Treaty of 1878. Most of the physicians in the army were either Armenian or Greek. It had not yet fully found its place in world political blocs. Since it was among the targets of the bloc formed by England, France and Russia, it did not seem to have any other option but to get closer to Germany. The close foreign policy with Germany drew the reaction of London and Paris, at the same time, this situation led to St. Petersburg's criticism. With the outbreak of the war, the Russians' view of the Ottoman Empire began to spread to newspapers and magazines from a negative perspective.

According to General Dubenskiy; The physical conditions of the Turkish Army before the great war were not prepared for a long-term war. The availability of weapons, ammunition, clothing, food, medical supplies and other equipment was inadequate. In addition, the army was not at a tactical and physical level for the harsh winter operations. Especially the land forces could not get rid of the negative effects of the Balkan Wars in 1877-78. During this process, while the army was being modernized by the Germans, on the other hand, it was exposed to the effects of currents of thought.<sup>3</sup> Although itihadism spread among the youth, there were also opposing sides of the ideas they spread. On the other hand, there was a complete confusion in the discussions about whether to go to war or which side to take in Istanbul bureaucracy Moreover, the situation in the political arena was not solid and the economic life in Ottoman society was in a very bad state. (Dubenskiy, 18.9.1914, p.12)

In fact, articles were written in the Russian press confirming the information that the Russian General conveyed to the readers. In Petrogradskiy Listok, one of the famous newspapers of the Russian capital, this situation was described as follows. “ *Since the Ottoman Army has not yet overcome the negative effects of the 1911/12 Tripoli and 1912/13 Balkan Wars, it is not ready for a new large-scale conflict. German influence on the Turkish Army gradually increased in 1913 with the efforts of Enver Pasha. The most vulnerable and the weakest flank of the army is undoubtedly the command echelon. 75% of the commanders in charge are young and 40% of them do not have a significant amount of war experience. Aged officers did not adopt modern warfare methods. They do not have experience in warfare techniques, especially in winter conditions. We should not forget the commanders who were forced into retirement because they could not work in harmony with the Germans. Moreover, the Third Army of the Turks, which will face the Russian Caucasian Army, is not ready for long-term battles in cold climate conditions in terms of equipment. The Third Army consists of the 9th, 10th and 11th Corps, 2 horse cavalry, 4 or 5 cavalry Kurdish units and 2 infantry units brought from Mesopotamia. The corps is made of three infantry divisions. Each has three infantry regiments. These regiments consists of artillery regiments, minesweepers, and vanguard units. The infantry regiment consists of three battalions and machine troops. The artillery regiment consists of two or three field and*

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<sup>3</sup> D. N. Dubenskiy, “voorujenniya sili Turtsii” *Letopis Voym*, 8.11.1914, №12, c.12, Petrograd, “According to the news received from Turkey by the Tsarist Russian Foreign Ministry, the Turkish Administration is occupied by the Germans and the Grand Vizier and his supporters are making every effort to avoid war. However, German General L. V. Sanders, a confidant of the German Emperor and holding the fate of the Turks in his hands, so electrified the Turkish Army, which he filled with German officers, that he immediately demanded active action. The Germans began to send Money to the Turks, apart from weapons and the two cruisers Breslau and Goben.” D. N. Dubenskiy, “v Turtsii” *Letopis Voym*, 20.9.1914, №5, c.12-13, Petrograd, The pre-war proximity of Turks and Germans is often found in Dubenskiy’s work. According to what he wrote under the heading “Out of Borders”, he stated that “the Turks were not independent, the Germans had toys in their hands, the Germans had a town or a German company headed by Sanders. In the Russian Government letter published on September 17, once again, Turks are invited to common sense and ask the Turks to weigh all the consequences of such a dangerous measure as closing the Dardanelles.” D. N. Dubenskiy, “za-granitsey” *Letopis Voym*, 27.9.1914, №6, c.10.

*mountaineering units. The Kurdish troops are unprepared and undisciplined. Modern weapons of Schneider and Krupp are in the hands of artillery units. The Infantry are armed with rifles caller Mauser. The inadequacy in the number of trained personnel and the inadequate means of communication such as telephone and telegraph in mounted warfare stand out.”* (Petrogradskiy Listok, №298, 20.10.1914 (3.11.1914) p.12)

Reç, one of the respected newspapers of Petrograd, addressed its readers about the Turkish Armed Forces before the Caucasian Front as follows “ According to the German officers serving in the Turkish army, the Turkish soldiers can take forward action, but they cannot do so regularly and quickly. The army is not prepared for compulsory marches, and it is inadequately equipped with weapons and materials. That's why it's almost impossible to run a night or two in a row during the winter months without inflicting casualties on the army. This situation naturally slows down the speed of the operation. Under all these adverse conditions, the operation plan was designed by considering the best possibilities and considering that no in-depth progress could be made. All these difficulties cause limited forces to be sent from one line to the other. Turks used maps with a scale of 1/200000, which led to erroneous strategic decisions. Moreover, the maps are limited in number and usually in the host. However, there are 1/84000 scaled maps in the Russian army showing the region from Sarkamus to Erzurum. Such maps were not even found on the tables of Turkish commanders. (Reç, №280, 17(30).10.1914,p.3; Russkiy İnvaid, №233, 8.10.1914, pp.1-2)

In this work of Dubenskiy, the following information was given about the organization of the Turkish Armed Forces: “*The Turkish army was divided into different groups. At the head of these groups was the permanent army of Nizam. His backup was Prudence. Another backup was Redif, where his officers and privates were in permanent status. In the event of mobilization, there was the Müstahfiz, which was made up of civilians. Apart from these, there were also Hamidiye Regiments composed of cavalry units made up of Kurds. In 1908, military service was made compulsory for all men, including Christians. Those who gave Ottoman money worth 450 rubles (50 pounds) were considered exempt. Men were recruited at the age of 21. Military service consisted of 25 years. In order to become a non-commissioned officer, it was necessary either to have passed the exam or have completed two-year courses. From the age of 18 to 21, they had to successfully pass the exam or course. Officers, on the other hand, had to finish military school. There were three groups of officer schools, infantry - cavalry, artillery and engineering for engineering units. There were military high schools. There were also Staff Schools. Before 1908, half of the officers were non-commissioned officers, and the Germans changed this system.”* (Dubenskiy, 8.11.1914, №12, pp.8-9)

Dubenskiy shared the following detailed information with his readers under the title of “Turkish Armed Forces”. “*The Turkish army is good in defense but weak in attack. They are erratic in their retreat. They leave their weapons and food in retreats. There is a shortage of nationalist officers, and most of them are engaged in politics. The youngsters fired the experienced elders and replaced them with young German officers. Nepotism has become widespread. German officers do not respect Turkish officers. These young officers do not have the experience to handle a great war. The main staff of the Turkish army is the infantry, consisting of 130 infantry and rifle regiments and 43 separate rifle battalions. Regiments consist of four companies and three battalions each. Each division has three teams. There are 120 people in each division. The regiments were given either British origin heavy machine guns, Maxim or French origin heavy machine guns, Hotchkiss. The Turkish cavalry consisted of 5 fleets and included 40 regiments. In addition, each fleet serves as a reserve position within one year. Most of the horses in the cavalry were Hungarian breeds. Infantry units are divided into artillery, field and heavy. It consisted of field artillery, rearing, mountain and horse divisions.*

*There are 3 companies in each battalion and there are 213 companies in total. The mountain artillery consists of a battalion of 31 companies. Having suffered great financial losses during the Balkan War, Turkey later started to strengthen its artillery units with the new weapons it bought from Krupp. However, new equipment was not yet completed until the First World War, and the number of weapons in batteries was limited to 4 rapid firearms and 6 non-rapid weapons. Its heavy artillery consists of 5 battalions, each with 3 batteries of six-gun howitzers. It includes fortress artillery, regiment, separate battalions and companies. It consists of 143 divisions in total. Engineers' units consist of 14 different engineering battalions, 14 telegraph companies and 2 railway regiments. While higher military formations are organized, infantry and artillery units are reduced to divisions consisting of 3 infantry regiments, 1 rifle battalion and 1 training battalion regiment. In wartime, infantry divisions include a rear service company, an engineer company, a pontoon company, and an infantry training company. The total number of divisions is 43. (Dubenskiy, 8.11.1914, №12, p.10)*

*Infantry divisions form corps together with units of other military branches. The corps includes 3 field divisions, 1 rifle regiment, 2-3 mountain and heavy artillery battalions, an engineer artillery, a telegraph company and a flag battalion. Cavalry brigades consisting of 2-3 cavalry regiments, each containing 2-3 batteries and 1 machine gun squadron may be attached to some corps. The existing system of the Corps is designed for both peacetime and wartime. However, in wartime it is possible to form all cavalry divisions instead of cavalry brigades. The number of corps kept in peacetime is 14. Such corps is divided into 4 inspections in terms of military administration and is located all over Turkey. The first inspection covers the administration of the region around Constantinople.<sup>4</sup> Its organization includes: 1. Constantinople, 2. Edirne, 3. Rhodes, 4. Smyrna, 5. Ankara. The second inspection includes the 6. Aleppo, 7. Hodeidah (in Yemen) and 8. Damascus, as well as a separate division in Medina. The center of the third inspection is in Erzincan. This inspection includes 9. Erzurum, 10. Erzincan and 11. Van. Finally, the 4th inspection is concentrated in Baghdad, and its 12th in Mosul and the 13th in Baghdad. Each corps is responsible for its own territory, provided that its commander has the right to call reserves to serve in the troops under his responsibility. The reserve army (redif), which constitutes the majority of the Turkish armed forces in wartime, stands out as the army with the least important officer and non-commissioned officer cadres in peacetime. According to the charging method, redif is divided into two categories, the first being made mainly by those serving in permanent troops and reserves, and the other is created by those who are exempt from active service. In peacetime, Redif soldiers are invited to training camps that last for a month every two years to pass the first training. The systematic camps of the second one have not been made yet. Considering the regional conditions, the formation of the redif in wartime takes place very quickly. In wartime, the redif of the 1st category consists of 119 infantry regiments consisting of 4-2 battalions, a total of 342 battalions, 25 hussar regiments recruited from nomadic tribes consisting of 5 squadrons, a total of 125 squadrons and artillery, some of which were borrowed from the order. The 2nd Category Redif consists of approximately 150 battalions. It was planned to reduce the reserve units to 58 divisions, 39 of which were equipped with the redemption of the 1st category and the remaining 19 were equipped with the redemption of the 2nd category. These divisions will likely enable the formation of new troops or complement the composition of existing troops. There are no militia personnel in peacetime, and in wartime, new battalions will be formed only to serve within the country. The total power of the Turkish army in peacetime reaches 200 thousand people. In wartime, this number can be reached up to 1 million two hundred thousand (600.000 order and reserve, 400.000 1st category redif, 120.000 2nd*

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<sup>4</sup> In Dubenskiy's work, the word Constantinople is used instead of Istanbul, Smyrna is used instead of İzmir, and the word Türkiye is used instead of the Ottoman State.



category redif and 80.000 defense) depending on the needs of the country's forces. (Dubenskiy, 8.11.1914, №12, pp.10-11)

### **German Influence over the Turkish Army**

After the Turkish-Russian War of 1877-78, the Germans wanted to fill the international balance loss against the Turks for their political and economic interests. The Germans carried out the Berlin Baghdad Railway Project because of their industry's need for raw materials rather than developing trade or military cooperation with the Turks.

Before the First World War, Russian General Dubenskiy was describing the modernization desired in the Turkish Armed Forces by the Germans with the following words: *“In 1908, the Turks entered into very close relations with Berlin as a result of the German request to modernize their officers and army. Germany sent General Colmar von der Goltz and his deputy Slihtin to Istanbul. But their plans were negatively affected by the Bařkan Wars. The Balkan wars clearly showed that the German military influence did not have positive effects on the Turkish army. The Turks, who did not learn from these wars, once again applied to Berlin. As a result of this request, the Germans sent Liman Von Sanders and his team to the Ottoman lands. The Germans disrupted the morale of the Turkish army instead of increasing it.* (Dubenskiy, 8.11.1914, №12, pp.8-12)

*The recent transformations carried out by the Turkish army under the guidance of German instructors shook the main foundations of the spiritual order of the Ottoman troops without any organizational benefit. According to the general idea, every Turk is individually a reliable honorable person and also a soldier. However, the same Turks do not have the same ability to fight in masses due to the lack of a homogeneous command staff with a national spirit. Non-payment of salaries is another problem. They have trouble retreating and leave their cannon, machine gun and other heavy weapons behind. The Balkan war showed everyone the lack of well-trained officers. This proved once again that the army was largely doomed to failure. Meanwhile, the years after the war do not seem to have changed the composition of Turkish officers for the better. The persecution of officers with opposing views to the prevailing politics in the army, the expulsion of the former dignitaries and their replacement by new ones with the suspicious "Made in Germany" sign, the army's full of favoritism and German miscommunication weakened the bond between officer and soldier. The tactically hasty preparation of the German-Turkish model also did not promise anything good. As early as the Balkan War, complaints were heard that the officers did not understand the discipline of fire, knew little about intelligence, communication and security, and did not have enough knowledge and skills to eliminate the danger at the right (necessary) time.* (Dubenskiy, 8.11.1914, №12, pp.11-12)

In Letopis Voynı, Enver Pasha's criticism and German influence are frequently mentioned. Criticisms against Enver Pasha were also conveyed to the public by Russian newspapers, especially by the Petrograd press. According to Novoe Vremya Newspaper; Enver Pasha was making serious military-strategic mistakes at the front. He did not care about the winter conditions and was overly confident in the Turkish Army. The fact that he acted by listening to the German commanders was interpreted as the operation being no different than shooting a bullet into the darkness. On the Russian side, Enver Pasha's plan for the Caucasus Front might have been great strategically, but it was impossible to implement in reality. The plan was intended to be implemented without considering the physical conditions and seasonal conditions of the soldiers. Despite all these negativities, the Turks had fought bravely by obeying the order. According to them, Germans were to blame for Operation Sarıkamıř. The German military delegation put Enver in this difficult situation by leaving him under influence and obligation.” (Novoe Vremya, №13933, 24.12.1914, p.3)

In fact, Petrogradskiy Listok Newspaper had examined the German influence on the Ottoman Administration in the early days of the war. According to the newspaper report, the Germans promised the Turks a German loan of 300,000 pounds and an additional loan of 100 million francs, as well as weapons and ammunition in case of war. The Committee of Union and Progress, on the other hand, used the Germans to stay in power. According to the plans of the Turks, the great powers would fight, wear out, and meanwhile, the Turks would attack the Balkans and take the lands they lost in the Balkan wars. For this purpose, the Turks tried to stall them against the German urgency. However, at the very beginning of the war, when Istanbul unilaterally lifted the capitulations, the Germans woke up and forced the Turks to war. This incident angered the Turks. Thereupon, the Turks expressed that they should send weapons and money to the Germans as soon as possible. The Germans also sent ships and bombarded Russian ports. Thus, they forced the Turks into the war, albeit forcibly. (Petrogradskiy Listok, №295, 27.10.1914, p.3)

According to the Petrograd press, *“Enver Pasha was bought by the Germans. Even if the Germans win the war, which is a very difficult possibility, Turkey will still remain a peasant colony of the Germans. Although Turkish soldiers do not know the mistakes of their administration, it is certain that they will fight with all their strength in the war. However, they will be defeated due to reasons such as lack of discipline, poverty, and unpreparedness. German officers did not have time to modernize the Turkish army. Therefore, the position of the Russians in the Balkans is more solid.”* (Petrogradskiy Listok, №299, 31.10.1914, p.2)

As it can be understood from this and similar information, the Germans have been a guide in the fate of the Turks. Since cooperation with the Germans disturbed the Russians, the Turks who had the best relations with the Germans were drawn to the center of propaganda or criticism.

### **Conclusion**

In terms of War Historiography, the First World War still stands before us with its documents waiting to be investigated in many ways. It is essential to examine the past with a comparative method from sources with different angles. In this way, Letopis Voynni, who sheds light on the First World War from a Russian perspective, presented the process from the beginning of the war to the Russian Revolution with an uninterrupted and interesting style. The information obtained about the Turkish Land Army on the eve of the war actually reveals the fact that the Russian side did not only concentrate on the European fronts, but also followed the Turks for a long time. In this process, the economic situation of the Turks, the military's lack of equipment and preparation for the difficult task, the positive and negative reflections of the German modernization on the army and foreign policy maneuvers were meticulously written. In particular, the organizational structure of the Turkish Land Army, the bond between the command and the soldier, the physical and psychological conditions, and the capabilities or deficiencies of the army in the geography were put into lines. Considering the technological conditions of his years, General Dubenskiy conducted a study that cannot be underestimated for historians. The information they conveyed to the Winter Palace and to the readers was presented without breaking away from current developments. He also paid attention to chronology and details. With these aspects, it is in the category of work that historians will benefit from while illuminating the events with historical documents.

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