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Standard Oil Company and the Warehouses it opened in Istanbul (1914-1922)

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Abstract

Oil has been used since the world's earliest history. Sometimes for health purposes, sometimes to meet basic human needs. The global use of oil as an energy source has increased competition between countries. The discovery of oil in the Ottoman Empire dates back to ancient times. This study will examine the storage facilities of the American Petroleum Company, Standard Oil, in the Ottoman Empire between 1914 and 1922. Founded in the United States, the Standard Oil Company was a major corporation that shipped oil to many countries worldwide. Standard Oil, which opened storage facilities in various parts of Istanbul, expanded its operations by protecting its own interests and exploiting the region's strategic location. By establishing its warehouses near

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the piers, it sought to expand its trade volume. The warehouses established in Beykoz and Harem enabled the company to expand its domestic and international commercial activities.

Keywords: Petroleum, Standard Oil, Ottoman Empire, World War I.

Standard Oil Şirketi ve İstanbul'da Açtığı Depolar (1914-1922)

Öz

Petrol dünyanın en eski tarihlerinden beri kullanılmaktadır. Bazen sağlık amacıyla, bazen de insanların temel ihtiyaçlarını karşılamak için kullanılmıştır. Dünyada petrolün enerji kaynağı olarak kullanılmasıyla birlikte ülkeler arasındaki rekabet artmıştır Osmanlı Devletinde petrolün bulunuşu eski tarihlerde dayanır. Bu çalışmada Amerikan Petrol Şirketi Standard Oil'in 1914-1922 yılları arasında Osmanlı Devleti'ndeki depoları incelenecektir. Standard Oil Company, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nde kurulmuş ve dünyanın birçok ülkesine petrol sevk eden dev bir şirketti. İstanbul'un çeşitli bölgelerinde depolar açan Standard Oil, şirketinin çıkarlarını gözeterek ve bölgenin stratejik konumunu kullanarak faaliyetlerini artırdı. Depolarını iskele yakınlarına kurarak ticaret hacmini genişletmeye çalıştı. Beykoz ve Harem'de kurduğu depolar şirketin yurt içi ve yurt dışı ticari faaliyetlerinin artmasını sağladı.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Petrol, Standard Oil, Osmanlı Devleti , Birinci Dünya Savaşı.

Introduction

For centuries, mankind has used petroleum in a wide range of areas, from trade to industry; primarily as bitumen in the caulking of ships, asphalt in road construction, medicine in the treatment of diseases, fuel for cooking food and insulation material.¹

Contrary to popular belief, the presence of oil in Ottoman territory has been known long before its people. During his visit to Mosul during the time of Ottoman Empire's establishment, the Arab traveler Ibn-i

¹Ali Okumuş, Orta Doğuda Petrol:Uluslararası Rekabet, İmtiyazlar, ve Antlaşmalar(1890-1928).

Batuta stated that bitumen springs were known around the Tigris, and the bitumen was collected in pools and used to light fires.²

Evliya Celebi mentioned in his Travel Book "seyahatname" that oil and petroleum products were used in the Ottoman Empire's shipbuilding industry, that there was an artisan community for the oil business, and that there were caulking shops. He noted that naphtha springs existed near the Van Castle. He claimed that during his trip in 1649, he discovered naves in many caves in Van, one of which flowed into a pool.³ Van had a state-controlled naphtha mine in the 17th century, and trade took place with the material.

The province of Van was at the forefront of the Ottoman Empire's priority mining regions. The Van region was one of the first to attempt petroleum exploitation. In 1875, Nikogos Tokmakyan and his brothers conducted a series of studies in the region and signed a concession agreement to extract oil, but the oil could not be extracted due to a lack of adequate tools and technical equipment.⁴

The Ottoman Empire invented and exploited oil near the end of the nineteenth century. The village of Cingen, in the Kabaev sub-district of Iskenderun, made the first oil discovery in 1869. A concession was granted to Ahmet Necati Efendi. This oil concession was later transferred to other people and businesses. During World War I, this contract was terminated.⁵

The Ottoman Empire pursued various policies to compete in the global oil race that began in the nineteenth century. The Ottoman Empire fought fiercely for its resources as Western countries shared oil around the world. The fact that the company had some issues with the administration in the warehouses it wanted to set up, as well as the

² Fatih Başgöl, *Osmanlı Coğrafyasında Petrol Alanları, Çıkartılması, İşletilmesi, İmtiyazları ve Ekonomide Değerlendirilmesi (1876-1914)*, Yayımlanmamış Doktora Tezi, 2018s.32.

³ Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatname*, Çev. Zuhuri Danışman, Zuhuri Danışman Yayınevi, İstanbul 1969, s.241

⁴ Deniz Akpınar, "Osmanlıdan Cumhuriyete Van'da ve Sinop'ta Petrol Çalışmaları (1876-1950)", *İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Araştırmaları Dergisi*, C.7/S.4, s.2360

⁵ İdris Bostan, "Osmanlı Topraklarında Petrolün Bulunuşu ve İskenderun'da İlk Petrol İşletme Çalışmaları", *Coğrafya Araştırmaları*, 1999, C.1/s.2, s.12

events that occurred there during the process, is important for this study. The Ottoman Empire attempted to address these issues through legislation. The struggles of the Standard Oil Company to expand in Ottoman Istanbul, as well as those of the Ottoman Empire during this period, will be explained in this study. It is crucial to consider the warehouse locations, the settlement routes, the company's perception of Istanbul, the planned process for spreading oil throughout Ottoman lands, and the effort put forth to manage this process in 1914 .

This study attempts to analyze the oil depots of the Standard Oil Company, which was one of the key oil companies during the Ottoman Empire between 1914 and 1922, as well as its oil sales to other countries through the use of archival documents.

By transferring the oil fields in Mosul and Baghdad, which were within the borders of the Ottoman Empire, to the Imperial Treasury, Abdulhamid II wanted to take this region out of competition. At the same time, he wanted to keep the individuals and companies that would demand oil concessions under his control⁶. Sultan Abdulhamid II, knowing the oil reserves and importance of regions such as Baghdad and Mosul, ensured great protection of these lands by transferring them to the Treasury.⁷

The Ottoman Empire's Petroleum and Petroleum-Related Practices

From the foundation of the Ottoman Empire until the period when mining privileges began to be granted to Western entrepreneurs in the country in the 19th century, it is seen that the state had property rights over the mines in any way. There are four detailed mining regulations.⁸

In terms of oil production, the Baghdad region was well-known. Mithat Pasha worked tirelessly to process the oil in the region. While Mithat Pasha was the governor of Baghdad between 1869 and 1873, he sent petroleum samples from the region to London, where studies were

⁷ Büşra Karataşer, İkinci Abdülhamid Dönemi Petrol Yatakları İçin Verilen Mücadele, Enscon 2017, İstanbul.

⁸ Fahrettin Tızlak, Osmanlı Devletinde Madencilik, Osmanlı Ansiklopedisi, Cilt 3, Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları

conducted for the establishment of the Ottoman Empire's oil industry. British experts were sent to Mesopotamia in 1871 to work on drilling and oil separation techniques. The oil was found to be produced in the area using outdated techniques, and transportation was problematic, according to the evaluation report written as a result of one of the studies. During this time, the Ottoman Empire appointed Specialist Meisner to prepare a report on the oil resources discovered near Mendeli. Security was ensured, and fixed stations were established in the area where the oil was discovered, but these facilities were quickly decommissioned. In 1898, one of the British companies in the Middle East petitioned the government for an oil concession. The Ottoman Bank and a French company began oil exploration in Sarköy, Turkey, in 1898. Oil companies in Europe were also paying attention to foreign countries' oil exploration efforts.⁹

The United States of America, like Europe, was looking for new oil drilling techniques. Extracting, storing, and transporting oil, as well as developing export markets, necessitated specialized knowledge. Then, transportation became critical. As a result, railways became indispensable for the distribution of oil and kerosene in the nineteenth century.¹⁰

However, railroad development has unquestionably brought many benefits. It would go a long way toward preserving the Ottoman Empire's integrity and increasing economic prosperity.

The extensive rail network reduced transportation costs, commercialized agriculture, and expanded both domestic and foreign trades. Thus, continuous transportation links reduced production costs, leading to lower prices for manufactured goods. . Thus, by providing continuous transportation links, production costs were reduced, resulting in lower prices for manufactured goods. However, the Ottoman Empire lost its bargaining power as a result of waning political power due to having the railroads built, financed, and operated by

⁹ Niyazi Acun, age., s.133

¹⁰ Volkan Ş. Ediger, John V. Bowlus, Greasing the wheels: The Berlin- Baghdad Railway and Ottoman Oil, 1888-1907, Middle Eastern Studies,(2014), 56/2, 193-20

foreign companies and because of the empire's increased reliance on foreign interests. In this regard, railways were critical in connecting Ottoman resources to the outside world.¹¹ Oil was extremely valuable in the Ottoman Empire for European countries. England investigated what opportunities the Ottoman lands provided for safely reaching its colony, India. In 1834, the British Parliament tasked Lieutenant Colonel Francis Rawdon Chesney with investigating the Euphrates River basin¹²

The United States' Petroleum Policy

Britain and Germany were at the forefront of the battle for oil in Ottoman territory. Other countries that had completed their industrialization processes, as well as the United States, were at the forefront of the global oil battle. America drilled its first oil well in 1859. As a result of this drilling, it conducted numerous studies in order to obtain more oil.¹³

Clark and Rockefeller, two exceptional individuals, pooled their earnings in 1858 to launch a produce commission business on the Cleveland docks. The venture succeeded. Local historians credit Clark and Rockefeller with doing business for \$450,000 the first year. The war came on, and as neither partner went to the front, they had a full chance to take advantage of the opportunity for producing business a great army gives.

Clark and Rockefeller believed that a more lucrative opportunity than supplying the army was in the oil business, so when an energetic Englishman named Samuel Andrews approached them in 1862 to support his plan for starting a refinery, they invested \$4,000 and agreed to provide additional funds if needed.

Now Andrews was a mechanical genius. He devised new processes, made a better and better quality of oil, and got larger and larger percentages of refined oil from his crude. The little refinery grew big,

¹¹ Nevin Coşar&Sevtap Demirci, *Incorporation into the World Economy: From Railways to Highways (1850–1950)*, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 45/1, 19-31, 2009

¹² Nevin Coşar&Sevtap Demirci, a.g.e, S.56

¹³ Bilmez Bülent Can, *Demiryolundan petrole Chester projesi: (1908-1923)*, Yay. haz. Osman Köker., Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, İstanbul 2000, s.26

and Clark and Rockefeller soon had \$100,000 or more in it. In the meantime, Cleveland was growing as a refining 1043 centers. The business, which in 1860 had been a gamble was by 1865 one most promising industries of the town. It was but the beginning—so Mr. Rockefeller thought—and in that year he sold out his share of the commission business and put his money into the oil firm of Rockefeller and Andrews .¹⁴

The firm grew as rapidly as the oil business of the town, and started a second refinery William A. Rockefeller and Company. They took in a partner, H. M. Flagler, and opened a house in New York for selling oil. Of all these concerns John D. Rockefeller was the head. Finally, in June, 1870, five years after he became an active partner in the refining business, Mr. Rockefeller combined all his companies into one—the Standard Oil Company. The capital of the new concern was \$1,000,000. The parties interested in it were John D. Rockefeller, Henry M. Flagler, Samuel Andrews, Stephen V. Harkness, and William Rockefeller.¹⁵

Oil prospecting in Ohio experienced a boom in the 1860s, and one that looked attractive to Clark & Rockefeller in the wake of their wartime profits. Federal subsidies created massive price increases for oil, which attracted thousands to speculate in the oil-rich region around Cleveland.¹⁶

In a short period of time, the company began to operate in markets other than the United States. The Standard Oil Company sold kerosene and lamps during the Ottoman Empire in the 1880s¹⁷

American companies and traders began to sell petroleum products in Ottoman lands, particularly in Istanbul and Izmir. Because they did not engage in oil exploration activities in Ottoman lands prior to these

¹⁴ Ida M. Tarbel, *The History of The Standard Oil Company*, Newyork MClure,1904,s.52.

¹⁵ Ida M. Tarbel, a.g.e,36.

¹⁶ Audrey Gerrard, *The Standard Oil Company: Enterprise, Monopoly, and Regulation* , Institutt for moderne samfunnshistorie, January 2022. S.45

¹⁷ Volkan Ediger, age, s.120

years, they mostly marketed the oil extracted from their own lands.¹⁸ During World War I, the company supplied gas to the Ottoman Empire.¹⁹ The Ottoman Empire was at war with the countries it supplied oil to; until World War I, it was getting oil from Russia. Since it was also at war with Russia, Romania, and England in World War I, oil supply became difficult. Ioannina was lost in the Balkan Wars, and oil could no longer be supplied.

Oil was not coming from Iraq, another region that the Ottoman Empire supplied oil to. The only remaining oil source for the Ottoman Empire was America.

Establishment of the Standard Oil Company

Throughout the nineteenth century, countries around the world attempted to expand their land to sustain their existence. Along with expanding their land borders, countries sought to increase their global dominance by seizing oil reserves.²⁰

Mr. John D. Rockefeller founded a small oil refinery in the state of Ohio in 1865. During these years, the oil industry was in its infancy.²¹ The Standard Oil Company pursued a monopoly as well. The company's strong cash backing, combined with Rockefeller's blocking of competitors' sales rights, caused major issues.²² Due to their large capital, Rockefeller made agreements with railway transportation companies and provided discounted transportation. On the other hand, the higher transportation costs forced competitors to exit the market.

In addition to the transportation discounts, the Standard Oil Company confiscated the wagons in which the products were

¹⁸ Derviş Başa, agt., s.48

¹⁹ Büşra Karataşer, "Babialı'nın Amerikan Petrol Şirketi Standard Oil'e Bakışı", Sosyal Bilimler Araştırmaları Dergisi ,13/2, s.353-360

²⁰ Bilmez Bülent Can, age ,s.36

²¹ Gilbert Holland Montague, The Rise of the Standard Oil Company, The Quarterly Journal of Economics, Oxford University Press February, Vol 16, February 1902, p.266

²² Daniel Yergin, Petrol : Para ve Güç Çatışmasının Epik Öyküsü, Çev. Kamuran Tuncay, Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, İstanbul 1995,s.98

transported and only permitted the transportation of its products. Furthermore, the company possessed not only oil but also timber, iron, acids, and all the tools required by the factories. Because of its financial strength, the company had large stock market shares. The Standard Oil Company intervened in all areas, not only in the railways.

International oil companies viewed the Ottoman Empire as simply another market for petroleum products rather than as a source for oil. At the time of the RedLine Agreement, Standard Oil had been selling its products in the region for about 65 years and vying for this market with other oil companies for approximately 50 years. As these corporations began to explore the Middle East for petroleum sources in the early twentieth century, they had personnel who were already familiar with the region, and people in the region were already familiar with the industry, its products, and its players²³

Standard Oil, an American company, was one of the world's largest oil companies. Founded in America in 1870 by John Rockefeller and his partners, the company grew over time and became the first company to achieve a monopoly in this field by However, in 1892, an Ohio court ruling abolished the Standard Trusts. Following this decision, the question of how to liquidate such a large, interconnected structure arose. In 1899, the company reorganized itself, and its headquarters became Standard Oil of New Jersey. Standard Oil of New Jersey was the largest of the companies and a holding company. This company later became Exxon and continued its leadership. The second largest company was the Standard Oil Company of New York (SOCONY). This company also chose Mobil as its name .²⁴

²³ Andrew Patrick (1914), Standard Oil and The Battle for the Ottoman market 1864-, Diplomacy & Statecraft Vol 34/2, s.181

²⁴ Songül Ulutaş (2020), İstanbul'da Gaz Depoları Sorunu: Çubuklu ve Standard Oil Kumpanyası. Tarih Okulu Dergisi, s.115.

Warehouses of the Standard Oil Company in Istanbul

Despite its origins in the United States, the Standard Oil Company conducted business throughout the world in many nations with oil. They acquired rights and discovered the oil resources in the region after oil was discovered on Ottoman Empire territory. Initially, only the oil and kerosene needs of some Ottoman Empire regions were met, but as time passed, the trade volume expanded toward Istanbul.

The company's trade volume was also influenced by global political developments. The Ottoman Empire's demand for oil and kerosene increased as a result of its involvement in World War I. The Standard Oil Company's trade volume increased due to increased demand and a lack of railway connections.

Due to the political conditions of World War I, various rules were imposed on companies operating in the Ottoman Empire. The company continued with its operations in accordance with these rules.²⁵

In the letter dated 16th of November, the Standard Oil Company stated: According to the agreement made with the Minister of Finance of the Ankara Government, the company will only employ Turkish and American personnel in Anatolia from now on and their appointment will only be possible with the approval of this ministry. It has been decided that one of the Standard Oil Company's own employees and an American citizen, Monsieur Varner, will be sent to Ankara. It is requested that the situation be presented to Ankara. [A copy of the identity document given to Monsieur Varner by Admiral Bristol is attached].²⁶

In a letter written to the Ministry of Trade and Agriculture on 19 December 1915, the Standard Oil Company attempted to obtain permission to trade within the Ottoman Empire by providing information about the company. A. T. Doremus was appointed assistant clerk of the Standard Oil Company of New York, corporation, on August

²⁵ Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), Hariciye İstanbul Murahhaslığı (HR. İM 61/66/15-01,.06.Z.1322/12 Ocak 1922

²⁶ Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), Hariciye İstanbul Murahhaslığı (HR. İM 61/66/15-01,.06.Z.1322/12 Ocak 1922

10, 1882. As assistant clerk he will now be engaged in the manufacture and sale of various oils.

This company was authorized to manage all its affairs, interests, and real estate in the Ottoman Empire, to make all kinds of agreements in terms of the purchase and sale of the goods related to the foundation of the company for this purpose, to buy and rent land and real estate for the common purposes of the company and to insure all kinds of goods that were the property of the company.

The Standard Oil Company of New York was authorized to receive and endorse all types of guarantees and commercial documents such as checks, policies, money orders, and bills, as well as to issue, sign, receive, and endorse all documents such as bills of lading and freight agreements and average reports, bills, contracts, and such, and to officially write all types of documents, contracts and insurance agreements that were required by law. It had the authority to make specific statements about invoices, manifests, commodity export certificates, and other documents that had to be shown to tax officers. The company was authorized to officially register the privileges and differences about its purposes, as well as to obtain the necessary licenses for construction, factories, shops, warehouses, pools, and all types of machinery, via a request letter or by other means.²⁷

The company was also authorized to sue and collect its debts and receivables, as well as to hire and fire one or more of its employees. The Institution had the authority to appoint or dismiss one or more delegates regarding the aforementioned issues. With this power of attorney, Oskar Kangel Efendi, residing in Istanbul, was appointed as the Standard Oil Company's fully authorized attorney to conduct all the work required by the company and its institutions, as well as to approve the work that the delegates carried out in person or by any other legal means within the framework of this authority. It was stated in this power of attorney that the company could not change or cancel any power of attorney granted to one or more individuals for any reason prior to and during the date of this attorney. Also mentioned was the

²⁷ BOA, HR. İM 61/66

fact that this power of attorney could not be revised or revoked. It had been noted that Oskar Kangal Efendi would remain in office until his death or until he was dismissed by the Standard Oil Company during the term of the power of attorney.²⁸

The Standard Oil Company of New York informed the Ottoman Empire about the company's status and power with a declaration including general information about the company. The Standard Oil Company was founded in 1882 in New York, USA, with a \$5 million in capital to produce oil and other substances from oil. Its capital was raised on various occasions, and it reached 75 million dollars in 1915. The Standard Oil Company of New York, a company owned by the citizens of the United States of America, applied to the Ministry of Commerce in accordance with the first article of the law dated 13 December 1914 on foreign joint stock companies operating in the Ottoman Empire and committed to complying with the Ottoman laws in all its activities in the Ottoman Empire by sending certified copies of the bylaws, establishment documents, the above-mentioned testimonial, and power of attorney, which contained the translated copies of the appointment of a proxy to fulfill other legal conditions to operate in the Ottoman Empire. Complying with the fourth article of the law on joint stock companies, the company stated that if the joint stock company made some changes in its bylaws in accordance with the rules in the country where the head office was located, it would send a certified copy of the revised bylaws to the Ministry of Commerce, and if it wanted to change its representative in the Ottoman Empire, it would send a certified power of attorney. The Standard Oil Company declared that if the company ceased to operate or went bankrupt or changed its operations or merged with another company, it was obliged to notify the Ottoman authorities about the change and that it obtained permission to operate by complying with all the provisions of the foreign joint-stock companies law, the internal statute and laws of the Ottoman Empire, the current order, and the independence of the Ottoman Empire.

²⁸ BOA, HR.İM 61/66

The Standard Oil Company wanted to send gas and petrol to the rest of the world via Istanbul customs because of its strategic location. The company wished to establish oil depots in Beykoz due to its proximity to customs for its products such as gas and gasoline. As a result, it exchanged several correspondences with the Ottoman Empire.

In a letter written by the American Standard Oil Company on 29 July 1915 to Emlak-ı Hümayun İdaresi (the ministry dealing with the sultan's personal estates) in the Hazine-i Hassa-i Şahane (the ministry responsible for the sultan's personal income and expenses in the Ottoman Empire), a petition was sent to the Directorate of the Palace Treasury to rent land adjacent to the Eastern Railways station and the military warehouse within the port of Istanbul. The letter specified the physical characteristics of this land and the intended use of the warehouse. In addition to the old walls of the city fortress, there were also abandoned buildings near the sea. The company also wanted to rent the dilapidated buildings behind the sea-facing walls of this vacant land. The company promised not to cause any damage to the walls of the city fortress. Oil, gas, and fuel gases, whether barreled or not, would be stored in the buildings to be constructed in this location. It was also planned to construct workshops, barns, and other buildings where the equipment needed to prepare barrels and chests and store gas would be kept. A road was to be built in the area marked X on the map. The desire to build a road stemmed from the transportation problem at the time, and because transportation in this region was provided by an arched passage from the walls of the city fortress. The map also indicated the location of a small dock. The Standard Oil Company intended to load oil ferries onto this dock.

At the walled edge of the railroad property, there was a gate. It was planned to keep this gate in place while renting the existing fortress wall and constructing another wall in the land as well as a three-meter-wide road. It would be much easier to reach the Ottoman warehouses located in the middle of the hut labeled "Ç" this way. The company could transport the necessary goods by connecting the rented land to the Eastern Railways' land via a railway. . Because the city walls and old buildings were in ruins and there were no precautions in the area to be rented, the company wanted to be fully authorized for the walls marked

ß. Two oil pools would be built in the rented area as shown on the map. The steel oil pools resembled Standard Oil depots found around the world, particularly in Egypt. It was planned to add two more warehouses to the company's inventory to supply kerosene to ferries arriving at the Istanbul Port, as well as to the Marine Department and the Ottoman navy if necessary. The height of the proposed buildings is depicted on the map below, and no building would be taller than the city walls. It was stated that the buildings would not be taller than the gas pools and would not exceed twelve meters in height. Since the land that the Standard Oil Company wanted to lease appeared to be empty in 1915, the company stated that it was willing to rent it for twenty years if an agreement was reached. In fact, the company's statements that "this land is empty" can be interpreted as an attempt to persuade the Ottoman government by demonstrating leasing as a source of income. The company stated that it wished to extend the lease for another five years after the twenty-year lease expired. It was stated that if the Standard Oil Company was permitted to lease, when they vacated the land at the end of the contract, the buildings to be built, all institutions located there, gas depots, and other establishments would be left to the Palace Treasury without compensation. All the equipment to be left to the Ottoman administration was valued at twelve thousand liras in material terms.²⁹

Features of the Beykoz Warehouse

The Standard Oil Company planned to rent a space in Beykoz, where a light railway would provide transportation instead of a dock. . It was stated that transportation between various buildings in the warehouse to be established by the Standard Oil Company would be carried out by passing from the point marked X on the map via the light railway (whose rails were 60 cm apart or less and whose cars were powered by steam, human, or animal power). The Standard Oil Company stated that they would extend pipes and use pumps to extract gas from the ferries docked for transportation. The items to be stored in the company warehouse would not be flammable; kerosene, non-explosive fuels for lubricating other machines (used for lighting in homes), secondary

²⁹ BOA, DH. UMVM 99/1-5-1, 18.R.1328/26 Temmuz 1910

engine materials, and gasoline would be stored. The warehouse to be opened by the institution would be similar to warehouses all over the world.

The Standard Oil Company desired to establish warehouses in Istanbul. The Standard Oil Company drafted a petition to acquire the Sultan's land for this purpose. The petition included not only physical aspects of the warehouse to be opened but also persuasive texts highlighting revenue-generating opportunities for the Ottoman Empire.

Resim 1: Warehouses opened in Beykoz by the Standard Oil Company.

The Standard Oil Company of New York wanted to expand its warehouse in Beykoz, according to a letter written from the Sublime Porte to the Council on December 27, 1920. Selviburnu, one of the Sultan's gardens in Beykoz, Istanbul, housed the warehouse. Because the land belonged to the Hazine-I Hassa , a committee was formed to assess its worth, and the value and zoning status of the land were investigated. The examination revealed that the Standard Oil Company intended to expand on 10.5 acres of land. The mountainous portion of the land was valued at 3800 liras, i.e., 400 liras for one acre, and the hilly portion was valued at 2450 liras, i.e., 100 liras for one acre. The final section of the warehouse covered nine and a half acres and was located next to the Martyrs Cemetery. Because the land had extremely difficult-to-reach and mountainous sections, each acre was valued at 400 liras, making this land worth 3800 liras. It was worth a total of 16.750 liras. The deputy director of the Istanbul Municipality Science Committee, the palace treasury engineer, and the Bosphorus Land Registry officer of the Üsküdar Land Registry Administration prepared and presented this information to the Sultan.³⁰

³⁰ BOA, İ. DÜİT 14/9-2/1/22.Ra.1339/3 Ocak 1921

The Standard Oil Company's Warehouse Opening in Harem: in Istanbul

The Standard Oil Company made several attempts after Beykoz in Istanbul to open a warehouse in Harem. The company purchased the boathouse at the Harem Pier from its owner, according to a letter written to the War Office Military Courthouse Legal Department on March 29, 1921. On the land, the company began to construct a factory. While building the factory [AO9], Selim III demolished the walls of Selimiye Barracks, which stood next to the land.

Due to the damage to the barracks, it was requested to form a committee comprised of the Directorate General of Land Registry and Cadastre and the Ministry of Finance, under the Directorate of Legal Affairs of the Military Courthouse, which would report to the Grand Viziership and take appropriate action about the situation.³¹

The Standard Oil Company was granted a construction permit to build private warehouses on the land of the Harem Pier with the official permission of the Governorship of Istanbul, according to a letter written to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Vizier Registry on February 4, 1922. The company filed a petition with the municipality, claiming compensation for the damage it would suffer as a result of the construction delay if the construction permit was not granted.

After the Special Commission investigated the damage caused by the Standard Oil Company to the Selimiye Barracks as a result of the expansion of the boathouse in Harem Pier, the Sublime Porte wrote a letter to the Ministry of Internal Affairs on July 12, 1921. The Grand Viziership reported that action would be taken against military officers and other officers who did not take action while the Selimiye Barracks' land was being encroached upon. The investigation was later expanded, and it was decided that the Civil Inspection Board would conduct the necessary investigation into former Mayor Salim Pasha and a member of the municipal council who was found to have illegally granted licenses. The inspectors' report stated that the licensing authority belonged to the Governorship of Istanbul in accordance with the Gas

³¹ BOA, BEO 4678/350806/21.R.1339/31 Mart 1921

Storage Regulations, but in the case of the Standard Oil Company, because the license was granted by the municipality, it was invalid and should be ignored. On the other hand, the Istanbul Municipality and the Istanbul Governorship were informed that a license from the Governor's Office was required because there was no measure for ordinary construction in the building construction law regarding gas storage. The municipality responded with a letter stating that the previously granted construction permit certificate had been revoked and that the necessary inquiries had been made into who was to blame. Despite this setback, the company went ahead with the construction. The administration reported the situation to the Ministries of War and Finance to take legal action against the Standard Oil Company due to the invasion of the Selimiye Barracks, and the original state of the boathouse land and the maps showing the encroachment were sent to the Ministries of War and Finance. On October 3, 1921, Miller Zobinet, General Manager of the Standard Oil Company, signed a petition stating that the construction permit should be granted based on the plans provided for the private warehouse, which will be built in accordance with the official license, on the land of the Standard Oil Company Harem Pier, which was stated to belong to the company by title deed. It was also said that compensation and damages from the construction delay would be sought. The Standard Oil Company was adamant about securing a license and threatened to seek compensation if the process dragged on. Because the construction on the encroached land belonged to the Ministries of Finance and Military, there was a disagreement between the two institutions on the subject. As the subject was contentious, as reported by the Ministry of War to the Ministry of Justice, a lawsuit could not be filed at the time due to a decision to postpone discussing cases and disputes between Ottoman citizens and citizens of some Entente States. According to a letter from the Istanbul Municipality dated 25 January 1922, the Standard Oil Company's warehouse construction was not licensed, so municipal officials tried to prevent it as much as possible, but this time another problem arose. The Standard Oil Company employed Russian journeymen in its warehouse, and the officers had difficulty prosecuting them. The Standard Oil Company continued construction using this circumstance as justification. The municipality could not postpone such contentious

construction for more than fifteen days under Article 53 of the Buildings Law. As a result, it was stated that the construction should not be hampered unless a written order was given by the following Saturday, and because the importance and urgency of the issue were clear, the Minister of Internal Affairs, Ali Pasha, requested on January 26, 1922, that the necessary action be taken as soon as possible.³²

The Standard Oil Company's activities began at the Harem Pier and continued over time. Several notes (verbal or written statements made by a state to another state or to the ambassador of that state on an important political issue) were sent from the Swedish Embassy to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of War on 17 January, 13 July, and 2 August 1922. In 1922, the Standard Oil Company continued its construction at the Harem Pier, particularly by sending notes.³³

On September 25, 1922, a letter was sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Directorate of Political Affairs, from the Ministry of War. The American High Commissioner stated in this letter that the Standard Oil Company should begin construction on the undisputed portion of the land purchased by the Standard Oil Company around the Selimiye Barracks. Furthermore, the American Commissioner stated that it would be in the company's best interest to expedite the proceedings.³⁴

The construction area was limited to military land due to the encroachment of the barracks by the Standard Oil Company, which had purchased some land around the Selimiye Barracks, according to a letter written from the Ministry of War to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on January 17, 1922. The Assembly's decision to dispose of the Standard Oil Company in the contentious location halted the company's operations here until the case was resolved in court. Because the company intended to use the area outside the disputed land, permission was requested in writing from the superintendents, and because the company purchased it legally, the disposition of the

³² BOA, BEO 4704/352780, 21.R.1339/31 Mart 1921

³³ BOA, HR.SYS 2694/2,2.M.1339/16 Eylül 1920

³⁴ BOA, HR. SYS 2694-2

company was also legal. Consequently, it became evident that no obstacle could hinder the company's disposition.

However, because it was adjacent to the barracks and specifically in the city center, and because it was surrounded by wooden buildings, the company did not have permission to build warehouses to collect and store gas and other combustible materials in accordance with Ottoman Empire laws. However, it was stated that the company had the right to a disposition free of legal obstacles. Furthermore, except for the prohibited structures, neither the military nor the municipality prevented the company from constructing any type of building on its land.³⁵

According to a letter written from the Legal Office and Claims Department to the Ministry of War on 8 February 1922, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs took legal action to stop the construction and prevent the encroachment of the Standard Oil Company from building gas storage encroaching on a portion of the Selimiye Barracks. According to the Land Registry Office's investigation, the title deed for the land in question was issued in the name of Monsieur Harbert Lee, the former director of the company. As a result, a lawsuit was filed only on behalf of that director, but because he was not at his residence and he was in the United States, the court decided to make an announcement. The expiration of the time required to resolve the matter, the date on which the court would begin, and the court's decision to halt construction were all subject to various conditions. These conditions were contingent on the presence of both parties in court, as well as the commencement of court in absentia if neither party were present. Because the decision would take time, a letter was sent stating that a lawsuit had been filed at the mayor's request.³⁶

The Standard Oil Company was understood to have illegally built fixed and large pools for oil and gasoline storage in Kuruçeşme and Selimiye, according to a letter sent from To the Ministry of Internal Affairs of State on October 2, 1922. The government, on the other hand,

³⁵ BOA, HR. SYS 2694/2,

³⁶ BOA, HR. SYS 2694-2

formed a commission to investigate the legal aspect of the issue by thoroughly examining the transactions to take appropriate action. This commission wrote the following evaluations:

The construction of the warehouses was created as a result of the license granted by the Istanbul Municipality and the Istanbul Province Administrative Council, and it was decided to identify those responsible and cancel the license due to the actions taken in violation of the law and procedure.³⁷

Monsieur Oskar Kangal requested permission to fill two pieces of shallow ground in the area shown on the map, located between Sütlüce and Serviburnu around Beykoz, and 500 meters off the coast, to use as a warehouse in a letter written to the Council of State on June 28, 1922. The Standard Oil Company damaged the walls of the Selimiye Barracks to build a warehouse around Harem Pier. As a result, the investigations concluded that the municipality exceeded its authority, but despite the involvement of the governorship in the process, no results were obtained. The Standard Oil Company took advantage of the law and ignored the damage it caused to various government properties to construct its warehouses. Despite the Ottoman Empire's desire to take various measures, the situation remained inconclusive.

Fires at the Standard Oil Company

The Standard Oil Company expanded its power within the Ottoman Empire by opening warehouses on Istanbul's shores, it also dealt with problems that arose in these warehouses. In a letter from New York to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the General Manager of the Standard Oil Company, Monsieur Osea, stated that some of the gas, which they taxed in accordance with the laws, was burned in the Galata Warehouse. It was stated that the company's burning of gas was 2,072 ballot boxes, and they cost a total of 1,035 liras, each of which was valued at half a lira. This amount was requested to be repaid to the Standard Oil Company through the Ministry of Internal Affairs,

³⁷ BOA, MV 224/150, 27.S.1341/19 Ekim 1922

according to the fifth article of the regulation on gas storage published by the municipal offices on 17 October 1906.³⁸

In the reply given by the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the headquarters of the Standard Oil Company, it was stated that the gas in the warehouses of the Standard Oil Company was burned in the bombardment of the enemy state, France, by the warship Jeanne d'Arc. The cost of the company's burning of gas was added to the list of damages to be compensated by the French state, but since this cost was removed from the list by the French state, it was stated that there would be no action to be taken by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the compensation petition was returned to the Standard Oil Company.³⁹

According to a letter from the Standard Oil Company's to the Grand Vizier's Office, after construction began on the land purchased by the Standard Oil Company around the Harem Pier, it required communication and investigation due to encroachment on the land belonging to the military and finance ministries. Because the license granted by the municipality for gas storage during the reign of Salim Pasha was illegal and unauthorized, information was sought from the municipality to launch the necessary investigation against the members of the municipal committee who authorized the operation. After the examination made by the Civil Inspectors, it was stated that, according to the Gas Storage Regulations, while the authority to grant a license to the storage facility belonged to the Governorship of Istanbul, an unauthorized license was given by the municipality, and therefore this storage license would be canceled first. It would not be legally possible to issue a construction permit for warehouse buildings due to the failure to obtain a valid storage license from the competent authorities, and so the construction permit would also be deemed invalid. The construction of the Harem Pier warehouse of the Standard Oil Company was canceled. Although there was no legal authority for the company's potential compensation for damage and loss, it was stated that the individuals who granted the construction license should be

³⁸ BOA, DH. UMVM 99/12, 23.Za.1333/2 Ekim 1915

³⁹ BOA, DH. UMVM 99/12

compensated.⁴⁰ Due to the difficulties encountered, it was decided to amend the Gas Storage Regulations of 17 October 1906.

Because the city of Istanbul could not be compared to other cities, and the municipality was already responsible for duties and authorities such as fire prevention, warehouse inspection, and confiscation of liquid substances over the limit specified in the regulations, it was proven that the municipality should be given the authority to grant a license for the gas storage facility.

Gas Storage Regulations in the Ottoman Empire and the Standard Oil Company

The first article of the Gas Storage Regulation, dated 17 October 1906, stated unequivocally that gas storage would be constructed outside of the city borders. According to the fourth article, merchants could only build private warehouses to protect their goods if they obtained a government license for the location and manner of construction and if they were under the permanent control of the municipalities. Firstly, the government, namely the Istanbul Governor's Office, Parliament, and the provincial administrative council in Istanbul, held the authority to grant a license for the construction of gas storage, and therefore, any actions taken by the municipality without a license were deemed void.

Another letter received from the municipality regarding the change and improvement of the process of issuing licenses for the gas storage facility stated clearly that the authority to grant a license belonged to the government in the fourth article of the Gas Storage Regulation dated 17 October 1906. Since the city of Istanbul could not be compared to other cities, and the municipality was already responsible for duties and authorities such as fire prevention, warehouse inspection, and confiscation of liquid substances over the amount specified in the

⁴⁰ BOA, DH. UMVM 99/29, 23.S.1341/10 Ekim 1922

regulations, it was decided that the municipality should be given the authority to grant a license for the gas storage facility.

To begin with, because the authority to grant a license for the construction of gas storage was held by the government, namely the Istanbul Governor's Office, Parliament, and the provincial administrative council in Istanbul, actions taken by the municipality without a license had to be considered null and void.

If the Governorship of Istanbul granted licenses for the construction of gas storage within the city limits, in violation of the first article of the warehouse regulation, such licenses should also be deemed invalid.

Because those who gave licenses without authority and in violation of the regulations should have been held accountable after an investigation, it was only natural that the compensation due to the withdrawal of such licenses belonged to those who were found to be legally liable.⁴¹

The developments with the Standard Oil Company forced the administration to take several measures. Initially, the administration amended the Gas Storage Regulations, believing there was a gap in the legislation.. Because the Standard Oil Company obtained a license through some licensing irregularities, the licensing authority was transferred to the Istanbul Governor's Office. However, the Civil Inspection Board attempted to avoid conflict by collecting compensation from those responsible for the company's loss after the Standard Oil Company filed a compensation lawsuit.

The Civil Inspection Board decided to investigate the compensation lawsuit filed by the Standard Oil Company and subsequent developments while the case involving the company was still ongoing. The Civil Inspection Board prepared reports for the municipality on September 10, 1921, and September 21, 1921. Because the large warehouses established by the Standard Oil Company in Selviburnu near the Harem Pier were licensed by the municipality although they were not authorized to provide licenses, the following decisions were

⁴¹ BOA, DH. UMVM 99/29

made in these reports: First of all, the Standard Oil Company began construction of its warehouse in the Harem region only after obtaining a permit from the municipality. So much so that, in accordance with the Gas Storage Regulations, licenses for gas storage had to be granted to the traders by the governorship upon the Board of Directors' decision, provided that the location and construction were continuously under municipal control. However, by obtaining the license from the municipality, the Standard Oil Company did not comply with this regulation. As a result, it was decided that the license should be deemed invalid.⁴² Second, according to the Gas Storage Regulations, gas storage facilities could only be built outside of the city. It would have been inappropriate for the Governorship of Istanbul, which was authorized to issue such a license, to grant a license for the construction of warehouses within the city limits. Thirdly, regarding the municipality's construction license for warehouse buildings, the licensing procedures for the Standard Oil Company's warehouse in the Harem Pier had to be handled by the Governor's Office. Because the municipality was not authorized to issue a license for the construction of warehouse buildings, it was decided that the construction permit should be revoked and the construction should be halted. Furthermore, in relation to the compensation lawsuit filed by the company as a result of the events, the municipality officials who granted the authority were held legally accountable for this compensation and the resulting damage, because they acted outside of their authority and in violation of the regulations.⁴³ The announcement was made in accordance with the Governorship of Istanbul's decisions. Additionally, it was stated that the municipality should take the necessary actions and that any such warehouses that did not have a license from the Governor's Office should be investigated, the findings must be reported, and the necessary actions should be taken.⁴⁴

According to the statement made by the Minister of War in the letter written to the Mayor's Office on October 10, 1922, a lawsuit was filed

⁴² BOA, DH. UMVM 99/29

⁴³ BOA, DH. UMVM 99/29

⁴⁴ BOA, DH. UMVM 99/29

against the Standard Oil Company due to the Standard Oil Company's encroachment on the Selimiye Barracks land. The company, on the other hand, requested a building permit from Sadaret claiming that it only wanted to construct a warehouse on its own property. Parliament decided on 6 February 1922 that the lawsuit filed against the Standard Oil Company had been settled, and the company's boundaries were limited to the amount of land.⁴⁵

Because the Standard Oil Company was an American corporation, the political developments during and after World War I influenced the company's behavior. Inter-institutional communication, for example, changed as a result of the change in Istanbul's political situation following the Armistice of Mudros.

Following the Armistice of Mudros, correspondence between the British Foreign and War Ministries began to control the assigned personnel and authorities in Istanbul. Following negotiations on November 6, 1918, it was decided to appoint Admiral Calthorpe as the High Commissioner of Istanbul, Admiral Richard Webb as the Deputy High Commissioner, and Acting High Commissioner in Calthorpe's absence. Aside from these two high-ranking officials, it was decided to add two or three more experts to assist in carrying out the diplomatic aspect of their duties, and to provide advice and information as needed. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed Admiral Calthorpe on 8 November 1918, that he had been appointed as the High Commissioner of Istanbul.

Establishment of the American High Commission in Istanbul

The United States of America attempted to increase its influence in the region with its policies focused on the Near and Middle East at the turn of the twentieth century, and they attempted to play a different role than its other allies in the new conjuncture formed after World War I. The United States of America had entered the war on the side of the Entente Powers in the final stages of World War I, and like its allies, established its high commission in Istanbul after the war. It was critical to determine whether the USA would be given the same status as its

⁴⁵ BOA, DH. UMVM 99/29

allies in the occupation administration that was established in Istanbul. The USA did not want to send a military force to the planned occupation administration of the Straits and Istanbul. While sharing Ottoman lands, the Americans also took a different approach than their other allies. As the fourth ally with equal rights, it meant rethinking and restructuring all plans for Britain, France, and Italy. As a result, it was considered that the American High Commissioner to Istanbul should have a different status than the other Allied High Commissioners. After the three allied states took action to appoint a high commissioner to Istanbul, the USA began to verbalize its main intentions. Their allies thought that it was more appropriate for the USA to send a representative to Istanbul rather than a High Commissioner with the same status.⁴⁶ Over time, the American government began to see the value in appointing a representative to Istanbul. On 30 November 1918, Lewis Heck was appointed as the American High Commissioner in Istanbul. Heck was dismissed from his position as American High Commissioner in May 1919, and Gabriel Bie Rawndal took his place. In contrast to other allies, the USA sent American aid organizations to Turkey.

By 1919, the American High Commissioner's sole duty was to gather information about the Ottoman Empire. Using the Swedish Embassy, he would defend American interests until diplomatic relations with the Ottoman Empire were established. Other states' high commissioners established unilateral relations with the Ottoman Empire for their benefit. However, the USA was differentiated from other allied countries in this regard.⁴⁷

Considering these political developments, the American High Commissioner sent a note to the Swedish Commissioner to be forwarded to the Ottoman Empire, as the American Commissioner was not allowed to meet with the Ottoman authorities directly.

The New York Standard Oil Company bought land of 10.674 cubits (Turkish yards) in the Harem Pier, Üsküdar, in 1915. With a deed dated

⁴⁶ Abdurrahman Bozkurt, İtilaf Devletlerinin İstanbul'da İşgal Yönetimi, İstanbul Üniversitesi SBE Tarih Anabilimdalı, Yayınlanmamış Doktora Tezi, p.40-556

⁴⁷ Standford Shaw, Shaw, Stanford, J.: From Empire to Republic, Volume I, Ankara Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2000, p.117-19

20 September 1915, this land was transferred to Monsieur Herbert Lee Pret, the company's vice president. The abstract of the title was carefully investigated, and it was determined that it did not comply with the correct procedures and rules. The company received this land in 1920, and the abstract of the title was thoroughly investigated and found to be correct and in accordance with the procedures and rules. In 1920, it was decided to establish an oil storage facility on the land in Harem on the condition of obtaining a construction permit, and a license dated 2 August 1920 and numbered 1306 was issued to the company, which included the construction permit for this building. We submitted the building's plans to the relevant officials, and in November 1921, the Governorship of Istanbul granted a construction license.

With this license, the company began building construction in accordance with the plans, but despite numerous applications since then, the continuation of the construction has been denied by government officials. Thereafter, the Ministry of War appointed guards on the designated land and hampered construction. Furthermore, an officer who claimed to be acting under the authority of the municipality intervened in the construction. Following the storm on October 18, 1920, it was necessary to further strengthen the sea wall to protect the land. However, the officers arrested the workers who were sent to the warehouse for repair, and despite the company's applications to the municipality and the Istanbul Governor's Office, no results were obtained. The American High Commissioner then requested that The Porte take this matter seriously and that the relevant authorities be instructed to allow the construction of its building on the Harem Pier in Üsküdar in accordance with the license granted to the company by the Istanbul Governorship.⁴⁸

The Standard Oil Company issued a note to the Ottoman Empire to resolve the issues that arose in the warehouse in Istanbul Harem. A situation assessment was requested from The Porte. The company declared in 1920 that they were constructing on the land with the necessary permits. While the American High Commissioner was delivering this note, Istanbul was under occupation; the company

⁴⁸ BOA,DH.UMVM 99/29

wanted to continue its operations by imposing sanctions and tried every strategy to do so.

Conclusion

Petroleum has been used for various purposes all over the world for centuries. However, with the discovery of its use as an energy source, the importance of oil has grown, and oil races have begun in the world. The race had an impact on the Ottoman Empire over time. The Ottoman Empire identified the oil resources on its territory and prepared reports on them. These reports piqued the interest of major countries such as England and the USA, which attempted to have oil exploration permits in areas where oil was discovered within the Ottoman Empire's borders.

The Standard Oil Company of the USA pursued an expansionist policy on Ottoman lands. The process of obtaining concessions, which began in the Ottoman Empire's oil-producing provinces, gradually spread to other provinces.

The company supplied oil to many provinces throughout the Ottoman Empire. However, because it was in an oil race with other major countries within the Ottoman Empire, the Standard Oil Company wanted to expand its dominance in the oil industry by opening warehouses in Istanbul. The process was also influenced by global political and economic developments. The Ottoman Empire's participation in World War I altered the country's political situation. However, to increase its influence in the Ottoman Empire, the company used all means to open warehouses in Istanbul. Beykoz and Harem neighborhoods on the coast were selected as warehouse locations to facilitate trade. Large tracts of land were allotted in these areas, and even state-owned land was encroached upon. Based on these illegal circumstances, the Ottoman Empire used its authority and attempted to restrict the operations of the Standard Oil Company's operations.

The Ottoman Empire wanted the Standard Oil Company to limit its activities in the country to meeting the nation's oil needs. However, the Standard Oil Company continued its operations by circumventing the laws in various ways to maintain the oil supply and to increase its market share by exploiting the political conditions of World War I.

Although the Ottoman Empire implemented various measures regarding oil in the 19th century, due to the loss of its territories and World War I, it was forced to rely on the United States for its oil needs. After establishing market dominance in its own country, the American oil company Standard Oil established storage depots in Istanbul, the capital of the Ottoman Empire. These depots were strategically located near the ports in the Harem and Beykoz districts of Istanbul. There were also instances where the Ottoman Empire's gas storage laws were not followed. Over time, attempts were made to expand the existing depots illegally. While the Ottoman Empire attempted to intervene in Standard Oil, we learn from Ottoman archive documents that the company capitalized on the difficulties arising from World War I and exploited political vacuums to expand its depots.

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