



BAYRAMIÇ MGÇ ANATOLIAN HIGH SCHOOL
ERASMUS+ PROJECT PERSONAL STUDENT REPORTS

*THE STATUS OF THE STUDENTS IN
WORLD WAR I*



ÇANAKKALE AND THE STUDENTS

“We buried a university in Çanakkale.”

Mustafa Kemal

The Dardanelles campaign is the most important front line of the Great War from the perspective of Turkish history. Turks won a certain victory in Çanakkale but lost many of its educated youth there. In 1908 when the Young Turks took the power from Sultan, their first job was to send off more than thousand officers out of service under the pretexts of age and failure. These officers were supposed to support the Sultan regime. As the war started, Turkey declared the mobilisation and needed officers for the newly created military units. However, there weren't enough officers to meet this need. So, they decided to recruit students from Darül Fünun (the only university in Ottoman Empire at that time). After through a short training, these students were sent through front-line to serve as reserve-officers or lieutenants.



Volunteer Students at Gallipoli

Many historians call Çanakkale Wars as “Officers War” because o the number of reserve officers conscripted and their casualty rate was quite high. Technology and military equipment failure during the war created a disadvantageous situation for the Turkish side. Heavy casualties because of artillery shelling and bayonet charge increased the demand for fresh units and new officers. After a very short training, new students were put forward to the frontline. After the increasing casualties of May 19, 1915 high school senior students (last grade student) across the country were recruited as sergeants. When we take the volunteer students into account, the recruitment age fell down to fifteen.

Istanbul University medical students were enlisted as volunteers and many of them lost their lives on the offensive conducted on May 19, 1915. In addition, the school were closed because almost all school students were sent to the front and the building was used as a military hospital. These students had a short army training and were sent to the front to perform either in the field hospitals or at the front line.

In 1916 all high school seniors were recruited, and no one was eligible to start at Medical School. Therefore, the Cabinet of Ministers made a law that allowed Medical School to receive students without the condition of high school diploma. So the holidays were kept short in order to keep up with the program.

Galatasaray Lisesi, which is the oldest school of Turkey, had 60 graduates in 1912; however, the number fell dramatically during the WWI. It had 18 graduates in 1915, 4 in 1916 and 5 in 1917. All remaining students were either martyr or veterans at Dardanelles.in 1916, Balıkesir High School gave 98 martyrs at Dardanelles In 1917, the same school gave only two graduates. Sivas High School students who were going to the Dardanelles in 1915 wrote "Sir, we're going to the Dardanelles. Pray for us." on the board. Unfortunately, that school had no graduates the same year. Many school across the country had to send its students to war. Çanakkale High School was closed in that period and sent the remaining students to the neighbouring city, Edirne.



Galatasaray and Istanbul Boys School sent most of their students to Çanakkale

Among these schools Galatasaray High School had a distinct place. First started in 1480s during the era of Bayezid the Second, Mekteb-i Sultani changed its name as Galatasaray Lisesi after the republic era and has been the country's opening window to the west. The boys who finish this school were sent to Europe to complete their education and take important responsibilities in the high ranks of the state. When these well-trained boys were recruited, they were given important missions behind the lines as they were good at foreign languages. However, many of them volunteered to fight in the battle front and died.

The end of the WWI meant the end of the Ottoman Empire as well. The country was shared among the victorious side and a little land piece were left for the Turks in the Mid-Anatolia. Upon the revolt of Turkish nation under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal, the national hero of modern Turkey enabled them to establish a new state from the ashes of an empire. Turkey, turning its face to the West, made many reforms. The major problem was the lack of educated people who would adopt and explain to the grassroots. To explain the benefits of a modern and secular state to the people who lived as the subjects of a Sultan for centuries was a tough job and the new state frequently experienced a lot of difficulties. Mustafa Kemal focused on the problem by pointing out the loss of educated people at Dardanelles and said "We buried a university in Çanakkale."



Volunteer Students from Istanbul High School