

Istanbul, 1934



Galatasaray Square



Taksim Square



Karaköy. (Trams coming from Galata Bridge)

Photos: Salâhaddin Güz

Public and Private Turkish/Islamic Schools	452
Jewish Schools	11
Armenian Schools	36
Greek Schools	53
French Schools	29
Italian Schools	10
American Schools	5
British Schools	2
Austrian Schools	2
Bulgarian Schools	3
German School	1
Iranian School	1
Yugoslavian School	1

And further on the author summarizes the history of the city: "In 658 BC, emperor Byzas of Megara was ordered by an oracle to found a city across 'the city of the blind'. At the time, the area that we now call Kadıköy was inhabited by the Khalikidonians. And Byzas, upon seeing these Khalikidonians not notice the Sarayburnu hills (where now the Topkapı Palace is situated) right across the Bosphorus, was surprised that they did not found their city there, at such a beautiful spot. He just couldn't understand their way of reasoning, and reached the conclusion they indeed were blind to the beauty of nature. So he founded a city on the opposite shore.

Cüneyt Ayrıl

You may now be in Istanbul for a variety of reasons: business, pleasure, out of curiosity or maybe just because it was on your way. You probably feel some sort of an excitement. Why, you are a mere ten minutes away from the giant continent of Asia! And should you decide to do so, you can shuttle away between two continents as many times as you want on a single day! You can

even swim your way across to another continent!

What is it that makes Istanbul so exciting, so interesting? As an 'Istanbulian' born and bred, I could cover reams in answer to such a question. I could come up with many reasons some of which, I admit, would be exaggerated, and only some, truthful, why I love this city.

The other day, I came across a

book at a second-hand bookhandler's. It was an out of print book. (Shouldn't have been.) Even might be considered an antique! And it was just an ordinary city directory. A book with the names of all the streets, with maps, with lists of hotels, places to see... Such extraordinary effort to compile all that, come to think of it!

This book has the date January 1st, 1934 on the cover. And on

page 181, it says in old fashioned Turkish: "Istanbul has been the cultural center of the Turks for five centuries. And because of its historical background and high population; because the only university, the highest school there is, is situated here until the one in Ankara is completed; because of the presence here of the trade schools, Istanbul will keep on being the cultural center for some time to come."

One senses a degree of suspicion in the article towards the establishment of the capital in Ankara! — even a slight resentment perhaps... and a just evaluation of the fact that Istanbul was the cultural capital of the country.

Let us take a look into the book and see what kinds of schools there were, and how many of each, in Istanbul, the center of Turkish cultural activity at the time.

Istanbul acquired the quality of a metropolis at the time of Constantinus the Great, the Roman emperor. He established this city as the second capital of the empire on May 11th, 330 AD. Thus the capital of the Byzantines was given a new name from then on, and called the 'city of Constantinus' or Constantinopolis.

First the Arab Muslims and then the Turks laid nine sieges around Istanbul, the first taking place in the

sixth century. None of them were succesful though, as the walls built by Romans could stand up to all hosts. It was with the use of cannons that they could be brought down. And the young Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II. (the Conqueror) made use of this new invention when he laid the last siege on April 9th, 1453 and indeed captured the city on May 29th, 1453. He established it as the new capital of the Ottoman Empire, 1123 years after it was first founded. It is an interesting fact that both the foundation of the city and its changing hands have occurred in the month of May, the most beautiful month of the city.

The city of Istanbul has served as capital continuously for 1467 years!

Well, who are the inhabitants of this city, and where have they come from?

The Khalikidonians of the Asian side and the Byzantine Greeks are the original settlers. Then the Ottomans brought in Greeks from the Peloponessus, Jews from Thessaloniki, Albanians, Armenians from Tokat and Sivas, Turks from Bursa and Tire, Pontus Greeks, Smyrnians, Levantines etc.; in short people from all over the empire to give the city the cosmopolitan quality it now has.

The Turkish population, the new masters of the city, were mainly employed in the more 'honourable' professions such as government and military service, while the others worked as tradesmen, artisans; in short, in the productive side of the city life.

According to the census of 1927, Istanbul had a population of 690,857 out of which 447,851 were Turkish and 243,066 were non-muslim ethnic minorities and aliens."

On May 10th, 1932, the construction of buildings in wood was prohibited in Istanbul, and those that were already built were to be taken under state protection



Taksim. The spot ETAP Marmara occupies now.

and renovated.

On page 168 of our source book, speaking of 1933, it says: "Istanbul is growing daily with the addition of new buildings in stone and as a result of this, the housing problem is being solved and the rents are going down." Despite the 53 years that have passed since the publication of those lines, the writer of these, today, is of the exactly opposite opinion.

In 1930, the total number of all motor vehicles in Istanbul was 2,270. In 1932 there were 38,988 persons engaged in commerce and there were a total of 563 factories, plants, workshops in the city. The number of associations was 377, one of them being, "Association for the Employment of Women". The total number of volumes of books in public libraries at the time, was around 500,000.

Why does Istanbul excite one so?

One's grandfather or maybe his mother could have passed through this city. And maybe among all these cobblestones there remains from them something one will recognize.



Taksim Cinema -still there!

One is sure to find something of one's own culture as one walk its streets. Istanbul is a city of everything and a city for everyone. Once you've been here you, inescapably, will be an "Istanbulian" because you will have added something of yourself to the 'cosmopolis'. □

