

**ОСОБЕНОСТИ В ПОДГОТОВКАТА НА ШКОЛНИЦИТЕ  
ОТ ШКОЛАТА ЗА ЗАПАСНИ ПОДПОРУЧИЦИ  
ПО ВРЕМЕ НА ПЪРВАТА СВЕТОВНА ВОЙНА (1915 - 1918)**

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***SPECIAL FEATURES OF CADETS' TRAINING FROM RESERVE SECOND  
LIEUTENANTS SCHOOL DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR (1915 – 1918)***

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*Abstract:* This report, based on original archive papers, focuses on Reserve Second Lieutenants School functioning after Bulgaria joined the First World War to its end. During research period training institution vastly spreads out as well as executes essential educational tasks in order to ensure young officers command cadre for the needs of war. Significant features in cadets' training concept related to increased number of students, decreased term of training, introduction of innovations in warfare means and military art of war and, not on last position, actual military conflict lessons learned.

*Key words:* Reserve Second Lieutenants School, training specifications, short preparation term, warfare innovations, actual lessons learn and military records.

Reserve Second Lieutenant School was opened in 1901 and for more than twelve years implemented the specific task to prepare young officers for the need of the Reserve for the Armed Forces. One of the special features of the 1915 – 1918 period was that, according to Army Staff Prescription № 2734, dated September 9, 1915<sup>220</sup>, from the same day to the end of First World War, the **Reserve Second Lieutenants School** merged with and went under the command of the Military of His Majesty School<sup>221</sup>, the latter being renamed “Military of His Majesty School and Reserve Second Lieutenants School”. The output process for cadets' education during the war continued, which process met the needs and requirements for reserve officers for the

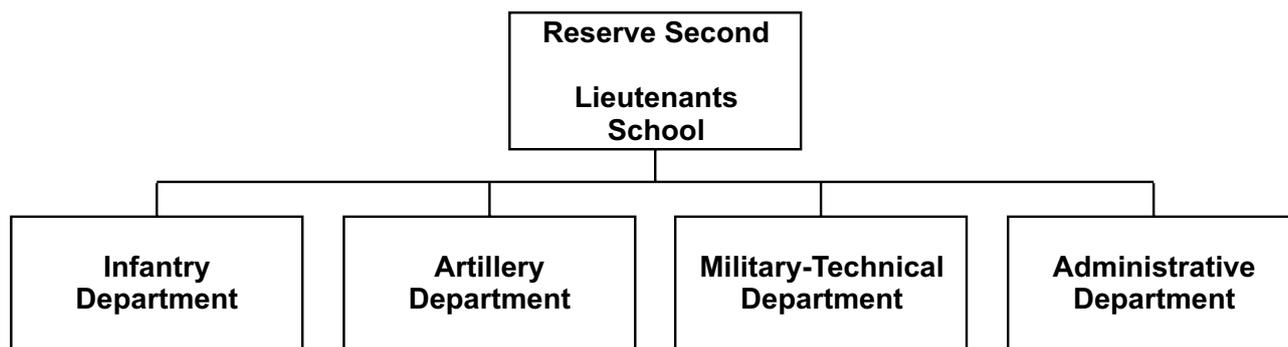
<sup>220</sup> The report is basically built up mostly on military archival records, researched by the Military School, Military Education Institutions Section at the General Staff and Active Army Headquarter (HQ) archival fonds for the studied period extracted from State Military Historical Archives. According to the “RULES ON THE ORDER AND ORGANIZATION OF THE USE OF ARCHIVAL RECORDS IN THE ARCHIVES STATE AGENCY” (Approved by Order No. 48/24 March 2015, amended and supplemented by Order No. 99/25 June 2015), the military records are organized on archival fonds, inventory and archival units. The following References of the Records scheme for quotation and reference in the report is used, applying short redundancy letters: SMHA (State Military Historical Archives), f (for the fond's number); i (for the inventory's number), a. u (for archival unit) and p (for used page).

<sup>221</sup> SMHA, f. 1521, i. 1, a. u. 237, p 2. Military Academy in Bulgaria is called Military of His Majesty School shortly known as Military School with the basic mission to educate regular cadets, graduated as second lieutenants for the needs of active units in the Armed Forces.

Army Reserve as well as for the battlefields of the active war<sup>222</sup> [1].

The Reserve Second Lieutenants School was task organized by **two groups**.<sup>223</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Regular Cadet's Battalion was the main unit for the Military School, while **2<sup>nd</sup> Reserve Cadet's Battalion**, located in Sofia, included 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> companies. The 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> companies were main tactical units into the **3<sup>rd</sup> Reserve Cadet's Battalion** that was based in Knyazhevo village near the Bulgarian capital. At the begging of the examined period all companies were **infantry** and consisted of four platoons. It is noted that, due to the increasing importance and mass usage of the **machine-gun and artillery unit** in the combat operations of the First World War, the number of trainees in these two specialties increased, which in turn led to the **transformation** of some of the infantry into machine-gun companies and artillery batteries [2]. The same process is valid for the important necessity of engineer and administrative young reserve second lieutenants. The war course and specification as well as the increasing need of new military specialties usage namely continuously changed the main structural body of the school. Structurally, the educational establishment of the **Reserve Second Lieutenants School** expanded during all the researched period and in 1918 reached four departments, which can be seen on **Figure 1**.<sup>224</sup>

Fig. 1. *Reserve Second Lieutenant School structure*



According to the wartime **C. E.**,<sup>225</sup> a school company had a commanding staff of five officers: a company commander and four platoon commanders with cadets between 160 and 240 people, depending on the number of accepted in the school and 31 lower ranks.<sup>226</sup> The command of the artillery battery was the same, while the cadets were in the order of 200 – 240, the NCOs – 21<sup>227</sup>, the soldiers' unit of 69 soldiers and 99 horses.<sup>228</sup>

A part of the students was filled by **warring into the current war young men** possessing middle and high education. Others were sent by their Regiment Military Commands. During the war the students were trained in the form of **combat and non-combat, but service courses**. Although, according to the war time training plan,

<sup>222</sup> SMHA, f. 1521, i. 1, a. e. 237, p. 302.

<sup>223</sup> The basic task organization for this period for the Reserve Second Lieutenants School is similar to battalion organization, but the "battalion" is called "druzhdina" (in Bulgarian language).

<sup>224</sup> SMHA, f. 1521, i. 1, a. u. 274, p. 131-134; a. u. 307, p. 140.

<sup>225</sup> C. E. is an abbreviation for Crisis Establishment. C. E. represents the structure of the examined institution during the war time period.

<sup>226</sup> Lower rank soldiers are represented by today's soldiers' ranks such as privates and corporals.

<sup>227</sup> NCOs are non-commissioned officers.

<sup>228</sup> SMHA, f. 1521, i. 1, a. u. 237, p. 261.

alumni should be trained for six months, the **duration of the training was shortened** first to less than six and then to four months to train as many commanders as possible [3], [4].

An enormous quantity of students entered into each war-time class. Two numbers are depicted in brackets on the **Figure 2**.<sup>229</sup> The first one is for the received students at the beginning of each training period, while the second concerns the successfully graduated at the end. Different **studying shifts** during the war years were crucial for determining the characteristics of the term and the changes in the teaching process and the active changed task organization of the school during the First World War<sup>230</sup> [5].

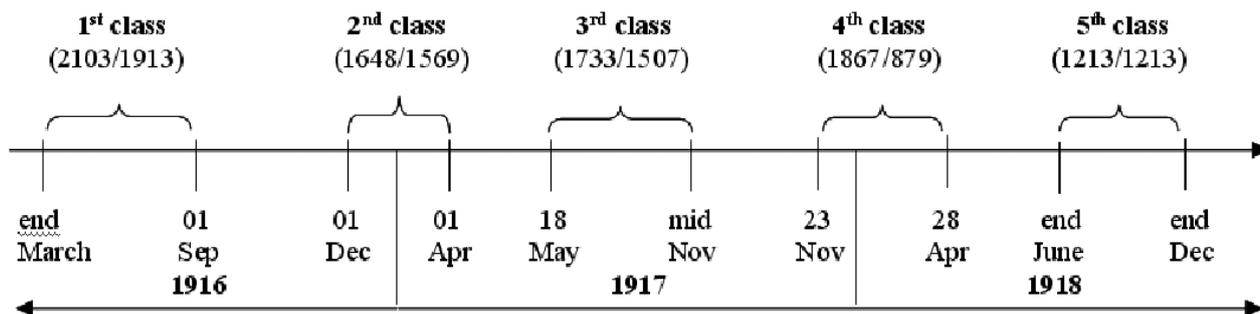


Fig. 2. *War-time classes Time Line with training duration and entered and successfully graduated cadets for the Army Reserve*

Simultaneously with the Army's involvement in the First World War, the teaching process at the Military school and its subordinate Reserve Second Lieutenant School for reserve officers was also undermined [3]. The main focus was on **teaching the lessons learned** from the practice, learning the **experience** of the fighting on different First World War fronts, mastering the **new means** of armed struggle and using the results of own experience. The Reserve Second Lieutenant School Command took a couple of **innovative steps** to adjust the training process in accordance with the new war-time **challenges**.

The first measure was connected with the basic rules in the institution. 'The Service Regulations in the Reserve Second Lieutenant School were **adapted** to the novelties coming by the new real war tendencies and were approved by the Minister of War on 17 March 1915.<sup>231</sup>

On second place, the management **adopted** special program whose content was exclusively new and included all features of First World War. The programme was known as **Programme of Different Studied Subjects in Reserve Second Lieutenants Military School subordinated to Military of His Majesty School in 1916**". The paper pictures all new innovations studied in different subjects.

The **combat course** focuses on the **six main disciplines**: tactics, topography, fortification, administration, military law and small arms fire for the infantry. Instead

<sup>229</sup> SMHA, f. 1, i. 5, a. u. 441, p. 80; f. 40, i. 2, a. u. 1496, p. 456-458; f. 1521, i. 1, a. u. 247, p. 131-134; a. u. 248, p. 27-57, 177-182, 468, 611, 665-713; a. u. 274, p. 226-250, 264, 316-317, 337-376, 452; a. u. 275, p. 229, 478-498; a. u. 293, p. 86-88, 116-148, 156, 164-170, 242-243; a. u. 294, p. 1-16, 32, 116-148, 164-170, 242-243; a. u. 307, p. 175

<sup>230</sup> SMHA, f. 1521, i. 1, a. u. 248, p. 468.

<sup>231</sup> SMHA, f. 1, i. 5, a. u. 432, p. 202

of the last discipline, artillery was studied in the Artillery Department.

**Tactics** were deeply examined by its own basic sections – **elementary and common**. Cadets were educated in the field of elementary science of tactics following: basic characteristics; organization, armament and forms of maneuvers of infantry, machine gun, cavalry, artillery and engineer troops depending of their specialty. The main objects of common tactics concern reconnaissance, march movements, security actions, battle order, actions of infantry, cavalry and artillery and specific combat tasks (night, urban and mountain operations).<sup>232</sup>

The second studied discipline was **topography**. The subject matter of the topography, the coordinates and grids, the scales, the conventional signs and legends, the orientation and the photograph of the area were objects to topography studies. Practical detailing of an **eye-sketch**<sup>233</sup> was the most important part of the subject. An interesting fact is that the soldiers were trained to take a picture of the area on the back of a horse.<sup>234</sup>

**Fortification** was conditionally divided into a **field, an artillery cover, and a practical part**. Field fortification occupies much of the discussed discipline. The theoretical part studied fortification tools and materials; profile, plan and dimensions and comparison of different trench facilities; light blindages. Artillery shelters were an important point and were only taught to students from the Artillery Department (various artillery trenches, natural and artificial obstacles). Everyone was educated about bivouac and camp buildings (tents, dugouts, etc.), military communications, field telephone and signals using flags.<sup>235</sup>

Under **military administration**, attention was paid to filling the army with soldiers, non-commissioned officers and officers; entering all categories of military personnel into the reserve and its purpose; a mobilization action and brief information on neighboring Balkan peninsula armies.<sup>236</sup>

Objects for studying **military law** were the military life and manners (armed forces and their importance, military discipline, subjects of disciplinary regulations), military criminal law, the study of crimes and penalties, formal laws. Military judicial institutions and pre-trial proceedings during war were also passed by cadets.<sup>237</sup>

**Small-arms fire** was only taught to the cadets of Infantry and Field Engineer Department, which later grew up and it is reformed to Military-Technical Department. The subject was separated on three parts: **materiel part, elementary ballistic and infantry shooting training**. Materiel part started with short historical review of the small arms fire development, immediately followed by studying of infantry weapons, magazine rifles, detailed explanations for the **“Mannlicher” gun system**. Military students were made familiar with **the Parabellum pistol and the Maxim machine-gun**. The Elementary ballistics was presented in the form of a brief description of the

<sup>232</sup> SMHA, f. 1521, i 1, a. u. 248, p. 70-72.

<sup>233</sup> The eye-sketch represents a sketch-map which is a rough hasty plan of surrounding area with its specific natural features as landmarks, hills, forests and manmade roads, buildings, bridges, villages, etc.

<sup>234</sup> SMHA, f. 1521, i. 1, a. u. 248, p. 78-79.

<sup>235</sup> SMHA, f. 1521, i. 1, a. e. 248, p. 76-78.

<sup>236</sup> SMHA, f. 1521, i. 1, a. u. 248, p. 79-80.

<sup>237</sup> SMHA, f. 1521, i. 1, a. u. 248, p. 79-80.

bullet / projectile (shell) trajectory, the law of distraction and problem solving tasks. The third section detailed the study of the Infantry Shooting Instruction.<sup>238</sup>

Only the Artillery Department's school cadets for the reserve study the **artillery** divided into **first and second part**. In the first part were studied the types of gunpowder; motion of the projectile in airless and air space; projectile trajectories; distraction; distance measuring methods; a law on dissipation; destructive, percussion, shotgun, and gunfire action of shells; modern artillery systems. According to the schedule, the study of **Shooting Instruction in Fortress Artillery** with the cadets of the fortress platoon and the **Shooting instructions in Field and Mountain Artillery** for the respective specialists were planned. The second part was mainly devoted to practical exercises. During the practical drills, the material part of the firearms and non firearms guns and artillery arms in our country were studied in detail.<sup>239</sup>

**The practical orientation of the content for military wartime** was also applied in the development of the taught material on discipline topics in the **non-battle formation officer's** course.<sup>240</sup> The cadets studied all the six disciplines mentioned above only informatively, without practical training because of their illnesses. The logistic management of the army, the railway infrastructure management, the intendant service, the sources of nutrition and the livelihood of the troops, the wartime troops' ammunition supplying, the sanitary service in the field infiltrates and the hospitals, the request procedure of the requisition orders during country participation in the war were taken under consideration for this category cadets.<sup>241</sup>

As a **general conclusion** from the exploration of the programme, it can be inferred that emphasis was placed on the **practical direction** of studying the subjects during an active war. **The principles of lessons learned** from the practice, practicality and orientation of the study material in **relation to the First World War** features were applied.

The school management took a third set of **adequate measures** to obtain the **best possible quality of education** for the cadets within the short terms. In the case of absence from school lessons of a cadet for more than 30 days, regardless of the reason, he could not graduate from the school.<sup>242</sup> Twelve young soldiers, who had been absent for more than 30 days, dropped out.

Another step was with regards to the increased number of lessons per day. In order to catch up with the study material, **mandatory evening classes** were introduced every working day from 19:45 to 21:00 hours. Classes were held in classrooms under the leadership of a senior cadet.<sup>243</sup> Additionally, a number of admissions took place after the main shift had started the training process. Reaching the training level of the

<sup>238</sup> SMHA, f. 1521, i. 1, a. u. 248, p. 75-76.

<sup>239</sup> SMHA, f. 1521, i. 1, a. u. 248, p. 75-76.

<sup>240</sup> This type of officers' course begins in 1914 year in the Reserve Second Lieutenants School. All entered into the course students have some personal defects and weaknesses which make people disable for some physical activities. The cadets do not take part in drills and field training.

<sup>241</sup> SMHA, f. 4, i. 3, a. u. 121, p. 601-613; f. 40, i. 2. a. u. 1406, p. 5; f. 1521, i. 1, a. u. 248, p. 80-82.

<sup>242</sup> During examined period only men have been entered into the schools and academies in Bulgaria. No available information for female cadets.

<sup>243</sup> SMHA, f. 1521, i. 1, a. u. 248, p. 113, 218.

main group of cadets, the extra admissions took place in four class days in the week.<sup>244</sup> The latter were held three half days a week. One hour a day increased the time for special classes with pioneer cadets.<sup>245</sup>

Because of the little time for the comprehensive training of cadets and the fact that they were sent to the Active Army<sup>246</sup> immediately following their graduation, where they received trained platoons, it was ordered that their common training time be decreased, at the expense of their **combat training**. The classes in the classrooms were consistent with the field, and basic idea focusing on combat training.<sup>247</sup> An important feature of the training process was that there are **no semi-annual rehearsals**<sup>248</sup>, and exams and eye-sketches were taken at the end of the course.

One of the most important moment concerns the focus on **interaction and cooperation**. The cadets were required to have excellent knowledge of the Field Manual of the Bulgarian Infantry, Part II, platoon training and the Statutes for Drill Service as the guidelines of leading documents. All requested knowledge could be applied to the field training, because the procedures of these manuals applied during the ongoing war.

Another interesting fact is that the **readable handwriting** became an important element in the training of students, which was becoming a major concern as a result of the war, as the graduates were about to prepare and respond to various battle documents that were mostly read in the dark and candles in the course of the battle. In connection with the advancement of the war and the lessons learned from it, the study of The Status of the Letters-book in the Armed Forces was introduced. The alumni wrote letters and correspondence and processed their outgoing mail to commands or subordinate structures.<sup>249</sup>

Short-term training required various measures described above, to get the best possible training, but also led to **unfavourable training conditions** and reporting of a number of **weaknesses** in the preparation of the produced reserve officers. There is some evidence that proves this hypothesis. **Military Education Institutions Chief**<sup>250</sup> reports regarding combat training results during the period of the war acknowledged that the preparation was **incomplete** – a result of the excessively shortened war-time training period. The total number of 90 training days for preparation was divided into two equal parts – 45 days for drill and field exercises and the same number for the theoretical classes. If more emphasis had been placed on studying the particularities of the **positional war**, the general mandatory training of the platoon officer would have remained in the background. Time was indispensable for the formation of a commanding officer to acquire the ability to lead a platoon in circumstances of field

<sup>244</sup> SMHA, f. 1521, i. 1, a. u. 248, p. 189.

<sup>245</sup> SMHA, f. 1521, i. 1, a. u. 248, p. 276.

<sup>246</sup> Bulgarian Active Army had led combat actions during the First World War since the country entered into the war.

<sup>247</sup> SMHA, f. 1521, i. 1, a. u. 248, p. 758.

<sup>248</sup> "Rehearsals" in this period in military educational system represent semi-annual exams which cadets before these years had to pass compulsorily.

<sup>249</sup> SMHA, f. 1521, i. 1, a. u. 274, p. 479-480.

<sup>250</sup> Military Education Institutions is a structure that is created a couple of years before, ruled by general as a superior. The basic primary role of this organization is to plan, organize, coordinate and control educational process in Military School, Joint Staff Colleague, Reserve Second Lieutenant School and other military educational organizations in the country.

positional war, and on the other hand, to learn the new technical means of struggle in the **nearby positional battle (smoke and fire gases, bomb blowers and mortars)**. The main measure taken by the Chief of Military Educational Institutions was linked to an increased time in training periods. This was the reason to **increase the preparation time**.<sup>251</sup> This step was followed by a proposal to the Military ministry<sup>252</sup> not to change frequently the teachers and instructors at the Reserve Second Lieutenant School and to send the latest real instructions and orders were using in the course of the war to the school, where the students could study them in advance.

**The weak theoretical and practical preparation** of the last two classes is valid for all graduated NCOs who came out of the school at the end of 1917 and the beginning of the next year. While, according to some military units, the training of cadets for active service from Military school was better than the same for the cadets for the reserve, it was the other way around. Some units believed that there was no difference in the poor preparation of the two groups of military guys, despite the different training periods. Practice confirms that, for only four or five months, the desired end-state on the training of students could not be achieved. **Innovation** was the teaching of tactics to be conducted by the company commander, and the lectures had to be attended by platoon commanders to know what to do in the following field training.

This situation speaks of the **extremely unfavourable circumstances** for the training of cadets for the reserve – there were not enough dormitories and classrooms for the large number of trainees, the winter classes were not particularly effective for the practical training. In times of shortened periods of training in the school, no privates from active and supplementary troops would be admitted into the school if they had not been in the combat formations or had not taken part in the war. If such a person came, he had to run a several months long course of combat or serve at the front and be sent at his commanders' judgment. The illustrative examples prove that the **training was appropriate** at the time and actual situation of the war in which the Kingdom of Bulgaria found itself.<sup>253</sup>

As a result of all the recommendations and taken measures, the curriculum for the disciplines in the school was **updated** and the talks on the topic of the positional war were being discussed.<sup>254</sup> For the implementation of these tasks, different **training ranges were organized** and equipment with appropriate facilities in the area of the training fields: for **mine and bomb training, for trench work**. A course on gas defence, **assault combat and communications** were initiated. **A strong position was built up for the training in positional war**.<sup>255</sup>

During the examined period, emphasis was placed on **tactical training**. Consideration would be given to **changing the settled battle order** of the formations resulting from enemy fire (artillery, smoke, airplane, etc.), the area, the distance to the enemy and the command. While lecturers were required to cover practically all

<sup>251</sup> SMHA, f. 40, i. 2, a. u. 1406, p. 247.

<sup>252</sup> Military ministry is Ministry of Defence nowadays.

<sup>253</sup> SMHA, f. 40, i. 2, a. u. 1496, p. 457-460.

<sup>254</sup> SMHA, f. 40, i. 2, a. u. 1406, p. 249.

<sup>255</sup> SMHA, f. 40, i. 2, a. u. 1406, p. 247-251.

of the material in the programmes, company and platoon commanders had to work on the theoretical postulates during the drill and tactical training of their troops. The influence of the aforementioned causes on the military order of our own troops was examined in detail. With regard to the offensive, at each level, students were taught how to accelerate the platoon's movement to the enemy, how to increase the rate of offensive to master the attack objective faster. Advantageously, in the tactics programme, it was anticipated that **offensive combat would be a major type of battle**, while defence was seen in a very small volume. Machine-gun fire, hand bombs usage, infantry intelligence application, constant contact with the enemy, pursuit and night surroundings offensive actions were some of the most used means and forms in the ongoing war, as these were being studied by military alumni.<sup>256</sup>

The process of discovering innovative time-honored military specialties continued. From April 5, 1917 courses for training and preparing for **artillery observers** and **commanders of acoustic commands** were launched. In the same year twelve cadets were trained in the **telegraphic specialty**, who, after graduation, were used to fill vacancies in radiotelegraphic stations.

Coming to the end of the war in 1918, **lectures** were intensively conducted, whereby new graduates studied the essence of **human personal character**, the need for a **strong type** of character and the methods of its formation. Their further training emphasized this **branch of preparation**, highlighting real examples of fighters possessing lofty, brave and strong character, whose assessment was included in the assessment of behavior. Moreover, the **manifestation of the character for the first time** acquired the power of one of the basic criteria in determining the **assessment of behavior** for everyone.<sup>257</sup>

After the end of the war, with the demobilization announcement, the Military school and the Reserve Second Lieutenant School were also demobilized in November 1, 1918, with the schools going to their peacetime establishments.<sup>258</sup> Reserve Second Lieutenant School **was again separated** from the Military school.<sup>259</sup> The demobilized graduates were fired in an unlimited period of leave (released by finishing their conscript military service), these sets that remained to serve were transferred to the service in their troops. The third group of cadets for the reserve that wanted to continue their education was transferred to the county regiments where they were born and were released as students.<sup>260</sup>

In **conclusion**, it should be said, that the time for preparation decreased extremely – a time when it was **extremely difficult** to fulfill the training tasks of the reserve officers, especially during the war for the country, but the reserve's cadets training was extremely close to the cadets for active service. Summarizing report results, it should be noted that, while the Reserve Second Lieutenant School was closed during the Balkan Wars, it was transformed into the Military School during the First World

<sup>256</sup> SMHA, f. 1521, i. 1, a. u. 275, p. 7-9.

<sup>257</sup> SMHA, f. 29, i. 1, a. u. 1, p. 45-46; f. 1521, i. 1, a. u. 294, p. 95-96.

<sup>258</sup> SMHA, f. 1521, i. 1, a. u. 295, p. 175-182, 195, 198-199, 249-255.

<sup>259</sup> SMHA, f. 29, i. 1, a. u. 1, p. 58, 60.

<sup>260</sup> SMHA, f. 29, i. 1, a. u. 1, p. 58, 60.

War and continued to operate and produce reserve command personnel. Though trained in shorter terms, the schoolmates graduated and filled the necessity of the Active Army and the Reserve during the war with relatively well-built, more practical than theoretical knowledge. For the first time, a wartime system for the preparation of reserve officers in Bulgaria was established and built on the basis of well-established peacetime traditions, taking into account all the peculiarities and innovations introduced in the training during the First World War.

In deduction, the Army HQ took appropriate steps to fill the **shortage of officers**. Five war-time classes went through the school during the war. On tentative data, about **8564** trainees from the most educated and erudite figures in Bulgaria entered into the school, and by the end of the war, about **5868** graduated. The last fifth class consisting of 1213 students ended in the early 1919s after the end of the war. Another specific feature of this war time period is that most of the students were directly **transformed to active officers** immediately after finishing the school, because they were directly transferred to active warring troops on the battlefields.

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