

HERALDS OF THE GYMNASTIC CLUBS “YUNAK” UP TO THE BEGINNING OF THE 20TH CENTURY

(Research note)

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Abstract

In the present work are revealed the prerequisites and the reasons for the appearance of the gymnastic movement in Bulgaria. The accent is put on the fact that the gymnastic exercises are closely connected with the physical preparation of the revolutionaries in the Balkans and have great significance for the resistance and readiness to fight in the crude conditions of revolutionary life. Underlined is the significance of Vassil Levski for the organization of the “gymnastic groups”. Presented are the historic data about the first gymnastic club “Yunak” in Sofia (1895). By one of the Swiss teachers who came to Bulgaria to teach gymnastics, Bulgaria becomes co-founder of the Olympic Games. Described are the reasons for the unification of the different clubs into Union of the Bulgarian gymnastic clubs “Yunak” in Sofia in 1898. Described are the 1st and the 2nd congresses (1898 – 1900) – Sofia, as well as the 1st national meeting – 1900 in Varna, upbringing its members in love to the Homeland.

Keywords: *physical education, physical development of students, classes in gymnastics, physical exercises, International Gymnastics Federation, Olympic games*

INTRODUCTION

About the history of the physical education and the gymnastics mainly write: Tsonkov (Цонков) (1968); Tsonkov & Petrova (Цонков & Петрова) (1976); Mittev (Митев) (1995); Bardareva (Бърдарева) (1992); Bardareva (Бърдарева) (1991); Gevrenova (Гевренова) (1992); Milev & Kotov (Милев & Котев) (1974); Radoev (Радоев), (2010).

Although there are works describing the chronology of appearance of gymnastics in Bulgaria during the time of Revival (by the above listed authors), here we offer the trace of the roots of the performing gymnastics in Bulgaria before the Revival – 17th, 18th and 19th till the beginning of the 20th century.

In pre-revival Bulgaria for use of elements from the gymnastic exercises we can talk at the time of the Chiprovtsi uprising (1688) when the leaders Dean Peyachevich and Luka Andrenin are well acquainted with military education of the Austrian army and they prepare the rebels using preliminary trained horses Newspaper “Third age” (*Вестник „Трета възраст“*) (2010). This gives us the grounds to suppose that there

has been preliminary training on horses – getting on and off static or moving horse which is earlier announced by Flavii Vegetsii.

Aim of the research:

Collecting of genuine data for the use of the gymnastic exercises since the 17th till the beginning of the 20th century.

Tasks:

1. Establishment of most early data for the existence of gymnastic exercises in our lands for this period.

2. Defining the factors which led to the appearance of the exercises with gymnastic character.

METHODS

Review of the specialized literature in the libraries – the National library “St. St. Cyril and Methodius”, the National Sports Academy “Vassil Levski” and the Library of the South-West University “Neofit Rilski”, Blagoevgrad – July 2012.

1. Studying the literature resources. Historical overview of the bibliography of the topic.

2. Studying the existing literature of the topic during the research period.

RESULTS

Walking, jumping, the game with ball and chelik are practiced by: teacher Tony from Rousse – 1770-1830 (Milev (Милев) & Kotev (Котев) (1974), who worked for more than 60 years until the age of 100, breaking the model of the education at that time which “puts the beginning of the school physical education”, around 1815-1820 (Tsonkov (Цонков) (1993), according to Tsonkov & Petrov (Цонков & Петрова) (1976). During one of the Russian-Turkish wars (1828-1829) the volunteer squads of Georgi Mamarchev nearly totally are completed by revolutionaries who every day perform imitation fights, maintaining constantly the physical form (Encyclopedia of Bulgaria (*Енциклопедия на България*) (1997).

The enlightener Peter Hdzhi Berovich (1824) Beron (Берон) (2014) in opinion of Milev and Kotov (Милев & Котев) (1974) recommends “movement against the settled school life”.

The patron of the Blagoevgrad University – Neofit Rilski (1793-1881), being a teacher in Gabrovo (1835) in the first primary school, introduces classes in “testament for health” – care about the physical development of students. Neofit Bozveli in “Short holy history and holy catechism” writes: the body upbringing must be before the spiritual education of child” [40 years Union “Yunak” 1898-1938 (*40 години „Съюз Юнак” 1898 – 1938*) (1939).

The same year under the form of friendly meeting and fun the participants in Velchova conspiracy (April 1835) have had “exercises in shooting and learning to walk in order” Newspaper “The Third Age” (*Вестник „Трета възраст“*) (2010), which in their essence are order exercises (Barshay (Баршай), 1985); Bonchev (Бончев), 1871); Ignatov (Игнатов), 1966) in basic gymnastics (Radoew (Радоев), 2010, 1991).

The first teacher who defines special classes in gymnastics is Ivan Momchilov from Elena school (1843). The first teaching gymnastics in three classes is Naiden Gerov (1846) in Koprivshitsa and the study programme included: Law of God, Bulgarian language, mathematics, general history, geography, natural history, writing, physics and gymnastics (Tsonkov (Цонков), 1993).

In this country the gymnastics is co-introduced by the revolutionaries of Layosh Koshut (1847-1848) and Nikola Stefanov by teaching military exercises at Gabrovo class school (1860-1864).

For the first time in Bulgarian language the word “Gymnastics” is written by P. Slaveikov in newspaper “Gaida” in 1866 – “Gymnastics and physical education are important instrument for the preparation of the young people for the liberation of the Homeland” (Slaveykov (Славейков), 1886), according to Milev & Kotev (Милев & Котев, (1974).

The term “gymnastics” is complex and marks the used means for development and improvement of the basic and supplementary exercises in the educational process.

DISCUSSION

The role of Vassil Levski for building the gymnastic group

With gymnastic exercises dealt the Bulgarian legion in Belgrade (Brdareva (Бърдарева), 1992), under the leadership of Georgi Sava Rakovski. From here comes the pen name of Vassil Ivanov Kunchev – Levskii (jump) (1837 – 1873) “he himself on the cradle and on the ropes making different tricks” (Zaimov (Займов), 1983), according to Milev (Милев) & Kotev (Котев), 1974).

Herald of the organized gymnastic movement in Bulgaria is the organized under the form of “patriotic groups” or “gymnastic groups”, the so called “secret brotherhoods”, created by Levski with explanations about the sense and push for their use during his stay as a teacher in the village of Voinyagovo, region of Karlovo and in the village of Enikyoi (the spring of 1867) and Kongas (today Michael Kogulnichanou), region of Tulcha, Romania (Irchek (Иречек), 1978). He uses in the education: jumping ditches, over jumps, (Kostov (Костов) & Кавдански, 1996) climbing trees (Encyclopedia of Bulgaria (*Енциклопедия на България*), which are the applicable exercises from the basic gymnastics. They are equivalent to the military physical education preparation of the young people for the coming national liberation war. Here is possible parallel between „patriotic gymnastics” of Friedrich Jahn and the “patriotic gymnastic groups” of Levski and not only names but aims are similar – resistance and attack against the enslavers which requires healthy and strong men. This gives grounds to some authors (Tsonkov (Цонков), 1968), according to Tsonkov (Цонков) (1993) to define Levski as “ancestor of the physical education in Bulgaria”

Teachers in gymnastics before the liberation

For the right moral and physical upbringing appeals Drumev (Друмев) (1870) and as physical education Bonchev (Бончев) (1871), according to Brdarev (Бърдарева) (1992) is recommended gymnastics.

Peter Berkovski in Haskovo (1782) actively educates the students with gymnastic exercises on equipment that he constructed himself.

Under the form of gymnastic exercises is given military physical education to the young people and preparation for the coming patriotic liberation processes (Stoyanov (Стоянов), 2007).

In this country the teaching of gymnastics in accordance with the methodology of education penetrates by foreigners – the first appointed teacher in gymnastics in Bulgaria is the Hungarian Kiril Colman Rongier (1869-1871) in Soumen in “painting, geometry and gymnastics” who teaches about 20 years in different cities

(Tsonkov (Цонков), 1993).

In this country during the time of Revival under “gymnastics” has been understood (as it was in ancient times) the performance of any kind physical exercises, with instruments and additional devices (Bozhilov – 1979, according to Barshay (Баршай) (1985), because “gymnastics is not self-aim, but simply way for upbringing”, in opinion of Milev (Милев) & Kotev (Котев) (1974).

Later have been defined (1873) “special gymnastic breaks” by Yossif Kovachev (1873) (Tsonkov (Цонков), 1993) as *prophylactics of curves of vertebral column*.

The first programme for education belongs to him and it was made during the same year.

The first “studious students club” is organized by Nikola Belovezhdiv in 1873/74 in Koprivshitsa. In the afternoons “its members have been going out of the village and conducting different games”. The club had the task to take care of the mental enhancement of the students.

During the liberation Russia-Turkish war the preparation of the Bulgarian volunteers is connected with military, physical and riding exercises.

The Check Vaclav Emler was teacher in Varna (1880 – 1885) and from 4 teachers, one of them is he, was appointed as teacher in gymnastics teaching the Tirsh system (1863). Every student got a mark in gymnastics. Another Check – Bohuslav Gregora was teacher at the same time in Dupnitsa (1880-1881).

In the Kingdom Bulgaria the students from the Second men secondary school founded in 1879 gymnastic club “Bulgarian lion”. The Checks organized club “Bulgarian falcon” (1879) and the church “St. Geogre” becomes the first gymnastic hall in Bulgaria.

In 1880 Russian and Check officers create gymnastic branch to the enlightening association “Slavyanska beseda” (Tsonkov & Petrov (Цонков & Петрова), 1976).

In Eastern Rumelia on 28.11.1879 (Newspaper “Maritsa”) (Вестник „Марица”) from 20.11.1878, is published the statute of the people’s gymnastic club “Eagle”, Plovdiv and is created “Board of trustees of gymnastic shooting clubs “Eagle” against the efforts of Turkey to recover the Turkish power in Eastern Rumelia. For short period of time similar clubs are created in Pazardzhik, Kazanluk as well as “Sea eagle “ – Bourgas, “Falcon” – Haskovo and Yambol, “Lion”, Sliven and others.

Those clubs have been preparing the population for defense purposes. In the training courses passed more than 103 thousand people. The High Gate is angry with the massive large scale military power and the governor Aleko Bogoridi is pushed to close them (30.10.1879), but they continue existing like reserve and play essential role for protecting the Bulgarian in Eastern Rumelia.

In 1880 is created Law for the people’s enlightenment which foresees teaching in gymnastics in primary schools and in 1881 – gymnastics is compulsory subject in the secondary schools.

The International Federation in Gymnastics = Federation International Gymnastique (FIG) is created 1881 – 11 years before the second – in rowing.

In 1883 T. Yonchev publishes in Varna “Gymnastics. Guidebook for teachers” and in 1884 G. Vazov publishes “For the military gymnastics at school and in society” (Milev & Kotev (Милев & Котев), 1974).

In the struggle for the Unification of Bulgaria (1885 г.) are included participants from the gymnastic shooting clubs and many of them take part as volunteers in the Serbian-Bulgarian war.

The Swiss teachers in gymnastics

Gymnastics as separate study discipline is introduced by the 10 Swiss teachers invited by the government (1894) and under this name is identified the programme in physical education at schools and as separate sports discipline – at the end of the 20th century.

The opposition at that time in Bulgaria (after the fall down of Stefan Stambolov) abuses them “being appointed some acrobats as teachers and the gymnastics out of the army is something mean, not according to the pride of the Bulgarian”. But Prof. Oden with arguments unmasks the political attacks without principles of the opposition press, encouraging the Swiss teachers for energetic work (Tsonkov (Цонков), 1993).

The first gymnastic club in Bulgaria is created in Sofia by initiative of Todor Yonchev with the active participation of the Swiss teacher in gymnastics Charles Shampau (21.01.1895) who is elected as first head (technical manager of the club).

Bodymoving club “Falcon” (“Forrest bird”)

At the end of 1894 in Rousse is created bodymoving club “Falcon” with universal features using widely general developing exercises. They are connected with running, jumping, throwing and catching subjects (Radov (Радоев), 2010; Tomov, D., & Tomov, D., (Томов, Д., & Томов, Д., 2005); Tomov, D., & Tomov, D., (Томов, Д., & Томов, Д., 1999), used except in gymnastics, track and field events, as well as in some games with small [Tomov, D., & Tomov, D., (Томов, Д., & Томова, Д., 2004) and big balls. The documentary investigation shows that members of this club met not so much for gymnastics rather than for entertainment – tours with boats on the Danube and organized celebrations.

The factors defining “the development of gymnastics in Rousse are: the port on the Danube, railway Varna – Rousse; the closeness to the Romanian capital Bucharest, the settlement of commerchants and intelligentsia which leads to the development of the economical and cultural life in the town as well as practicing gymnastics (Tsonkov (Цонков), 1993).

In order to recognize the members of the club is made and disseminated badge (made in Vienna) expressing falcon in flight with dumb bells in the nails and four letters C meaning “Free, Brave, Strong, Well-built” which is the motto of the club.

Bulgaria – participant in the first Olympic games

The gymnastics is presented in the first contemporary Olympic games, recovered in 1896 in Greece by idea of Baron Pierre de Kubertaine.

Bulgaria is one of the countries co-founders of the contemporary Olympiads and takes part with 1 gymnastic – the Swiss teacher in gymnastics Charles Shampau and Leader of the delegation Todor Yonchev.

To us the most important is that by gymnastics is put the beginning of Bulgarian Olympics which today



Fig. 1. The badge of Rouse bodymoving club "Forest bird"

with the champion Yordan Yovchev – participant in 6 Olympic games - unique achievement which has no analogue in World gymnastics – marks remarkable development.

After public demonstration (1st gymnastic games, Sofia, 1897) where Shampau shows effective exercises on horizontal bar and this apparatus for long time has been Shampau's. Out of the country gymnastic club "Yunak" is created in the famous "Robert College" in Tsarigrad. In the Western part in Tsaribrod (Godech) is created gymnastic club "Yunak" in 1897 and in 1899 Bosilegrad "Yunak".

Creation of the Union of Bulgarian gymnastic clubs "Yunak"

Reflection of circular letter 4425/16.05.1897 of the Ministry of education is the preparation and conducting Constituent assembly on 15.08.1898 for the unification of the existing clubs into one Union.

The motto of the Constituent assembly is:
„Strength, braveness, harmony, solidarity“

At that time in the gymnastic hall of the State men secondary school, Sofia, under the chair of the distinguished specialist Todor Yonchev, 23 delegates from 13 clubs gather together. There Yonchev declares remarkable speech for the benefit from gymnastics which is platform for the future activity of the Union.

„My aim with those gymnastic clubs is our young

people to be given the chance instead of lasing to take care of distinguishing and support of the physical strength... Is he strong, is the man healthy, his generation will be healthy, strong and full of energy.

Gentlemen! Since today you are in charge of your honored position.

To be membership in the club must be the brightest page of all citizens; from the gymnastic field you must take out the best impressions.

Gentlemen! You should try to enhance our gymnastic clubs and to put them high in the society what they deserve (40 years Union "Yunak" 1898) (*40 години „Съюз Юнак“ 1898 – 1938. (1939). 29*].

In this way the Union of the Bulgarian gymnastic clubs "Yunak" was created (after accepting the regulations of the Union).

For first chairman of the Union of the Bulgarian gymnastic clubs "Yunak" is elected Stoyan Zaimov – revolutionary and public figure.

Still on the establishing congress the technical commission headed by P. Belev takes decision not to choose one gymnastic system but to take from others. The exercises constitute two types of gymnastics – personal (individual) and general (massive gymnastic performances). The Union regulations approve the banner, the format and the printing organ.

First "Yunak" congress Sofia 1899.

15-28 August in the hall of hotel "Slavyanska Beseda". The minister of education Todor Ivanchev addressed the meeting declaring "I am amazed by the idea which inspires the yunaks and I wish to have gymnastic groups all over Bulgaria. In order to show how good to me is the yunak idea I apply for membership in the Sofia gymnastic club" [*40 години „Съюз Юнак“ 1898 – 1938*] (40 years Union "Yunak" 1898-1938), 1939).

Second regular "Yunak" congress 1900 - Sofia

The motto is "Homeland, strength, friendship"

It is conducted 15-28 Aug in the gymnastic hall of the Sofia men secondary school represented by 34 yunaks – delegates of 22 clubs. During this year on the conference in Kyustendil the teacher Ivanka Vassileva reads a paper for the benefits of the physical education for the girl and the woman. As a result is formed lady's club with 10 girls yunaks. Apotheoses of the acquired skills are the demonstrations on the yunak's meetings since 1900.

The first general yunak's meeting was in Varna 1900 where the motto is like on the second yunak's meeting: "Homeland, strength, friendship".

It has taken place on 9th, 10th and 11 April – Easter, with the participation of 1360 yunaks and juveniles from all over Bulgaria divided into two categories. Except „free exercises on equipment - horse, in the programme have been included the following disciplines: running with and without hurdles, javelin, throwing stones, high and pole jumps“.



Fig. 2. The emblem of the First general Meeting in Varna, 1900

After the conducting of the meeting the number of members grows. This is due to the fact that the public watching the demonstrations is persuaded on the spot for the usefulness of this kind sport activity.

In the Union "Yunak" in 1900 – 2 years after the foundation, there have been 32 clubs with more than 3000 yunaks and about 5000 juveniles.

CONCLUSION

The Union of the Bulgarian gymnastic clubs "Yunak" since its foundation, during its activity has been upbringing its members in the spirit of physical improvement and moral virtues as well as in Christian values and patriotism.

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