

## **ORIGIN OF GYMNASTICS MOVEMENT BEFORE THE LIBERATION OF BULGARIA (1878)**

*Review*

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### **Abstract**

*In the material are presented the first teachers in enlightening Bulgaria, who included the gymnastic exercises in their work. Special place is devoted to Vassil Levski as organizer of the secret "gymnastic communities" during his teaching activity, making a parallel with the "patriotic gymnastics" of Jan in Germany and Amoreaus in France.*

**Keywords:** *secret gymnastic communities, Vassil Levski, gymnastics chronology, physical development of students, sports equipment, physical exercises*

In before the Bulgaria national revival, toward gymnastic exercises elements usage can be talked for the time of Chiprovtsi uprising (1688), when the leaders G. Peyachevich and Luka Andrenin were well acquainted with the military strategy tactics of the Austrian army and they prepared the participants in the uprising using preliminary trained horse squads (Tsonkov (Цонков), 1993). This gives us the grounds to presume that there has been preliminary exercises on horses – getting on and off on static top and moving horse around, about what earlier authors has been written Flavius Vegetius (Milev (Милев), 1979).

Jogging, jumping, games with ball and tip cat are practiced by teacher Tony from Rousse 1770-1830, for more than 60 years reaching the age of 100, breaking the model of education at that time, establishing beginning of the school physical education around 1815-1820 (Tsonkov (Цонков), 1993). The general military preparation is carried out by the teacher Hristo in Gorna Dzhumaya (Blagoevgrad) around the 30-ties of the XIX century. During one of the Russian-Turkish wars the volunteer squads of Georgi Mamarchev were mainly completed by the haidutis (1828-1829), who experienced every day imitation of fights keeping themselves in good physical condition.

Beron (1824) recommends movements against the "settled school life" (Tsonkov (Цонков), 1993) which are good against hypodynamia (Tsvetkov (Цветков), 2012) and obesity (Gospodinov (Господинов), 2012 a).

*The patron of the Blagoevgrad university Neofit Rilski (1793-1881), when being a teacher in Gabrovo (1835) in the first public school, implemented classes of "heritage in health" which cared about the physical development of students (Gospodinov (Господинов), 2011). Neofit Bozveli in his "Short holy history and cathahisis" (Belgrade, 1835) wrote: the body education should be before the mental education of art" (Dokova (Докова), 2010). The same year in the form of friendly meetings and fun, the participants in Velchova zavera (April 1835) have been trained in gun shooting and walking in military order (Glushkova, Popova, Glushkov, & Gramatikova, 2014), which in its essence were exercises from the basic gymnastics.*

The first teacher, who defined special classes in gymnastics is Ivan Momchilov from Elena - "factory for

teachers" (1843). He also defined the significance of the health functions of gymnastics (the physical education). The first teacher in gymnastics in the three classes was Naiden Gerov (1846) in Koprivshitsa and the study programme included: God's Code, Bulgarian language, mathematics, general history, writing, physics and gymnastics.

In this country gymnastics was brought by the revolutionaries of Layosh Koshut –1848, (Bardareva (Бърдарева), 1991) and in 1860-1864 – Nikola Stefanov in Gabrovo public school taught military exercises, applicable in most of the sport disciplines (Lekina, 2014)

For the first time the word "Gymnastics" was written by Slaveikov (Славейков, 1866) (100 years Bulgarian gymnastic federation. (100 години Българска федерация Гимнастика). In Bulgarian., underlying that "gymnastics and physical education were very important for the preparation of the young people for the liberation of the Homeland, (Slaveikov (Славейков), 1866).

Gymnastic exercises were a part of the activities of the Bulgarian Leagues in Belgrade (1862, 1867-68) under the leadership of Georgi Rakovski, from where comes the pseudonym of Vassil Ivanov Kunchev – Levski „when he makes different acrobatics on the swings and on the ropes" (Zaimov (Заимов), 1985)..

The forerunner of the organized gymnastic movement in Bulgaria was organized under the form of "patriotic group" or "gymnastic community" of the so called "secret brotherhoods" created by Levski with explanation for the sense and impulse for their use during his work as a teacher in Voynagovo, the region of Karlovo (1864-66) and in the village of Enikyoi (spring of 1867) and Kongas (nowadays Michael Kongalnichani - Romania), (Tsonkov (Цонков), 1993). Having an educational function (Dokova (Докова), 2010) they are introduced to exercise from an early age (Dimova & Bacheva (Димова, & Бачева), 1985) in which conditions are created for development of power motor abilities (Doncheva Pacheva & Gramatikova (Дончева, Пачева, & Граматикова), 2014) - care for physical development of the students, which must involve the parents (Gospodinov (Господинов), 2012b). „The gymnastic community" were equivalent to the military-physical preparation (talim – Turkish) of the young people for the growi-

ng national liberation war.

Here a parallel can be made between the “patriotic gymnastics” of Friedrich Jan in Germany and F. Amoreaux in France (19<sup>th</sup> century), as well as Sokolsko movement in Slavonic Central Europe at the beginning and in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century “patriotic gymnastic communities” when not only the names, but also the aims were similar – response in invasion and attack against the enslavers for which healthy and strong men were necessary. This gave the ground to some authors – (Tsonkov (Цонков), 1958). As for the realization of motor skills, experience and personal qualities (Nikolov, (Николов), 2014) of gymnastic exercises given military physical training of youth with educational functions (Dokova, (Докова), 2011, 2010) and preparation for their huge debts patriotic liberation processes, defined by Vassil Levski as “a forerunner of the physical culture in Bulgaria”, with which we fully agree.

In this country the teaching in gymnastics accompanied with the methodology was introduced by foreigners – the first appointed teacher in gymnastics in Bulgaria was the Hungarian Kiril Kolman Ronge (1869-1871) in Shoumen in “painting, geometry and gymnastics” which he taught for more than 20 years in different towns. These exercises serve to increase the level of General physical training in differentiation of education (Lekina Лекина (2010), and prevention of joint disease (Petrova (Петрова), 2010).

In Bulgaria during the Revival, under “gymnastics” was understood (as it was in ancient times) the performance of all kind of physical exercises, with, (Petrova (Петрова), 2015) and without appliances and assistive devices, with small (Tomov & Tomova (Томов & Томова), 2004,1999) and big balls, etc. as a part of the ancient harmonious education (Mitev (Митев), 2014).

The term “gymnastics” was complex and includes a means for development and improvement of the basic and auxiliary exercises. (Kinov (Кинов), 2014, (Petrova (Петрова), 2010) in the learning process in physical education, mastering the technical priomi (Lekina (Лекина), 2014) and the acquisition of knowledge of the physical education and sport. Later were defined (1873) “special gymnastic breaks” by Yossif Kovachev (1873) *for prophylactics of the spinal curvature*. (Mitova, Popova, & Gramatikova), 2014).

The first study programme for education in gymnastics was his work dating the same year.

The first “studious students group” was organized by Nikola Belovezhdov 1973/74 in Koprivshitsa. In the day afternoons “the members” have been coming out of the village and have been playing different games. The group had the task to take care for the spiritual enhancement of the students (Milev & Kotev (Милев & Котев), 1974)

During the Russian-Turkish liberation war the preparation of Bulgarian volunteers was familiarized with the military-physical and horse riding exercises.

The Czech Vatslav Emler teaches in Varna (1880 – 1885) and he was one of 4 teachers that were appointed as teacher in gymnastics using the Tirsh system (1863). Another Czech – Bohuslav Gregorais was teaching at the same time in Dupnitsa (1880 – 1881) gave mark to every student for his success in gymnastics, an attempt to search for an objective evaluation of sports technique. (Serafin, Maronski, & Kornecki, (1990).

In the Principality of Bulgaria, the students from Sofia secondary men school in 1879 founded gymnastic group named “Bulgarian lion”. The Czechs founded the „Balkan eagle” group (1879) and the church “St. Georgi” became the first gymnastic hall in Bulgaria.

In 1880 the Russian and Czech officers founded the gymnastic branch of the educational group „Slavyanska beseda”.

In Eastern Rumelia on 28.11.1879 is published the statute of the people’s gymnastic group “Eagle” and in 1879 in Plovdiv is created an Administration of the gymnastic - archery groups “Eagle” against the aims of Turkey to restore the Turkish forces in Eastern Rumelia. For a very short time similar groups were founded in Pazardzhik, Kazanluk, as well as “Sea Eagle” in Bourgas, “Sokol” in Haskovo and Yambol, “Lion” in Sliven and others, toward education in patriotic and humane values. (Mitev (Митев), 1995).

Those groups were preparing the population for defence. The temporary Russian management gave 70 thousand guns type “krimki” and 103 thousand people have been trained for their usage. The Government was angry from this large scale military force and the governor Aleko Bogoridi was forced to close it. (30. 10. 1879), but they continued to exist as a reserve and they played a significant role for preservation of the Bulgarian power in Eastern Rumelia.

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