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The Intellectuel Life Of The Bulgarians In Macedonia

Jeux olympiques organisés à Bitolia le 2 Août 1916 à l'occasion de l'anniversaire de la Grande insurrection de 1903.

Athletic games in Monastir on August 2, 1916 in observing the annual celebration commemorating the great Macedonian insurrection of 1903.

The Gymnastic Societies in Macedonia.

They sprang up simultaneously with the Young Turkey upheaval in 1908, as the result of which at the beginning more favourable conditions for a freer life of culture were created within the entire Ottoman Empire. Up to that date the Sultan's authorities persecuted even the most innocent educational enterprises as being incosistent with the patriarchal immobility of the empire. In every young people's association the tools of Hamid were detecting a political conspiracy and persecuted it with all the vebemence of the police laws. It was for this reason also that the Macedono-Bulgarian youth preoccupied all its spiritual and intellectual forces in the secret all-national association — the revolutionary organisation. The constitution of 1908 insured seemingly at least wider intellectual and political liberties and along with the strictly national and political organisations, it brought forth into life also a great many purely intellectual and educational enterprises. One of them was the grouping of the stanch young Bulgarian generations into gymnastic societies.

Longing for larger space, freer air and greater joy, the Bulgarian young

people throughout Macedonia, immediately after the above-mentioned upheaval, undertook the organisation of gymnastic societies. And within a short period of 3 to 4 months there were already sprightly and tidy gymnastic groups in almost all the town centers of Macedonia. They developed not only for the benefit and joy of the young people themselves, who through them were developing and strengthening their muscles, in order that some day they may become worthy and healthy citizens, but also for the joy and the hope of the expiring generations, who had their bodies crushed down in their unequal fight against the existing political bondage.

According to the By-Laws, their mission, as that of all gymnastic associations, was to develop the physical forces of the young people and to maintain in that manner an active vitality and a spirit of collectivity, so necessary in their future civic life.

Gradually, in all Bulgarian towns were to be noticed gymnastic excursions, gymnastic games and exhibitions and the old fathers were happy to observe with tears of joy in their eyes the rapid development of their offspring, concieved in struggles and misery. The geater the faith in the national future which the sprightly and long files of young people aroused within the soul of the Bulgarian, the greater was the jealosy and disquietude on the part of the newly settled propagandists.

A gymnastic excursion in the nearer or farther vicinity of the city was always greeted with a sincere triumph on the part of the peasants. They were vying with one another in inviting the Bulgarian eagles as their own guests in order to hear them sing about the national greatness and to derive faith for a better future. The graceful files of the gymnasts depicted within their soul the bright highway of national happiness. They pushed along with themselves and brightened all those who were prone to have vascillating consciences. An orderly and vivacious march of young people through the streets of the city called forth the impotent cries of the feeble Greek groups of propagandists.

Meetings of gymnastic societies were being organised in various cities. These meetings were actual national processions. Within them was to be felt the pulse of the national might.

In 1910 the Czech Athletic Associations invited to a general athletic assembly in Prague all Ottoman athletic societies. At this gathering only the Bulgarian athletic societies were represented from Macedonia, because there were no alien societies, since in Macedonia there were no alien gymnastic societies of young people.

The Young Turks, being frightened from the great national awakening of the Bulgarians in the empire, in 1909 commenced to interfere not only with the Bulgarian political institutions, but also with the purely educational. They enforced certain restrictions by means of a severe control over the gymnastic societies as well. And yet, notwithstanding these restrictions, after certain compromises had been effected, these societies continued to exist up to the installment of the Serbian and Greek regimes in Macedonia. It is these athletic societies, in graceful files headed by bands of music, which were the first in 1912 to greet the „liberators" of Macedonia.

However, immediately after the settlement of the new political masters in this unfortunate country, they were disrupted together with the Bulgarian school and the Bulgarian church.

In 1915 with the restoration of the Bulgarian authority, these societies were also at once restored, in order to die in 1918 until the day of a new life.

Our illustration represents games of the Monastir Athletic Society on the occasion of the annual celebration in connexion with the Bulgarian insurrection during the year 1903.

WANTED — a foreigner as a partner or manager of a factory for combs, buttons, caneholders and knives etc., made out of horn or celluloid, who has done such work or is an experienced chemist. For particulars apply by letter to: Peter Gloushkoff, Nishka № 33, Sofia.