

SCHOOL AND SCHOOLING IN THE KINGDOM OF BULGARIA: PHOTOARCHIVES - PART 1

B.V. TOSHEV
University of Sofia, BULGARIA

Abstract. At the Research Laboratory on Chemistry Education and History and Philosophy of Chemistry, University of Sofia, a collection of photos and other documents illustrating the school and schooling in the Kingdom of Bulgaria (1878-1946) has been established. These photos have a historical value. Some of these photos together with other two documents are shown here. The publication of such materials will continue in future.

Keywords: Kingdom of Bulgaria, educational system, school life, school-leaving certificate

At the end of nineteenth century and in the years later any foreigner visiting Bulgaria manifests his/her opinion that "the Bulgarians are the most promising of all the Balkan people" [1]. James David Bouchier – one of the big friends of Bulgaria, wrote: "During the thirty years of its troubled existence the young Bulgarian State has made almost phenomenal progress. Education has advanced rapidly; public works have been instituted in a large scale; the country has been covered with a network of railways; wealth has undoubtedly increased, and order has been maintained, often in circumstances of great difficulty. The military organization receives high praise from foreign experts...The Bulgarians indeed worked wonders" [2]. The expenditure for

educational purposes during the year 1912 reached five million dollars. Bulgaria far exceeded the other Balkan states in the matter of national and municipal expenditures for the education of children. The amount spent for educational purposes in 1912 averaged \$1.20 per inhabitant. For Serbia during the same period it was sixty cents per inhabitant; Greece, fifty cents; Montenegro, forty cents, and Turkey, twenty cents [3]. Therefore, the Kingdom of Bulgaria possessed one of the finest educational systems in the world despite that the Bulgarians themselves considered their educational system and methods far from the ideal [4].

With so many superlatives about the Kingdom of Bulgaria, its people and their social life, it is quite strangely that the today's Bulgarians know nothing about their country in the period before the WW2. The reason is in the former political regime which made peoples' mind completely blank in respect to all that would contradict to the communist dogmas. For instance, the period between the two world wars was estimated in this way: "A spirit of chauvinism was installed in education... Educational ideas of the imperialist bourgeoisie were imported, aiming to 'conform the interests of the individual of those of society', without any relevance to the social class divisions and to make use of education as a means of overcoming to growing class contradictions. ...Reactionary changes were made in secondary school education; its curriculum has been reorganized in a spirit of a belligerent nationalist bourgeois policy" [5].

Recently, The New Education Library (NEL) has been established at the Research Laboratory on Chemistry Education and History and Philosophy of Chemistry, University of Sofia. Within the Library, there exists a Section of Photo- and Paper-archives. The present contribution presents some of the items of that Section. With such photographs and documents an interest of the young generations to the period of the Third Bulgarian Kingdom is aimed to be revived. The snapshots and old documents themselves have a great power. Old photographs hold a special mystery. Being able to study scenes and faces from the past and to know how something or somebody looked so long ago makes you feel almost as if you had been there yourself or known that person in some fleeting way. As if you could smell the air ore hear the voices, feel the wind, the press of a hand.

1. School "St. Sedmotchislenitsi", Sofia, 1928; Teacher: Mrs. Sarafova¹⁾



2. School "St. Sedmochislentsi", Sofia, 1931; Teacher: Mr. Sarafov¹⁾



**3. Temperance Society with children from the town of Kula, NW Bulgaria,
1920^{s2)}**



**4. Temperance Society with students from the town of Berkovitsa,
NW Bulgaria, 1928³⁾**



5. Gymnasium of Belogradchik, mid-1930s, girl-schoolfellows⁴⁾



6. Gymnasium of Belogradchik, mid-1930's, school-time⁴⁾



7. Gymnasium of Belogradchik, mid-1930s, physical training class⁴⁾



8. Gymnasium of Belogradchik, mid-1930s, lesson in drawing⁴⁾



9. Vocational Trade School, Sofia, 1937, girl-school fellows⁵⁾



10. Fifth Gymnasium for Boys, Sofia, 1938, the teacher (Milenkov) with his class⁶⁾



11. School choir with the town orchestra (bandmaster Ovtcharoff), Berkovitsa, 1940⁶⁾



12. Certificate of a primary teacher (1909)⁷⁾



13. Certificate of a primary teacher (1920)⁸⁾



NOTES

1. The primary school "St. Sedmochislenitsi" (= Cyril and Methodius and their five disciples) was destroyed during the war. The photo belongs to Hristo Oltchev (1921-2007), one of the pupils in the picture. The photo was presented by Ms. Violeta Oltcheva, Hristo's daughter, a chemist at the Department of Physical Chemistry, University of Sofia.
2. Source: auction.bg
3. The temperance societies with young people and students were very popular in the first quarterly of the twentieth century. The picture shown was found by Ms. Vania Filipova, a former PhD student at the Research Laboratory on Chemistry Education and History and Philosophy of Chemistry, now in Cyprus.
4. The photograph belongs to Lubka Tosheva, née Ignatova (1921-1994).
5. The photograph belongs to Zdravka Oltcheva, née Tsokova (1920-1998); the picture was presented by Ms. Violeta Oltcheva, Zdravka's daughter, a chemist at the Department of Physical Chemistry, University of Sofia.
6. Found by Ms. Vania Filipova.
7. The owner of this teacher certificate is Kornelia Vassileva, née Ivanova (1885-1959). Mention that the teacher qualification has been certified with the signature of the Minister of Public Education, then the famous Nikola Moushanoff (The document was presented by Dr. R. Vladova, Kornelia's granddaughter, Institute of Genetics, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences).
8. Another teacher certificate of Cvetana Tsokova, née Tsibranska (1898-1940) signed by the Minister of Public Education, then the well-known Stoyan Omarchevsky (The document was presented by Ms. V. Oltcheva, Cvetana's granddaughter, a chemist at the Department of Physical Chemistry, University of Sofia).

REFERENCES:

1. **Vanderlip, F.A.** What Next in Europe. Harcourt, Brace & Co., New York, 1922.
2. **Bourchier, J.D.** The Rise of Bulgaria. *National Geographic Magazine* **23**, 1105-1118 (1912).
3. **Monroe, W.S.** *Bulgaria and Her People*. The Colonial Press, Boston, 1914.
4. **Stephanove, C.** Bulgaria. *Educational Yearbook of the International Institute of Teachers College*. 1(1), 37-58 (1924).
5. **Atanasov, Z.** *Education and Science in the People's Republic of Bulgaria*. Sofia Press, Sofia, 1974.

✉ **Professor B.V. Toshev,**
Research Laboratory on Chemistry Education
and History and Philosophy of Chemistry,
Department of Physical Chemistry,
University of Sofia,
1 James Bourchier Blvd., 1164 Sofia, BULGARIA
E-Mail: toshev@chem.uni-sofia.bg