

SAMOKOV NEWS

AMERICAN SCHOOL FOR BOYS

AMERICAN SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

SAMOKOV, BULGARIA

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The Girls' School Today

The Girls' School has an enrollment this year of 136 boarders and 30 day pupils, the greater number, of course, being Bulgarian, but including also Jews, Russians, and one Armenian. This year our new girls were selected from the many applicants by an intelligence test, thus insuring high quality.

Many of the girls cannot afford to pay even our moderate tuition which little more than covers the cost of board. We offered two new full scholarships this year to worthy, poor students, at the same time continuing the two given last year. Several girls receive part scholarships, which are provided by various friends of the school. Prof. Whittemore's American Committee for the Education of Russian Youth

makes it possible for nine little refugee girls to be included in our numbers this year. As a group they are attractive and among the most promising in scholarship.

We are gradually dropping the three lower classes corresponding to the grades, so that in two years we shall have a five-year "gymnasium" course, corresponding to High School plus one year of college. Nearly half of the work is done in the English language. The course fits our girls for the national university in Sofia and for the other



MAIN BUILDING OF THE GIRLS' SCHOOL

universities of the continent.

An interesting innovation this year is the introduction of a small group of elective subjects for the two upper classes. Whereas heretofore we were compelled by the national school program to teach higher mathematics including even calculus,

organic chemistry, and advanced physics, we are now free to offer a choice between this group of subjects and another of a broader cultural nature. The sentiment among the girls is clearly shown by the fact that out of a class of nineteen only five chose to continue their scientific studies.

This year we are offering an entirely new group of studies including child psychology, mothercraft, elementary nursing, and the theory of cooking and food values. This is in accordance with a decision of the trustees to endeavor to fit our girls more directly for the duties of homemaking. The girls themselves seem to be delighted with the opportunity to get a working knowledge of the duties which practically all of them will some day assume. Some of these things are taught by actual practice in the two cottages where the oldest and youngest girls live.



"HAPPY HOME" GIRLS

Each of these cottages is under the supervision of a house-mother. One of them, in which the 22 youngest girls live, is called "The Happy Home," and is under the direction of Miss Crockett. The children take care of their own bedrooms, do all the cleaning of the house, prepare the menus, cook their own suppers, and

wash the dishes after every meal. During the study hours the girls choose one or two of their number to keep order. It is interesting to see how well these children of from twelve to fifteen years of age manage their work. Holidays and Saturday evenings are especially jolly occasions in the "The Happy Home." Parties to which the boys of corresponding age are often invited, with ice-cream and cake sometimes of the children's own making, evenings of songs or stories, and sometimes programs planned by the children themselves are thoroly enjoyed.

The home of the two upper classes has been christened "The Commune," the principle of common work and play having been adopted by this group. Theirs is a huge dilapidated Turkish house, used recently for a tobacco store-house. These girls have much the same program as the little girls, but naturally assume larger responsibilities. They plan all the menus, estimating the cost of materials, weighing the foods, and working out properly balanced meals. They do much toward the preparation of every meal, taking turns as cooks. Even bread-making has been started by this group, — not a small undertaking considering that bread is the Bulgarian staff of life. They do all the cleaning of the house, and have made the old place look homey and pretty with gay curtains and cushions.

The intermediate girls are living in dormitories. Their lot is not such a happy one as that of the cottage girls. Large numbers make it impossible to carry on all of the same activities. They have, however, a certain number of house duties, — keeping their rooms clean, lighting fires, serving at meals, and washing dishes. But

these girls are deprived of much of the social life of the others. We are eagerly awaiting the day when we shall have new buildings adequate for all our needs.

We have mentioned that there is a certain amount of self-government in the cottages. Besides this, Miss Abbott has a general system of partial self-government thru a group of tribunes. These are chosen from each class and report regularly to a chief tribune on the conduct of the girls. If possible, difficulties are adjusted at once in the group of tribunes; otherwise, the chief tribune reports to Miss Abbott. We believe that such a system tends toward the development of strong character.

The religious life of the school is very strongly emphasized. Every morning before classes begin, the girls gather in the general assembly room for morning prayers. The talks almost invariably stress some vital Christian principle. Usually the speaker is one of our own missionary group or a teacher, but occasionally a guest brings a quickening message from the outside world. (Recently we enjoyed a visit and a number of good talks from Miss Overton, an English Y. W. C. A. secretary.) In the evening, a short period is given to more informal devotions. Sunday morning church attendance is compulsory. The preacher is usually one of our missionaries. A remarkably good student choir of fifty voices adds to the attractiveness of the service. We have a flourishing Sunday School under Miss Meebold's superintendence. No doubt Miss Abbott, in her little prayer circle which meets twice a week, gets nearer to the hearts of the girls than any of the rest of us.

On the whole, we are having a good year, with everything running smoothly.

But we feel cramped, and our plans and hopes for the school make us long for our new home near the cultural center of Bulgaria.

The A. S. G. of Yesterday

The beginnings of the American School for Girls are linked with the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, which began work in Bulgaria in 1858. This the Board did on the recommendation of some of its missionaries in Constantinople, who had found worth-while qualities in the Bulgarians whom they had met in and about that great city.

Late the next year, Dr. Byington, a missionary of the American Board, made a tour of Southern Bulgaria with the idea of choosing a field for the opening up of educational work. He found the Bulgarians keen for education. After nearly five centuries of Turkish oppression, their strong national spirit was again coming to the front. They felt that there was a connection between education and freedom. Altho their "cloister" schools connected with the monasteries (to which only a few were admitted) had perhaps been not altogether useless, they had nevertheless failed to meet the needs of the people in general. So as early as 1835 secular education, in a very limited way, had been introduced, and when Dr. Byington came he found in the then small town of Sofia a school for boys and another for girls.

Early in 1863, with the help of a Bohemian, a Miss Fannie Meisner, he established in that city the American School for Girls. In the same year Miss Mary Reynolds came as an assistant, to be followed soon by Miss Rose Norcross.

Most of the first pupils were from the more intelligent families in the town. It was not long, however, before the church authorities became suspicious of its influence upon the girls and wrought up the superstitious mothers to a frenzy of fear lest the foreigners should bewitch or by some secret fascination lead their daughters astray. At last a mob fell upon the missionary premises, stoned the windows, and would have broken into the house, had not a brave little girl jumped out of the window and run to inform the police, who gained control of the situation. The pupils suffered much petty persecution in those early days from their ignorant relatives and friends. Because of the evangelical nature of the school, some of the girls were withdrawn, but it was not long before their places were filled by girls who came as boarders from all over Bulgaria, especially from the villages.

The teaching in the school for the first few years was only in the elementary branches, and the Bible, of which the children were almost entirely ignorant, was one of the main text-books. No Bulgarian text-books were available in the beginning, so that the missionaries were obliged to translate the daily lessons. After some time, the question arose as to the advisability of adding two years to the then existing four years' course. Some feared that this would give too great a prominence to mental culture, while others felt that the standard of the school should keep pace with the national gymnasia. After some discussion, the program was lengthened one year, and later another was added.

When Miss Esther Maltbie came to Bulgaria in 1870, there were 27 pupils in the school. In the meantime, Dr. Byington

had left, Miss Norcross had died, and Miss Reynolds had been obliged to return to America on account of ill health. Miss Maltbie at once assumed the duties of the directorship of the school. With the assistance of Dr. Haskell and Miss Beach from Philippopolis, the school continued for a few years in Stara Zagora. Then, chiefly for climatic reasons, it was removed to Samokov, a mountain town 35 miles south-east of Sofia. Miss Maltbie had unbounded energy, great executive ability, and a deeply religious nature. Under her leadership the school not only kept up to standard in the matter of scholarship but maintained a high spiritual tone.

When Bulgaria came out from under the Turkish yoke in 1878, education began to make rapid strides, and many gymnasia with high educational standards, for girls as well as for boys, began to be opened. With the funds at their disposal, the national gymnasia for girls, in the matter of equipment and teaching force, finally outstripped the Samokov school, which formerly had been the leader. Our school, however, turned out the superior type of woman because of its moral and spiritual training, but its diplomas and certificates were valueless in the country for securing any kind of work.

In 1908, because of ill health, Miss Maltbie was obliged to give over her work into the hands of the new principal, Miss Inez Abbott. The Samokov school had already worked long and hard to secure government recognition, and with the coming of Miss Abbott and the lengthening of the course to that of the national schools (8 years) the matter was pushed even more urgently, until in July, 1914 recognition was granted, the class graduating in June,

1915 being the first to receive the coveted diplomas. From that time on the Ministry of Education has sent an official examiner at the close of each school year to be present at the final examinations of the graduating class and to sign the diplomas, which thus become of equal validity with those granted by the national gymnasia.

As a result of the generous permission secured from the Ministry of Education in May, 1921 to introduce an American course of study and to teach other subjects in the English language, we are beginning to realize one

of our dreams of years, — the giving of sufficient English to open up to all our girls the wealth of English literature.

The School of Tomorrow

When Mr. Woodruff, a little more than two years ago, secured the long-sought permission from the government (referred to in the November number of *SAMOKOV NEWS*), a new day dawned for our Girls' School. At last, after years of pleading and watchful waiting, we had in our hands a document from the Ministry of Education saying that we could change our curriculum from that of the national

schools to something that would better fit the needs of Bulgarian girls; also that we could do much of the teaching in English, thus enabling the girls to master the language and to take advantage, first-hand, of all its wealth of inspiration and practical help. Of course, this has increased the popularity of the school almost as

much as did the government recognition of its diplomas in 1914; and from our many applicants we can pick the most promising. Now we have the hearty cooperation of the government, as well as the active encouragement

of the parents, in giving our girls what we have always coveted for them.

We want a school near Sofia, large enough to accommodate two hundred boarders, and so arranged and equipped that the very construction and equipment will aid us in working out our ideas. In addition to the two buildings to be shared with Boys' School, we want —

1. Several model cottages in which some of the girls will live in smaller groups, under the supervision of house-mothers, and learn every phase of house work along with their school work.

2. A Dormitory, to accommodate those who do not live in cottages.



CLASS OF 1922 WITH TEACHERS

3. A Home Economics Building.

4. An isolated Hospital Building.

And what kind of a curriculum do we propose to give our girls? It must be a comprehensive one to comply with the demands of the government, as well as with our own wishes. We want our girls to become leaders of thought and action in Bulgaria, according to their peculiar abilities. Hence, they must have well-trained minds. But we want their theoretical courses to emerge into something very practical. For example, a girl who studies chemistry should be a better cook because of her knowledge of this subject; after her course with the art teacher, she should know how to dress herself more becomingly, and to arrange her home more attractively, whether she has little or much money at her disposal. The theory and practice of cooking, the cutting and making and mending of garments, home hygiene and care of the sick, child study and mother-craft, already enter into our course of study. But a Home Economics building, equipped to meet the special needs of the country, will make these subjects far more vital than they can possibly be in our present cramped and inconvenient quarters. Such a building will make possible a strong course in sanitation — home and community — which should be in charge of an experienced specialist. Since most Bulgarian girls become wives and mothers, sooner or later, the usefulness of a properly equipped building in the hands of just the right specialist will be truly great. For here will be trained girls who will go back to their home centers to emphasize the civic and economic responsibility of the home to the community, and the proper care of human life in the home.

The teachers in our school should be the choicest we can find in America and Bulgaria. They should not only be specialists in their various lines of work but should have proved their sympathy with young girl life.

But we must have something more than model buildings, a model curriculum, the strongest of pupils, and the best prepared teachers. We must have as teachers, house-mothers and helpers, only those whose every day lives recommend the teachings of Jesus Christ. Only in so far as we have such a staff can our school realize the real aim for which it exists,—the preparing of strong Christian leaders for Bulgaria.

We would emphasize the fact, however, that the word "Christian" is not necessarily synonymous with "Protestant." It is the *kind* of life, and not the name, that we must constantly keep in mind. From Orthodox, Jewish and Protestant faiths we shall aim to send out girls who will live out the Christ-life in their communities as nurses, doctors, dentists, women's club leaders, writers, secretaries of Christian organizations, teachers, and especially as enlightened mothers.

Y. W. C. A.

Our branch of the Y. W. C. A., with a membership of 80, is now in the third year of its activity. Its aim is to exert a helpful and Christianizing influence over every phase of our school life. To this end a meeting is held every Sunday afternoon, at which the members discuss together problems of Christian life and conduct, or listen to talks by teachers and speakers from farther away. At Christmas time, the girls distribute baskets of food and articles of clothing among the poor of the city. Thruout the year there are calls which help to encourage the spirit of giving. This year we plan to enlarge the circle of our

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interests by contributing to the World's Christian Student Federation, for Russian student relief, the proceeds of a pageant, "The Torch of Culture," which has been prepared by one of our alumnae.

To help in overcoming the prevailing sentiment of the country that one who has acquired learning should not put his hand to manual labor, and to encourage those girls who would be glad to earn money provided nobody knew about it, a self-help committee was organized. At first, for lack of other candidates, the chairman had to take most of the jobs that were offered. This year, on the other hand, she complains that she has nothing to do, because all the girls who want work solicit it for themselves, leaving no position unfilled. Thus another aim has been realized.

Last summer we held our second conference camp in Cham-koria. Every morning after prayers we gave an hour to Bible study, another to a series of lectures on social questions, and a third to a discussion of policies and methods. In the afternoon there was time for thought and recreation. We all feel that this time when we go up into the mountains to plan and pray and play together is one of most helpful influences in our Association life.

On Dec. 1 the Sport Club presented Shakspeare's "Othello" before the school community, repeating it the next evening for the Samokov public. With a part of the proceeds, which amounted to over 2,200 *levs* (pre-war \$440; now \$15), the Club has made a double-runner seating ten for coasting.

On Dec. 8th Mrs. Dimchevska's class in piano of 26 members gave its first public recital of the year in the study hall of the Girls' School. The girls acquitted themselves with credit and some showed great promise for the future.

On Dec. 15 the boys' literary society *Razvitiye* presented Goethe's "Egmond" for the students, giving a second performance the following evening for the public. They are using part of the proceeds of 2,700 *levs* for binding books in their library.

The girls' literary society *Napreduk* ("Progress"), numbering 75 members, holds bi-weekly exercises consisting of declamations, sketches of well-known authors, debates, and musical numbers. Its purpose is to develop the natural gifts of the girls in writing, public speaking, and literary taste.



A FORD-FUL OF SENIORS AT CHAM-KORIA

In response to pitiful appeals on behalf of the thousands of Armenians who have fled for refuge to Bulgaria during the last few weeks, about seven thousand *levs* was gathered from the two schools, and materials bought with this sum were at once made up by the girls into warm garments for women and children, and sent to two neighboring cities where conditions were most desperate.

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On Sunday evening, Dec. 24, a Praise Service was held in the church, at which the school choir took a leading part, — giving, among other things, the choruses "The Glory of the Lord" and "Hallelujah" from "Messiah," "Lacrymosa" from Mozart's "Requiem," and "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy" from Gaul's "Holy City." Our boys and girls are indeed fortunate in being able to sing and listen to such sacred music as the magnificent "Hallelujah" and the solemn but equally magnificent "Lacrymosa."

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The Christmas holidays were passed most happily by the 50 boys and 100 girls whom circumstances did not permit to return to their homes. On Jan. 6 (Christmas eve, Old Style) a group of boys had an informal program and invited to their Tree, which they had brought down from the forest and decorated themselves, both schools, the town Sunday School, and the children from a neighboring orphanage.

On Christmas night the girls presented to a crowded audience in the church a series of tableaux illustrating the Christmas story, accompanied by a choir of girls.

During the three days here celebrated, a student choir went about the town singing Xmas carols outside the houses of teachers and friends, thus gathering 3600 *levs* for aid to poor students.

Members of the Y gladdened many a poor home with presents of wood and food.

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The Temperance Society, at its December meeting, was addressed by Miss Danailova on "The Influence of Alcohol on the Organism." A program of recitations and music was given.

On the evening of Jan. 14, in the church, the Society celebrated the third anniversary of the inauguration of national prohibition in the

United States. Appropriate songs by the school choir and declamations accompanied the address, which reported the progress in the enforcement of the Eighteenth Amendment.

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On Jan. 14 Dr. James L. Barton, senior secretary of the American Board, stopped off at Sofia for one day on his way from Constantinople to Lausanne, where he has been attending the Peace Conference. Dr. Barton arrived just in time to attend a mass meeting held in the National Theater to celebrate the third anniversary of Prohibition in the United States. The meeting was attended by members of the diplomatic corps, the entire American colony, officials, and prominent citizens. Dr. Neichev, leader of the temperance movement in Bulgaria, presided. After several speeches, Mr. Manolov, secretary in the Ministry of Education, made a remarkably fine appeal for a campaign of education in favor of total prohibition, stating that as soon as public opinion warranted it, the Government stood ready to enact a law enforcing the reform

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We have four recent graduates — two girls and two boys — studying at the new School of Religion in Constantinople. They are Hristina Dimitrova '20, Yordanka Popova '22, Vladimir Tsvetanov '22, and Hristo Yanev '22. Besides these, five graduates of the Girls' School are taking the nurses' training course at the American Hospital in Constantinople.

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A letter has just been received from the U. S. from one of our graduates of fifteen years ago, now a wife and mother, but also a speaker for missionary gatherings and women's clubs, a magazine writer and a member of the Writers' Club in the American city in which she lives. She says: "Somehow I have never outgrown being a Samokov girl. Samokov to me was Opportunity — finding myself. It was dreams come true." She pleads for a place in the school for a relative of hers, adding,—"I want her to go to Samokov even for one year. It will make her over. You know at a glance the girl who has been there and made the most of it."