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THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS FOR THE FOUNDING OF CHILDREN'S SUMMER RESORTS IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY

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Abstract. The topic is part of the author's research in the field of extramarital forms of socialization of Bulgarian children. Using different types of sources, the religious children's resorts organized in the 20th century will be presented. The article will outline the boundaries set by religion in terms of the selection of children in the camps, and will seek an answer to the question of whether religion creates division between individuals or serves to include children. The relevance of the topic is an indisputable fact, due to the many organized children's summer camps of a religious nature today.

Keywords: childhood, socialization, children's camp, religion

Introduction

Goal-oriented and institutionalized children care did not exist as a part and parcel of European daily life before late 19th c. One of the indicators for the change that came about after that were the attempts to organize various forms

of involvement for children in their time off their usual labour activities, family chores or educational needs. The idea to implement some form of juvenile camps (children's holiday settlements or colonies) close to nature, where children's physical health would be of primary concern and where some religious education would be provided as well, was most probably first advanced by European protestants. Thus, for instance, in Switzerland, the movement began with the efforts of a protestant minister called Bion, in 1876. Another Church official, pastor Lorient, established the first French children's summer camp in 1881, with only three little girls attending. The scale of the movement is well illustrated by the fact that on the following year there were 79 attendees already, in 1906 – 26,000, then 103,000 in 1913; 125,000 in 1925, to reach 220,000 in number, in 1939, on the eve of World War Two. Catholic church representatives also joined in the movement and their “open air camps”, usually located close to their parishes and entirely included within their patronage, were intended most of all to provide better conditions for a continuing education. Thus, in 1905, monks, nuns and priests took close to 4,000 children from their parishes to a children's camp in the vicinity of Paris and Lion (Donnelly, 1959).

From the research I carried out on literature on the issue, namely, the development of these camps or facilities both in Europe and in the United States, I came to the conclusion that, at first, the religious denominations often relied on the idea that religion was a factor stimulating positive, wholesome outcomes in children's later lives. Still, the existing theoretical explanations of the impact of religious environment remain to a great degree fragmentary and ill-fitting to form a coherent whole (Paris, 2008).

Most empirical studies, however, did indeed detect a constructive influence of religion on young American people's lives, which involved nine key factors (moral instruction, spiritual experience, role models, social skills and leadership, coping skills, cultural capital, social capital, network building and contacts outside the community). Generally speaking, these factors would

be grouped around three key vectors of influence (moral order, cognitive competence, asocial and organizational connectedness). (Smith, 2003, p.19).

The conclusions of some of the studies on the religious socialization of children and young people of the Eastern Orthodox Church also point in this direction (Galabova, 2020).

Possibly, the goals the religious institutions were setting looked quite similar to the goals intended by families and schools concerning the socialization of the individuals. This individuality formative process may briefly be defined from the viewpoint of ethnology as a process whereby specific beliefs, views, convictions, practices, values, norms etc. would be transferred from one generation to the next so that the coming generation would be able to participate in the predominant social life. In short, socialization was linked to the integration of the individuals within existing social structures (Bankova, 1992).

This paper does not claim to address exhaustively the role of religious organizations and institutions in the process of the socialization of individuals. It presents some of the research its author carried out on the subject-matter of her dissertation work, "Childhood in Bulgaria, in Extra-Familial Group Forms of Socialization through the 20th c.: Ethnological Aspects". Main subject of this study were children's camps (colonies, holiday resorts, bivouacs) in Bulgaria. Within the effort to reach my research objectives, I studied various literary and archival sources and have also included some brief excerpts from interviews taken in the course of my field ethnographic work. My leading hypothesis was that children's summer camps of religious orientation from the beginning of the 20th c., did indeed play a positive role in the successful, extra-familial socialization of children. At the same time, the different denominations caused some division between the children subject to their care. To illustrate this point, I will use examples from camps of religious orientation from our times, in order to follow changes and innovations in that sort of activities that took place since the beginning of the 20th c.

Children's camps of religious orientation

As it turned out, the initiation and organization of summer camps in Bulgaria was by no means an easy task. This was the case specifically in the first half of the 20th c., when the lack of adequate funding was quite real. A number of charity organizations and donors offered help and the funds they provided contributed significantly to the school and extra-familial socialization of children. Perhaps most committed to the task were the religious institutions and organizations which, naturally, became outstanding benefactors. Here I should point out that this text will consider and emphasize the role of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and its related communities and organizations, which directly managed the development, organization and operation of children's summer vacationing in this country. I will pay special attention to the first half of the 20th c., when this type of institutions was first established. I will focus only on the children's facilities of religious participation and orientation. The models of religious education presented will show the manner of influencing the youngest and their recruitment for the dogma of the Orthodoxy. I must emphasize here that this process was carried out in complete transparency, with the explicit consent of children's parents and continuous supervision on the part of the respective persons or institutions in charge.

Though somewhat aside from the scope of my research, I should mention here the scout's movement, which was quite widely spread in Bulgaria and attracted its most numerous adepts among the representatives of the Armenian confessional community. One of the reasons for that most probably was the historical fate of these people and the fact that following the 1915 genocide, numerous orphaned children needed extra-familial socialization. Thus,

[T]he scouts' movement turned out to be a very suitable form for the entire Armenian community and became a popular, club-like children and young people movement, highly valued by Armenians.

Adjusting the movement for their needs and looking for ways to provide care for all the orphaned, they also included girls in the movement (Mitseva, 2001).

This democratic form of relations between the sexes was in complete compliance with the basics laid down by Robert Baden-Powell (1918), assumed to be founder of the movement, who, in 1918, wrote his scouting guide for girls, covering activities needed for camping outdoors, such as starting a fire, making knots, and also activities for acquiring household skills and abilities, such as sawing and cooking.

Moreover, the founding of orphanages, schools, day-care centers for children of working families, canteens, playgrounds, healthcare stations and other children's summer facilities was an important part of the charity mission of a number of ecclesiastical organizations and brotherhoods. This activity was clearly motivated by the idea to introduce extra-familial forms of socialization that would influence positively children's lives and health. As Dr. Zhechka Kutincheva noted in the *Nasheto Dete* (Our Child) magazine in 1931:

[S]ocial care was introduced for the well-being of children. The development of this social care, the concern for more fresh air and sunshine for the kids became of importance. Everybody turned their eyes towards the mountains and the sea – where the fresh air and the sunshine is. There the children must spend their summer days. And the children were taken off their home environment and sent to their own, purely children's summer settlements (Kutincheva, 1931).

It is important to note that the areas in the immediate vicinity of churches and monasteries were usually deemed healing, often because there were presumably medicinal springs nearby, for their natural environment, and the opportunity for the kids to visit sacred places.

Dr Boris Miloshev¹⁾ described Hieromonk Joseph Miloshev (1884-1958) as a champion of the cause, as were his followers, who founded several organizations: Union of the Christian Orthodox Educational and Charitable Brotherhoods; Union of Pupil, Youth, and Student Christian Associations; Union of Eparchy Priesthood, Laymen and Others. Members of these organizations undertook numerous actions in support of abandoned children, young people of risk background, drafted programs to expand religious education. All these efforts were focused on catechization. The basic principles of catechization, in the narrow sense of the term, that became widely spread in Christian practice, related to the notions of “learning” and “mentoring”. The term “catechization” began to denote the consistent oral and overall personal education in the basics of Christian faith and life.²⁾

Specifically, vis-à-vis children, summer camp organizers saw proselytise as the main duty of the Church. The programs involved extensive catechization, classes in Christian ethics and morality, Sunday schools, book distribution teams, setting up of educational centers.¹⁾ In my opinion, most notable in the field was the work of the Sayuz za zakrila na detsata (Children Protection Union), whose efforts were focused in the above auxiliary, extra-familial institutions. Detailed, in-depth analysis of this organization was presented by Christina Popova (1999).

The CPU was a structure within Bulgarian Red Cross Association, which, as Nikola Balabanov states: “...has as its goal the all-round physical and spiritual development of children” (Balabanov, 1927). And it is not surprising that exactly because of that “spiritual development”, prayers and religious talks were a part and parcel of the joint activities in a great number of children’s summer facilities during the period under review. Proof of this can be found in the well-drafted programs of the CPU, containing the everyday activities of children in the summer facilities. The purpose of these programs was to strengthen the children’s health, to ensure their sound development and education, and they used to fully engage their time. By way of example, I will

further on discuss the methods used by the Youth Christian Association to reach the above goals, in the Tchayka (Seagull) seaside summer facility for children near Varna.



Tchayka summer camp

Physical development and health were monitored by medical checks. Follows the information provided by one of my respondents (V. Ch., born in 1930, in Varna), whose father, a doctor, psychiatrist, who worked in Varna until 1948, then moved to Sofia with his family, used to take turns of “duty” in that summer facility.

[I] was just a little girl, but I remember well enough. My father wouldn't let me to the summer camp, saying that it was only intended for children of frail health. And I even envied them – just imagine how childish I was! Because they were gathered there, played together, ate delicious meals. He went to the medical station there and when there

were kids in the camp, they brought them to him to chat” (Ilieva 2020, personal archives).

Varied physical education program was introduced that included team sports, athletics, mass games, excursions, water sports. The magnificent natural setting of the facility contributed to the religious growth of the children, as did the non-mandatory workshops for in-depth addressing of various religious topics, the morning talks, prayers, choral singing etc. For the socialization of the children there were various entertainments, bonfires, special daily schedules etc. (Grigorov, 1933). By founding of the Tchayka summer camp, in 1925, the Youth Christian Association provided a model summer facility where religion was present as an important part of the education and development of children, but religious orientation was not compulsory, which was confirmed by the information provided by respondents, and was often attended by children who suffered of various health issues. The camp supervisors took care to encourage friendly relations between the vacationing children, their observation of the camp discipline as well as their patriotic self-awareness. And even though religion was not a dominant characteristic of the summer camp under consideration, its presence in the program contributed significantly to the moral and spiritual growth of the attending children. For, as one of the pedagogues concluded in the *Nasheto Dete* (Our Child) magazine: “... low spiritual and moral level of the social setting is the greatest obstacle to the moral progress of a child or any individual for that matter” (Tsenov, 1929). In their essence, the structure and order in the Tchayka summer facility did not differ significantly from those of the rest of the summer facilities as of the early 20th c. The main difference may be that it was intended only for boys of 12 to 19 years of age, and they were accommodated in tents (13 in total). Breakfast, lunch and supper took place in a large tent – the mess. Children's health was looked after by the camp doctor. Sunshine, air, exercise was an important part of the camp regimen. Education and other character formative activities, too, were among the

priorities. The qualities instilled in the attending children are well summed up in A. G. Ganev's evaluation, who wrote:

[B]esides sound healthy habits, children are meticulously taught simple social and human sensitivity, personal initiative, self-control, spiritual profundity, citizen virtues and national self-awareness... Besides the spiritual and moral training program that follows the “clean life, clean play, clean speech” principle, and based on popular morning guidance talks in the spirit of Christian consciousness and Bulgarian national awareness, besides this moral strengthening, an educational program consisting of special courses is implemented (Ganev, 1934).

Explanation and interpretation of certain passages of the Christian scriptures within the talks presented at the summer camps aimed to instil sense of justice, kindness, equality and other virtues necessary for the upbringing of the children. The absence of fanatic religious zealotry and the demonstrations of respect for religion were, to my thinking, a good example of goodwill and care for those who were building up their value systems at the time. This was, beyond any doubt, a factor for the rapid increase in the number and significance of the summer establishments.

From pedagogical point of view, interesting information is available in Petya Ivanova's study, who notes that, initially, the activities of the Orthodox Christian movement of school children were rather chaotic. This prompted the interference of the Holy Synod, which issued, in 1931, a Model Constitution for the associations “thereby setting up a systemic and unified approach” to the work and giving a powerful impact to the development of the movement, especially children's associations. Thus, as of April 1935, there were 1342 children's Orthodox associations of 106 190 members, children and young people” (Ivanova, 2019. And, perhaps exactly owing to the efforts in that direction: “No health-oriented idea has ever found such an easy acceptance in

this country and enjoyed such a rapid growth, as the summer camps. Over the last several years, astonishingly quickly, children's summer establishments spread across all spots of good climate in Bulgaria", as Zhechka Kutincheva (1931) wrote.

Eparchial summer camps

Teaching religion at schools was forgotten for a long time, and, moreover, it used to be qualified as superfluous and disposable. With the imposition of communist rule in 1944, the Church practically became invisible for large sections of society, despite the fact that church activists and associations continued their work extending help to the needy (Metodiev, 2010). This is why, in terms of religious education and organizing of extra-familial activities on the part of religious institutions, active were the years between 1919 and 1944.¹⁾ Those were times when school and Church walked hand in hand. As Marina Mladenova (2007) noted:

[O]n national scale, priests were among the pro-active members of the Parent-Teachers' associations. Priests participated in the managing councils of the Children Protection Union in Bulgaria. Per data of 1937, 724 of 10 000 members of these managing councils were priests. These figures speak of themselves.³⁾

This author provides valuable data on the social and charitable activities of the Bulgarian Exarchate of the time, noting that the church summer facilities at the monasteries were of notable importance. Thus, the Sofia Eparchy ran summer colonies for poor children in two shifts, lasting a month each. Local churches presented a list of 10 children each. These needy children were supported, in the children colonies, by charity and alms by individual donors or by funds provided by the St. Sofia Orthodox Christian Brotherhood. Motivated by the excellent impact the church summer facilities had on children's health

and morality, the Holy Metropolia decided to organize an additional summer facility at the Dragalevtci Monastery for children of 2nd and 3rd school grade, at a monthly fee of 900 levs, besides the free of charge summer facilities of St. Spas, near the village of Dolni Lozen and the St. Cyril and St. Methodius facility in the village of Gorna Banya. They also organized a summer facility for girls at the Zemen Monastery, at 1500 levs a month. Annually, the St. Sofia temple and its brotherhood supported 20 children in the children's summer facilities at the Metropolia.³⁾

Curious is the announcement for the children's colony organized at the Tcherepish Monastery. The information reaching us through the pages of the *Nasheto Dete* magazine, from 1937, is quite detailed and valuable, in terms of the verbal expression of the Christian education in the summer resort. The school children colony at the Tcherepish Monastery, founded in 1936, was opened on July, 26th by Hieromonk Josiph, in the school premises at the monastery. To spend their vacation, children were gathered from Lokovit, Vratca, Byala Slatina and Knezha. The total number was 74, the children from the Vratca gymnasium being the largest group. Hieromonk Josiph, who was head of the colony, was to take care for the general welfare of the vacationing children, Dr Nanov was to look after their health status, Hieromonk Climent, abbot of the monastery, was in charge of household works, but also cook, servant, mechanic and food dispenser.

In his capacity of head of the colony, Hieromonk Josiph presented numerous talks on topics such as: "The Inadequacy of Science in Building Up Morality". "The Need for Worldview in Life", elucidations on the "Our Father" prayer and the "We Are Grateful to You, Jesus, Our Lord" prayer, "Man: Created in God's Image and in His Likeness", "The Need for Revelation", "Christ: Ideal for the Young", getting acquainted with the Gospels and reading of selected passages thereof. Besides these talks, Hieromonk Josiph taught the children various Christian and folk religious songs, such as *Our Father; Holy God; Oh, My Bishop and Spiritual Beacon; Dedicated to You, My Lord; Forward,*

Let's Follow Christ's Banner; Darkness of the Evening; Lullaby; Book; The Bell is Ringing; Dear Fatherland; Maritza Rushes, and His Majesty, the Tsar's anthem. Twice during the vacation, the children organized household parties, that included singing of religious and folk songs, recitation of poems, jokes and sketches. There were also two visits by persons of high clerical and social status, who were to inspire the children with talks for learning and virtue. On August 2 and 3, 1936, the colony was visited by His Holiness Metropolitan Paisiy. He encouraged the children to behave well and achieve excellent results in their physical strengthening and, most of all, spiritual growth and education. On August 16, of the same year, the colony was visited by the regional social care inspector, Mr. Zaytsarev, who assured the children that internalizing all Christian virtues in their souls would warrant their happy and successful life thereafter (Nasheto dete in 1937).

Among the quoted examples, another type of children's camps of religious orientation was prominent: those belonging to the Church, and organized by monasteries. These camps were funded by the associations that founded them. Against certain rent, monasteries provided premises to accommodate vacationing children. This was the case with the Zemen Monastery and the girls who spent their summer vacation there in 1929. Per the archival sources, the announcement was as follows:

[P]lease be advised, that we hereby grant permission to the Sofia Young Women's Christian Association to organize, as of this year, a summer colony for workers, clerks, school and other girls in the rooms belonging to the St. Joan Bogoslov's church in the village of Zemen, against certain payment.⁴⁾

Besides strengthening their moral principles, the summer facilities were expected to teach religion and instil dedication and love for the Christian teachings in the attending pupils. Besides their physical development, children

in the church summer facilities learned to recite poems, to pray and sing songs that inspired attachment to the Church. Some of the priests were in charge of the facilities for years on end, were familiar with the results and this was the reason why they were able to set up permanent service as was the case with the priests from the St. Sofia church. This was noted in their letters to the Metropolitan: “In our willingness to keep children close to the Church, we have founded a permanent summer establishment for them as a continuation of our joint work through the school year.”³⁾



Zemen Monastery – Photo by Radina Ilieva, spring, 2018

Excellent, in terms of continuation, was the initiative of the Hadzhidimovo Monastery, in their annual organizing of a free of charge children's summer resort. Attended children of families of believers and families of limited circumstances. The children were taught theology, Christian virtue and good behavior. "At the end of each shift, the children prepared a presentation of songs, recitations and dramatizations of Biblical episodes, thus demonstrating to their parents what they had learned", as noted studies on the topic (Lyubenova & Georgieva, 2007).

The achievements of the Metropolia summer camps are well documented. There are numerous documents showing that bivouacs were founded for years on end. Thus for instance, such camps were organized at the Bukovski Monastery even after the new regime took over, and practically forced the Church to generally give this function up. In a document from 1947, preserved at the Burgas State Archives Office, it is specifically emphasized, concerning the Bukovski monastery: "In performing its social task, the church from the Sliven Eparchy will this year, too, set up an Eparchial summer facility for students...".⁵⁾ Of course, the funds needed to support the endeavour were provided through charity and renting out of church and monastery properties, as the government had suspended its support for this type of activity. Reviewing charities before and after the communist take-over, Lovech Metropolitan Gavriil noted:

[B]y the Budget Act for 1946, the funds previously available to the Bulgarian Orthodox Church in support of its charitable activities were discontinued... The Ministry of Social Policies announced that the Social Support Fund that existed under its supervision was discontinued and its funds were incorporated in the budget of the Ministry.⁶⁾

The information provided by the Metropolitan showed that the operation of the Summer Vacationing facilities for children, supported mainly on funds of the Church, was managed more than adequately. Then, the government applied a different approach to all that. The Minister of Social Policies issued Decree, No. 61 of March, 19th, 1946, ordering that the directors and the pedagogical staff of existing orphanages were to be employed and paid by the Ministry, and the institutions were to move under its jurisdiction. The Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church qualified this as a factual expropriation of the orphanages from the Church, but that was the idea the communist state had for the role of the Church in lay-people's lives. On the adoption of the new Constitution, the issue with the summer facilities disappeared since said facilities and all charitable activities were taken over from the Church and re-instituted as the monopoly of the state. Due to foreign policy considerations, the government of the Fatherland Front allowed certain exceptions vis-à-vis the other religious denominations, especially the Catholic Church, but this only lasted until the Religious Denominations Act was adopted in 1949. The new regulations did not completely disrupt the charitable activities of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, but these now moved to a new stage. They went underground: "It became secretive, hidden, yet real".⁶⁾ The changed regulations concerning the practical implementation of children's summer facilities, too, places obstructions for the Church, as these practically excluded it from the activities offered. Metropolitan bishops, too, were denied the opportunity to set up vacationing facilities. Despite of all this, the examples quoted above show that the function did not stop there and children's summer camps continued to be organized at some of the monasteries. It is important to note here that this was about the Church Summer facilities. Camps of religious orientation no longer existed, as Christian talks and prayers were no longer included in the everyday activities of the campers. These were replaced by others, in line with the communist doctrine.

Personal accounts

Numerous times in the course of my research on children's summer facilities in early 20th c., I had to face the fact of the absence of any personal accounts that would most certainly give more flesh and colour to the idea of the bivouacs of that time we may form today. Each and every memory, every account about such an experience would be unique and that is why I will continue to set aside significant resources and time for finding any that may have survived. Exceptional is the account by Prof. Gatya Simeonova, who describes in detail her mom's vacation in an Eparchial summer facility in the beginning of the 20th c. As a reason for her mother's sojourn in the facility, Prof. Simeonova quotes her feeble health as a result of suffering from diphtheria and scarlet fever.

[I] will give a detailed account of the background of my mother's poor health, which became the main reason for her to be sent on a vacation at the monastery in the first place. She was commended to go by the parish priest and the camp itself was supervised by the Dorostol-Tcherven Metropole. In the 1930's and the early 1940', this institution organized in one of its monasteries, namely, St. Martyr Marina, near the village of Karan Varbovka, the vacationing, in two shifts, of children and young people from needy families and/or of poor health. My mother was among the latter. There is another detail worth mentioning. Being a girl from a well-off family, her childhood was replete with duties. When somewhat grown-up, she used to always be available to help her mother and did not remember ever participating in other kids' games. That is why a month away from home, away from the domestic chores, was something extraordinary, something to remember, and something that never happened again in her lifetime.

My efforts to discover more details about that summer failed to produce the results I hoped for. My grandfather took her in his cart to

the Metropolia, in Russe, where the vacationing kids were to gather. Then they transported them to the monastery. My mother couldn't remember how they traveled. There were wooden bungalows at the monastery, at a certain distance from the temple. There was also a dining room. They were girls only. My mother made friends with Father Sava's daughter, from Russe. The children were looked after by caretakers, there was also a priest. Their day began with prayer, then they had some sort of classes, listening to Christian teachings. Yet there was more than enough time for games and walks. In the evening they attended liturgy. In the church itself there was a well of healing water. And this quite scarce account ends in Russe, where her father waited for her and took her to Hotantsa – their native village. Why do I recall these scarce and rather vague memories of my mother's? Because they do somehow illustrate the contact with God and the role of family, school and Church at the time, to achieve proper behavior through acquainting the children with the spiritual values of our Christian faith.⁷⁾

The warm feeling of this shared memory is impressive. This was probably a unique opportunity that gave those kids back then lots of positive emotions. This is also a historical testimony to the significant, yet unobtrusive role of Bulgarian Orthodox Church in one of the most efficient forms of extra-familial socialization of children – their summer vacation camps.

Religious children's camps today

Nowadays, social and educational activities have been regulated by law, namely the Religious Denominations Act, as follows: “Denominations registered under this Act can establish medical, social and educational institutions (Art. 30, item 1). Or, in other words, any religious institution may institute and organize summer facilities, in order to present to attending children

the basics of its faith. Modern religious summer camps for children are essentially different from those of the early 20th c.

The transformation of the goals and objectives of the scout movement that was restored among the Armenian community after 1991, first on Varna, then in other cities around the country, is of interest. While, on its founding, the orientation used to be purely humanitarian, the priorities nowadays have shifted to learning their native language and history, lectures in theology, church attendance on religious celebrations and, of course, camping according to the rules of the movement, in forest conditions including orientation in the wild and pathfinding (Mitseva, 2001).

One of the relatively new initiatives in the field is the children's camp set up in the Sv. Georgy Monastery in Kremikovtzy, near Sofia, intended for children of various ages. Over 7-day shifts, children are accommodated in the monastery free of any charge. Games and sporting events are organized as well as walks in the mountain. They are also acquainted with the lives of various saints, with religious celebrations and church liturgies.⁸⁾

Thus for instance, a camp founded by the Russe Eparchy and the Pomorie Monastery at present, can accept children between 8 and 14 years of age, and of certifiably good health. According to the requirements, "The children shall be looked after by a team consisting of a pedagogue, instructors and a professional medic. Daily events shall include talks, participation in religious services, organized games and competitions, talent evenings, walks and excursions in the vicinity... Medical certificate shall be required, issued by the general practitioner of the child, confirming their good general health".⁹⁾

Also, various vacationing opportunities have been provided, for boys only, as is the case of the children's orthodox camp established in the Lopushna Monastery, by the Vidin Holy Metropolis, blessed by His Eminence, Vidin Metropolitan Daniil. According to its rules, only boys of 7 to 14 years of age may attend, while the team who looked after the children should include a seminarist from the St. Joan of Rila Seminary, in Sofia, and a subdeacon.

Among the attending boys there are active participants in spiritual life, who study Christian studies in their classes of Religion and Orthodoxy, provided by the schools in the town of Vidin. The boys are aware of the material they are going to study and participate pro-actively in the talks and in the liturgies. “For their appropriate celebration of St. Ilija’s Day, July 20, they prepared a narrative based on this saint’s icon, where events from his life are depicted, and also a small theatrical performance based on the parable for Poor Lazarus and the Rich Man”.¹⁰⁾

The examples quoted show clearly the modern orientation and concept of the summer camps. These are fully focusing on the religious education of the attending children, while teachers and educators were people who pro-actively participate in religious life. This, in turn, shows that children learn from people who could really provide knowledge, people who believe in the benefits summer vacationing facilities could offer to the attending children. The appeal is indicative: “May God guide the tutors so that they could be of benefit to the children and may their work be fruitful. May He give strength to the servants of God in the monastery who are to look after the comfort of the children and, most of all, may He protect the little ones, so that they could grow up healthy, carrying God in their hearts”.¹⁰⁾

Conclusion

First established in early 20th c., in order to look after children’s health and strengthen their values in the spirit of the Christian faith, religion-oriented children’s summer facilities have survived to this day. Clearly, attending children socialize and form behaviour models through the proper organization of their free time, by learning to sing and play. Attending children’s summer facilities of religious exposure, will obtain some religious education aiming at their growing up as good people. I outlined above the two types of children’s camps that existed in early 20th c. – those of religious orientation, which used prayers and singing once or two times a day and the Eparchial children’s

summer facilities, which implemented daily programs focused on the study of Christian doctrine. Both models were proven successful and became an important part of the growing up of numerous sick, poor and needy children.

NOTES / БЕЛЕЖКИ

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<https://www.verouchenie.com/%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%BB%D1%8E%D1%87%D0%B8-%D0%B2%D1%82%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B0-%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%B3%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D1%81%D0%BC%D1%8F%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%BE%D1%82-%D0%BC%D0%BE%D0%BC/>

10. <https://www.verouchenie.com/%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%BB%D1%8E%D1%87%D0%B8-%D0%B2%D1%82%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B0-%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%B3%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D1%81%D0%BC%D1%8F%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%BE%D1%82-%D0%BC%D0%BE%D0%BC/>

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