

1st June

BULGARIA

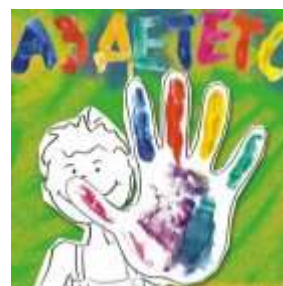


The First of June – International Children's Day

On the occasion of June 1st, International Children's Day, a short description related to what children's folklore games and customs used to be can be made.

The universe is totally unrecognizable to a contemporary child from what it used to be to children two or three centuries ago. However, some children's games have survived the vicissitudes of time.

Very popular is the game "Kralyo portalyo", coming from "king" and "gates". It is a game in which children line up, facing each other in pairs with arms raised so as to form a tunnel of sorts. Then pairs take turns to go through the tunnel, and as they do so they chant, "There are you king of gates, open up, for the king is going to war". Another popular children's game is "Happy name to you, Your Grace." Children's games have copied a lot from military exercises, as they include a lot of archery. In children's games one can find a detailed description of military hierarchy.



Games used to be a part of some ritual. Similarly, we could claim that games and rhymes were meant to literally "instruct" babies. They taught them names of animals and plants and later added to them the concept of numbers, family relations, and various agricultural activities.

Not all children's games and rhymes represent a useful lesson. Some of them resemble a sports' trim. For example, playing tag is a real athletics race. Or the game of leapfrog has so much to do with nowadays long-horse event in athletics. Boys often competed in throwing stones at the greatest distance, or hitting a poking staff or even played a version of bowling with some lamb bone, from the Gergyovden meal. Boys' games were also their first lesson in farming. They made a miniature plough out of maize stalks and practised "ploughing" the land. Girls, in their turn, assembled a tiny loom and wove aprons for their dolls.

On this day Bulgarian children get a lot of presents from their parents and grandparents. Then the family usually goes for a walk in the Sea Garden of Varna where children can enjoy a great variety of entertainments, specially organized for the day. The day finishes with having some delicious meal in a restaurant or a cafe.

CZECH REPUBLIC

International Children's Day

The International Children's Day as an official holiday was primarily perceived in the Eastern bloc. On the other hand, on 20th November the West celebrated the World Children's Day, which was proclaimed by the United Nations and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). This holiday was proclaimed in the year 1959, together with the adoption of the Declaration of Rights of the Child. Thirty years later, on the same day the Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the UN.



In the year 1949 the idea of regular celebration of the Children's Day came from the International Democratic Women's Federation, the International Teachers Association and the World Federation of Democratic Youth. These organizations brought together mainly left oriented members, and in accordance with some sources they were even under the direct influence of the Soviet secret police agencies.

On 1st June in the former Czechoslovakia the communists arranged compulsory celebrations, which took place in all schools. Various entertainment for children were organized by councils and various social organizations. Celebrations usually took place on the school play-grounds, where various games, competitions and performances were prepared for children. Performances were usually represented by firefighters, soldiers, but also by children who were under the direction of their school teachers. Communist system skillfully used the Children's Day to promote its ideology and combating of religion. Course of the celebrations was carefully monitored and evaluated.

After the revolution The International Children's Day lost its ideological meaning. Children with their parents are now involved in celebration of Children's Day which is particularly organized by city councils. They prepare Children's Day which is full of entertainment, gifts, fun, a different approach at school, it's cool day. This public holiday is understood as the unofficial beginning of summer. The school is already coming to an end and the children are looking forward to warm, sunny days and wonderful holidays.