



BULGARIA

Cup & Cross Ministries International July, 2002

Bulgaria at a Glance

Bulgaria is a country of eight million people and slightly larger than the state of Tennessee. It has been one of Europe's poorest countries, although the rise of multi-party democracy offers some hope. Eighty five percent of the people are Bulgarian Orthodox and there is a growing Muslim population. The Protestant Church accounts for about 1.25% and has an annual growth rate of 17%.

Chaplaincy in Bulgaria

Through the past 13 years the world has witnessed a miracle. In the corner of Europe, coming out from severe Communist persecution and surrounded by the Balkan religious wars, one growing group of Christians is making a difference for the Kingdom of God. Placed on the crossroad of three world religions (Christianity, Islam and Judaism) and three continents (Europe, Africa and Asia), the country of Bulgarian has experienced an on-going spiritual revival in which hundreds of thousands of people have been touched by the power of God.

Since 1995, *Cup and Cross Ministries International* has worked toward a vision of the establishment of a Bulgarian Chaplaincy Association – an organization that incorporates pastoral care to prisons, military, police and hospitals. Our outreaches have been able to provide pastoral care and social services to the needy in a time of severe economic crises and political tensions. Our presence has been an answer for people in need for both physical and spiritual support. In the beginning of the 21st century, we are witnesses of a miracle as this vision comes into reality. Today, police and military officers participate in services led by the same ministers and pastors who once, during communism, were ordered to arrest for the preaching of the Gospel.



History of Events

In September of 1944 the Communist revolution took over Bulgaria. All prior Protestant activities were outlawed. Pastors and ministers were imprisoned. Some were brutally executed. Any attempt for ministry in public was equal to a death sentence. The church went underground for 45 years until the Fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and a Holy Ghost revival swept through the country. But we believe that **REVIVAL MUST GO ON** and reach every corner of the Bulgarian nation that has not yet been reached.

In the summer of 2000 the Bulgarian Church of God organized a chaplaincy seminar in the Military School in Veliko Turnovo. This was done with the partnership of NATO's head chaplain along with the representative of the Orthodox Church in Bulgaria, the Patriarch Gabriel and the director of the school under the patronage of the vice-president of Bulgaria Mr. Kavaldjiev. More than 250 officers, spiritual leaders and civil representatives were present. The goal of this seminar was to awaken the interest of the community and to request changes in the Bulgarian constitution, which would guarantee the freedom of military personnel to access the chaplain's services and care.

The Bulgarian Chaplaincy Association

In February of 2002 a chaplaincy seminar, organized along with the Church of God



Chaplains Commission, was held in the National Palace of Culture (picture above) in Sofia. More than 60 pastors, chaplains and church workers from different denominations attended. These were people actively involved in military, hospital and prison ministries. The seminar was a stepping-stone for the development of the chaplaincy ministry in Bulgaria. It served as a beginning point of the structural development of the department of chaplaincy and caregivers in the Bulgarian Church of God and facilitated to the establishment of the Bulgarian Chaplaincy Association. The ministerial assignments focused on the army, hospitals, police and even some government agencies that have showed interest in our work. It is our prayer today that we are able to take the revival from our home-churches to the work places of millions and touch lives with the Gospel of the Risen Christ.