

# B U L G A R I A

REVIVAL  
MUST GO ON

# CUP & CROSS

## Orthodox Split Deepens

The split in the Bulgarian Orthodox church after the fall of the communist regime considerably deepened last week, when the police expelled priests "reformers" from the Alternative Synod under the demand of the "conservative" Synod headed by Patriarch Maxim. The police temporarily closed approximately 250 churches, monasteries and religious buildings used by the alternative synod, 18 of which are located in the capital Sofia. The Alternative Synod accused Patriarch Maxim of serving the former communist regime. In Sofia, two of the priests "reformers" from the "St. Parashkeva" church and "The Assumption" church were arrested. The Police had ensured access to the churches of the "conservatives" under the order of the Prosecutor's Office.

Sofia City Prosecutor Boiko Naidenov announced that the decision for the involvement of the police was taken when the Orthodox Church turned to the authorities for help against "people that impede the functions of the church". Naidenov grounded himself on the Confessional Act passed in 2003, which allows



the use of force against "people that abuse the heritage of the religious community". A court investigation has already begun against the Alternative Synod, the magistrate stated. The priests-reformers in response, introduced a form of "church in the open" in the garden in front of the "St. Sofia" church in Sofia to protest against the non-clerical measures undertaken against them.

The Bulgarian Orthodox Church, which claims eighty percent of the population of the country, experienced a schism after the fall of the communist regime in 1989. The Reformers, however, accuse Patriarch Maxim, who was elected for life in 1971, of cooperating with the

communists and demanded that he be expelled. The Alternative Synod is currently led by Bishop Inokentii, elected in July 1996, after the death of patriarch Pimen. "Our problem is Patriarch Maxim. We cannot bow to a political bureau of the Communist Party," stated bishop Inokentii. The arrest of priests with order of the Prosecutors' Office is "the ultimate blow against the Orthodox religion, and worst of all is that this makes the faithful renounce from the church", he said.

The Alternative Synod receives the support of the Union of the Democratic Forces (UDF) – the oppositional rightist party in Bulgaria. The party reacted sharply (continues on next page)

## MARKET PLACE RADIO MINISTRY

For the past four years, Cup & Cross Ministries' weekly radio program has been broadcasted from a regional network that was used for Communist propaganda during the regime of 1944-1989.

Several weeks ago one of our team members was at the Yambol marketplace and noticed a crowd that had gathered around a radio speaker. While the marketplace is generally accompanied with noises and loud voices, this crowd was quiet and focused on the radio program. They were listening to one of our regular weekly religious broadcasts. This particular issue was on the topic of fasting. Our team member reported the occurrence and followed up by visiting the marketplace again the following week only to find out that people had gathered around the radio speakers listening to the program again.

Our Bulgarian team reports that this is not a new occasion, as they have observed similar occurrences in stores, marketplaces and village squares since the beginning of our radio ministry. Keeping in mind that a great number Bulgarian and foreign radio stations, cable televisions and satellite programs offer a great variety of broadcasts in Bulgaria, this news brings excitement and encouraging among our churches. The Gospel of eternal life is preached in the markets and by all means this is the fulfillment of a Biblical mandate.

## ORTHODOX SPLIT DEEPENS

and strongly condemned the acts of the police, considering the lack of court decision for the actions. "This is not the way the wholeness of the Bulgarian Orthodox church should be restored", commented former President of Bulgaria Petar Stoyanov. According to him, such acts will only deepen the conflict between the Orthodox Christians in Bulgaria. "Our main concern is the wholeness of the church. Patriarch Maxim is waiting for the stretched hands of the repented (reformers) to go back to the House of God", said Father Nikolay, one of the "conservators". State authorities, in its turn, are continuing to perform the role of a conciliator even after Bulgaria Prime Minister Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotha swore to the Cross and the Gospel in the presence of Patriarch Maxim when he was sworn in at the position of prime Minister in 2001. The same did the newly elected Bulgarian President Georgi Parvanov in January 2002.

## FREEDOM OF RELIGION DECLARATION

Declaration of the participants in the "Current Problems of Religious Communities in Bulgaria" Conference held on July 13, 2004 in Sofia. To:

1. The President of the Republic of Bulgaria
2. The Chairman of the Parliament of the Republic of Bulgaria
3. The Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria
4. The Chief Prosecutor of the Republic of Bulgaria

We, the participants in the "Current Problems of Religious Communities in Bulgaria" Conference held on July 13, 2004 in Sofia, representing religious communities, non-government and social rights organization and citizens, being apprehensive with the attempts of the state to be involved in the internal dynamics of the religious communities and protesting against the tendencies to use the religious problematic for political purposes without taking under considering the numerous protests and objections against the prac-

public of Bulgaria

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pretext of applying the Confessional Act, as well as for the actions purposing the inflaming of religious animosity. We consider it to be unpredictable and dangerous for society to enforce totalitarian tendencies in the sphere of human rights after fifteen years of democratic changes in Bulgaria and on the verge of the country's entrance in the family of free European nations.

## Christianity and Human Rights

In November 2004, Cup & Cross Ministries will participate in the fourth annual Lilly Fellows Program National Research Conference which will focus on the theme, "Christianity and Human Rights." The conference will be held at Samford University and will explore the deep embedding of the language of human rights in international discourse. It will urge Christians to stand at the forefront of a transnational network of human rights activists and scholars that increasingly holds global political and military leaders accountable for their actions. The thinkers and activists participating at the conference are pressing, with greater frequency and success, the notion that human beings are endowed with certain basic rights, regardless of the type of political and economic system into which they are born. Cup & Cross Ministries will be participating with a research presentation entitled Postcommunist Christians in a Postmodern World.