

What do Bulgarians feel like?



“Bulgarians Feel Like Abandoned Kids”, according to a Social Anthropologist

Excerpts from Euronews interview with prominent Bulgarian social anthropologist **Haralan Aleksandrov** on the ongoing social and political crisis in **Bulgaria**:

“The reasons that triggered the mass demonstrations [*in February*] have been there for years. Some people in **Bulgaria** are desperately poor, can hardly survive and face hardships, difficulties and poverty. However these issues have been postponed for years.

Resentment and anger were somehow contained within the functioning political system. For some reason this year this arrangement broke up, it just collapsed. Apparently people can not live any more with this status quo.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the belief that something better is going to happen has died. Bulgarians live not just in a poor society, but in an impoverished society.

A growing number of people do not have any hope, they don't believe that things will change for better and no longer trust the elite – not only the politicians, but anyone who has some position. Bulgarians feel like children who have been abandoned and left to survive on their own.”

This is the world's view of our situation , but God says:

“No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.”
(New International Version (NIV) Joshua 1:5)

Christians in Bulgaria believe that God is with them and that we should be 'all times watchers' for our firm faith and go on. I do not remember a peaceful time since I was born. In my country the spiritual realm is a full-time battle field as it is said in the following short statistics.



As Bulgaria is gripped by a political crisis and mass protests, the country's religious elite is in the midst of transition too. After the death of Patriarch Maxim in November last year, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church is about to elect a new leader.

Like the secular world, the church is mired in crisis. Alleged ties to dubious businessmen and to the communist-era secret police, as well as the luxurious lifestyle of some of its highest-ranking bishops, have damaged the church's reputation. An institution with a 1,100 year-old history, which survived centuries of Turkish domination and decades of communism, the church has recently seen its prestige and influence among the Bulgarian society dwindle. Over 80% of the country's 7.3m people declare themselves followers of Orthodox Christianity but only 10% see churchgoing as an important part of their lives. What is more, only 40% state that they trust the church, down from over 60% a couple of years ago.

Most people in the Balkan country are rarely aware of the church unless it issues condemnations of pop-stars like Madonna, the annual gay pride parade or the St. Valentine's holiday (on that day most Bulgarians observe the day of St. Trifon, also called the day of the vine-grower, by throwing night-long wine fuelled feasts).

Recently, however, Bulgarians showed renewed interest in the church, which was fuelled by last year's revelations that 11 of the country's 15 top bishops were secret police agents during communist times. They were reporting to the notorious Darzhavna Sigurnost (FBI), the political police, who spied on people for suspected "anti-communist behaviour". The bishops also passed on information about representatives of the Greek and Macedonian churches. Observers note that 70% of the bishops belonging to the secret police is a higher rate than the number of agents in the foreign ministry of Bulgaria. "We were obliged to be in sync with the state for the good of the people," said metropolitan Kalinik (agent names: Rilski, and Velko) explaining his affiliations with the communist regime.

Even if its influence is declining, the church still has a role in the lives of Bulgarians who mostly observe traditional Christian holidays and rituals. Thus, the controversies which surround the Bulgarian Orthodox Church have a negative effect on society. The result, according to a report by Germany's Konrad Adenauer Foundation, is people who are confused in their religious convictions "by a church that is led and represented by a high clergy with a dubious public image, full of contradictions and internal dissension." Now the church is faced with a choice of a new leader from a list of three metropolitans, two of which were agents of the secret police.

The Education System of Bulgaria

If the spiritual situation is a great disaster, it is almost the same in the Education system in Bulgaria. It is mainly supported by the state through the Ministry of Education and Science. School education is compulsory for children from seven to sixteen years of age.

Unfortunately, the new Education Minister doesn't think that our educational system is disastrous enough:

"Children should start school at the age of four," according to Bulgaria's new Education Minister, Aneliya Klisarova.

The Education Minister also emphasized that tougher control should be imposed on private schools. She reminded that the former center-right GERB government allowed public funding for private schools, which she believes may lead to the establishment of a great number of private schools – sometimes with questionable qualities.

Moreover, she doesn't want the implementation of a system for differentiated payment of teachers extending the principle "Money Follows Pupils" over private schools to happen as well. The expected development of private education in our country, especially after the accession of our country into the European Union, will raise to the foreground the issue of the financial policy of the state towards private schools, mainly with regard to extending the principle "Money Follows Pupils" over these schools as well. The solution of this issue lies in achieving certain results with regard to the other two problems – the improvement of the material basis in state and municipal schools and the unification of the criteria and mechanisms for control over the quality of education in all schools. For this reason, the principle "Money Follows Pupils" can be implemented in its completeness not earlier than 2015, which is an unfair, because the Ministry has the money available now.



Private Secondary School 'Petko Rachov Slaveikov', Sofia

<http://www.slaveikov-school.org/>



Private Kindergarten and Elementary School "Novo Pokolenie" (New Generation)

<http://www.novopokolenie.eu/>

However, Private schools are competing on the Academic field successfully with state schools. The two schools 'Petko Rachov Slaveikov' and 'New Generation' in Sofia, which main goal is to educate the Bulgarian new generation in God's principles and change their way of thinking are fighting the "good fight" and if you want to be heroes, please join us-pray for us, support us and love us!
"Be strong, and let us fight bravely for our people and the cities of our God. The LORD will do what is good in his sight."

(New International Version (NIV) [1 Chronicles 19:13](#))

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