

Religion and Society in Contemporary Bulgaria

At the beginning of 2012 the “Commission for the Opening of State Police Files” in Bulgaria published a report according to which 11 of the 15 current members of the Holy Synod, the highest administrative committee of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, were agents of or informal collaborators with the Bulgarian secret police, the “Committee for State Security” (Komitet za daržavna sigurnost) during the socialist era. Individual bishops then apologized for their collaboration with the secret service while others denied ever having worked for the state police. The case triggered an intensive public debate on the role of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church during the Cold War and shows that the church still has difficulties in coming to terms with its own past. However, the commission’s report also inspired new research on the church’s past, as historians now have access to more sources due to the large-scale opening of archives. In this issue of *Euxeinos* Daniela Kalkandjieva will elaborate on the state’s infiltration of the church as well as the church’s scope of action at the national and international level during the socialist era.

Bulgaria is for the most part characterized by Orthodox Christianity, but the country also has a significant Muslim minority (Turks and Pomaks), which the articles by Marina Liakova and Evangelos Karagiannis deal with. The Turkish minority, which accounts for approx. 8.8 % of the population, is indeed well represented in politics and public administra-

tion, but the type of representation – almost exclusively through the party “Movement for Rights and Freedoms” (DPS) – is indicative of the ethnic isolation of the Turks in Bulgaria. They are also frequently economically and socially disadvantaged compared to the Bulgarian majority population. In his article Evangelos Karagiannis compares state policy towards the Pomaks, the Slavic-speaking Muslims, in Southern Bulgaria and Northern Greece. It is apparent that both countries have pursued entirely different strategies in dealing with this Muslim minority. However, due to the Bulgarian assimilation policy a significant part of Bulgarian Pomaks regard themselves as Bulgarians nowadays.

In her article Sonja Schüler deals with a current political development: a spontaneously emerging environmental protection movement, which successfully resisted plans to soften nature conservation regulations in the Bulgarian forestry law in the summer.

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