

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_sbct-01.php

The Schism in the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, Part 2: Under the Socialist Government, 1993–97¹

JANICE BROUN

Introduction

Since 1992 the Bulgarian Orthodox Church has been rent by one of the most persistent and damaging schisms in the Orthodox world. There had been widespread dissatisfaction about the church's subservience to Todor Zhivkov's regime and Patriarch Maksim and the Holy Synod had been accused of collaboration. On 9 March 1992, under the first government of the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) led by Filip Dimitrov, the director of the Board for Religious Affairs, Metodi Spasov, bluntly told the Synod that Maksim's election as patriarch 21 years earlier had violated the church's bylaws and was thus invalid. On 18 March three leading metropolitans, Pimen of Nevrokop, Pankrati of Stara Zagora and Kalinik of Vratsa confirmed that in their opinion the election of 1971 was null and void.²

On 25–26 May, through Decree No. 92, Spasov sent shock waves throughout Bulgaria and the Orthodox world by declaring Maksim and the entire Holy Synod illegitimate and uncanonical and replacing them with a Provisional Synod under the three dissident metropolitans together with an enigmatic reformist monk and UDF politician Khristofor Subev. Led by Professor Radko Poptodorov, who had called for a purge of the Holy Synod over a year before,³ they were backed by a Priests' Union which represented a minority of clergy disillusioned by the Holy Synod's reluctance to reform itself or allow open discussion. Pimen had been a rival candidate at Maksim's election and was patently making another bid for the patriarchal throne. Maksim had been the Politburo's nominee, as Veselin Metodiev, vice-president of the second UDF government, made clear to the National Assembly on 27 June 1997.⁴ As the commentator Spas Raikin has pointed out, all elections under communism were rigged, but that fact did not canonically invalidate appointments made under duress, provided that validly consecrated bishops used the requisite liturgical rites. What alarmed Raikin and the majority of church members, including some UDF supporters, however, was the government's apparent ignorance or scorn of canon law, its violation of the democratic constitution of 1991 and its arbitrary recourse to bylaws imposed on the church against its will by the communist government back in 1951. It was indeed on the grounds that the church was not following these bylaws by holding elections at all its levels that Pimen had contested Maksim's election. The UDF leaders were mainly members of the intelligentsia with a veneer of western culture and no experience or understanding of church affairs. They regarded Maksim and most of the Holy Synod as irredeemably compromised and were not prepared to

show any flexibility, make concessions or admit that several leading Provisional Synod members – Pimen, Pankrati and Kalinik in particular, who had long held power within the Synod as Maksim's inner Council – had been just as closely attached to communist policies. In the words of sociologist Krasimir Kunev, chairman of the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, who knew Pankrati and Kalinik: 'Unfortunately the people who organised the split were not the right people in terms of moral qualities'.⁵ Exactly how much scope, if any, members of the Holy Synod had had to defend and protect the interests of their church and its members under communism remains a matter for individual consciences to decide. Some of them must have had doubtful consciences, for around 1970, after the government realised that it had failed to crush the faith of the traditional national church, it embarked on an increasingly effective programme of infiltrating its ranks, right up to metropolitan level.

According to Raikin, Bulgarians swallowed the concept that 'the church is politics', treating it as a political football to be kicked around by the opposing forces, the UDF and the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP, the recycled Communist Party), with neither party motivated by any genuine concern for its religious well being. Raikin points out regretfully that, with more prudence, the UDF could have had the entire church behind it for the democratisation of the country.

When I wrote what has turned out to be the first part of this article on the schism, in 1993, the UDF government, having managed to antagonise many sections of society, had collapsed; its coalition partner, the mainly Turkish Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF), had switched its support to the BSP. Some of the schismatics had already defected or returned to the bosom of the Holy Synod. The general expectation was that, based as it was on the alliance of a defeated and discredited political party, a few ambitious clerics and a small minority of priests and laypeople, the schism (*raskol*) would soon collapse. Instead, it has dragged on for eight years. In hindsight, it is now obvious that the Bulgarian revolution was incomplete, politically, economically and ecclesiastically. The schism has had a disastrous effect on Bulgarian church life. Many members kept their faith through decades of persecution and longed for a clean, revived, outward-looking church. Although no canonically regular local Orthodox Church outside Bulgaria recognises the schismatic Synod, the internal troubles have prevented any such renaissance occurring.

During the next four years from 1993, the BSP-dominated government was able to assume, self-righteously, a novel role as a defender of a church which its communist predecessors had done their utmost to wreck: it came out in defence of Maksim as the legitimate patriarch. The conduct of both sides in the schism proved that the church had been so undermined by systematic infiltration and corruption that it was incapable of mustering a nucleus of resistance to external manipulation substantial enough to press for political neutrality. The alliance of the BSP with the Orthodox Church did not however, benefit the church as much as some of the Holy Synod may have hoped.

In 1996 a schismatic *Subor* (Council) elected Pimen patriarch. In autumn 1998 the two ageing patriarchs were still confronting each other, intransigent, refusing to retire gracefully and give their church a chance to elect a new, younger patriarch. Maksim was 84 and a diabetic; Pimen was 93. The schism was so serious that the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomaios convened a Pan-Orthodox Council in Sofia with representatives of ten local churches to try to resolve the schism as well as other disputes currently splitting Orthodox communities. UDF politician Iordan Vasilev revealed in a television broadcast after the UDF government's return to power in spring 1997

that Makim had been prepared to step down before March 1992, but that the UDF intervention had hardened his determination to maintain his canonical legality. The continuance of the schism raises the question as to whether it was basically the result of the work of communist infiltrators within the UDF, whose aim was to further undermine the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and push it and the UDF into open conflict.

This article chronicles the course of the schism until the beginning of 1997 when the BSP government collapsed, having brought the nation to the verge of catastrophe.

Khristofor Subev Bows Out

From 1989 Subev had been the leading protagonist for religious freedom, for Muslims as well as Christians. He founded the movement 'Spasenie' (Salvation) to promote reform of the Orthodox Church and became vice-president of the UDF Co-ordinating Committee and chairman of the National Assembly's Religious Affairs Commission. He came to be highly regarded by most believers, including Orthodox. He maintained a high profile through publicity and spectacular rallies and vigils demanding radical church reform. It was Subev who had recommended Spasov as director of the Board for Religious Affairs. Gradually, however, he lost public support and alienated more and more church members as a result of his increasingly erratic behaviour: he loudly denounced Maksim as a communist during the liturgy, for example. In 1992 the Provisional Synod nevertheless consecrated him bishop of Makariopol, a nonexistent diocese, in defiance of church canons, which require the consent of all the bishops.⁶

Pimen publicly confessed the Provisional Synod's concern that Subev was putting politics before the church; when appointed bishop in Varna and then Samokov he had refused to go.⁷ In January 1993 Subev definitely parted company with the schismatics when he publicly anathematised and excommunicated several key figures from both synods.

In June, now transformed into an arch-conservative, he founded an Old Calendarist church to downstage the already existing one, which had originated in the catacombs and had surfaced in November 1992. In January 1993 the newly-emerged church had elected as bishop of Triaditsa (the old name for Sofia) Archimandrite Foti (Siro-makhov) who had studied and taught in Greece, had been consecrated by Old Calendarists there and was the spiritual son of the *starets* Serafim Aleksiev. In 1994 the Russian Orthodox Church in Exile entered into full communion with it. By 1997 it had three parishes in Sofia and seven in other towns, a convent founded by Russian nuns and a good religious press.⁸ This intense, austere, pietistic, ultra-traditionalist, monarchist church was never likely to attract significant support in a nation as deeply secularised as Bulgaria.

Subev elevated himself to archepiscopal rank and boasted that he would purge the Bulgarian Orthodox Church of heresy, rescue it from ecumenism and withdraw it from the World Council of Churches (WCC).⁹ By this time he had forfeited all credibility and his support had dwindled to his immediate entourage, a handful of UDF activists and monarchists.

The suspicions of Aleksandur Gospodinov, one of Subev's teachers at the Academy of St Kliment of Okhrid in Sofia in the early 1980s, that he was one of the many police agents sent to infiltrate future clergy, were justified when in May 1994 the UDF at last launched a purge of members with communist connections. Gospodinov, a keen UDF supporter, was critical of his party for not having vetted its

officials properly back in 1990.¹⁰ Subev publicly admitted that his father had been a police officer whose job had been to trade food for inmates.¹¹ Other sources claim that Subev senior had been an investigating officer at Belene concentration camp. Documents surfaced indicating that Subev had himself acted as an informer before 1989.

In 1995 Subev dissolved Spasenie and, despairing of gaining any further support in Bulgaria, departed to the USA, where rumours about him still abound, including his claim to have been granted political asylum and, in 1998, two parishes in California. It is unclear on whose behalf Subev has been operating – the communists', the UDF's, or his own – or, as his persistent *voltes face* suggest, a combination of all three.

Maksim's Synod Allies Itself with the BSP

From the end of 1992 until January 1997 the former communists were again in control of Bulgaria, at first through a BSP-dominated coalition under the nominally independent Lyuben Berov, a well-meaning economist who was dogged by ill-health. Exasperated by the failure of an attempt at reconciliation, Berov vowed never to have anything again to do with the synodal disputants. His government resigned on 2 September 1994 and the BSP won the December elections convincingly with 43.5 per cent of the vote. The election results indicated the deep divide in Bulgarian society. The BSP drew most of its support from the rural areas, the elderly and people who were resistant to change; the UDF continued to dominate the main cities, a dominance reflected in the fact that their councils backed the Provisional Synod in property disputes.

For Maksim and the Holy Synod this was a welcome period of consolidation, enabling them to deepen their rapprochement with the BSP and giving them an opportunity to convince the Orthodox world of their validity.

President Zhelyu Zhelev believed that a stable democracy had to be based on cohabitation and consensus rather than confrontation and, though a UDF member, had never concealed his disapproval of the UDF's intervention in church affairs. He continued to keep his distance from both synods.

Predictably, the government dismissed Spasov, director of the Board for Religious Affairs, on 23 March 1993, on the grounds that he had issued legally invalid orders.¹² His successor, Byzantinologist Khristo Matanov, claimed to be unattached to any party and made it clear that the disputants should be left to settle their affairs without state intervention. Although he refused to register the Holy Synod formally, for practical purposes he regarded it as the main church authority, and set aside Decree No. 92, thus removing any legal basis for delegitimising Maksim.¹³ The neutrality of the Board for Religious Affairs was called into question the following year when it embarked on blatant and arbitrary discrimination against specific religious bodies, but this did not affect the conflict between the synods.

In the face of pressure from Subev and the public in 1990 the Holy Synod had promised to convene a *Tsurkovno-naroden Subor* (Council of Church and Nation), but had procrastinated. In autumn 1992, confronted with a rival synod and a determined nucleus of believers demanding reform and participation in the concerns of their church, it belatedly decided to convene one. However, by the spring of 1993 the electoral process came to a virtual standstill, with both synods accusing each other of manipulation of parish and diocesan elections. It would take four more years and a rival schismatic *Subor* before the Holy Synod was ready to risk calling one again.

By June 1993 the Provisional Synod seemed to be on the verge of capitulation. Its chief activist, Subev, had defected. Its leading metropolitans, Pimen, Pankrati and Kalinik, hankering after a return to their previous privileged position, pleaded contrition – the first of several periodic pseudo-repentances. But the Holy Synod's Pre-Synodical Council would settle for no less than their demotion to lay status and exile to a monastery. These terms proved completely unacceptable; repentance was one thing, the surrender of prestigious ecclesiastical position and privileges another.

President Zhelev and Maksim's Synod appealed to Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomaios as well as to the Russian, Serbian and Greek churches to arbitrate. Poptodorov objected, pointing out that as '*primus inter pares*' the ecumenical patriarch had no jurisdiction over the internal affairs of local churches. The UDF also accused the 'atheist president' of unwarranted intrusion in Bulgaria's religious affairs.

Bartholomaios arrived in September but his hopes of settling the dispute were dashed. He found himself confronted with not two but several competing jurisdictions. He dismissed Subev's as a sectarian aberration but was deeply concerned about the hostility of Foti and the genuine Old Calendarists. There were other *soi-disant* Old Calendarist churches too, which the Board for Religious Affairs refused to register on the grounds that each group claimed to be the true one.¹⁴ Bartholomaios made his disapproval of the harshness of the Holy Synod's terms for reinstatement clear, but it refused to relax its intransigent attitude. He listened carefully to the reformist priests' complaints and their demands for a committee drawn from both synods to revise the canons. The Priests' Union numbered about 110. Even among the majority of the 800 active clergy who supported the Holy Synod there was discontent at the Pre-Synodical Council's exclusion of lower clergy and its refusal to allow them any voice. Meanwhile, on 24 November an investigative commission headed by Poptodorov revealed that out of 101 votes cast for Maksim at his election as patriarch, 67 were written in the same hand.¹⁵

Nevertheless, some of the lower-rank rebels returned to the Holy Synod and were duly reinstated. These included the two deans of Sofia's Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, and two bishops, Antoni of Provat and Galaktion of Velika. Antoni was rewarded by being appointed Maksim's deputy and Galaktion was reinstated. The aged Metropolitan Stefan (Staikov) of Veliko Turnovo, incapacitated by a stroke, resigned. On 15 December the Holy Synod announced that its way was clear to elect replacements for the errant metropolitans, whom it had demoted but not excommunicated. The replacements were Grigori (Uzunov) formerly Bishop of Lovech, for Veliko Turnovo; the patriarch's vicar Natanail (Kalaidzhiev) for Nevrokop;¹⁶ and Ignati (Dimov) for Vratsa. Neofit (Dimitrov), Synod secretary, was appointed in place of the schismatic Metropolitan Sofroni (Staichev) of Ruse, who retired, dying the next year.¹⁷

In defence of the Holy Synod, Raikin argues that it had no choice but to accommodate itself to circumstances and accept help from any side which was now ready to offer it. The UDF, for its part, did not appear to have learnt any lessons from its ill-advised foray into internal church affairs in 1992 and persisted in backing the Provisional Synod's batch of unprincipled careerists.

The majority of church members regarded Maksim and the Holy Synod as the true canonical church. Gospodinov, who had worked in the Academy and Seminary close to many of the personalities involved in the schism, had witnessed at first hand the relentless infiltration of the future priesthood. He believed that though the communists were no longer seeking to destroy the church, they were bent on exploiting and controlling it for their own ends, with the connivance and even collaboration of

some of its leading members. Personal access to Maksim from advisers who might tell him some uncomfortable truths was barred by security guards – indeed both sides employed them. It seemed that Maksim was being deliberately isolated from democratic influences and pushed by his entourage towards the BSP. Gospodinov felt that an over-cautious Maksim achieved nothing by trying to be ‘all things to all men’. He suspected that communists were responsible for pressing for the use of sterner methods against the schismatics so as to deepen the schism and keep the church divided.

The BSP was by now increasingly playing the themes of nationalism, Orthodox unity and Slavophilism in the face of the Catholic Church and Muslim fundamentalism. Its support for the legitimate Synod gave its members the opportunity to present themselves to the electorate as at heart defenders of the church. At parish level, non-believers turned out to vote in some parish elections.

The schism also served to divert attention from continuing and increasing control by the *nomenklatura* of the banks, finance, security and the economy. Within the church, energies which should have been utilised for tackling the many practical problems that were a legacy of communism and for providing a much needed pastoral outreach to a secularised, spiritually deprived nation were dissipated in disputes about control of sees, property and assets. Thus the rapprochement with the BSP resulted in a period of stagnation.

Antoni Khubanchev, the Academy librarian, noted at this time a welcome renewal in personal devotion, in parish and youth work, and in many hitherto unfamiliar fields of social outreach, but complained that taking advantage of these new opportunities depended on the initiative of priests and lay people because the hierarchy was immobilised by the divisions, or just too conservative to act.¹⁸ According to a devout female church member, the church had been the only place under communism where all values had converged; it had suffered greatly but now was too closed in on itself and incapable of reform.

Gospodinov believes that although seminarians and theological students were no longer being recruited as communist agents, communist elements were watching out for gifted young men whom they could influence and utilise for future key positions. The continuing presence of non-believing members of staff was bound to affect their students; Gospodinov says that in 1995 he suspected that all except perhaps one of the current seven postgraduate students who would go on to become lecturers were unbelievers. At the highest level the communists were promoting their chosen candidates. By 1994 four of the 14 metropolitans had close links with the communists. Were that number to increase to seven or eight the church could be caught in a tragic plight, Gospodinov believes, since canonically it is almost impossible to get rid of bishops even if they are known to be compromised. Gospodinov had worked under Grigori and Ignati, former Seminary rectors, and expresses considerable reservations about them. Grigori had stood as a BSP candidate in 1991. Later, in 1995, he was to canvass for the party’s candidate in his diocese.¹⁹ His attempt to introduce martial arts – inevitably associated in people’s minds with training for the security services – into the seminary had raised such an outcry from its conservative staff that he had had to abandon the project.

The new bishops were contested by schismatics who prevented Natanail celebrating his inauguration at Nevrokop. In April 1994 they seized the church in Plevna, in the see of Vratsa. Although it was outside his jurisdiction, Grigori sent a lorry by night to his former seminary to muster two dozen boys who were game for a fight. He then directed operations for the church’s recapture, during which two of the

occupants were wounded.

The patriarch's launch of a church bank, despite heated protests from some of his own metropolitans, aroused widespread disapproval and considerable derision among the Bulgarian public, many of whom regarded it as a means for laundering dirty money as well as enabling the Patriarchal Synod to secure the loyalty of churches and individuals. Launching a bank required a down payment of 500 million lev, a considerable sum for a church that was pleading poverty. Written proof exists that Metropolitan Gelasi (Mikhailov) consigned the entire foreign business of the Patriarchate exclusively to a Piraeus-based financier.²⁰

The official Synod journal *Tsurkoven vestnik* expressed indignation when the Eastern-rite Catholic archbishop Mgr Metodi Stratiev accused the Orthodox Church of not standing its ground in the face of communist pressure because it was financed by the state. Stratiev, a devout, deeply respected figure, had spent 11 years in prison and hard labour under the communists and regarded the Orthodox hierarchy as communist.²¹

Ralitsa Derilova, one of the batch of enthusiastic women students readmitted to the Academy in 1990, observed rampant nepotism at the heart of the Synod. Blackmail goes on. Employees in the Synod are put under pressure, even typists and cleaners, as well as priests' wives. The lady running its bookshop has to decide into which side's accounts she pays her takings. People switch from one side to the other. She saw the schismatics as the only hope for reform.²² Her view was shared by most active UDF adherents; although many UDF sympathisers regarded Maksim as legitimate, reconciling committed support for the democratic party with support for the canonical Synod was not an easy task.

The Schismatics

Speculation as to who was actually behind the schismatics was rife, especially following a baffling order in July 1994 from Pimen as 'Acting Chairman of the Holy Synod',²³ which implied that he was merely a figurehead and could not rely on the support of his fellow metropolitans. Pimen nominated a team consisting of Bishop Inokenti (as its general secretary), Priests' Union leaders Poptodorov and Archpriest Anatoli Balachev, the priests Kamen Barakov, Ivan Tomov, Stefan (from St Peter and Paul Church, Sofia), Khristo Latinov and Emil Spanchev, and some others. He stipulated that no order of his should be implemented unless it received prior approval from Inokenti, Barakov and Spanchev. His order sparked off an article by Ivan Zhelev Dimitrov, Old Testament lecturer at Sofia Academy, 'Koi durpa kontsite?' ('Who is pulling the strings?'), in *Tsurkoven vestnik*.²⁴ Dimitrov concluded that the schism was promoted by powerful property owners hiding behind a front of ecclesiastics and manipulating them in order to prevent the church reclaiming all its property. These individuals, he maintained, would not stand to gain if the church used its normal income for its broad educational and charitable purposes.

During 1994 the schismatic Synod constituted its own counter-hierarchy to fill all the Bulgarian Orthodox Church's twelve sees. Eventually there were seven metropolitans and five bishops.²⁵ Inokenti was elected metropolitan of Sofia. Though the schismatics had no press they utilised sympathetic newspapers like the UDF *Demokratiya* to air their news and views.

When Matanov removed the legal base for delegitimising Maksim, the procurator general, Dr Ivan Tatarchev, an indefatigable supporter of the Provisional Synod, took up action to restore the property it had been allotted. In a letter to Maksim, the

patriarch was told simply that he was free to turn to 'the competent organs' for redress.²⁶ The disputes over property, which had given rise to such undignified skirmishes between the two sides in 1992, had crystallised over two key sites. Most Holy Synod priests maintained that the return of these sites by the schismatics was a prerequisite for ending the schism. The fate of one, the Synod headquarters, occupied and barricaded since May 1992 by the schismatics, was resolved almost unnoticed at 6 a.m. on 13 May 1994 when, in the absence of the normal security guards, a janitor handed the keys to Neofit. The surrender seems to have been prearranged.²⁷ Its return did not signal the end of the schism, however, as many had hoped. The schismatics were not prepared to relinquish the patriarchal workshops producing candles, icon lamps and bells at Ilientsi, a Sofia suburb, which they had seized in 1992. The manufacture of church candles is still the major source of church revenue. Even before 1989 50 million candles a year were sold; afterwards the number soared even higher. The schismatics' occupation of the workshop represented a considerable loss of revenue for the Holy Synod, which was forced to import candles from Greece; some of its bishops opened their own diocesan workshops.

Throughout the period various participants and observers came up with proposals to end the schism. Gerasim, the schismatic auxiliary bishop of Sliven diocese, asked that all demotions and excommunications be suspended and the present *status quo* be observed.²⁸ Archpriest Anatoli Balachev emphasised that Maksim ought to beg forgiveness of the people, not the people of him, and that only talks with both sides on an equal footing could overcome the division. He blamed Subev as chief culprit for the schism. In 1995 the new UDF leader Ivan Kostov, who had replaced the former prime minister Dimitrov, attempted negotiations, but the Holy Synod pointed out that the schism could not be resolved unless the UDF admitted its responsibility for initiating it.²⁹ Maksim and his bishops asked premier Zhan Videnov to issue a document declaring the Provisional Synod invalid. Although Videnov admitted the dispute was not between equivalent sides, Khristo Matanov, director of the Board for Religious Affairs, refused to intervene.³⁰ On 11 April the Congress of the Priests' Union broached the vexed question of the urgent need to set a date for convening the Council of Church and Nation.³¹

1995 also saw the further breakup of the original nucleus of schismatic metropolitans. On 17 April the Holy Synod summoned 150 priests from all over Bulgaria to approve the excommunication of Pimen and Pankrati and the repentance of Stefan. On 22 June Pimen, Pankrati and Kalinik all expressed regret to the Holy Synod in full session. Finally, on 16 December, Pankrati and Kalinik were received back into the patriarchal fold. Pankrati was immediately reinstated as metropolitan of Stara Zagora, the position he had held from 1967 until 1992.³² The Synod was not completely satisfied with Kalinik's submission and demoted him to probationary monastic status, which proved unacceptable to him. From the very outbreak of the schism, Kalinik may have set his sights on the patriarchal throne, believing that Pimen was not likely to survive much longer; now he went his own way.³³

Deputy prime minister Svetoslav Shivarov, under whose authority the Board for Religious Affairs was placed, issued an order giving a new interpretation of the Law on Confessions. He maintained that because the law recognised the Bulgarian Orthodox Church as the predominant religion of Bulgaria the church did not need to register with the Board. So as to terminate the schism, which 'ill serves our national interests, and for the preservation of the church as a fortress of the Bulgarian soul', he also ordered the Board to inform the patriarch that the church's juridical status had been restored. The order emphasised that the only competent authority to settle the

schism lay within the church itself.³⁴

On 17 November the government issued Order No. P63 to compel the director of the Board for Religious Affairs to register the Holy Synod. Matanov refused to comply on the grounds that he was not prepared to break the law, as his predecessor had. A new person with impeccable communist credentials, Boncho Asenov, was appointed to the staff of the Board. A former lecturer in the Sixth Department of State Security, who had taught in the police school at Simeonovo and specialised in monitoring religious denominations, he had even boasted of the book he wrote on his work there and of his participation in the brutal campaign in 1984–85 to force Bulgarian Turks to adopt Slav 'Christian' names. Over Matanov's head, he started a series of new meetings with the contestants in the schism.

In January 1996 Professor Todor Subev, formerly assistant general secretary at the WCC, made an interesting contribution to the continuing debate towards resolving the schism.³⁵ He argued that there were historical precedents from the time of the Donatist controversy for parallel church structures coexisting on a temporary basis and allowing intercommunion among church members.

The Battle of the Candles

During Lent, the Holy Synod was confronted with a crisis, with its ill-paid seminary teachers on strike. It therefore sought to increase its funds by recapturing the Ilientsi candle-making workshop. On 18 March, under Asenov's guidance, it hired a private security firm, which reappropriated the workshop and expelled the workers. The possibility of a candle shortage over Easter loomed. During the subsequent 38-day siege there were scuffles and some violence. On the one side were the government and police; Videnov assured Maksim of his government's support. On the other was Tatarchev, who accused the patriarch of taking the law into his own hands. He ordered the patriarchal church to evacuate the factory; otherwise he would have them evicted by force. He even threatened Maksim with arrest. Pimen, for his part, joined distressed out-of-work employees demonstrating outside their factory until he collapsed and had to be carried off. The occupation ended on 24 April when, following orders from Sofia City Council and a military prosecutor, the patriarchal side evacuated the workshop.³⁶

The Priests' Union urged both Synods to make concessions and started negotiations with the Movement for the Unity of the Church, which supported the Patriarchal Synod. Poptodorov stressed that the Holy Synod was duty-bound to convene the Council of Church and Nation before its four-year electoral mandate ran out. Here he was still following the stipulation in the 1951 church bylaws; these reaffirmed the original bylaws of the Bulgarian Orthodox Exarchate of 1871, which stipulated quadrennial Church Councils. During the 120 years of its existence, however, the church had convened only three Councils of Church and Nation – in 1871, 1921 and 1953. As Raikin points out, it was the Holy Synod which by the Statutes of 1895 controversially dropped the stipulation for quadrennial Councils and definitely and unequivocally established itself as the supreme and sole authority in the church, excluding altogether the participation of the lower clergy and laypeople in higher church councils.³⁷

The Visit of Tsar Simeon

Both major parties steered clear of monarchism, apart from Subev's UDF wing, for

the monarchy was a nineteenth-century German import without deep local roots. Surveys indicated that fewer than ten per cent of Bulgarians wanted it restored. Nevertheless, Tsar Simeon's first visit for 50 years, from May to July 1996, aroused considerable interest. Although government ministers boycotted him, the Holy Synod welcomed him warmly. Maksim and Serbian Patriarch Pavle, on an official visit, jointly celebrated the liturgy on 16 June in a packed St Alexander Nevsky Cathedral. In line with accepted government and church protocol, no special prayer for the tsar was included, but he was interceded for by name, allowed to read the Creed and blessed by both patriarchs. The choir sang the royal anthem and there was stormy applause after the 'Many Years' anthem. Patriarchal spokesman Marin Zarbanov stressed that the church was not in favour of the tsar's restoration but that he might exercise a 'moral role' as Bulgaria emerged from communism. Generally, Zarbanov said, Orthodox Churches do not favour the restoration of monarchies, because of their tendency to interfere in church affairs.³⁸ To Pimen's disappointment Simeon made no attempt to contact him in his see in Blagoevgrad, to which he had been invited. Subev had formerly led a militant band of monarchists among UDF members, but Simeon's explicit endorsement of the canonical Synod eased the position of the less radical monarchists, who followed the official patriarch. Despite the favourable impression Simeon made even among antimonarchists by, to quote Plovdiv translator Tsveta Luizova-Khoreva, 'demonstrating charm, intelligence and moderation none of us have seen here for years', the effect of the visit was short-lived as the nation continued its downward spiral towards its worst-ever economic crisis. The monarchy was a luxury Bulgaria could not afford.

The Schismatic Council Elects Pimen Patriarch

The schismatics now went ahead with preparations for their own Council of Church and Nation in St Paraskeva Church in Sofia on 2–3 July 1996 to elect a new patriarch in place of Maksim. Pimen applied to Shivarov for a three-million lev subsidy. Shivarov however assured Maksim that the government recognised only one Orthodox Church in Bulgaria, that led by him and the Holy Synod, and affirmed its juridical standing and registration of its leadership under the Law on Confessions. Shivarov maintained that the Synod under Pimen no longer existed because the Supreme Court on 5 November 1992 had declared the May 1992 directive invalid and because the Board for Religious Affairs had never registered it. The attempt to hold a Council and create a second Orthodox Church, he wrote, violated the constitution, destabilised society and threatened national security. 'There have never been two Orthodox Churches in the history of the Bulgarian people.' The wishes of Pimen's followers had been 'subordinated to the political objectives of the UDF and Subev's undisguised ambition to become patriarch'. Shivarov warned that the decisions of such a Council would not be accepted as legal.³⁹

The 150 schismatic Council delegates were chosen on the basis of the 1992 parish council elections. To what extent they were representative of Bulgaria's 3000 parish churches was questionable; rather, they acted for the schismatic dioceses. None of the three Holy Synod representatives invited deigned to attend, nor did President Zhelev. The only foreign Orthodox Churches represented were uncanonical: the Church of Macedonia, and the Kiev Patriarchate Ukrainian Church whose head, that unscrupulous power-seeker Filaret (Denisenko), had a reputation tarnished by his past connections with the KGB. Filaret had already met Bishop Inokenti in Kiev on 8 June and announced the mutual recognition of their churches.

The election of Pimen as patriarch went ahead despite the fact that 55 delegates abstained from voting. This level of abstention cast doubt on the Council's choice. The abstainers probably would have preferred a patriarch under 90 or one with a cleaner slate than Pimen, who had provided evidence of his instability and opportunism only that spring when he had again proffered his repentance to the Holy Synod. Two canonically legitimate metropolitans, Pankrati and Ioaniki of Sliven, were put up as token candidates to provide the appearance of genuine competition. Out of the 95 who voted, 90 chose Pimen. Key UDF figures like Dimitrov and Tatarchev were very much in evidence and addressed the Council. It is doubtful if many really comprehended the seriousness of the ecclesiastical issues at stake. Some may later have regretted their participation. New bylaws were adopted providing for a 37-member Holy Synod (including the patriarch), two thirds of whom were to be priests and one third laypeople. The inclusion of laypeople was without precedent in Bulgarian Orthodox history. Existing dioceses were reduced in size so that smaller regions could enjoy better pastoral provision. On 4 July Pimen was enthroned. It was ironic that Maksim was at the same time at Bachkovo Monastery celebrating the silver jubilee of his patriarchate. In Sofia, Bishop Galaktion rocked the celebrations in St Paraskeva Church by tolling the funeral bells of St Alexander Nevsky Cathedral. Videnov sent Maksim a goodwill telegram emphasising the Council's deeply anti-Bulgarian character.

The Council and enthronement of a rival patriarch shook the nation and deeply saddened many believers. One article dubbed the Council 'a Constituent Congress of the Church of the UDF'.⁴⁰ Even Tatarchev had to admit that the public election of a patriarch was without precedent in Bulgarian history. Newspaper articles lamented that the way lay open for sects to make inroads on young people and wean them from their ancestral faith. Gospodinov wrote a letter to *Demokratiya* pointing out that the communists, by posing as defenders of Orthodoxy, seemed to be the main beneficiaries of the schism. He reminded readers that four years earlier the paper had identified some of the schismatic demonstrators in ugly scenes in St Alexander Nevsky Cathedral as the same people implicated in the burning of Communist Party archives in 1989.

In this way it is possible to discredit the democratic movement and divert people's attention away from government failures and the fact that the *nomenklatura* still occupy key positions, posing as defenders of the church, to create a false impression that those Orthodox who remain faithful to Maksim oppose the UDF, and to divide the noncommunists.⁴¹

The canonical Synod retaliated by condemning the 'uncanonical, antichurch and anti-national Council' for its irresponsibility in electing a pseudopatriarch.

The act committed by the schismatics is an event of absurdity and shame in the centuries-long history of our church and our state. Regrettably, prominent public figures, with their attendance and irresponsible statements at this pseudo-Council, proved its antichurch character.⁴²

On 24 July the Synod also threatened Pimen, whom it had previously excommunicated, with the direst ecclesiastical punishment, anathematisation, if he refused to repent before its projected Council at Easter 1997. Although it defrocked the schismatic bishops, it invited the other priests and laypeople to return to its fold. It demanded that Kalinik renounce all the consecrations in which he had participated since 1992.⁴³ In response to a statement from Tatarchev challenging Maksim's

legitimacy it lodged a complaint to the Strasbourg European Human Rights Commission.

Pimen petitioned the government for recognition, allegedly using a seal with the inscription 'Bulgarian Orthodox Church' stolen from the Holy Synod. The government refused to reply, apparently, according to sources close to the Cabinet, in order to deprive the schismatics of the opportunity of appealing to the Supreme Court, still dominated by the UDF. Legal experts explained that they based their refusal on the Supreme Court's earlier decision invalidating Spasov's registration and that the Provisional Synod therefore had no legal status. According to Article 6 of the Law on Confessions, they said, only the Cabinet or vicepresident had the right to confirm changes in the church's constitution. They commented that Pimen's Synod could be registered only as a new Orthodox Church, but that this would violate the constitution; an application to the Supreme Court would require a specific number of deputies' signatures.⁴⁴

As for recognition abroad, for years members of Bulgarian Orthodox parishes in other parts of the world had been divided on the issue of allegiance to the Holy Synod. In the USA, indeed, they had been split between antagonistic jurisdictions since 1963, partly in reaction to perceived machinations by the official Bulgarian Orthodox Church to exploit them for prosoviet propaganda. Pimen was justifiably regarded as an agent for the Bulgarian regime; he cursed all church members who refused submission to the Holy Synod. Some under Kiril, now archbishop of Pittsburgh, had gone under the safety net of the Orthodox Church of America. Another group under Metropolitan Joseph of New York, still loyal to the Holy Synod, was bitterly opposed by a group taken over by ultra-rightist monarchists. This unhappy and convoluted situation had wrought havoc within the American Bulgarian community, especially in New York where there were interminable property disputes.⁴⁵ Despite Pimen's record, in their enthusiasm for the UDF still other churches, including Ss Cyril and Methodius in New York and St Sophia in Chicago, expressed a desire to join the schismatic Synod.⁴⁶ No local Orthodox Church, however, would recognise Pimen and the schismatic Synod. Letters arrived from Constantinople and Greece confirming their previous endorsement of the Holy Synod.

In Sofia on 9 November Shivarov issued an order to clarify the status of the church. He contrasted Article 3 of the Law on Confessions that designated it as 'the traditional confession of the Bulgarian people' with Spasov's directive that treated the church as if it had never been registered. He argued that this directive was contrary to the Law on Confessions. He reaffirmed the Supreme Court's decision of 5 November 1992. He pointed out that the majority of the Bulgarian episcopate and priesthood, at home and abroad, had backed the Holy Synod and Patriarch Maksim in full accord with Orthodox church canons. So as to terminate the existing state of affairs in the church, 'which ill serves our national interests, and for its preservation as a fortress of the Bulgarian spirit', he ordered Matanov, who had deposited his resignation at the end of August, to inform Maksim that the juridical status of the church leadership was automatically restored, and hence that no new registration under Article 15 of the Law on Confessions was required.⁴⁷ Matanov replied that the only competent authority to decide canonical issues was the church hierarchy. His continuing obstinacy and the government's fresh determination placed him in isolation. As far as the schism was concerned he had done his best to maintain impartiality. It is not clear whether in the end he resigned voluntarily, but, as noted above, Asenov was appointed to the Board for Religious Affairs as provisional director as hardline elements carried out retrenchment within the government.

Asenov gave interviews to the socialist press peppered with aggressive allegations about, among others, the so-called sects and what he termed the antinational designs of some opposition politicians. He boasted that he would restore the unity of the Orthodox Church under its legitimate head Patriarch Maksim and force the schismatics to their knees. His appointment aroused widespread consternation among religious minorities and protests from Catholics and some Protestants.

Toleration and Relations with Protestants

Bulgaria's remarkable national hero deacon Vasil Levsky, who was executed during the struggle for independence in 1872, urged all communities – Orthodox, Muslims, Jews, Armenians, Catholics and Protestants – to continue to respect one another after freedom was won. This long tradition of a tolerant multicultural society is rapidly evaporating in a wave of xenophobia stemming primarily from an alliance of nationalists and communists exploiting right-wing elements within the Orthodox Church and the Board for Religious Affairs, and a theologically illiterate and susceptible populace. Gospodinov notes that as the Patriarchal church consolidated its position and reaffirmed its links with its sister churches, in particular, the Russian, Greek and Serbian churches, so did an antiwestern, anti-Catholic, anticumenical contagion spread rapidly throughout the church. The BSP played on the themes of Orthodox unity and Slavophilism, and promoted nationalism, exploiting their support of the legitimate Synod to present themselves as defenders of the faith. Believers noticed people who were never Orthodox all of a sudden presenting themselves as ultra-Orthodox.

Religious freedom in Bulgaria, as Krasimir Kunev, chairman of the Bulgarian Helsinki committee, points out, depends largely on the position of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church *vis-à-vis* the other churches.⁴⁸ In February 1994 the Board for Religious Affairs embarked on a discriminatory policy patently influenced by the Holy Synod and encapsulated in the Law on Persons and the Family. Contrary to the 1991 Constitution, it violated church–state separation by demanding compulsory legal registration for religious bodies with the Board. It was significant that out of all newly-established legal entities only religious institutions suffered discrimination in this way. From 1995 the tacit alliance between Maksim and Videnov facilitated the imposition of further restrictions that handicapped even local Evangelical churches. These churches dated back to the nineteenth century but during the last 40 years had virtually been eliminated from public awareness through persecution. People often confused them with less doctrinally orthodox and sometimes idiosyncratic churches and sects from abroad. Some sections of the media jumped onto the bandwagon, claiming to act as a mouthpiece for Orthodox opinion. They denied these mainstream Evangelical churches, as well as the newcomers, any possibility of refuting allegations of promoting drugs, pornography, criminality, the alienation of children from parents, and even suicides. As Kunev points out, it is only too easy to make small churches scapegoats during protracted social and economic crises. Maksim protested against the distribution of religious literature brought in by the Operation Mobilisation ship 'Doulos' in Varna in 1995. Varna Orthodox churches objected to the Methodists building a new church in the city centre to replace the one they had lost there.⁴⁹ Interestingly, in 1996 Orthodox bishops accused the incoming churches of trying to infiltrate local Evangelical churches.⁵⁰

Even patently good and pious people were swept up in the spread of chauvinism and fell to denouncing Protestants. Seminary staff members Hieromonk Nikolai and

Ivan Zhelev Dimitrov encouraged their students to march with lighted torches to burn banners announcing an international Pentecostal conference under the Swede Ulf Echman in Sofia's Palace of Culture in May 1993. Gospodinov rebuked his young pupils for such uncivilised behaviour, unworthy of Orthodox believers.

Confronted by frequent instances of discrimination and even persecution, the Bulgarian Evangelical Alliance (Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal, Congregational and Church of God) complained repeatedly to the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee and sister churches abroad. In a declaration on 3 January 1996 addressed to President Zhelev, the WCC and the Conference of European Churches (CEC), the Alliance reproached the Bulgarian Orthodox Church for its inconsistency in working alongside Evangelical churches in the WCC and CEC while at home resolutely declaring itself against all non-Orthodox denominations, and especially Christian ones. It accused Maksim of seeking Zhelev's cooperation to ban and expel them.⁵¹ *Tsurkoven vestnik* did not appreciate the criticisms raised by the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, accusing it of bias.⁵² Some Orthodox are more broadminded, however. The 'Phare' project held several educational seminars on religious minorities in various cities during 1995 and 1996 to try and educate church representatives.

Orthodox Relations with the Catholic Church

Historically Catholics were well integrated in the Bulgarian nation. Their credentials in resistance to Ottoman rule and its concomitant Phanariot Greek domination in ecclesiastical affairs were impeccable; their smaller Eastern-rite branch (variously estimated at between 6000 and 20,000 out of 70,000) originated as a spontaneous local protest against this Greek domination in the 1860s. In independent Bulgaria the church came to play a role in culture, in education and in medical, charitable and social ministry out of all proportion to its size – less than one per cent of the population. Many older Bulgarians still affectionately remember Pope John XXIII from his days as nuncio in Sofia and long to see church institutions functioning again.⁵³

This history gave the Catholic Church a head start in public opinion over the Protestant churches when communism collapsed in 1989. Nevertheless, it had suffered discontinuity through communist oppression, losing more than its fair share of priests through martyrdom. Though keeping its reputation untarnished, it was thrust into a ghetto, and deprived of all its property and institutions apart from church buildings. By 1989 barely 30 priests were left, with only three new young ones – two of whom were quickly consecrated bishops. It needed considerable outside help to reconstitute its life. In 1991 its four bishops invited Pope John Paul to visit their country.

The repercussions of Bulgarian involvement in the attempt on Pope John Paul's life in 1981 added a bizarre element to Bulgarian relations with the Vatican and continued to drag on. In 1995 several newspapers defended a papal visit on the grounds that it would clear Bulgaria's reputation and urged President Zhelev to resist pressure from the Holy Synod against it.

Both Bulgaria's postcommunist presidents realised how vital it was to reestablish amicable relations with the Vatican, while the BSP government's attitude towards the Catholic Church was resentful, with the church's property restitution covered by the 1992 laws. The Holy Synod, however, was considerably more reserved and even hostile. Elements within the BSP government and National Assembly exploited national chauvinism to play off Orthodox against Catholics. The Bulgarian Orthodox Church did not send any delegates to the crucial Balamand Conference on Orthodox-

Catholic relations and the status of Uniate Churches in 1993. Speculation was rife about whether Pimen's Synod might even enter into a union with Rome. In an interview Eastern-rite Archimandrite Georgi Eldurov, a professor of theology in Rome, tactfully pointed out that any such Catholic union with separate Orthodox Churches or segments of them would only create deeper divisions between Catholics and Orthodox and would detract from the long-term Catholic aim of reunion with the Orthodox. Balamand, he said, posed no threat to Bulgaria's existing Eastern-rite Catholics. He then replied to allegations that Rome favoured Pimen's Synod, based on the fact that only clergy from Pimen's entourage had been invited to the Feast of St Nicholas in Bari and that the nuncio, Mgr Rizzi, had attended the previous schismatic Theophany liturgy. Eldurov pointed out that the Bari invitations went out to people the organisers knew, that Pimen, Pankrati, Kalinik and Galaktion came into that category and that Rizzi had not been invited to Patriarch Maksim's Theophany liturgy. He further pointed out that at formal occasions in Rome it was Maksim's representatives who were invited and that they appeared in the Vatican's official contact list whereas Pimen's entourage were referred to only as 'former metropolitans'. He added that it would be better if the forthcoming beatification of the bishop of Nikopolis, Evgeni Bosilkov, executed in 1952, took place in Rome, where 'Bulgaria's cause will stand out before the whole world, while here it will sink in the Danube'. He judged the atmosphere in Bulgaria, both ecclesiastical and political, too charged to consider a papal visit advisable for at least four or five years.⁵⁴

In 1994, when a delegation from the Atlantic Club visiting the pope sought confirmation of Bulgarian non-involvement in the 1981 assassination attempt, Pope John Paul expressed his deep desire to accede to his bishops' request and meet representatives of the 'dear Orthodox Church'.⁵⁵ The Synod was less enthusiastic and its secretary, Gelasi, objected that a visit would revitalise local Catholics 'excessively' and 'be inconsistent with traditional Orthodox church policy'.⁵⁶

In 1996 a proposal to erect a statue of Christ on a hill overlooking Plovdiv, where 35,000 of the nation's Catholics live, to replace a memorial to the 'liberating' Soviet Army, was turned down, against the wishes of most of the city's inhabitants. Following heated protests from the Russian government, Bulgarian neocommunist associations and the Orthodox hierarchy, the UDF-dominated city council revoked its consent. The Catholic bishop of Sofia–Plovdiv, Mgr Georgi Iovchev, maintained the official Catholic view that his church had no wish to profit from the schism which was tearing Orthodoxy apart.⁵⁷ He was able, however, to consecrate Bulgaria's first new Catholic church for half a century there in 1996.⁵⁸ Overall, despite encountering considerable obstacles to the reclaiming of property and the use of expatriate clergy, the Catholic Church has been more assured of its status than the Protestant churches.

Some (but not all) of the Catholic bishops are in favour of overlooking professional differences and working together locally with the Orthodox. There is a certain amount of jealousy discernible in the official Orthodox attitude towards the Catholic community, which is young, active, thriving and socially engaged; but at local level relations between individual Orthodox and Catholics are often very close.⁵⁹

Before attending the pan-Orthodox Conference on Patmos for the nineteenth centenary of the Apocalypse of St John in September 1996 the Bulgarian Orthodox Church stated its disapproval of two of its themes – relations with the Catholic Church, and whether Orthodox Churches should be regarded as national institutions.⁶⁰ Maksim's television appeal to the pope to 'return to the bosom of Orthodoxy' was dismissed as a joke by other church officials. Maksim confirmed that he did not share the papal vision of a return to Christian unity and would not wish to meet him.⁶¹

Relationships with Muslims and Jews

Traditionally, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church recognises the established status of Muslims and Jews, who in fact enjoy more leeway than non-Orthodox Christians. The Bulgarian Orthodox Church's defence of Bulgarian Jews during the Second World War is a very bright spot in its history and its relations with the tiny remnant of 5,000 remain close. In September 1996 Maksim attended the reopening of their Sofia synagogue that was bombed during the War.

Since there are almost a million Muslims in Bulgaria, 12–15 per cent of the population, no government can afford to ignore or antagonise them. Their main political party, the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF), is the third largest, and has often held the balance of power. The Islamic establishment, like the Orthodox Church, experienced a schism over its leadership, but Grand Mufti Nedim Gendzhev was a self-confessed agent, who had even participated in the brutal campaign in 1984–85 to force Turks to change their names (ironically, to Christian ones), and his removal by the UDF–MRF coalition in 1992 therefore met with the approval of most Muslims. However, in a policy parallel to that employed towards the Orthodox hierarchy, the BSP government reinstated him and his coterie. This led to widespread Muslim protests and demonstrations in 1995, but they went unheeded, and it was only with the UDF back in power that their schism was brought to a satisfactory conclusion.

The Holy Synod's relationship with the Muslim establishment is friendly, far more so than that with its rival Synod. There has been general alarm among Orthodox at the influx of Muslim fundamentalists,⁶² who also cause concern among many of the habitually easy-going Turks, some of whom have chased fundamentalist preachers out of their villages.

The Pomaks, about 200,000 strong, centred in the Rhodope Mountains, are a more controversial group, for their origins are disputed. As Bulgarian-speaking Muslims, more committed in their faith than most Turks, they are in an invidious position, targeted since 1990 by Christian and Muslim missionaries alike. In 1994 an Orthodox priest, Boyan Saruev, with a dubious past as a police officer, preached that whoever remained Muslim was an enemy of church, nation and state, and claimed to have reconverted hundreds of Pomaks to their 'original' Christian faith.⁶³ Pomaks are very community-centred, so conversion has to be of whole villages rather than of individuals. How much support Saruev has had from his church establishment is doubtful; he has also flirted with the Eastern-rite Catholic Church.

Relationships with Orthodox Churches Abroad

The Holy Synod, endorsed by the visit of the ecumenical patriarch in 1993, has cemented its relations with neighbouring Orthodox Churches.

To the south, the Greek church has supplied considerable practical as well as moral support, providing theological and educational materials and also generous relief supplies in times of economic crisis. In 1994 the Greek parliament launched 'Vouli', a project for inter-Orthodox relations. Its inaugural meeting was attended by deputies from both the BSP and the UDF, but it proved ineffective.⁶⁴

With the BSP in power, reaffirmation of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church's traditionally close relationship with Russia was a priority. Patriarch Aleksii of Moscow paid a visit from 19 to 23 May 1994, and took his usual line when visiting former Warsaw Pact nations, using the opportunity to clear the air by apologising for

totalitarianism and past inequalities in relations between Russia and Bulgaria. The UDF, in line with its campaign against the BSP rapprochement with Moscow, boycotted the ceremonies. Spasov accused the church of advancing Russian interests. He argued that since Russia was not in a position to challenge the West directly, it was manipulating Orthodoxy, including its satellite church in Bulgaria, to find new ways to advance its interests.⁶⁵ Aleksī tactfully refrained from comment on the schism. From 31 May to 6 June 1996 Maksim paid a return visit to Moscow during which Aleksī emphasised the links between the two countries, at the level of both state and church. Maksim received the Order of St Andrew, the highest decoration of the Russian Orthodox Church, as well as some relics of St John of Rila.⁶⁶ He then proceeded to Ukraine to meet representatives of its splintered Orthodox Churches including Metropolitan Volodymyr Sabodan of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate), with a view to gaining a clearer picture of the complex situation there. He studiously avoided meeting Filaret, who despite his endorsement of Pimen wanted to keep his lines open with the Holy Synod; he reproached Maksim for snubbing him and dismissed Volodymyr as ‘the Moscow Patriarchate’s vicar’.

Some ultranationalist elements within the church in alliance with the BSP tried to take advantage both of the resentment caused by the disastrous economic consequences of the UN embargo against Serbia and of anti-Catholic sentiments aroused by the Yugoslav conflict. They attempted to create the psychological basis for a union of Orthodox nations to provide backing for the Serbs and an end to sanctions. In 1995 Patriarch Pavle invited Maksim to visit Serbia; it had been many years since such an event had taken place. During his six-day visit in October Pavle thanked the Bulgarian church and people for their sympathy and assistance during the civil war and emphasised their close ties in faith and blood.

However, relations between the two churches were complicated by alleged Serb mistreatment of the 25,000 Bulgarian minority in Zapadni Pokrainini in south-east Serbia.⁶⁷ When Bulgarian television visited the area in 1994 large numbers of villagers did not appear, presumably as the result of intimidation. Nevertheless, some BSP members discounted their plight. Maksim, however, raised the issue with Kontić, the Serbian prime minister, and demanded the right for young Bulgarians to worship in their own tongue. When Kontić accused him of trying to court popularity with ‘certain Bulgarian political parties’ by laying claim to Yugoslav territory, Maksim replied that he was not a politician; he considered the issue in spiritual terms only and was simply asking for what the Yugoslav constitution guaranteed.⁶⁸ President Slobodan Milošević told the Bulgarian delegation that he favoured annual meetings and more regular contacts between the two patriarchs to avoid problems like that of Zapadni Pokrainini piling up.

Maksim visited packed churches in Serbia and monasteries in Kosovo.⁶⁹ Pavle assured the Bulgarians that liturgies in Zapadni Pokrainini would be in their language. On his way home Maksim was greeted by Bulgarians in Bosilovgrad and celebrated an unscheduled liturgy for them in Bulgarian, but in Tsaribrod a group of believers was prevented from meeting him.

Results of the Holy Synod’s Alliance with the BSP

What benefits did the Patriarchal Synod’s alliance with the BSP government bring to the church as a whole?

Internationally, it enabled the Bulgarian Orthodox Church to return to the main-

stream of Orthodoxy, with participation in pan-Orthodox conferences at various levels and the benefits those brought.

Internally, the refusal of the Board for Religious Affairs to intervene in the schism perhaps enabled the Holy Synod to continue to delay convening the long-postponed Council. This, in the long run, was not to its advantage. Procrastination opened the way for the UDF and schismatics to take the initiative and convene a Council of doubtful canonicity and elect a rival patriarch. The existence of rival patriarchs, one of whom was to be endorsed by the UDF government that replaced the BSP, led to even more convolutions in relations between church and state.

Many church members believed that a forum of free and frank discussion of internal church problems and of the alleged links with communism was a prerequisite for resolving the schism. Even those loyal to Patriarch Maksim became more and more frustrated. Gospodinov, for instance, deplored the Holy Synod's failure to condemn communism: 'being non-party is one thing; not condemning communism is another'. In 1996 a group of theologians, church historians and canon lawyers formed a centre in Sofia, which sought to extend Orthodox witness within society and contribute towards resolving internal church problems. They expressed deep concern about the Patriarchate's inertia and its lack of vision, and consequent lack of projects for outreach, stressing that it had had six years, quite long enough to formulate a positive programme. They called for new legislation to clarify church-state relations at every level and for restitution of the property confiscated in 1945. They emphasised how urgent it was for the church to respond to the challenges posed by the radical transformation of society and to play a constructive and dynamic role in this process and, in particular, to use its projected Council to address internal reform and renewal.⁷⁰ Petio Petkov, a graduate in theology, believes that the hierarchy as a whole is too undistinguished academically and too out of touch with daily life, as well as too paralysed by the continuance of the schism, to reap any advantage from it.⁷¹

The secularist Bulgarian Helsinki Committee reflects the views of most Bulgarians: that the antics of the schism's participants have reduced the church to a ludicrous role in public life and have led to a loss of respect both for the church itself and for Christianity as a whole. In autumn 1996 Luizova-Khoreva commented on the situation in Plovdiv: 'Protestants and Catholics are much better organised than the Orthodox and getting stronger. Orthodox priests are failing to respond to a situation of growing poverty and despair where religion seems to be the only consolation left.'⁷² Committed, pastorally-minded Orthodox priests with packed, busy Orthodox churches do exist, especially in Sofia, but this is despite rather than with the active encouragement of their hierarchy, and they long for the end of the schism.⁷³ In the opinion of Hieromonk Dr Pavel Stefanov, unless the church wakes from its lethargy in order to respond to the call of the Gospel and the times it will very soon become obsolete.⁷⁴

Religious Education Stymied

Despite the wishes of 80 per cent of Bulgarians, the Holy Synod's alliance with the BSP has failed to produce any concessions in the restoration of religious education, abolished in 1948, to the school curriculum.

In precommunist Bulgaria religion had become mandatory in schools, though its impact was considerably reduced by the fact that many teachers of religion were influenced by socialism and even ridiculed their subject. Interestingly, Scientific

Atheism was not introduced as a subject in communist schools, perhaps because secularism had already made such deep inroads in Bulgarian society. With freedom came a widespread public desire to have religion restored to the curriculum, even if many only wanted it on an optional basis. Compulsory religious education was one of the Holy Synod's basic requests in its letter to the new government on 9 January 1990. When it came to power, the BSP quietly shelved that item.

The issue became more urgent in the eyes of church people in the face of the proselytising by foreign sects which poured into Bulgaria after 1989, and was one on which both Synods were in full agreement: this was a doctrinal rather than a canonical issue. Both Synods were represented at the first conference on religious education for 50 years held in April 1993. Both Synods objected when deputy education minister Tatyana Kostadinova upheld the principle of church-state separation and the continuance of a secularist and pluralist outlook. However, some church members were aware that any state subsidies for Orthodox teaching in schools would violate the 1991 Constitution's separation of church from state. The BSP government had no intention of allowing priests or teachers newly trained at the Orthodox Academy a guaranteed access to children. Government representatives argued that this would violate the rights of parents and children who did not want religious education as well as those of non-Orthodox believers. They also argued that restoration of religious education would enable other religions – chiefly Islam – to vie for a foothold in secular education.⁷⁵

Although in theory the Orthodox Church was allowed access to schools, this was a matter for the discretion of the head teacher, who would normally be someone appointed under the communists and unsympathetic, if not hostile, towards Orthodoxy. As a result very few schools, apart from some in larger cities whose mayors were anticommunist, and some private schools, offered even voluntary religious education – even where the majority of parents in a locality requested it. Only one school in Sofia provided it. There was no coordination possible between such teachers as were able to function. Socialists continued to control most schools and local councils, and sometimes blocked parents' requests. The principal of the 'Otets Paisi' Secondary School in Kresna, Zhinka Ilieva, banned religious lessons. When parents complained to UDF mayor Sancheva and she ordered classes to proceed, Ilieva tore up the document and threw it out of the window.⁷⁶ Most graduates, mainly women, became intensely frustrated on discovering that their new vocation was virtually impossible and, in a rapidly deteriorating economic climate, had to look elsewhere to earn a living. Some were very critical of Fr Khristofor Subev for failing to keep his promise to use his power in the National Assembly to ensure compulsory religious education during the UDF's term of office.⁷⁷ Attempts to get round the ban by imitating Protestant Sunday Schools were half-hearted and generally ineffective. Meanwhile, the Holy Synod succeeded in blocking a gift of attractively-designed children's Bibles, one for each child, from the USA, on the grounds that they were Protestant, and also blocked as 'nonconfessional' textbooks written by Protestants, even though the Ministry of Education and Science recommended them in 1993.⁷⁸

Although the government was ready enough to employ the Law on Persons and the Family of 1994 to discriminate against and ban sects it was not prepared to allow basic religious education to provide susceptible youngsters with the knowledge and means to resist or counter them.

In September 1995 the minister of education Ilcho Dimitrov categorically turned down the Holy Synod's request for religious instruction in schools, though he did

consider offering 'religious knowledge' as a secular subject. Marin Vurbanov, co-president of the Synod's Education Department, complained about a Ministry proposal that if religious knowledge were provided it should be taught by history teachers, not by priests or trained lay theologians.

It was not until 1995 that the Ministry recognised the Seminary in Sofia and the reopened Seminary in Plovdiv. It even proposed to close Sofia University's Theology Faculty, after limiting it to 20 students, at a time when the Universities of Veliko Turnovo, Shumen and Blagoevgrad were responding to the demand for faculties in theology, religion and philosophy. The Ministry of Education also turned down proposals from professors in Sofia and Veliko Turnovo for immediate mandatory religious lessons in state schools to be taught by their graduates, adding that there were too few of them to fill all the required teaching posts and that in any case society was predominantly atheist and not prepared to face such a sudden return to religion.⁷⁹

The government also absolutely refused to re-establish chaplaincies in the armed forces, hospitals and prisons, such as had operated legally in precommunist Bulgaria.⁸⁰

Property Restitution

Ironically, despite the struggles of the rival Synods to occupy key sites, neither of them tackled the issue of restitution of property expropriated by the communists, which was a priority for other churches. True, no Orthodox buildings had been appropriated; but neither Synod showed any interest in the provisions in the 1992 restitution law for reclamation of church land, although its enforcement could have brought in an estimated income of 55 billion lev; and this was far short of what might have been possible, because the 1992 law covered only land confiscated since 1947, not since 1945, thus excluding 80 per cent of it, according to church estimates.⁸¹ Letters from Land Reallocation Commissions inviting claims were ignored. Amazingly, the church does not even know what it possesses. Its register of monasteries in 1990 numbered 54, until enthusiasts discovered there were in fact 112. Monasticism had sunk to a low ebb even before communism and vocations to the monastic life, as opposed to those probably destined for the church hierarchy, had virtually dried up by 1989. Barely 100 monks and 200 nuns had survived, most of them aged, so most monasteries were deserted and derelict, despite some fresh vocations among younger women after 1990. Some visitors on a tour of several remoter monasteries in 1998 met only one monk. The archives of the Sofia Metropolitanate lie rotting and mouldy, a prey to rodents. Both Synods lack competent lawyers who know what to look for, since many employees on both sides were sacked on suspicion of working secretly for the enemy, while others left of their own free will.⁸²

Meanwhile, with the connivance of the BSP government, people with BSP connections who were owners of lucrative municipal property sat tight to prevent any reclamation. The government's attempt in 1994 to classify Bulgaria's largest and most prestigious monastery, Rila, as a cultural monument was abandoned following heated church protests.⁸³ It was left to the second UDF government, in 1997, against BSP opposition, to grant Rila legal status, to return some of its property and grant it tax concessions. In December 1997 the Holy Synod admitted that the BSP government, like all the others, had failed to defend its rights.

Thanks mainly to the efforts of local believers, however, a number of new churches were opened and derelict ones restored throughout the country.⁸⁴ Rila itself

was the scene of an international gathering on 16 October 1996 when patriarchs from many Orthodox churches celebrated the 1500th anniversary of St John of Rila.

Bulgaria on the Brink of Catastrophe

During the second half of 1996 Bulgaria was plunged into political and economic crisis. With inflation topping 300 per cent, it hovered on the brink of complete collapse, starvation and civil war. The average monthly wage shrank to about £12. Bulgarians compared their plight with that of the Germans at the end of the First World War and many doubted whether they could survive the winter. The country became virtually a Third World state.

The November 1989 revolution had been incomplete. To quote Kevin Connolly,

the ruling Communists had simply changed their nameplates and carried on their old business under a new name. Despite a temporary setback in the 1991 elections they had access to levers of power right through until 1997 with only a year's break. In 1994 most electors had welcomed the Communists back. That was a grave error, though later many Bulgarians admitted bitterly that they only got what they deserved. The BSP had adroitly harnessed the old unaccountable methods of administrative control to new links with western partners and produced a society where money haemorrhaged out of the system into the shadowy black economy which existed beside it and fed off it.⁸⁵

In 1995 Zhelev denounced the 'red octopus' for fast undoing all the progress Bulgaria had made towards democracy by gaining control of all institutions of power, the banking system, the economy and the national media.⁸⁶ 'Bulgaria was an imitation of democracy ... of freedom of speech ... pluralism and ... sometimes even an imitation of opposition' – the last comment incidentally being inadvertently relevant to the schism.⁸⁷ The end result of the constant undermining and plundering of the system was the collapse of the economy.

During the run-up to the presidential elections in autumn 1996 Maksim was strongly criticised by the controversial priest Boyan Saruev for receiving would-be BSP candidate Georgi Pirinsky at Rila.⁸⁸ On the other hand the abbot of Bachkovo, Bishop Naum, blessed Petur Stoyanov from nearby Plovdiv, who had replaced Zhelev as UDF candidate in June.⁸⁹ Stoyanov was elected on 3 November with nearly 20 per cent more votes than his BSP rival, Ivan Marazov. His success indicated a general determination to have radical change enforced and signalled the imminent collapse of the fractured government.

Former prime minister Andrei Lukanov, a reformist, warned that Stalinism was making a comeback, targeted links between rampant private business empires and organised crime, and accused the BSP and some state officials of misusing national security agencies for internecine struggles. He was assassinated outside his home on 2 October. It was Bulgaria's first postcommunist act of political terrorism and pointed to dark secrets within the BSP.⁹⁰ Prime Minister Videnov was patently not the man to deal with the escalating crisis and he resigned on 22 December.

Stoyanov, who came from Plovdiv's Catholic quarter, though not himself a believer, was well disposed towards religion and locally so popular that some former communists switched their vote to him. Generally regarded as more pragmatic and a better communicator than the philosophical but intellectually better-endowed ex-dissident Zhelev, he had, like his predecessor, been prepared to criticise his own

party's mistakes. He was honest and prepared to blurt out uncomfortable truths. His main failing was a propensity for *faux pas*. As a divorce lawyer, all his skills were to be called into play to deal with Maksim and Pimen.

Meanwhile the Synod had blacklisted schismatic churches, with the result that the number of people frequenting them for rites of passage plunged. The demand by the Board for Religious Affairs that all churches register made little headway with Maksim, who pointed out that his church had existed for eleven centuries and was beyond state regulations, and that canon law predated state law. Shivarov had tacitly accepted his position but on 13 December, faced with the imminent collapse of Videnov's government, he ordered Asenov to register the central leadership of the Bulgarian Church on the basis of the list of its Synod members and dates of their elections. When Pimen's Synod appealed to the Supreme Court against his decision, the Court ruled its appeal legitimate and the registration invalid. One member of Pimen's Synod suggesting splitting the dioceses between the two sides. In the New Year Asenov registered the Holy Synod without the submission of a new Statute and ordered the patriarch to convene a Council in May.⁹¹

National Crisis

The government's resignation precipitated a national crisis. Zhelev, still president, explained that constitutionally he was unable to dissolve the National Assembly and call new elections. On 3 January 1997 a united opposition rally decided on an emergency Declaration of National Salvation. The BSP majority in the Assembly refused to vote on this. On 10 January protestors besieged the Assembly to try to force a vote. The police brutally repulsed them, clubbing demonstrators and onlookers indiscriminately; 200 had to be treated in hospital. In a concerted effort to bring the government down, to force elections before its mandate expired the following year and to formulate a fresh social contract, the UDF and its associated parties led massive public demonstrations each evening. These were broadly representative of all sectors of the population apart from those with a stake in the maintenance of a mafia-dominated society. Participants compared them to a pilgrimage, with tens of thousands assembled in the vast cathedral square, a microcosm of Bulgarian society, warmed by tea provided by the UDF city council, listening to political discourses and singing fervently. For three hours a day the people of Sofia were united, and after seven years of blatant self-seeking, the feeling of renewed solidarity was tangible.⁹²

Although priests from both sides were well to the fore in Sofia it was the schismatics who seized the initiative. In a strongly-worded appeal to church and nation, Pimen called on the opposition not to submit to 'godless ruling politicians' who had led the nation to ruin and robbed people of their liberty. On 12 January he blessed the opposition and his Synod expressed solidarity with 'their long-suffering people in their just protest'.⁹³

The Holy Synod issued a more guarded statement on 14 January that suggested that it might, true to form, be sitting on the fence, waiting to see which way the power-struggle would evolve. In its appeal 'to all political forces to put aside their narrow political-party bias and in a quiet, peaceful, businesslike and democratic atmosphere to resolve the nation's pressing problems in a just way, without any delay', it avoided being too specific, and gave no firm guidance when it was desperately needed.

Seminarians, normally enthusiastic Holy Synod supporters, joined students in their

imaginatively-staged demonstrations, as did banner-waving members of the Pentecostal Church of God. Until late in the night of 4 January staff and students from Sofia University Theological Faculty sang nineteenth-century revolutionary songs in front of the BSP headquarters.⁹⁴ On the steps of St Alexander Nevsky Cathedral Pimen – not noted for his theological distinction – asserted that God and the people were the same thing. In Blagoevgrad on 19 January he blessed the UDF pledge to save the nation. In Sandanski town square Fr Bochukov officiated at the symbolic funeral of the BSP. In Haskovo Fr Antoni served a liturgy for a UDF victory.⁹⁵

A key factor proved to be the emergence of a pro-democracy nucleus, originally around 50 priests, from the Patriarchal Synod. ‘We, the Orthodox priests from Sofia, give unqualified support to all forms of protest within the framework of the law against the suffering caused by the incompetent and immoral rule of the BSP’, they announced. On 14 January, only minutes after the end of their conference, they joined the UDF protest march, together with schismatic bishops behind Pimen and Inokenti. On 21 January they organised a Movement of Priests for Church Unity (MPCU) and insisted on meeting the president, in whose capacity to bring about church unity they expressed confidence. They argued that parish priests were not divided and had been participating in nationwide protests from the very beginning. This was possibly not the case; while some were genuinely concerned, others may have decided it was politic to jump on the prodemocracy bandwagon; patriarchal priests had not been to the fore in Plovdiv. The MPCU convened a national conference on 5 March to discuss the situation and prepare for the Council, inviting bishops from both Synods. At least one schismatic priest called for negotiations to bring about the resignation of both the patriarchs.

On 13 January the powerful trades unions joined the opposition to mount increasing pressure on the government. After fruitless efforts to persuade the BSP to dissolve the National Assembly Stoyanov warned the BSP leadership on 28 January of the threat of fresh violence as the opposition called for a national strike.

Following prolonged wrangling and procrastination, the government finally resigned on 4 February and agreed to call elections on 19 April. A caretaker government, under a new-style UDF that was no longer a coalition but one party, was appointed by the president on 10 February under Sofia mayor Stefan Sofiyansky. He promptly sacked Asenov, a step that brought relief to most believers.

When the president-elect was received by Maksim on 16 January, Stoyanov expressed his desire to help reunite the Orthodox Church; Maksim emphasised that canon law requirements must be observed and that because there was only one patriarch in Bulgaria it was impossible that there could be two heads of the church.

Maksim observed scrupulous ecclesiastical protocol at the presidential swearing-in on 22 January, appearing without his episcopal vestments for the cocktail party, where he was cordially greeted by Stoyanov. Pimen, obviously expecting a pay-off for his unqualified support of the UDF, arrived vested as patriarch. Maksim and the Holy Synod walked out in justifiable high dudgeon. Thus it was Pimen who proffered Stoyanov the Gospel for the presidential oath. Stoyanov kissed the Gospel book – a reflex action, so he claimed, and one which he later regretted – before repeating the words after Pimen.⁹⁶ A year later in an interview he admitted that he had made a mistake in inviting two patriarchs to his inauguration. ‘I very much wanted both to be present and to receive their blessing.’

This action, whether unintentional or not, gave the message that the UDF, even under its new guise, could not detach itself from its commitment to the schismatics. It seemed at that point set on pressing on with its unfinished business, purifying all the

last traces of communism, quite irrespective of other factors which should have been considered.

How far the new government has been able to maintain this stance and where its policies have led, will be covered in the next article in this series.

Notes and References

- ¹ Part I of this article is Janice Broun, 'The schism in the Bulgarian Orthodox Church', *Religion, State and Society*, vol. 21, no. 2, 1993, pp. 207–20.
- ² Spas T. Raikin, *Decapitation of the Orthodox Church in Post-Communist Bulgaria*, unpublished paper, pp. 27–29. In response to Tatyana Doncheva, a BSP member of the National Assembly, former Holy Synod lawyer Metodiev showed to the Assembly Decision No. 145 of the Politburo of 8 March 1971 (signed by Todor Zhivkov and other members) proposing and supporting the candidacy of Maksim, Metropolitan of Lovech, and instructing the then director of the Board for Religious Affairs, Mikhail Kyuchukov, to do the preparatory work necessary to ensure his election.
- ³ 'Shans za otselyavane', *Pravoslaven pastir*, 25 February 1992, quoted in Raikin, *op. cit.*, pp. 26–27.
- ⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 16–17.
- ⁵ Kunev, conversation with the author, May 1994. (The BHC was founded in 1992.)
- ⁶ Subev was also ineligible because he had been married and divorced, twice.
- ⁷ In an interview with the newspaper *24 Chasa* on 25 March 1993 Pimen conceded that Subev was personally ascetic.
- ⁸ Heinz Gstrein, 'Von der Wende zur Zerreißprobe', *Glaube in der Zweiten Welt*, no. 3, 1997, pp. 19–20.
- ⁹ 'Weitere Spannungen in der Orthodoxen Kirche', *Kathpress* (Vienna), 9 July 1993.
- ¹⁰ Gospodinov, conversation with the author.
- ¹¹ Subev failed to keep his appointment for a third interview with me, though he sent a long explanation of his decommunisation policies through his disciple Stefan Penov, assistant professor of philosophy at Sofia University. My previous interviews with him had been in October 1990 and September 1992, the second taking place in the barricaded Holy Synod palace.
- ¹² 'Government promises to help unify Orthodox Church', *BTA*, Sofia, 24 March 1993.
- ¹³ Raikin, *op. cit.*, p. 46; and 'Heilige Synode beschliesst Einberufung eines Landeskonzils', *Informationsdienst Osteuropäisches Christentum* (Munich), no. 15–16, August 1993, p. 14.
- ¹⁴ Kunev, conversation with the author. I visited one such group in Sofia under Hieromonk Ioan Vasilevski; its members claimed that they were still persecuted and in the catacombs and behaved like members of a sect. Another young congregation in Panagyurishte belonging to the St John Chrysostom True Orthodox Brotherhood claimed to have been evicted on 7 August 1993 from a monastery (formerly used as a barn), which they had been restoring. In a typed appeal to the West from a certain Mariya Patusheva they accused the police of branding them as sectarians and alleged that the local priest was a police agent.
- ¹⁵ Report in *Demokratiya*, 24 November 1993.
- ¹⁶ The diocese was renamed Gotse Delchev, in order to distinguish it from the jurisdiction of the schismatic Pimen over the same area.
- ¹⁷ Raikin, *op. cit.*, p. 3. Raikin maintains that neither Stefan, who was in the last stages of Alzheimer's disease, nor Sofroni (b. 1897) was consulted about joining the Provisional Synod.
- ¹⁸ 'Bulgarian renewal follows violent protests', *Church of England Newspaper*, 16 April 1993.
- ¹⁹ *Demokratiya*, 18 October 1995.
- ²⁰ Gstrein, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

- ²¹ *Tsurkoven vestnik*, 18 September 1995, and Stratiev, conversation with the author, 1994.
- ²² Derilova, conversation with the author, 1995.
- ²³ *Tsurkoven vestnik*, 11 July 1994.
- ²⁴ *Tsurkoven vestnik*, 4 July 1994.
- ²⁵ Some schismatic bishops were given titles of ancient sees: Antoni of Provata; and Galaktion, tendentiously, of Velika in Macedonia.
- ²⁶ *Glavna Prokuratura na Republika Bulgariya*, no. 11801/93. IV, quoted in Spas Raikin, 'The schism in the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, 1992–1997', in John D. Bell (ed.), *Bulgaria in Transition* (Westview, Boulder, CO, 1998), p. 218 and note 44.
- ²⁷ Raikin, 'Decapitation ...', pp. 49–50 (Raikin actually witnessed the handover).
- ²⁸ *Dukhovna prozrenie*, no. 1, February 1994 (the Provisional Synod's shortlived monthly).
- ²⁹ *Tsurkoven vestnik*, 27 March 1995.
- ³⁰ *Standart*, 4 March 1995.
- ³¹ *Demokratiya*, 12 April 1995.
- ³² 'Pankrati vladika ot novo', *24 Chasa*, 18 December 1995.
- ³³ Raikin, *Decapitation ...*, p. 32.
- ³⁴ Raikin, 'The schism ...', p. 218 and note 47; *Republika Bulgariya, Ministerski Svet, Zapoved P-63*, Sofia, 9 November 1995; *Ministerski Svet, Direktsiya na Veroyz-povedaniyata*, no. 363, 13 November 1995.
- ³⁵ *Duma*, 23 January 1996. (*Duma* is the newspaper of the BSP)
- ³⁶ Svetlana Bahtchevanova, 'La guerre du cierge', *La Nouvelle Alternative*, no. 42, June 1996.
- ³⁷ Spas Raikin, 'The Bulgarian Orthodox Church', in Pedro Ramet (ed.), *Eastern Christianity and Politics in the Twentieth Century* (Duke University Press, Durham, NC, 1988), p. 163.
- ³⁸ *Service Orthodoxe de Presse*, no. 210, July–August 1996, p. 14.
- ³⁹ Raikin, 'Decapitation ...', pp. 50–52; pp. 46–47 give the text of Shivarov's letter of 5 June 1996.
- ⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p. 54.
- ⁴¹ *Demokratiya*, 11 August 1996. (*Demokratiya* refused to print this letter from Gospodinov until he had protested to his party leaders. He believes that a communist element is still active on the UDF newspaper.)
- ⁴² Raikin, 'Decapitation ...', p. 53, quoting *Patriarshesko i synodalno vuzvanie kum vsech-estnia klir i pravoslavnite khristiani v diotseva na bulgarskata pravoslavna tsurkva*, Holy Synod, 12 July 1996.
- ⁴³ *Kontinent*, Sofia, 13–17 July 1996.
- ⁴⁴ Lyuboslava Ruseva, 'Pravitelstvoto otkazva da registrira razkolnitsite: molbata na Pimen do kabineta podpechatana s kraden pechat', *Duma*, 6 August 1996.
- ⁴⁵ Information supplied in letters from Raikin.
- ⁴⁶ *Demokratiya*, 24 August 1996.
- ⁴⁷ Raikin, 'Decapitation ...', pp. 46–47.
- ⁴⁸ Kunev, conversation with the author, May 1994.
- ⁴⁹ 'Missionstour abesagt', *Glaube in der Zweiten Welt*, no. 2, 1995, p. 4.
- ⁵⁰ Jonathan Luxmoore, 'Eastern Europe 1996: a review of religious life in Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Poland', *Religion State and Society*, vol. 25, no. 1, March 1997, p. 93.
- ⁵¹ Declaration of the United Evangelical Churches and other Protestant denominations in Bulgaria, *Face to Face*, June 1996, p. 8.
- ⁵² *Tsurkoven vestnik*, 14 November 1994.
- ⁵³ Stratiev, conversation with the author, 1994.
- ⁵⁴ *Nedelen standart*, 31 July 1994.
- ⁵⁵ *Kontinent*, 15 November 1994.
- ⁵⁶ 'Orthodoxe gegen Papstbesuch', *Glaube in der Zweiten Welt*, no. 5, 1995, p. 3.
- ⁵⁷ 'Keine Christus-Statue für Plovdiv', *Glaube in der Zweiten Welt*, no. 11, 1996, pp. 4–5.
- ⁵⁸ Luxmoore, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

- ⁵⁹ Stratiev, conversation with the author.
- ⁶⁰ *Demokratiya*, 5 September 1996.
- ⁶¹ Luxmoore, *op. cit.*, p. 90.
- ⁶² Archimandrite Evlogi, principal of Plovdiv Seminary, conversation with the author, May 1994.
- ⁶³ 'Muslime getauft', *Glaube in der Zweiten Welt*, no. 2, 1995, p. 4.
- ⁶⁴ Gstrein, *op. cit.*, p. 18.
- ⁶⁵ Raikin, 'The schism ...', p. 219 and note 49; Metodi Spasov, 'Bulgarskata Pravoslavna Tsurkva e strategicheskoto zveno za moskovska politika', *Demokratiya*, 9 May 1994.
- ⁶⁶ Maksim was offended when Russian television referred to him only as 'a representative of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church', according to *Trud*, 4 June 1996. Theologians in Sofia commented that this demonstrated a scandalous lack of respect for the head of the church. Within the Synod it was not regarded as a journalistic blunder.
- ⁶⁷ Areas along the Bulgarian frontier around Bosilovgrad and Tsaribrod and along the river Timok, ceded to Yugoslavia in 1918.
- ⁶⁸ 'Patriarch stirs it up', *The Tablet*, 21 October 1995, p. 1420; also in *Demokratiya*, 13 October 1995.
- ⁶⁹ *Tsurkoven vestnik*, 16 October 1995.
- ⁷⁰ *Service Orthodoxe de Presse*, no. 214, January 1997, p. 12.
- ⁷¹ Petio Petkov, conversation with the author, 1998.
- ⁷² Tsveta Luizova-Khoreva in a letter.
- ⁷³ Dr Aleksandur Gungov, conversation with the author, 1998.
- ⁷⁴ Hieromonk Dr Pavel Stefanov, 'Catechism in Bulgaria', *Orthodox Outlook* (Wallasey), no. 72, January–February 1998, p. 19.
- ⁷⁵ Diana Tomova, 'Religion in Bulgarian schools – for orthodox Christians only', *Face to Face*, September 1997, pp. 7–8.
- ⁷⁶ *Demokratiya*, 17 October 1995.
- ⁷⁷ Derilova, conversation with the author, 1995.
- ⁷⁸ Stefanov, *op. cit.*, p. 19.
- ⁷⁹ *ibid.*
- ⁸⁰ 'Le Gouvernement refuse d'introduire l'instruction religieuse à l'école', *Service Orthodoxe de Presse*, no. 202, November 1995, pp. 20–21.
- ⁸¹ 'Restitution of church property', *Human Rights without Frontiers* (BHC, Brussels, 1996), pp. 30–31.
- ⁸² Ivan Rachev, 'Restoration of the ownership of church property in Bulgaria in 1992–1996', *Face to Face*, June 1996, pp. 6–7.
- ⁸³ The property, the huge Rila mountain, had been granted to the monastery by a fourteenth-century tsar and confirmed by a decree of the Ottoman sultan. The communists expropriated it and nationalised it in 1962.
- ⁸⁴ 'Bulgarie', *Service Orthodoxe de Presse*, no. 205, February 1996, p. 14.
- ⁸⁵ *Europhile*, 18 January 1997.
- ⁸⁶ Josephine Schmidt, 'Muzzled by Bulgaria's red octopus', *Transition*, December 1995, p. 70.
- ⁸⁷ Marina Koinova and Stefan Krause, 'Protesting state meddling in the national media', *Transition*, 5 April 1996, p. 53.
- ⁸⁸ *Trud*, 20 August 1996.
- ⁸⁹ *Demokratiya*, 16 August 1996.
- ⁹⁰ Ivo Georgiev, 'Indecisive socialist party stumbles into crisis', *Transition*, 27 December 1996, pp. 26–28.
- ⁹¹ Magda Asparouhova, 'Bulgaria is the first Orthodox state in which two patriarchs have claims on the religious power in the country', *Face to Face*, no. 7, May 1997, p. 2.
- ⁹² Nadege Ragaru, 'La Bulgarie de la contestation: pour en finir avec le communisme', *La Nouvelle Alternative* (Paris), no. 45, 1997, p. 19.
- ⁹³ Information on daily developments supplied by Gospodinov, participant and eyewitness.

⁹⁴ *Demokratiya*, 4 January 1997.

⁹⁵ *Demokratiya*, 19 January 1997.

⁹⁶ *Trud*, 21 January 1998.