

Masonic Festivities In Bulgaria

During a recent visit to Eastern Europe, Deputy Robert W. Woodward, 33°, G.:C.:, shared in the fraternal vitality of the Scottish Rite and Freemasonry in Bulgaria.

During the week of June 21–27, 2003, as Deputy Robert W. Woodward, 33°, G.:C.:, visited their country, Bulgarian Freemasons showed the power of fraternal enthusiasm and Masonic building. On June 21, Bulgarian Brethren welcomed Ill.: Woodward, Deputy, Scottish Rite Bodies, NATO Bases, as a Brother whose name is engraved with golden letters in the Masonic history of Bulgaria. Deputy Woodward and over 300 Brothers, leaders, and members of the Sister



During his recent visit to Bulgaria, Deputy Robert W. Woodward, 33°, G.:C.: (left), conferred with Ill.: Michael Mavronichis, 33°, District Grand Master of Cyprus.

Grand Lodges of the Grand Lodge of Bulgaria, together with representatives of eight other Grand Lodges, attended the installation of Grand Master Roumen Raltchev, Grand Lodge of Bulgaria, who is also the Lieutenant Grand Commander of the Supreme Council, 33°, in Bulgaria. Ill.: Woodward's greeting to the assembled Brethren was welcomed as an example of Masonic wisdom, strength, and tolerance. He shared the truth about Freemasonry and the work of the Bulgarian Brothers to benefit the Craft and their own country.

The installation ceremony was purposefully held in Veliko Turnovo, the ancient capital and spiritual center of Bulgaria. More than 50 large Christian monasteries, over 30 churches, and many ancient spiritual sanctuaries are located in or around the town. Also, it was in Veliko Turnovo that the constitution of the Supreme Council, 33°, of the Scottish Rite in Bulgaria was accepted on March 7, 2001.

On the following day, Sunday, June 22, the regular conference of the Supreme Council, 33°, in Bulgaria welcomed Ill.: Woodward, elevated five deserving Bulgarian members of the Scottish Rite to the 33°, and announced the election of Sovereign Grand Commander C. Fred Kleinknecht, 33°, and Ill.: Woodward, 33°, G.:C.:., as honorary members of the Bulgarian Supreme Council. Following this, the Supreme Council created a class, starting from 5° to 14°, of 12 Scottish Rite Brethren and established the Lodge of Perfection at "Orient-Veliko Turnovo."

Later during the same day, the American College was established with all the required educational licenses from the USA. The American College is built with the sponsorship of the Grand Lodge of Bulgaria and the Supreme Council, 33°, in Bulgaria and will function under their auspices. Deputy Woodward, who became the College's first Chairman of the Board, placed a time capsule carrying a message of hope and inspiration to future generations.

After these ceremonies, the members of the Supreme Council, 33°, in Bulgaria, the new 33° Brethren, Ill.: Woodward, as well as foreign guests from sister Supreme Councils and Grand Lodges, visited the grave of Ill.: Ilia Pavlov, 33°, Grand Minister of State for the Supreme Council, 33°, in Bulgaria, to pay their respects. Ill.: Woodward placed a lovely flower wreath on the grave on the behalf of the Southern Jurisdiction, USA. He then highlighted the merits of Ill.: Pavlov for the development of Freemasonry and the Scottish Rite not only in Bulgaria but also for the rest of the world.

The same evening of this busy day, the Brethren traveled 200 kilometers to the city of Dobrich where they visited the local Lodge and shared thoughts regarding the philosophy of Freemasonry. An hour later in the city of Balchik, at the old palace of the Bulgarian kings on the coast of the Black Sea, the members of the Supreme Council attended a ritual of the Lodge of Perfection, 14°.

The following day, Monday June 23, at the marine capital of Bulgaria—Vama, another meeting and ritual of the Lodge of Perfection, 14°, took place. Then, on June 24, in the ancient town of Nesebar, close to Burgas, the largest port of Bulgaria, Deputy Woodward met with Brethren from the Lodge "Orient-Burgas" and told them about the value of the Scottish Rite. On June 25, at noon in Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria, Sovereign Grand Commander Petar Kalpaktchiev, 33°; Grand Master Roumen Raltchev, 33°; and Ill.: Woodward, G.:C.:., were received at the presidential palace by the Honorable Georgi Parvanov, the President of the Republic of Bulgaria. President Parvanov, who has met with Deputy Woodward three times in the last three years, stated his willingness to support

the Scottish Rite and Freemasonry. Ill.: Woodward, speaking for the Brethren of the Southern Jurisdiction, presented his own warm regards and expressed admiration of the President's efforts towards Bulgaria's acceptance in NATO.

On June 26, Ill.: Woodward, together with the Sovereign Grand Commander, the Grand Master, and this author, visited the government building to meet with Ill.: Dimitar Kalchev, 33°, the Minister of National Administration and a member of the Supreme Council, 33°, in Bulgaria. Ill.: Bros.: Kalchev and Woodward remembered their participation in the Bicentennial Biennial Session festivities in Charleston, South Carolina, in 2001 when Ill.: Kalchev was coroneted a 33°.

The visit of Ill.: Woodward to Bulgaria elicited several prominent newspaper stories, thus benefiting the positive profile of Freemasonry and the Scottish Rite in Bulgaria. With a sense of fraternal accomplishment, Ill.: Woodward concluded his visit to Bulgaria with warm fraternal hugs at Sofia Airport on June 27, 2003. All Brethren wished for additional meetings in the near future and more efforts for the development of the Scottish Rite and Freemasonry around the world, for the strengthening of the democracy in Eastern Europe, and for the safeguarding of freedom.



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