

# Leah ANSWERS

Mission Possible Bulgaria spoke with writer Stephanie Dickerson about the Leah magazine's ministry to women.

Bulgarian women face many obstacles in society. They comprise over 62 percent of Bulgaria's unemployed population. "Christian women have a low self-esteem because of the financial situation," says Svetlana Karoleva, an editor for Mission Possible Bulgaria. "The last 10 years have been very hard. Women are tired and worn out. They see themselves as failures."

Borislava Borissova, another editor, adds "young women are afraid to get married. They fear they will have children and will not be able to provide for them." "Most women earn low salaries," says Karoleva, "but prices are high, especially for food."

Many women have become believers since the fall of Communism and are the only Christians in their families. "Women form 75 percent of most Protestant churches," says Karoleva, "and many are married to non-Christians. This creates problems. Often, husbands do not allow children to attend church."

## The start

Mission Possible Bulgaria, a non-denominational ministry, seeks to meet the needs of Bulgarian women. In 1996, it sponsored a series of seminars featuring British writer Marion Stroud and



Leah has changed its format to a more attractive size.

other speakers. Response to 10 days of teaching showed women were hungry for God. As a follow-up, Stroud suggested Mission Possible Bulgaria consider some sort of publication.

Eighteen months later, the dummy cover for an A5 sized magazine was ready. "God called us to produce a magazine," says Daniella Encheva, senior editor for Mission Possible's Leah.

"We did not even have enough money to start," says Karoleva, "but we already had women interested in subscribing to the magazine, so we went ahead."

Mission Possible chose the name Leah because "Leah, in the Bible, was despised," says Encheva,

"but God loved and blessed her." Encheva hopes this will inspire Bulgarian women in their daily struggles. "The name is short, gentle, and tender, like a tune," adds Karoleva.

"Everything in Leah is written to encourage Bulgarian women to be strong, bold, to realize what they can do, to strengthen them and to encourage them to share the gospel," says Borissova. "The magazine is not highly theological," says Karoleva, "but it has articles to help women grow in their Christianity and it touches non-Christians as well."

Leah usually features personal experience. Each issue has an interview with a Christian woman, a brief

devotion, four or five articles on a specific topic, jokes for children, a crossword puzzle, poetry, and home decorating tips. Topics of past issues include drugs, alternative medicine, divorce, abortion, and relationships with fathers.

## Looking ahead

Leah was an immediate success and sold out with the first printed issue. The response from readers has been tremendous.

Leah has since changed in size and format. Encheva and her coworkers are making "more courageous plans for the future." They hope to sell more subscriptions, and eventually increase from four to six issues per year.

Leah is sold in churches and Christian bookstores. "We tried to sell in secular bookstores but could not," says Karoleva. "The public considers evangelicals a sect. This makes distribution in the mass market very hard." "We cannot get out of the churches," agrees Borissova.

Mission Possible staff want to attend more events to promote Leah and a new collection of books for women, the "Leah Library." Mission Possible Bulgaria is looking to the future. Bulgarian women need to hear God's message, and Leah answers. ♦