

# THE BULGARIAN ORPHANS FUND



A small, highly personalized, direct-aid programme started (in 1999) and run by journalist and broadcaster Tony Scotland, for the relief of abandoned, neglected & disabled children and babies at some of the 120 state institutions in Bulgaria. Most of the homes are hidden away in remote villages; many are bleak and squalid, with plaster falling from the ceilings, paint peeling off the walls, beds so wet that the mattresses are rotting, and insanitary plumbing. The

children are often cold, unwashed and underfed, with nothing to do ó no school, no books, no paper, pens or crayons, no games, footballs, skipping ropes or tv. Just a numbing purposelessness, and a pervading stench of drains and boiled cabbage. At his own expense, Tony visits the homes twice a year to turn his friends' donations into gifts of food, clothes, bedding, nappies, feeding spoons and medicines; double-glazed windows; kitchen equipment, air conditioners and plumbing; chairs, desks, teaching materials; games and seaside holidays. The Fund also supports carpentry and cookery workshops, a gypsy music school and a smallholding run by and for orphans. In 12 years it has raised £106,529.12, and spent it, cautiously, in the course of 27 visits. Since all running costs are privately met, there are no overheads, so that **every penny given is spent directly on the children**. The Fund is currently helping 45 special-needs children at a home and school in Haskovo, 15 talented Roma boys at the Karandila music school in Nadezhda, 193 abandoned and sick babies and toddlers in Pleven, 118 released orphans at residential homes in Sofia and Plovdiv, and 41 severely disabled orphans in Medven. It plans to recruit more village grannies as part-time carers in baby homes, and to set up training projects to give discharged orphans a chance of finding work which would save them from poverty and crime - and help to build Bulgaria's future within the EU.

