



Keeping In Contact

News from Kontaktmission USA

August 2003

Sent to Siberia

We can all remember old movies in which some Russian dissident was threatened with being sent off to Siberia, that part of Russia where life was cold, hard, and separated from normal society - a horrible punishment. Today, Siberia is growing right along with the rest of the Russian-speaking world, even if it is still cold! And it may surprise you to know that a German Kontaktmission missionary, **Gerhard Rehwald**, along with his Russian wife, **Lena**, have gone there *of their own free will* to help reach an entire region for Christ.

The Novosibirsk Region lies in western Siberia and has a population of approximately 2.8 million, about 1.4 million of whom live in the regional capital city, also called Novosibirsk. The other half of the population is spread across the region, living in 24 "county seats" (of more than 25,000 inhabitants each), as well as 32 small towns and more than 1400 villages and hamlets.

Not even half of the county seats have *any* evangelical witness, not to mention a church. There are only a total of 22 churches and 30 house groups in the entire region, and eleven of those churches are in the one large city. That leaves only eleven churches and 30 small groups scattered over a region 375 miles long by 250 miles wide.

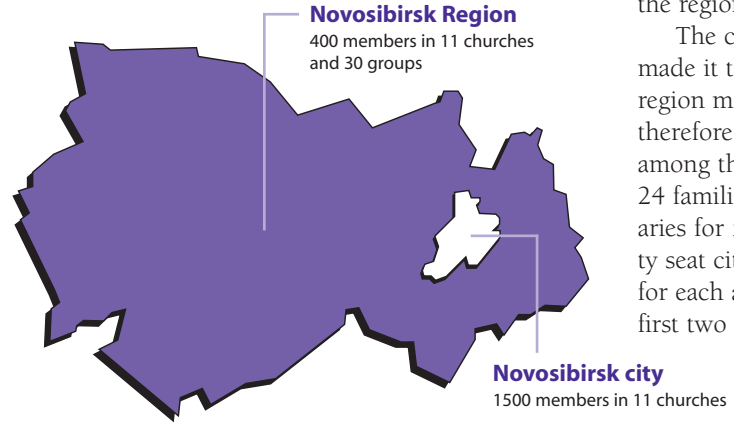
The number of church members starkly illustrates the gravity of the situation: there are a total of only 1900 church members

(among the total population of 2.8 million, a tiny 0.07%, or 7 per 10,000), and 1500 of these are all in eleven churches in the city of Novosibirsk. This means there are only a total of 400 members in 41 churches or new church planting projects across the region! (see map graphic)

The churches of the city have made it their goal to reach the entire region more effectively. They are therefore looking to send out, from among their own numbers, at least 24 families who will serve as missionaries for 5-7 years in one of the county seat cities so that a strong witness for each area can be established. The first two families were sent out from these congregations as Kontaktmission missionaries in April.

Gerhard Rehwald has implemented a 1-year study program, offered in

the evenings, designed to begin the preparation of new workers. He writes, "The year-long evening Bible training program, which graduated its first class in December, helps prepare young men from our congregations for continued education (as pastors). Many of these young people are not – or not yet – ready to begin a regular theological course of study for several years. This evening program gives them the ability to get their basic biblical training under their belts while they are working their regular jobs."



Inhabitants	City	Region	Total
	1.4 million	1.4 million	2.8 million

Church Members	City	Region	Total
	1,500	400	1,900



Gerhard and Lena Rehwald have gone to Novosibirsk to help reach an entire region for Christ.



The Evening Bible School graduated its first class in December.

The Role of Kontaktmission USA and Rob Harris

By Rob Harris

part of my work is **recruiting American missionaries** to go to western Europe to work with Kontaktmission church planting teams. Recruiting involves visits with Bible college students on campuses and wherever I may find them, as well as building and maintaining a presence at missionary conventions and other events, where interested students and other individuals may be

looking for organizations to work with. We also set up individualized missions internships for students who are potentially interested in missions in Europe.

Finally, you need to know that Kontaktmission USA is officially a separate US non-profit organization, financially and legally distinct from the German Kontaktmission organization in accordance with US tax law. **We receive no funding from Europe. (Our goal is, of course, to SEND as much funding to European missionaries as possible!)** We are not allowed to financially support the German

organization because of this law, but we are allowed to – and actually must, according to our by-laws – support missionaries in Europe and the Russian-speaking world. So Kontaktmission USA supports these national workers and missionaries directly, acting as a forwarding agent for them here in the US.

Once, while we were missionaries in Germany, a man in our German congregation asked me how I earned my living. He already knew that I was an American missionary and that I worked at the churches there in Germany, so I had to think about how I should answer him. So I said, “I write newsletters for a living.”

I explained to him that almost exclusively through our newsletter were we able to stay in contact with our financial supporters and tell them about the need for new churches in Germany and how we were meeting that need. Through the regular newsletter we gained and maintained the trust of the churches and individuals back home, trust that we were doing what needed to be done, and this trust translated into our financial support. He understood and was satisfied by my answer. And it applies to us, Rob and Carla Harris and Kontaktmission USA, today as well.

I hope that this little article about my role – actually our role, because Carla is involved in every aspect of the work – will help you to see more clearly what we are doing about the need for Christian witness in Europe and the Russian-speaking world. And we hope that you will consider supporting the work of Kontaktmission USA. Europe can use lots of help in coming to know Christ, and we can use yours in helping to make Him known there.

When I am asked what I do for a living, my answer invariably draws a puzzled look from the questioner, like he or she needs more information. This is usually because I opt for the short answer, something like, “I’m the United States representative for a European missions agency.” I can only assume that most of you, who read this newsletter, might also give me the same puzzled look if you were to get that answer, so I’ve decided to put a longer version of the answer down on paper for you to read. It is our sincere desire to be honest and up-front about what it is we do, and to share with you the importance of this work. Because we want you to be as passionate about it as we are!

First of all, I am blessed and honored to serve as the **US Director for the Kontaktmission organization**, whose main office is in Wüstenrot, Germany, and which operates in 14 countries around Europe. This means that correspondence, donations and anything else that relates to US contacts of any Kontaktmission missionaries all comes through our office here in Tennessee. Being the US Director also means that I **serve on the strategy council** for the organization, helping to plan and execute training, strategize for growth, and organize promotional efforts of the mission. For this reason I am in nearly daily contact with the main office or with one of our missionaries. I also generally travel to Germany about twice a year for meetings, and usually combine this with some other travel to meet with individual KM missionaries while I am in Europe. Next month, for example, I will travel to Germany for meetings, then on to Austria for an informational visit, to Slovenia to participate in a seminar for church planters, and to Russia to see first hand the work in the Orenburg region.

Second, I **represent here in the States the work of indigenous (native) Kontaktmission missionaries working in various countries**. This means visiting with congregations and missions committees to increase awareness of the work and raise support for these missionaries’ needs, as well as helping with correspondence between the churches and the missionaries. In the last month, for example, I have (with Carla) represented Russian national church planter Andrei Nikitin at a church camp in Missouri to raise funds for his family’s household needs, visited with churches about two other national missionaries in Ukraine and Russia, and helped our missionary in Novosibirsk, Siberia to prepare a brochure in English for use with churches in the US, part of which appears in this newsletter.

Third, a very important but unfortunately very difficult



Rob Harris manning the Kontaktmission booth.



Going Where It's Not Easy

I remember an occasion while I was a youth minister when I went to one of the local high schools to meet some kids after school. As one of our youth group girls approached the car along with a friend, the friend asked her to come over to her house that evening. Without batting an eye or seeming the least bit uneasy, the girl from our group answered (not aware I was listening), “No, I can’t, I’m going to youth group. Hey, d’ya wanna come?” And the other girl, who was dressed “too sexy” and was lighting up a cigarette, answered honestly that she couldn’t, but wished she could.

Do you know what this indicates? Among a couple of other things, it especially indicates that the door for the Gospel in that high school, and in that culture, was wide open. It was OK to discuss church in public without expecting ridicule. Going to church was an accepted activity, even on a social level. In this sense, at least, taking the Gospel to suburban high school youth in America was relatively easy “missionary work”.

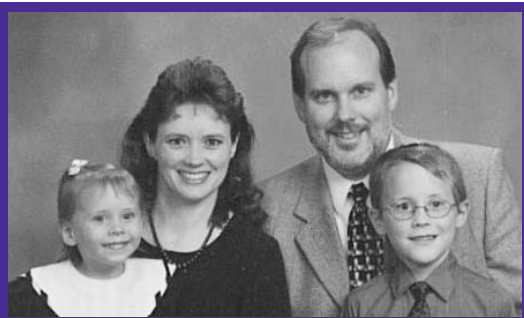
In the last newsletter we shared some statistics about how weak the countries of western Europe are in terms of evangelical Christian witness. The two reasons for the small percentage of evangelicals in western Europe are a **lack of mission effort** and **simple resistance** by the people of these countries. As we have mentioned before, Europe is comprised of mostly post-Christian societies. This means that the message of Christ is summarily discarded as no longer valid, no longer interesting in these societies, that it is, in our slang, “so last century”. In other words, Europe is not much at all like

the school or the culture mentioned above. I like to say that the door for the Gospel in Europe is not closed, but it’s only open a crack, and it’s a heavy door.

One of the most startling things I have learned about missions efforts in the world is that they are actually working, and in dramatic fashion. Many countries have seen large segments of their populations who have embraced faith in Christ as a result of missionary efforts, especially in the last 20-25 years. But these countries are mostly in the poorer regions of the world, regions where an educated western missionary with good tools and some wealth has an easier (compared with in Europe) job to do in convincing his or her hearers.

No, church planting in Europe is not much like preaching to the choir. Instead, it’s sometimes preaching to the utterly disinterested, the not-at-all searching, the completely hardened, the deeply spiritually confused, and the stubbornly proud. Often, it’s preaching to the healthy and wealthy who need no humanitarian aid, and to the educated, who feel themselves capable of thinking their way out of any problems they may face and who know how to rely on their governments to help them. Usually, it’s preaching to people who have firmly decided to be unrelentingly critical of anything that offers more hope than they already feel. But it is also – always – preaching to people whom Jesus loves very, very much, and to people who would have so much to offer to the cause of Him who offered Himself for them. Please pray for Europe, and that more missionaries will choose to go there, where it’s not so easy.

*...the message of
Christ is summarily
discarded as no
longer valid, no
longer interesting
in these societies,
... it is, in our
slang, “so last
century”.*



The Harris Family
Rob & Carla with Alissa & Ryan

News from all over

Marian and Maria Kozak, *new workers, Kaunas, Lithuania* We are, as of the end of August, right in the middle of our preparations for our departure for Lithuania. Please pray that God provides the right apartment for us, and for protection throughout the move.

Werner and Silke Willuweit, *new workers, Vienna, Austria* Please pray for all our preparations as we depart for Austria, and the eventual move to Vienna to assist in the church work there.

Peter and Olga Vogel, *church planting / Bible school administration, Orenburg, Russia* The Bible students are finishing up their two-month internship and preparing for graduation next month. Please pray for their future service. Please pray also for the new group of students, now taking their entrance exams, who will begin their studies on September 7th.

Harald and Margitta Schuster, *church planting, Burriana, Spain* Gitti (Margitta) and another woman from the congregation, Mari Carmen, are making evangelistic visits to women living in the Nules beach region. They are inviting these women to a new house group which has been started there.

Dirk and Annette Staudinger, *church planting, Prüm, Germany* Many prayed for our recent presentation, open to the public, "Esoteric and Buddhism". Seven non-Christians came to the meetings, for which we are very thankful. Please pray that God's Word will bear fruit in their hearts.

Joy and Marion Selvathasan, *church planting among Tamil people, Herne, Germany* In July we were able to hold our first Tamil radio broadcast on a local radio station. Each month from now on we will have 47 minutes for a similar broadcast.

Donations may also now be made via the Internet and by credit card at www.PayPal.com.

**Make donations payable to Kontaktmission USA
email address: missionkm@aol.com**

You will incur no extra charges for using this service.