



# Keeping In Contact

News from Kontaktmission USA

October 2003

**1 Country**  
**2 Million People**  
**700 Believers (maybe)**

## Slovenia

If you were asked to come up with a list of European countries, it's probably one of the ones you wouldn't remember to mention, even if you knew it existed. Slovenia was, before the early 1990's, a part of Yugoslavia, when it successfully seceded from that country and mostly escaped the military turmoil of the region. Financially, it is relatively healthy. It is also a beautiful Alpine land with picturesque views, an Austrian-Catholic cultural heritage, and a Slavic language, Slovene, which is sort of a Russian dialect with Latin or "normal" (for us) script. **Eastern and Western Europe meet and mix in Slovenia.**

Kontaktmission director Dieter Trefz and I were in Slovenia last month to speak for a missions conference organized by our missionary there, **Christoph Stein**. Although I was very impressed with the way the country looked as well as with the friendliness and sophistication of the people, I was also deeply



moved by the need for missions work, specifically the planting of Bible-believing churches, in the entire country. The headline of this article says it: if everyone who sometimes visits an evangelical church is counted, if all the children in these churches are counted, and if some people are counted twice just for good measure, the highest reasonable figure for the total number of evangelical Christians is around 700. And **the churches are small and weak, with a common attendance figure of around 15-20.**

(While there, I preached at a church with a



**Christoph and Connie Stein are beginning to plant churches in Kamnik.**

regular attendance of 8-10.) The primary evangelical association, the Baptist Union, has a total of only about 125 members in 11 groups. Around 40 church leaders, volunteers

and missionaries from various groups came to our conference, where we shared ideas about helping small, weak churches grow and become a significant presence in their communities. A repeat of the conference is planned for next year.

Kontaktmission's missionaries, Christoph and Conny Stein - he's German, she's Croatian - are far enough along in their language studies to begin a brand new church-planting work in the small city of **Kamnik**. ("Stein", their last name, means "stone" in German; "Kamnik" is Slovenian for "stone". They feel they belong.) **Please pray** for the Steins as they build their new church with God's help, and also for their work in helping the other churches in Slovenia to find hope and grow.



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The headline of this

**Kontaktmission Director Dieter Trefz addresses a missions conference in Slovenia.**

# The Future of Missions Work

**INTERNATIONAL, FLEXIBLE, INNOVATIVE**

Kontaktmission has, in recent years, begun working with missionaries from various countries other than Germany, including (obviously) the United States. But Americans are not the only “foreigners” joining the Kontaktmission team. In fact, we have a number of different sending and receiving country scenarios already in place.

We of course have Germans working in Germany and in many other countries, but we also have people of other nationalities (Nepalese, Tamil, Argentinian) working in Germany. We have Ukrainians in Ukraine and Russians in Russia, as well as a Ukrainian working in Russia. We have people who were born in Russia to German families who are now working in Russia again. We have Swiss working in Austria and Brazilians working in Portugal. The list goes on, and it’s growing, and it’s all one organization with one set of goals and work principles.

The challenges facing a multi-national organization like ours are painfully evident each spring when we gather in Germany for training and encouragement: the main sessions are translated, prayers are spoken in whatever language the speaker chooses, and even testimonies, work reports, and question-answer periods have to be simultaneously translated into multiple languages. Until recently, the official language of the organization has been German, but our strategy council has now realized we need to move to three main languages: German, Russian and (as everybody’s favorite second language) English. All business doc-

uments, employment contracts, training materials and even some promotional material will need to be put into these languages. This will of course mean plenty of translation projects for me!

But the challenges involve more than just the languages. There are also staggering cultural differences which affect everything from the way our workers respond to the authority of their team leaders to the way they communicate about how to do church work. Eastern European workers live on less money than our western European workers pay each month for their cars and insurance, and yet everything has to be fair and reasonable. And we have to be one team.

Now that you have read this, I would like for you to consider how different this missions organization is from anything you have ever heard of here in the States. I’ve looked around, and *it is different*. **But it is important to note that there is a reason that we are different, that it is on purpose: we believe that this kind of international work and flexibility of methods are the best hope for success in missions work in the countries of Europe, where it is not easy to start churches and to win people to Jesus.** We believe that Europeans can reach Europeans best, that Americans can have important roles on European teams, and that missionaries of other nationalities can as well.

## Got an old computer?

### (Needs of Eastern European workers)

Perhaps you have never felt comfortable donating financially to missions, but would like to help in some tangible way. Maybe your business or your church is upgrading its computer equipment. Maybe you’d like a good reason to update your laptop. And it might be that your church’s missions budget has a small amount left over at the end of the year... Well, our indigenous workers and teams in Ukraine and Russia could use your help with equipment, supplies, and books for libraries. Here are a few needs you or your church might consider supplying. Please contact us at [rob.harris@kontaktmission.org](mailto:rob.harris@kontaktmission.org) or (731) 824-0182 if you can help meet one of these needs.



### Ukraine Team:

- digital camera (new or used, at least 2.0 megapixel)
- desktop computer (new or used, PIII or newer, no monitors or accessories)
- laptop computers (2 needed, no more than 3 years old)

### Bible College, Kremenchug, Ukraine:

- Donations for library books (Excellent Russian language texts are available)
- Donations for textbooks (Again, excellent books are available but shipping is expensive)

### Orenburg, Russia Team:

- digital camera (new or used, at least 2.0 megapixel)
- laptop computers (3 needed, no more than 3 years old)
- quality keyboard (small)

### Bible College, Orenburg, Russia:

- Donations for library books

# A Cultural Insight – What Russians Think of Americans

While visiting Orenburg, Russia with our missionary team in September I was given an opportunity to speak to an English class at the University of Orenburg. Yevgeni (or Jhenya), one of the young men from the Orenburg Baptist church, himself a language/philology student, set up the session and whisked me over to the classroom. He and our missionary team see this kind of participation at the university as a way to use English and German speakers for Christian witness and influence.

Before me sat 13 upperclassmen – all young women – and their professor, chair of the languages department of the university, also a woman. After a one sentence introduction by Jhenya I was perfunctorily seated behind the desk at the front and turned loose on the class, a fairly unnerving moment for me, I have to admit. After a few painful seconds of confused silence while I looked around in vain for some direction from the professor, I finally began by talking about where I come from and have lived, including Germany, which seemed to be interesting to some of them.

Then, as they warmed up and began to ask questions, the conversation turned to the differences between Americans and Russians. One girl wanted to know how Americans eat. (Her father, a doctor, thinks we need to eat more soup.) Another was curious about how men and women fall in love and interact in serious relationships, including marriage, which gave me the opportunity to say that the best marriages I know about are strong Christian marriages based on Biblical principles. We talked about the war in Iraq and about whether or not the press can be trusted. I said I thought it was possible to get a fairly presented picture of the truth by watching and reading different news sources available in the US. They didn't seem to think this was at all possible in Russia. We talked about wealth and poverty in the two countries, and I said I thought it was still possible to gain at least a comfortable level of wealth in the US simply by finding a job and working really hard. They said, "That's a difference. Here, you can work very hard and you still don't get anywhere."

Then several wanted to know all at once if all Americans think all Russians are stupid and inept. I thought the question

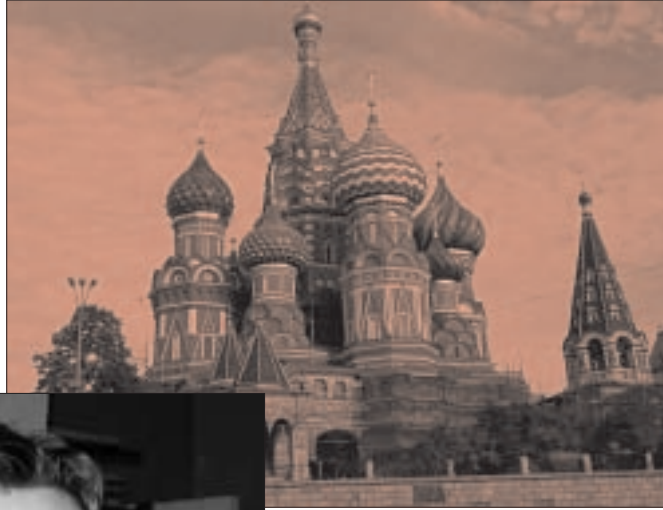
was strange, and asked why they would think that. One offered an explanation: "You know that movie, *Armageddon*? The Russian is like that in that movie." (In case you don't know the film, Bruce Willis and a team of oil drillers and one Russian cosmonaut save the world from a comet in space.) The conclusion drawn from this, affirmed by the whole room, was that all

Americans must see Russians as inept, like the cosmonaut in that movie.

Although it was a fun atmosphere and everyone was very polite to me, and although I had lots of good things to say about Russia and especially Russian people,

there was definitely an undercurrent of displeasure about Americans, and no, not just about American foreign policy. So finally, near the end of the hour, I had to ask, "I'm curious, is there anyone here who simply hates all Americans?" Nobody said "No, it's not like that" and several looked down, somewhat ashamed. But one spoke up and said, "Yes, I think I can say I hate or don't like all Americans." I asked why she should feel that way about all of us, and she said, "Because I think Americans scorn Russians and think we are stupid and can't do anything." I dug for more information about why they think we feel that way and about where they get their information about life in America. Their answer? The movies.

**Jhenya and our missionary team see participation at the University of Orenburg as a way to use speaking opportunities for Christian witness.**



***It's Now Possible to Contribute to Kontaktmission USA Online***

***Donations may also now be made via the Internet and by credit card at [www.PayPal.com](http://www.PayPal.com).***

***Make donations payable to Kontaktmission USA email address: [missionkm@aol.com](mailto:missionkm@aol.com)***

***You will incur no extra charges for using this service.***



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## A Statistical Look at Russia – “There Is Hope”

The country of Russia, although now officially open for evangelism, continues to be a difficult mission field where much work needs to be done, preferably by Russians or Russian-speaking nationals. A brief look at the following statistics will give you an idea of the state of Russian society, at least the negative side of it. There is certainly cause for concern among Russian politicians, and cause for action among Christians.

These statistics and more were provided to all evangelical groups in Russia who are participating in a major outreach program called “Nadyejhda yest” or “There is Hope”, which has been initiated by the Billy Graham organization and is being administrated on the local level by Russian evangelicals in their own towns and regions. Our team in Orenburg, Russia is also participating in the program.

**Kontaktmission USA**  
**now has a website at**  
**[www.kontaktmissionusa.org](http://www.kontaktmissionusa.org)**

### General statistics:

145,000,000	total population
920,000	annual population loss (0.63%)
73%	live in the cities
over 100	various nationalities also living in Russia
720,000	children in orphanages
912,000	prisoners
2,500,000	severe alcoholics
10,000,000	addicted to narcotics
228,000	AIDS infected (3,500 newly infected monthly)
4,000,000	homeless
28%	children born to single mothers
58	average life expectancy - men
72	average life expectancy - women
8.3%	have internet access
10%	have a mobile phone
83%	prefer politicians with a “strong hand”

### Percentages of Russians by religion

Russian Orthodox Church	.....54%
Islam	.....8%
Judaism	.....0.3%
<b>Protestant</b>	..... <b>0.2%</b>
no religion	.....35.8%
atheists	.....22.3%
other religions	.....1.7%

believe religious faith is important	.....14%
pray regularly (religion not specified)	.....13.7%

Source: Russian ministries of Interior, Health and Statistics