

Translators' News

Institute for Bible Translation

Summer
2003

www.IBTnet.org



Young and old read the IBT Children's Bible

INSTITUTE FOR BIBLE TRANSLATION 30 YEARS

How it all began...

On the evening of March 27, 1973, a small group of people gathered in an apartment in Bromma, outside Stockholm, Sweden for a meeting of what was to become the East Bible Institute, later renamed Institute for Bible Translation. According to the minutes of that first meeting, the "purpose of the organization is to produce Bibles for the non-Slavic peoples living in Slavic countries." Four persons were appointed as board members of the newly formed organization. That same evening the Board approved the printing of Bibles, New Testaments

and Scripture portions in 15 languages spoken in the Soviet Union. This was at a time when many Christians behind the Iron Curtain were persecuted for their faith, many were in prison, and practically all Bible work had ceased – the Bible was a forbidden book.

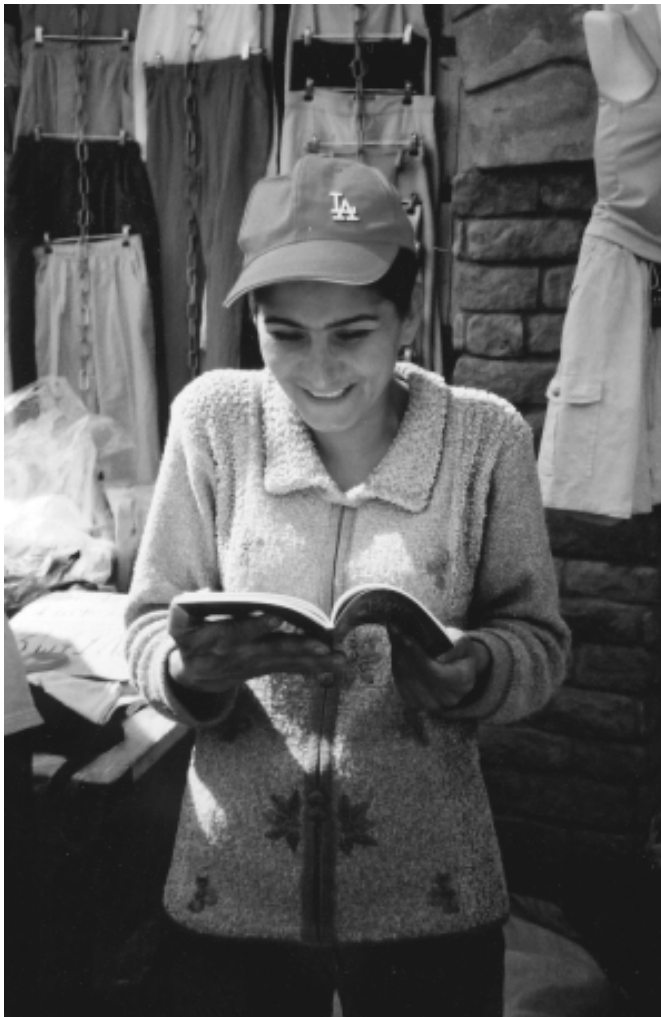
"I have strange feelings as I read those minutes", writes IBT's founder, Borislav Arapovic in his book 'Bibeln Sidenväg'. (Translation: The Bible's Silk Road) How did we have the courage to vote for and approve a program to reach a goal that seemed as distant as the Himalayas at the time? The goal before us was to organize translation and printing in about 70 languages – i.e., about half of the languages spoken in the Soviet Union. How naive we were! But perhaps it was just this naiveté that confirmed that it was God's work. Thirty years of accomplishments are to His credits, not ours!

A Nordic Project

Borislav Arapovic, who is Croatian, had immigrated to Sweden from Bosnia, and in the early 70's began to be interested in the minority peoples of the Soviet Union



The Kalmyk New Testament was published 2002



The first ever printed book in Rushani—the Gospel of Luke!

and their need for Bibles in their own languages. This resulted in the “100 language project”, which was supported by 4 Scandinavian Missions to the East. They were: Slaavilaislähetys in Finland, Danish European Mission in Denmark, Mission Behind the Iron Curtain in Norway and the Slavic Mission in Sweden. Soon it became evident that the project was too big for these organizations – so an independent Institute was founded. This organization later identified itself as a scientific Institute, which had as its only mission to translate the Bible, and not to evangelize. Today, this has proven to be an invaluable decision. This has opened doors for Bible translation among Christians, Muslims, Buddhists and Animistic people groups”.

Bible translation in secret

The first translators were those who had fled to the West during World War II. Since many had lived outside their countries for a long time, it was necessary to send completed manuscripts, by courier, back to the regions where the translated languages were spoken. Eventually, a network of translators was built up within the Soviet Union,

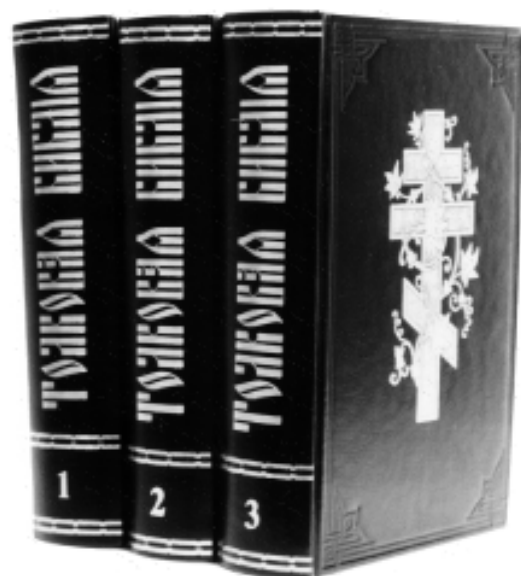
risking their safety and even their lives, to work on the forbidden book. Texts were checked by linguists and exegetical checkers in the West, so before a book was ready for printing, it had made many trips back and forth between East and West – transported in the undershirts of Finnish young women or in the secret compartments of cars.

Not a single shot fired

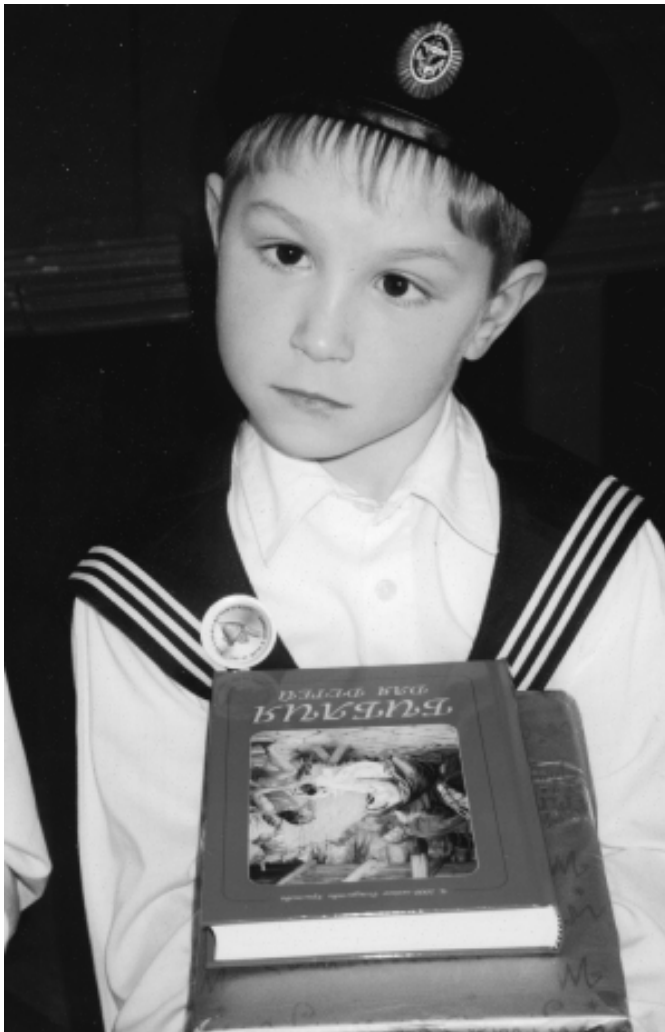
“Who of us in the founding meeting of March 27, 1973, where we agreed to begin a work greater than anything we were equipped for, could have ever imagined that 18 years later, in 1991, the Soviet Union, second only to the world’s strongest military power, would cease to exist without a single shot being fired. How could we have known that the 15 Soviet republics, which made up the country, would become independent states, where the national languages would once again become official, and that Bible translation in those languages would take on a different meaning from that of the Soviet times? Only God knew that.” (Translated quotation from *Bibelns Sidenväg*, i.e. *The Bible’s Silk Road*)

With the help of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, Borislav Arapovic established IBT in Moscow already in September 1990. At the present time the IBT offices in Helsinki and Moscow coordinate the translation and printing process, and after perestroika a cooperative effort has developed with other translation organizations and local churches. Currently, Bible translation is progressing in approximately 80 languages, with over 200 individuals in the former Soviet Union at work on this enormous task!

Barbro Lindström



Tolkovaya Bibliya



The Children's Bible has been printed in 30 languages

Some highlights of IBT's 30 years!

IBT has published the Bible or parts of it in more than 60 languages.

Three Bibles

The Moldavians, Tajiks and Georgians have received **entire Bibles** in their languages

16 New Testaments

The Adygei, Azeri, Balkar, Kabardian, Kalmyk, Karelian, Kyrgyz, Komi-Zyryan, Kurdish-Kurmanji, Mari, Ossetic, Tatar, Turkmen, Tuvini, Uzbek, and Udmurt peoples have received **the New Testament**. Ten more New Testaments are scheduled for completion by 2005.

Five people groups have received their **very first printed book ever** – the Gospel of Luke for the Bezhta in the Caucasus area and portions of the Gospel of Luke for the Enets in Siberia and the Rushani, Wakhi, and

Yazguliami peoples in the Pamir mountains of Tajikistan.

The Children's Bible

The IBT Children's Bible is probably the world's most popular Bible for Children. It has been printed in 30 languages in 8 million copies since 1983. A special project is presently underway in partnership with about 25 different churches and organizations in Russia, to distribute the Children's Bible to children on the streets, in orphanages, hospitals and prisons.

Tolkovaya Bibliya

To commemorate the 1000-year anniversary of Christianity in Russia, IBT printed 150,000 sets of the Tolkovaya Bibliya, a Russian Bible in 3 volumes, with commentaries, as a gift from the Nordic countries to the Christians in Russia. The printing required about \$2 million, and the governments of Denmark, Norway, and the Faeroe Islands were among the donors.



The Tatar New Testament was published in 2001

*Many still do not have the Bible
in their own language*

IBT continues its mission! **There are still many people groups in the former Soviet Union who do not have the Bible or New Testament in their language, and many who do not even have one portion of Scripture in their mother tongue!** Because of the lack of funding we currently have 12 translations on hold.

In addition, four on-going translation projects are almost in total lack of funds – the **Dargin, Lak, Nogai, and Shor** projects. The Dargin people (400,000) and Lak (139,000) live in Dagestan, in the Northeastern Caucasus area. They are Sunni Muslims. The Nogai (94,000) are in North Dagestan and the Stavropol area – they are also Sunni Muslims. The Shor people number 16,000 and live in Southern Siberia. Their religion is a mix of Orthodox Christianity and Shamanism. “Certainly most Shor people know the Russian language – but that is not the point. Having the Word of God in the mother tongue is the important thing, because it touches the heart,” says a member of the translation team.



Members of the Shor translation team

**THANK YOU,
dear friends!**

Much has been accomplished during these past 30 years – but without God’s help and all of you who have supported IBT in prayer and finances, none of this could have happened. Thank you, dear friends!

Project of the Month

We desire that the 30th Anniversary gift be designated for the support of the four nearly un-financed projects mentioned above – the **Dargin, Lak, Nogai, and Shor** translations. Throughout this year, our newsletters will remind you of the need for funding of these translations. Your special gift this month will help provide the **Dargin** people with their first Gospel of Luke!

Institute for Bible Translation

Institute for Bible Translation was founded in Stockholm, Sweden in 1973, its main task being to publish Bibles for “non-Slavic peoples in Slavic countries.” In the CIS 130 different languages are spoken. Since then we have worked on Bible translation in more than 80 of these languages. We have printed the Bible or portions of it in over 60 languages, including three whole Bibles, in Georgian, Moldavian and Tajik, and 16 New Testaments. We welcome your support for our continuing efforts in bringing the Word to those in the former Soviet nations. All peoples of the world should have the Bible available in their native language.

In the US:

PO Box 216
Alhambra, CA 91802
Tel. 1-626-281-4740
ibtna@IBTnet.org

In Canada:

45-2301 Arbot Road
Nanaimo, BC V9R 5K3
Tel. 1-626-281-4740
ibtcn@IBTnet.org

In the UK:

PO Box Northwood 212
Northwood, HA6 1WG
Tel. 01923-823493
ibtuk@IBTnet.org

In Sweden:

Box 20100
SE-10460 Stockholm
Tel. 08-722-2340
info@IBTnet.org

IBT also has offices in Russia and Finland.

*Institute for Bible Translation is a US registered non-profit organization. IRS approved receipts will be issued for income tax purposes, for all contributions to Bible translation, publishing and printing.