

FANTASY OPENS DOORS FOR TRIAD

Anna Shirochenskaya, of Triad Publishing House (www.triad.ru) in Moscow, Russia, talked with InterLit about her commitment to sharing the Gospel through quality Christian fiction.

Christianity should be culturally relevant, because as it spreads all over the world, it will not survive in any country where it does not become a part of the culture and the national heritage," says Anna Shirochenskaya, director of Triad Publishing House.

a's culture and national heritage. Their books stayed with the Russian people all through the times of Communist rule.

"Books, along with music and arts, served as one of the substitutes for religion," says Shirochenskaya. "When the political situation in

other religions, yoga, meditation, and witchcraft." At the same time, the best of the world's classical and modern literature became available.

Choosing a popular genre

People tend to like fiction much more than nonfiction, especially in Russia. The highest sales are in fiction books. Because of this, Triad wants to promote the Christian worldview and Christian ideas in a form that the public will enjoy.

"Our main purpose as Christians who publish books is to go to the end of the world and bring the good news," says Shirochenskaya. "Fantasy has huge potential to convey the Christian message, so we chose fantasy books as our next priority." Fantasy is one of the most popular genres in Russia. Huge interest in the books of C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, and other authors proves the trend.

Quality fiction

In a regulated economy, quality was a key concern. Every industry, including publishing, desired it as the prince desired Cinderella. Standards for writing, translation, and editing were maintained quite high.

Russian readers, used to quality, continue to demand it. Therefore, in furthering Russia's Christian heritage, Triad's strategy includes a high commitment to editorial excellence. Triad's staff looks for



Pictured above are two of Triad's fantasy titles for children.

"Christian publishers should be facilitating this process."

Christianity came to Russia more than 1000 years ago, and writers like Tolstoy and Dostoevsky helped Christianity become a part of Russi-

Russia changed and it became open to western influence, secular publishers flooded the bookshops with Harlequin books, crime stories, science fiction, fantasy, children's books, and all kinds of books on



"The Russian language is a splendid instrument," says Anna Shirochenskaya, director of Triad. She provided simultaneous Russian translation at Cook's 2001 International Christian Publishing Institute on Leadership.

manuscripts with innovative approaches to plot and language.

"The Russian language is really very rich, it is a splendid instrument," says Shirochenskaya, who holds a graduate degree in Russian translation and interpretation. "We express Christianity with this instrument, this work of art, and sometimes our translations sound even better than the original."

"We educate our readers through language," she adds, "We should not condescend to readers by only using only easy vocabulary, but should lift our readers up, even teaching them new words."

Christian fiction can bring about an emotional response from the readers, giving them a lasting spiritual experience, populating their minds with favorite characters, making them wonder about their motivations and attitudes. Triad wants to offer value to readers, something new, something that has not been said before. Plot development is critical.

"A good book is one where once you start reading it, you just cannot stop," says Shirochenskaya. "To find a good manuscript, find a good author," she adds. "One who has the talent and the skills, is hard-working and is a researcher. It all shows up in the manuscripts."

Currently, Triad has published three fantasy books for adults. Triad

Arthur, by Stephen Lawhead, is the third and newest installment of Triad's fantasy series for adult readers.

has four children's fantasy titles in development, and more titles for both adults and children on the way. Most of its titles so far are translations, though Triad is developing Russian authors as well.

Distribution

"At first, Christians did not accept the fantasy genre," recalls Shirochenskaya. "The Christian market was really cautious, but sales were generated by word-of-mouth."

Triad is actively taking steps to educate Christians concerning fantasy books and other types of fiction. The publishing house has a book club with a magazine for members. A recent issue discussed fantasy titles and provided an overview of Celtic Christianity, prominently featured in Stephen Lawhead's fantasy books.

For secular bookstores, the key word is fantasy. "Secular contacts heard Triad publishes good fantasy books and stopped being suspicious of us as a Christian publishing house," says Shirochenskaya.

"This is a new market for us," she adds. "Our fantasy books have opened new doors for us." Triad's relationships with secular contacts have paved the way for the sale of nonfiction titles, particularly those that focus on psychology and self-help issues. Interest in books on popular theology has also been a real surprise.

"People need help," says Shirochenskaya. "Who is in a better position, than Christians, to help them? It is our responsibility and privilege." v