



# Just Like in the Movies

*Russian publisher Anna Shirochenskaya described her day to InterLit's Isaac Phiri during the latter's visit to St. Petersburg and Moscow.*



*Anna Shirochenskaya in her Triad office in Moscow. "My key role at Triad is finding good books to publish," she says.*

**I**t is 5:30 a.m. I just stepped off an overnight train from Moscow to St. Petersburg. Anton Palchikov, a friend and executive director at

Mirt Publishing, "volunteered" to pick me up. The roads are icy. Anton forgets to slow down when making a turn and the car spins. Just like in

the movies. Thank God there were not many other cars on the road.

I am in St. Petersburg for the International Christian Book Fair. Triad is one of the organizations that helped start this fair; it helps us come together as publishers and booksellers.

We reach Mirt's office. Anton uses his password to enter the building. Because of increased crime, we have to secure our offices. I rest while Anton brews coffee.

Triad's office is in a building that used to be a factory. One area is for printing and binding, another is a warehouse, and then we have an office suite. It is small but nice. We like it.

Anton offers me coffee and cake. He is a good host. We do the same when he comes to Moscow—though cake is not good enough for him. He wants sausage!

I tell Anton we have to go. I must check on our stand and meet international guests.

After some calls, Anton is ready. He puts

on a coat and his favorite black beret. I tell him it makes him look like a French artist. He laughs. Anton is a good friend. I have good relationships with many publishers in St. Petersburg and in Moscow. I call them anytime I need anything. We are family.

I cannot say this is my typical day. In Moscow, I leave for work at 8:00 a.m. I avoid cars and buses. The subway is the best; I can read and it drops me near my office. I take a 10 minute brisk walk to our office. I always pass by this great old house. It has character. I wish we could afford it for an office.

I look forward to the office. I enjoy our team. They are all enthusiastic. Sometimes we "fight." Good fights. What is the best way to market? What books are best to publish? Should we go to the St. Petersburg book fair by car or by train? Last year we drove and our van broke down. Gennady Kalmykov, our fix-it guy, repaired it. This time we decided to come by train.

That was a better idea, if you ask me.

Some days at our office are hectic. We publish about 18 titles per year, printing 3,000 to 6,000 copies of each book. We also print books for other Christian organizations. Most expect us to perform miracles at the last minute. Christians like miracles, especially when performed by others.

My key role at Triad is finding good books to publish. I am working with Russian authors to develop locally-written titles. We published a book on overcoming addictions. This is an important issue in Russia.

Most of our books are translated from English. I look through catalogs and request reading copies. When I receive a book, I read it and share my thoughts with the team. If the book matches our mission and looks like it will sell, we decide to publish.

Our biggest challenge, of course, is distribution.

We are working hard to get into the secular market. We have published cross-over titles with some success. Triad is the only Christian publisher that had a stand at Moscow International Bookfair. But, the secular book industry in Russia is hard to break into.

We have also launched a book club. We send information about our books to members on our mailing list. If they are interested in a book, they let us know and we mail it to them with a pay-on-delivery note. When the postal service delivers the package they collect payment and deposit it into our bank. This program will grow. We have a virtual hostess for this club. All mail comes in her name and we all respond in her name.

We are also exploring international markets, especially with the large numbers of Russians in the U.S. and around the world. Our books are now selling in former Soviet

republics. That is why we attend the St. Petersburg book fair. Booksellers come to this event from many countries.

It is 6:00 p.m. and the first day of the book fair has ended. It was a good day—lots of people came to our stand. Five of us pile into Anton's Lada. The little car groans under the weight. It must be the Americans! We speed off to downtown St. Petersburg to find a restaurant.

One of Anton's two cell phones rings. It is his wife. "I will be home late today," he says. "I am taking guests out." Before we go to a restaurant, Anton wants to give our guests a glimpse of the city's landmarks. Museums. Palaces. Theaters. Bridges. Church buildings. Finally, we drive by a KGB building, quietly, as though we were spies. Just like in the movies.

After dinner, I hike to my hotel while Anton drives the guests back to theirs. I am exhausted, ready for a good night's

sleep. But other Triad staff, including our sales manager, Vladimir Andreev, are staying at the same hotel. They want to talk. About sales. About marketing. About strategies for the future. We "fight" until 2:00 a.m.

My day in Moscow officially ends at 5:30 though, in practice, we often work up to 6:00 or 7:00 p.m. or even later. When my day ends, I shut down my laptop and head for the subway station. I push through the crowds of people who are streaming in and out of the subway station. There is a train every five minutes. I take a moment to enjoy the architecture of the underground station before jumping onto the train. If I find a seat, I pull out a book I requested as a reading copy. It may be the next bestseller, but that is a decision for another day. Right now I look forward to a quality evening with my 13-year old daughter. Perhaps we will watch a movie. ❖

## HOW ANOTHER RUSSIAN PUBLISHER BALANCES BUSINESS AND PERSONAL LIFE

TAKE  
1



Anton Palchikov of Mirt Publishing, at work on his laptop...

TAKE  
2



...helps Tracy Danz of Zondervan use a computer function...

TAKE  
3



...receives a call from his wife...

TAKE  
4



... is interrupted by a call from the office on a second cell phone...

TAKE  
5



...back to talking to his wife and son.