

A warm, golden-toned photograph of a snowy winter night. In the foreground, a wooden fence is partially covered in snow. To the right, a wooden house is visible, with a bright light emanating from a window or doorway, casting a glow on the snow. The background is filled with snow-laden evergreen trees. The overall atmosphere is cozy and festive.

# RUSSIA & ASIA report

*May His peace, love and joy  
be with you this Christmas and always*

# Visions Become Reality!



Visions do become reality. That's the way God intended it. December 10<sup>th</sup>, 1989 was just an ordinary day. Four people had come together in a home in the far north country of Finland.

Faith and vision united the four behind an unusual cause. The firepower of television and radio in the Soviet Union could soon be harnessed to take the Gospel to the peoples of that great superpower. It was not yet—but it was to come! Believing in that vision Gordon, Kai, Laura and I founded IRR/TV. Not one of us on that winter day knew how much impact the ministry of IRR/TV would have in Russia in the days ahead.

For the past 15 years Laura and I have lived out the greatest adventure of our lives—an adventure in missions given by the Lord.

Believing that media in the Soviet Union would soon open up to the Gospel, we purchased our first piece of television equipment. We took out a bank loan—in faith. Our faith was rewarded.

Fifty two of the best Bible stories in animated form catapulted to the Soviet Union's largest TV channel seen by over 300 million viewers. It was a first ever in Russia. The nation responded. Over one million letters flooded the post office in Moscow in just four weeks. The nation was on the move seeking God.

We believed that after 70 years of wandering in the wilderness of atheism the story of the prodigal son had to be

told to the Soviet peoples on television. Call it blind faith. Exercising that faith turned a vision into reality.

On national television Laura appealed to her countrymen, "*After 70 years of aimless wandering come home! Your Father in Heaven is waiting!*" 2 million viewers responded! Russia was thirsting after spiritual meaning.

Yes, times change. Russia has changed. But vision still becomes reality when we set out to do what God has called us to do.

## Christmas is a story for the Church to tell

Granted. There is no such thing as a perfect church. Why? Because there is no such thing as a perfect Christian. Every believer has his and her own imperfections.

Yet, who wouldn't want to belong to a church, the very thought of which would cause our heart to skip a beat, or meetings that we wouldn't miss for the life of ours, and a place that draws outsiders in droves, and a place where we could use our God given gifts for His glory and the salvation of souls.

The church is the only institution on earth that offers hope to a dying world. It's potential is limitless. The church is called to comfort those who weep, lift up the downtrodden, build bridges to those who seek God, and share the truth with the lost, help those in need and reach

out to the rejected. The church provides deliverance from bondage, addiction, depression, and provides a home for the outcasts. We as believers make up the church.

No matter how deep the human suffering, the church's power to heal and restore is far greater.

There is no other institution in this world that has been given an equally important task. The church is the hope of the world. Without it the human race would mercilessly degenerate in darkness and sin. We as believers make up that church.

Whether the church succeeds or fails in its commission does have consequences in time and in eternity. This is what we believe at IRR/TV. We want to give the Great Commission our very best shot.

If this vision will possess our hearts as believers in the church, if it will possess the leaders of the church in Russia, Europe and America then hope will burst into flame in our homes, cities and our nations. If this happens, it will be Christmas every day of the year—just the way it was intended to be.

May you have a blessed Christmas season. Thank you for supporting the ministry of IRR/TV this past year through your prayers and gifts.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Hannu Haukka". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Hannu Haukka



# Special report from Petrozavodsk

"Mission Petrozavodsk" became "the talk of the town" in one day. From capital city to small village, from Governor to farmer people were talking about **POWER TO CHANGE**.

"Apparently it is possible to change the look of a city in a single day," wrote the daily newspaper Severny Courier. "Of that the people of Petrozavodsk were convinced as they woke up one November morning," the article went on to say. The reporter noted that the campaign message was everywhere: on buses, trams, taxis, billboards, television screens, radio programs and newspapers.

## The Church's Business Card

It was the evening of the second day of the campaign. I was sitting in the campaign office next to the call center with the pastors of the churches of Petrozavodsk. "I encourage you to

*choose the telephone counselors with care. The telephones are your business card to this people and the government of this city. First impressions will linger for a long, long time—perhaps years to come."*

As we talked, the evening telecast began. Ten minutes later the door opened and our office manager appeared visibly shaken, "Hannu, we have "overload"! All lines are busy! The phones are ringing off the hook! We need more lines!" The report sent a tingling sensation through those of us present.

## Overload!

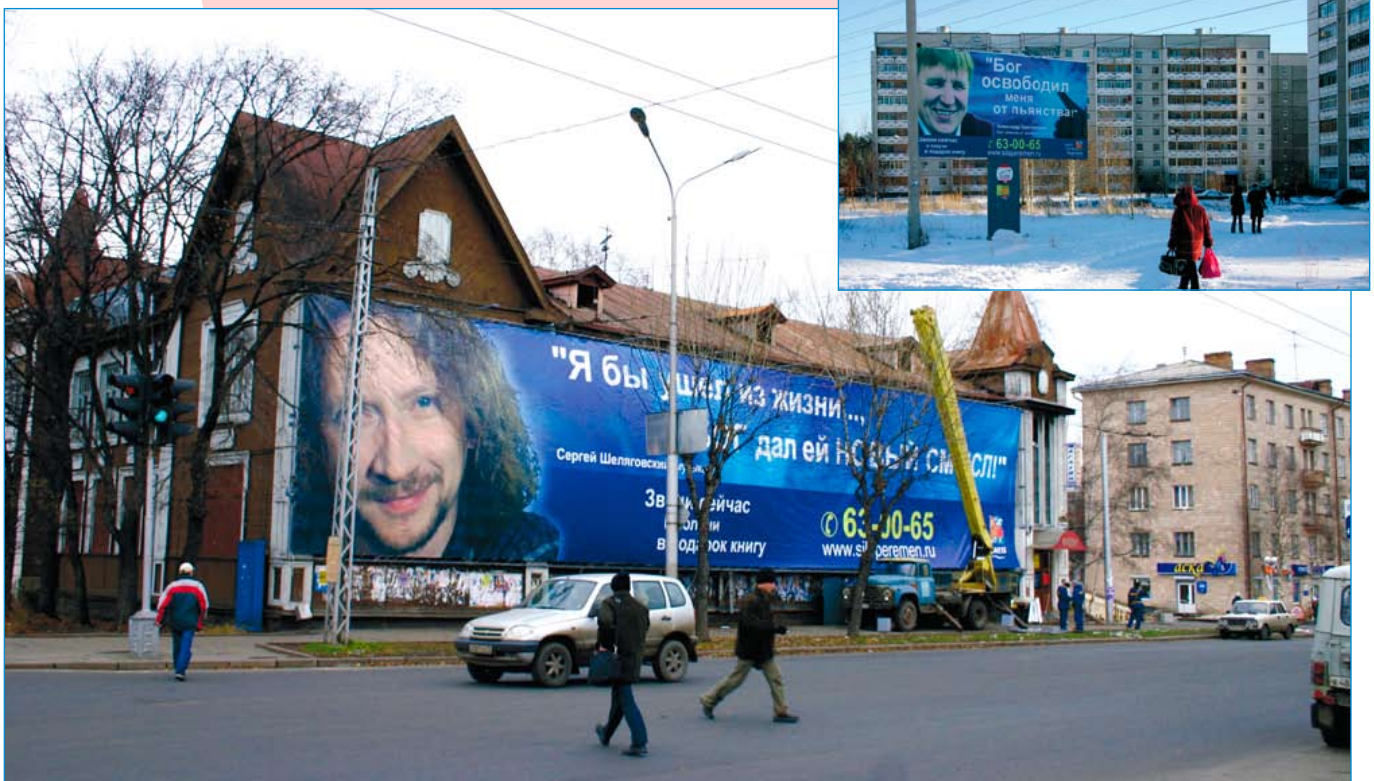
I walked out of the room and opened the door to the call center. The steady

drone of ten people talking all at once was overwhelming. The counselors were reaching out to the people of their own city—people in spiritual need.

For a moment I stood unmoving, observing the sight. Then I turned and left the room, my eyes wet with tears. This was what we all had been praying for and waiting for. People all across the city who would never visit a church or come in contact with the Gospel otherwise were calling the call center.

That evening over 100 phone calls were received. Another two hundred calls, possibly more, never got through as all lines were engaged nonstop. A temporary overload of our untested equipment cut off untold numbers of

*Petrozavodsk's largest billboard across the street from the University, measuring 100 feet in length, has a compelling testimony from a well known local musician, "I was going to end my life but God gave me new purpose." Other billboards around the city encourage people to call a number to receive spiritual help (see inset).*





These lightbox ads were new in the city and helped get the message out: "God can give you the Power to change!"



Miraculous story of salvation. Vladimir Kiselev, sentenced to 18 years in prison, stands in front of the billboards of Petrozavodsk: "Presidentti Yeltsin pardon me!"

callers before the first word could be said.

### Go Drown Yourself!

The following morning the largest billboard was mounted on the side of a building on the main street of the city. The mega billboard measured an astounding 100 feet long by 20 feet high (33 m x 6 m). On the billboard was a famous local musician, Sergey Shelyagovsky.

Sergey had experienced God's power personally. He had come to the end of his rope and had decided to end it all by drowning himself in Lake Onega—one of Russia's large lakes. The city was on its shores.

When Jesus came into Sergey's life he was born again. In giant letters the text on the billboard next to his picture read, "I WAS GOING TO END MY LIFE BUT GOD GAVE ME NEW PURPOSE". Even as the billboard was being mounted it turned the heads of every passer by.

### Worries At City Hall

The pastoral committee chairman pastor Fyodor Akimenko was summoned to city hall. The mayor's office was concerned. Not everyone was rejoicing over the campaign. The next morning it was Laura's and my turn to meet the city officials.

At city hall Mr. Lobanov, responsible for the city's public advertising, was polite but apprehensive. "You've got quite a campaign," said the official. He had personally inspected and approved all the campaign advertising. "The billboard on the main street is rather large, in fact, its the largest in the city's history. Its message is also pretty hard hitting. No doubt, you will achieve the goals you have set before you, for this campaign. Could you possibly tone down the language in the ads?"

### Massive Problems

Mr. Lobanov anxiously waited for my reply. "The social problems that the city faces are pretty severe," I said. "Forty percent of Russia's adult men

struggle with alcohol, drug addiction and AIDS are on the rise at an alarming rate. Out of every 300 pregnancies 200 end in abortion. Marriages are falling apart at record speed. A softer approach will not solve the problems!"

Lobanov was silent and then nodded in agreement. That same evening the call center was flooded with hundreds of phone calls. Several people called to say they would end their lives. By the grace of God their lives were saved.

### Opposition Appears

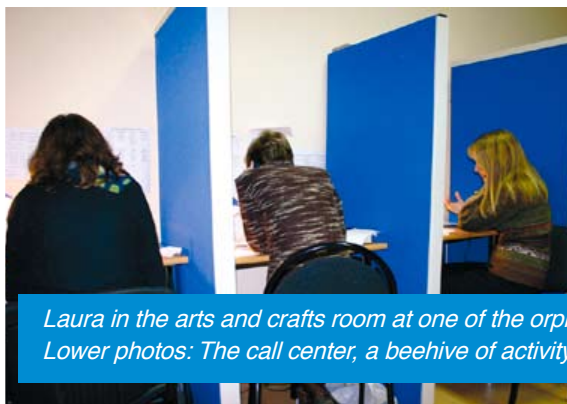
The summons to city hall was a sign of things to come. Opposition was gathering. That night the newly installed neon light boxes on Lenin Street were vandalized with graffiti. The advertising agency filed a police report. That was followed by a phone call: "If the light boxes are cleaned up they will be destroyed." The group concerned was an obscure 'extremist-nationalist' organization.

Down the street another group tried to burn down the giant 100 foot





for life, gives his testimony on  
 ed me, but Jesus Christ freed



Laura in the arts and crafts room at one of the orphanages. Top right: Ads on the sides of city buses.  
 Lower photos: The call center, a beehive of activity. Thousands of calls have been received already.



billboard. However, security guards patrolling the area had managed to prevent the act. The billboard was made of flame-resistant material.

The forces of darkness had a reason to be concerned. The following evening the number of phone calls to the call center doubled to several hundred calls. Of these 196 gave their personal information and wanted to be contacted personally by a campaign representative. The campaign's message was getting through.

Worried about the ads I prayed, "Lord, please send angels to protect the ads. We are unable to guard them. Only You are able to do that..."

### Book Order From the City Library

The next morning Yuri, our campaign coordinator called me, "*The main library just called and ordered the POWER TO CHANGE booklet for all libraries in the city!*" Yuri also told me of staff hearing people on the street talking about Jesus and the campaign.

As the first week of the campaign came to a close the call center had received over a thousand phone calls. 700 callers had left their personal information and asked to be contacted again. It was much more than we had anticipated, and much more than we had seen in other cities.

### "Stop The Campaign"

Power to Change was on the hit list of opposing powers. Moscow based religious affairs advocate Vladimir Ryahovsky arrived in Petrozavodsk for a specially called press conference. Skinheads threatened to arrive on the scene and break up the conference. The FSB, security police assured that the group was under surveillance and would not be allowed to act.

Another anonymous nationalist organization wrote a letter addressed to the head of Karelia's provincial government, Governor Katanandov, Mayor Maslyakov and the Justice Ministry. The letter demanded that the campaign be stopped immediately. Claiming to

represent the Orthodox Church the group announced that it would stage demonstrations in front of city hall until their demands were met.

### Calls Escalate

When opposition arises blessings are usually in store. That night all of the telephones in the call center rang for hours nonstop as people called to talk about their woes and share their problems.

One such caller was on the verge of committing suicide. The call was put through to a senior supervisor on duty. Vadim Avandgardovich took the call, "*Put the knife on the table, and do yourself no harm. Let's just calmly talk.*" Vadim continued to calm the caller while phones rang and other conversations erupted throughout the call center.

As I moved through the center I was convinced, For this reason God has directed us and this campaign to the city of Petrozavodsk.



*With help from Campus Crusade for Christ and GAIN IRR/TV donates 2 computers to a local prison to help with their education of the young inmates. Center: Vladimir tells the inmates about Jesus and his life story.*

### Prisoners Set Free

Part of the outreach involves taking the Gospel to those who have lost their freedom. Vladimir Kiselev knows what prison is all about. While serving a life sentence Vladimir earned the reputation of the ‘worst of the worst’. But one day all that changed when he came face to face with the grace and love of God. That day light shone into Vladimir’s lonely, hopeless, dark heart.

Miraculously, totally unexpectedly President Yeltsin signed a pardon for Vladimir. Vladimir, like the thief on the cross, had experienced unmerited salvation. When he heard the news he could not believe it. His inmates said: *“If you of all people are pardoned then every other prisoner in this prison camp should be freed first!”*

*“My life changed—completely,”* declares an exuberant Vladimir.

Vladimir has been happily married since then and now is the father of two

adorable children. After his release he has ministered to thousands of inmates in prison camps across Russia.

As part of Mission Petrozavodsk, Vladimir visited Segezha Prison Camp #9, a four hour drive north of the city. Karelia has many such prison camps which are home to thousands of prisoners. Camp #9 holds about one thousand prisoners. The youngest inhabitants of the camp are barely twelve years old.

While there are no special prison camps for children in the province of Karelia the youngest prisoners are sent to camps either in the St. Petersburg or Murmansk region.

### No Nonsense Gospel

*“This was never God’s plan for your life! You can live a better life with Jesus! God can give you the power to change,”* exclaimed a truly free Vladimir.

When Vladimir called for the prisoners of camp #9 to make a personal

commitment to Jesus over one hundred prisoners rose to their feet signalling their intention to do so. For many of these men this was the first step of a new life in Christ.

Vladimir Kiselev shares his testimony on several billboards in the city. Beside his portrait the following words tell his story: *“President Yeltsin pardoned me but Jesus Christ freed me!”*

In addition to the message the prisoners at the camp received 700 winter coats. With help from Campus Crusade for Christ and GAIN two computers were also donated. They are used to equip younger prisoners for jobs after payroll. The justice ministry of Karelia thanked the Mission office and sponsors with an official letter of appreciation.

### Power To Change in Essoila

At a meeting of pastors on the Power to Change committee I heard story after story about how the campaign





Several orphanages in Petrozavodsk receive much needed equipment and a freezer to keep food safe, something they never had before. The children and their caretakers are in need of many essential necessities.

had touched peoples lives.

“There is a great stir in the city,” remarked Pastor Pjotr Logatsky. “We have never seen anything like this in Petrozavodsk. Who could have anticipated this!”

Pastor Aleksander Shestipalov also spoke. His testimony was on the billboards as well. Beaming with joy, he shared how the campaign had touched his hometown of Essoila, 60 kilometers from Petrozavodsk. The mayor of Essoila met Alexander and expressed his jubilation over the fact that Aleksander from his town was involved in the campaign.

“I used to be a brawler and a drunk

before Jesus saved me!” exclaimed Aleksander. When Aleksander appeared at the town pub everybody would clear out. Alexander would beat up on everyone and would always win.

“My former drinking buddies now come and shake my hand and hug me! This campaign has brought so much joy in my home town.”

The TV programs are popular in Essoila. Those that do not have TV sets rush to their neighbors to watch the Power to Change programs every night. Lively discussions follow each program.

Once the campaign is over, Alexander wants to hang the 20 by 10 foot

billboard bearing his portrait on the outside wall of his house. Next to his picture is the text, “God delivered me from alcohol—Experience the power to change. Call 63-00-65.”

A special mention of appreciation is due to Campus Crusade For Christ for helping to financially carry the burden and their expertise in preparing the local congregations for this campaign. By all accounts it has been a resounding success and we will continue to share more reports from within and around Petrozavodsk in our next Russia Report.

Hannu Haukka

Note: Though it will take about six months to gauge the effects of Power to Change in Petrozavodsk already 3,000 people have called and requested further one on one contact. 2,000 people are engaged in discussion through the Campaign website. At least 5,000 decisions are expected through the viewing of the *Jesus* Film. 15,000 books have been distributed through the local churches so far. At least 50,000 people have been reached through various means during the campaign. It is also safe to say that 80% of 300,000 people in the city of Petrozavodsk encountered the message that God does give men and women the power to change.

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# Petrozavodsk Responds

Our first 60 minute live show on Karelia State TV had just finished airing. The phone lines at the TV station and our call center were swamped with calls as people wanted to ask questions that had been tormenting them.

Of the hundreds that called that night at least three made a personal decision right there on the phone to receive Jesus. Each caller was sent a POWER TO CHANGE booklet.

## Fighter Squadron

—The message that “God gives the power to change” had penetrated every segment of society. The Rus-

sian air Force had a fighter squadron stationed outside the city at Besovets. Four orders for the POWER TO CHANGE book came in. One government office called and requested 40 books for the staff.

## Mafia

—Even the Mafia dropped by to pick up a copy of the book. “You will recognize me when my car pulls up to your office,” instructed the Mafia man. Our staff was on the look out. Sure enough, an expensive SUV with darkened windows pulled up. The man personally asked for a book. Flipping through the pages, mildly

impressed, the man noted that the ‘system’ really worked—you call and you get your book!

Contented he put the booklet in his coat pocket and disappeared into the night.

## Suicide averted

—Sergey called the campaign office and told a counselor that he planned to kill himself. His girlfriend had just left him and his mother had cursed him.

Sergey met with a youth pastor and joined him at a youth event where he made his personal decision for Christ. He now attends youth meetings very actively at church.

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## Nine Relatives Saved Through Television Programs



The story of Irina, a telephone counselor at Mission Petrozavodsk call center: *"I was watching a program on Karelian TV about Jesus' sermon on the mount. I was searching for God. At the time I only knew a deep emptiness, hopelessness, and I wanted to commit suicide.*

*I listened to the sermon, at the end of the program I prayed the sinner's prayer with Hannu Haukka. I was saved because of that program. I was free and my life changed completely.*

*Soon after my whole family and most of my relatives were saved—all 9 of us.*

*I remember how I my children watched a children's program that Laura Haukka hosted. It had a great impact on them and they made their decision for Christ because of that program.*

*I want to help others at this call center because I found new life through the preached Word on TV."*

PRAYER REQUEST: Please keep Petrozavodsk in your prayers. Many lives are being impacted as the local congregations work to gather the harvest and help spiritually lost people deal with their needs.



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