

Moldova April 2004

Moldova continues to be one of the poorest nations in Europe, with average monthly income for workers of around \$30- that means people are working for \$1 / day. Pensions are around \$15 / month- 1\$ every two days. Yet prices are relatively high and real poverty is deepening here. It is so true of our beloved brotherhood here that it is the poor of this world, rich in faith who have been called. Although postage costs are a major obstacle to our Bible Basics work, it was a pleasure to assist the local ecclesia in the baptisms of three more: VALENTINA, LILIJIA and IRINA, daughter of sister Elvira.

Two of our sisters continue to work selling books on the streets in all weathers, and despite their poverty they have recently photocopied more copies of the Bible Companion, which quite rightly is the first piece of literature they give to people.

Photo: Sis Luba distributing the newly photocopied Bible Companion and reminding some



sisters of the importance of reading Scripture daily.

Many of our sisters have health problems, and the elderly have major problems in paying their heating bills. The blocks in which they live are from the Soviet era, and there is no way to regulate the heating- the standard bill must be paid or else eventually the state take over the apartment and evict the occupiers, even if they own the flat.

There are also needs associated with those having babies. One sister will soon give birth, God willing; another sister has just become a grandmother and her family really don't have the funds to support the new arrival. They asked if we could appeal for Pampers to be sent to them, for weight from 3kg – 7 kg. If any would like to mail some out and also baby clothes, we can let you have their mailing addresses and you can send to them direct.

The situation in the rebel republic of PriDnestrovia continues about the same; they are still cut off from the rest of Moldova, and the economic situation there is desperate. The 'republic' is run by a Mafia and there are serious shortages. It's probably the worst humanitarian crisis in Europe, although very little commented upon in the press. The Russian 14th Army remains in the rebel republic, and communication between the sisters there and in Moldova remains extremely difficult.

Russian language Bibles are in short supply in Moldova, and we will endeavour to mail some packages of them through. The sisters there really are so strong in faith, regular Bible reading, prayerfulness and preaching are really in evidence and we take much comfort from the way things have developed in this beautiful country since we first gingerly entered it in 1993 (at the height of the civil war) with leaflets and books about the Truth. To God be the glory.

Bro. H

Carelink recipients will recall the recent appeal for our brother. We're delighted to say that several ecclesias came forward, and now our brother has a sponsorship. This came just at the right time, as he has just informed us that many in his position- i.e. those who have been given asylum status by the UN- are now being told they will be resettled in Northern Iraq, which is supposedly safe and stable now. All indications are that this is not the case. Therefore the fact

our brother has a foreign sponsor ought to put him in a different category, although he asks for our prayers that he not be sent to northern Iraq. The security situation there and also the situation for Moslems who have converted to Christianity is very bad. The following report makes that clear:

IRAQ

Christian Convert from Islam Shot Dead

Ziwar Muhammad Isma'il, a Christian convert from a Muslim background, has been shot and killed for his faith, according to Middle East Concern. Ziwar, who worked as a taxi driver in Zakho, in the Kurdish authority area of North Iraq, was shot by Abd al-Karim Abd al-Salam at a taxi rank early in the morning on 17 February. Abd al-Salam approached Ziwar and challenged him to return to Islam. When Ziwar refused he opened fire with an automatic rifle. Other taxi drivers gave chase, apprehending Abd al-Salam and handing him over to the police. Abd al-Salam claims that the Islamic prophet Muhammad appeared to him in a dream and told him to kill Ziwar.

Ziwar converted to Christianity seven years ago. Unlike many converts from Islam Ziwar had been quite open about his faith and, as a result, he had been threatened by his relatives and other Muslims and twice arrested, though not charged. Ziwar leaves a widow and five children.

DEATH FOR CONVERTS

All the major schools of Islamic law (Shari'ah) agree that Muslim men who convert from Islam should be put to death, their marriages annulled, and their children and property taken away. This tradition is upheld and taught by many Muslim religious leaders around the world. In countries like Iran, Sudan and Saudi Arabia the death sentence for leaving Islam is part of the law of the land. In other countries they may be arrested on various pretexts and often beaten, tortured or imprisoned. Even under more moderate Muslim authorities, such as those in the Kurdish areas of northern Iraq, converts may still face widespread hostility and aggression from their own families and communities. In several countries converts have been murdered by Islamic extremist groups, others have been killed by individual Muslims who believe they are doing the will of Allah by taking the law into their own hands. * from:
<http://www.domini.org/openbook/iraq20030224.htm>