



A Christmas MIRACLE

BY RYAN CAMPBELL

Winter is a cold time of year in the Russia Moscow Mission. To a missionary this sometimes seems true of not only the weather but also the people. They become introverted. Everybody seems to be rushing home after work. People are ill, the roads are terribly slick, and the cold ruthlessly bites every exposed piece of skin. Smiles are rare.

My companion and I found ourselves in these conditions during the winter of 2005. We wanted to cheer people up by sharing our message of faith, hope, and love, but nobody wanted to listen. And to be honest, my mood wasn't all that great. I couldn't help but feel discouraged. Day after day we walked the cold streets in search of people to teach, freezing our feet to the bone. In spite of the discouraging circumstances, we didn't want to give up. Christmas was getting close, and we wanted to help people feel the Christmas spirit. But how?

One evening as we were on the train returning home, a small group of musicians walked into the railcar. They played wonderfully, but to my surprise, their performance didn't have an effect on anybody. Maybe a person or two gave them some pocket change, but the rest just stared out the frosty windows. I felt bad for the performers and gave them a few coins.

Soon we arrived at the station near our apartment and ran home. As soon as I closed the apartment door, the phone rang. I picked it up and recognized the voice of our district leader. That day we were supposed to have thought

of ideas for celebrating the Christmas season as missionaries. I had totally forgotten, but I didn't want him to know that. Straining for an idea, I remembered the group of musicians and suggested that our district could sing Christmas hymns on the trains. I could accompany them on the violin. To my surprise and perhaps dismay, our district leader loved the idea. We decided on a day. "What was I thinking!" I said to myself, remembering that three of the missionaries in our district were tone-deaf.

The day came, and the missionaries met on the platform. The sun had set long ago, and it was terribly cold. My feet were already numb. We rehearsed for about five minutes until the train crept slowly up to the platform. We gladly entered its open doors, getting out of the cold wind and snow. I took my violin out of its case and silently prayed that God would touch the hearts of the listeners.

As we boarded the train, most of the people didn't pay any attention to us. My fingers hadn't warmed up yet, so when I started to play, the tone of the violin sounded very simple but very piercing. Suddenly the mood in the railcar changed. It was almost as if something could be felt in the air. The passengers seemed to hold their breath. The other missionaries joined with me, singing the words to "Silent Night":

*Silent night! Holy night!
All is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin mother and Child.*



*Holy Infant, so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace;
Sleep in heavenly peace.*¹

While I played and the other missionaries sang, nobody in the railcar spoke a single word. When we finished the hymn, I looked around at people's faces. *Everybody* was looking attentively at us. Tears were flowing down the cheeks of several women. It was silent for a minute as nobody wanted to interrupt the moment. Finally a man standing in the back of the railcar exclaimed, "They are Saints, genuine Saints!" Everyone began to applaud.

As we walked down the aisle, many people wanted to give us money. When we didn't accept it, they became all the more surprised. I heard somebody saying under his breath, "This just doesn't happen." One man even tried to give us a thousand rubles and was shocked when we refused the money. Instead, we offered him a pass-along card, which he gladly took. Soon other passengers began asking for pass-along cards. They also asked about the Church and us. It seemed like wherever we looked, our eyes were met

with smiling faces and warm greetings. At the end of the railcar, we wished the passengers a merry Christmas and waved good-bye to our new friends.

On the other side of the door, we looked at each other in disbelief. "What just happened?" we asked. Then, with twice as much energy, we entered the next door. At first the passengers didn't pay any attention to us, but after we performed the hymn, they had the same miraculous reaction. For the rest of the evening, we made our way through the railcars, experiencing the same thing in each one. Never before had I seen such acceptance and love.

Returning home that night, I realized that I had experienced a miracle wrought by music, a message about the Savior, and the spirit of Christmas. Even in the coldest times of our lives, we can be comforted by the Lord's presence. How blessed I was to have seen how drastically people can change under the influence of the Spirit. I will always remember that evening and treasure it in my heart. May the Spirit forever work such miracles! **NE**

NOTE

1. "Silent Night," *Hymns*, no. 204.