



Photo by Jeb Wallace-Brodeur

Paul Richardson, publisher of Russian Life magazine, in his Montpelier office.

Russian Life thrives in Montpelier

By **BRUCE EDWARDS**

Staff Writer

Montpelier is a long way from Moscow — 4,428 miles as the crow flies.

But in a world that has gotten even “smaller” with new technologies like the Internet, publishing an English language magazine on Russia is not so surprising.

In fact, Paul Richardson has been publishing Russian Life from his small Vermont office for 13 years.

Started as a propaganda tool of the Soviet Union, the magazine — then called Soviet Life — was purchased by Richardson following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Looking to move back to the states, Richardson, a native of California, took the advice of his business partner and moved to Vermont. “Desktop publishing was really just starting to take off back then in 1990,” Richardson said. “So we said we could do this anywhere and Vermont sounds like a nice place compared to Moscow.”

Published every other month, the 64-

page Russian Life contains stories about the country’s culture, history, business, travel and society.

Richardson said while most of the stories are written by Russian freelance writers, the magazine has contributing writers from around the world.

Although it has some advertising, he said the magazine’s 10,000 subscribers, who pay \$33 a year for six issues, make Russian Life (www.russianlife.com) self supporting. The color magazine contains stories not usually found in the mainstream press.

“There’s no other real good source to get a depth of information on Russia,” Richardson said.

He said the magazine contains stories on the country’s far-flung regions and life in little-known towns and social issues of interest.

Richardson’s company, Russian Information Services, has also come out with a new English language quarterly on Russian literature, both fiction and nonfic-

tion. Each issue has a theme with the first issue on dogs, the second quarterly focused on spring while the upcoming issue will have roads as a theme.

The company sells a bilingual wall map of Russia. For a better understanding of the Russian language, there is the second edition of “Survival Russian,” a conversational and colloquial guide to culture-rich Russian. The book contains 90 essays and more than 2,000 Russian phrases and words. There is also a cookbook, “A Taste of Russia.”

Although once a propaganda tool of the former Soviet Union, Russian Life’s Web site makes it clear the magazine is an independent publication.

“Russian Life is privately owned and fiercely independent. The magazine has no affiliation, official or unofficial, with the government of Russia or the United States, nor with any political agency, lobbying group or media conglomerate.”

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The Russian government has shown little tolerance for criticism by the domestic press. But Richardson said his correspondents have not encountered similar problems.

“We certainly have written stories on controversial things from the Mafia to the crackdown on the press to spies,” he said. “No, we haven’t really run into that.”

Richardson speculated that the reason for that is the government is more focused on Russian language media and particularly in Russia.

Russian Life is able to operate on a skeleton crew with Richardson, an office manager in Montpellier and an editor in Moscow.

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