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The Book of Mormon in Russian

Author(s): A. Z. Richards, Jr.

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Abstract: This article describes the labors of Andre K. Anastasiou in preparing a Russian translation of the Book of Mormon.

THE BOOK OF MORMON IN RUSSIAN

By Elder A. Z. Richards, Jr.

THERE are few countries in the world which have not yet had the restored Gospel taken to their shores. One of them is Russia. Only recently has Russia's political attitude toward religion changed considerably. It now appears as though the way is opening for an entrance of the message of the restoration into that great part of northern Europe.

That great expanse of land, its people, and their customs are familiar to Brother Andre K. Anastasiou. He, himself, is a Russian, having been born in Odessa on October 13, 1894. That date is according to the Georgian calendar which was 12 days behind our calendar, which, however, has not been used in Russia since the War.

From Russia to Britain

If someone had told 19 year old Andre Anastasiou, when he was in the engine room of a merchant ship bound for Africa on the Mediterranean Sea from whence he went to Antwerp, Belgium, twenty-two years ago, that within a few years he would be a Christian minister, he would probably have believed the statement untrue. To-day he is a minister, an elder in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The position which he holds to-day, President of London District, is typical of all his labours since he joined the Church in London in 1917.

At "Townshott," the snug little home of the Anastasiou's in Great Bookham, Surrey, Brother Anastasiou spends his spare time reading and translating Russian as an avocation. His arduous task, during the past several years, has been that of translating the Book of Mormon into the Russian tongue. At the request of Dr. James E. Talmage he began in 1925. Dr. Talmage was then president of the European Mission, and a member of the council of the Twelve Apostles. A Book of Mormon with President Talmage's signature on the fly-leaf is among the books which Brother Anastasiou prizes in his library. Its 522 pages of English print will make considerably more pages in Russian. To an Englishman, the

words look like a conglomeration of extracts from the English and Greek alphabets.

How would you like to copy 500 pages of the Bible in long hand? Much more tedious is the task of translating a similar amount of text. Brother Anastasiou finished his translation some time ago, which produced 1,200 pages written compactly in ink on both sides of looseleaf paper. The 2,400 pages of writing make a manuscript about 5 inches thick. Its hand written pages also represent about five years' work. He was able to translate only during his spare time which limited the work to the evening and early morning hours.

At the present time, Brother Anastasiou is engaged in the task of checking and typing the Russian manuscript. He expects to have it finished soon and then will have it rechecked by experts in London.

When the time came that Brother Anastasiou needed a

typewriter to make his final copy, he was unable to purchase a new one because of the prohibitive cost. However, he purchased a small English machine. No sooner had he bought that typewriter than again he enquired at another shop for a Russian machine. After being informed that he could probably obtain one only by ordering it new, he prepared to leave when the clerk pulled from the dusty files a box containing old typewriter parts. From amongst its varied contents he withdrew a set of Russian type with keyboard. As it was of little value without the other part of the machine, the customer bought it at a bargain price. Unusual is the fact that that very keyboard fit perfectly into his other machine which was made for interchangeable sets of type with keyboard, although it was manufactured by an entirely different company, and there were probably few in London like it.



Andre K. Anastasiou at work.

This incident, with many others has enabled the translation to continue uninterrupted. Brother Anastasiou recalls how he read about Joseph Smith, how during the Prophet's sacred work a burning within his breast dispelled every doubt when passages were correct, but how the feeling of uneasiness always accompanied a slight error in his work and would not leave until the passage was correct. In answer to prayers, similar assistance has been granted the translator of the Russian volume by the Holy Spirit, during his work of translation. Often has Brother Anastasiou felt the warmth imparted by the Spirit only when a

passage is correct, and also the feeling which the Divine Companion gives when testifying that the passage is not correct.

The life of Brother Anastasiou, since he left his homeland in 1914 reads like a book, every chapter of which makes the reader feel that some supreme purpose is behind it all. He recalls distinctly the afternoon of May 18, 1914, when, cap in hand, he said farewell to his mother. He was going abroad, but where, he could not tell her. The beginning of the War found him swinging a miner's pick in the mines at Morlanwicz, Belgium. From the coal pits he made his way across the battlefields to Brussels. From there he slipped through the military lines to Ghent, thence to the briny shores at Ostend. It was here that he paid for passage to Folkestone.

Soon after his arrival in England Andre purchased an English grammar and attended night school, where he learned the

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He further declared:

"The paralysis of division is upon us at the very moment when the greatest crisis in the history of man demands the power of union."

A distinguished theological leader declared that:

"The Christian religion, opposed by Fascism and Communism, was encountering the most formidable obstacle that it had been called upon to meet since Charles Martel repelled the invasion of the Mahometans at Tours in the eighth century."

He added that:

"To-day the conflict must be decided by superior spiritual power; that economic materialism has lost Russia to the Christian Church and that the man-made and anti-Christian religion of race and blood now threatened the loss of Germany as well."

He added that the boundaries of Christendom were being diminished and that it is fighting a war of defence involving in some instances its very existence.

Is it not time that Christian nations should arouse themselves to the dangers—physical, political, moral and spiritual—by which they are surrounded?

The obligation rests upon all who profess the name of Christ to preach and teach the Gospel of love and peace and to cooperate in bringing into harmonious relation the peoples of all lands.

There should be a spirit of valour; not a feeling of defeatism; but rather should all say, as did Rupert Brooke, as he sailed to the hard campaign in Gallipoli:

"Now God be thanked, who hath matched us with this hour."

The future looks dark with the engines of human destruction in operation in many lands, and Communism and atheism lifting their strident voices seeking to undermine faith in a moral universe and in a Living and Everlasting Father, but—

"If life be a comedy to those that think, and a tragedy to those that feel, it is a victory to those that believe."

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, believing in God, in the ultimate triumph of His kingdom, look forward with courage and faith, and joyfully associate themselves with all who seek righteousness and await the coming of Jesus Christ Our Lord.

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language. Within three years after arriving in England he heard the Gospel. Six months later on May 18, 1917, he was baptized. Within a year after baptism, he served on a short term mission in London. To-day he is president of the London District in the British Mission.

When the time comes to introduce the Gospel to Russia, its missionaries will take with them the record of the Nephites, and the Russian people will read it in their native tongue. This will have been made possible by a native of that country who heard and accepted the message of Mormonism.