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Mormon Pioneers in Communist Estonia, 1989–90

Arnold K. Garr

It was a moment in time that Steven R. Mecham will never forget. It was 19 June 1987, and Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles was setting Brother Mecham apart as president of the Finland Helsinki

Mission.^[1] In that blessing Elder Nelson told President Mecham that he would open missionary work in Russia and the Baltic States. When President Mecham heard that promise, it came as such a shock that he even opened his eyes in

amazement during the blessing.^[2] The promise was so astounding because in 1987 Russia and the Baltic States were among the fifteen communist republics that made up the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union had suppressed religious activity for decades, and most Latter-day Saints felt that the likelihood of the Church going into these nations was remote, if not impossible, in the foreseeable future. Yet the promise would be fulfilled sooner than most people thought possible. It was fulfilled because those Saints involved with the establishment of the Church in these communist countries were just as courageous as the Mormon pioneers in America who crossed the plains and entered the Great Salt Lake Valley back in 1847. This essay will only focus on the Church’s pioneering activities in the Baltic Republic of Estonia—the first country in the Soviet Union to open its doors to young, full-time Church missionaries.

Estonia is a country in eastern Europe about one-fourth the size of Utah with a population of approximately one and a half million people. It is bordered by the Baltic Sea on the west, the Gulf of Finland on the north, Russia on the east, and Latvia on the south. Estonia was forced to become part of the Soviet Union in 1940.

The history of the Church in Estonia actually began in neighboring Finland in 1989. An Estonian by the name of Valtteri Rótsa obtained a visa to visit relatives in Finland. During his visit he met Elders Wade Ashworth and Kirk Jensen in a store in Hyvinkaa. Hearing them speaking in English, he asked them to help him translate a document. The

missionaries agreed and then began teaching him the gospel at the local chapel.^[3] About ten days later he was baptized,

16 July 1989.^[4] Before Rótsa returned to Estonia, President Mecham met with him and gave him the charge to share the gospel with his friends and relatives back home and make preparations for the president and some of his Finnish

missionaries to visit a few months later.^[5]

When Rótsa returned to Tallinn, Estonia, he took Church literature with him, including copies of the Book of Mormon published in Finnish and Russian. He then taught his son-in-law, Enn Lembit, about his new religion. When Lembit heard about Mormonism his testimony caught fire, and he shared his newfound gospel knowledge with anybody who would listen. In the fall of 1989 Lembit started holding informal gospel instruction meetings in his home for his family and friends, even though he was not yet a baptized member. There were about ten people in this group and they met once or twice a week. Lembit taught them about Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, and the Restoration of the gospel. There was no Church literature published in the Estonian language, but Lembit circulated Finnish and Russian

copies of the Book of Mormon that he had obtained from his father-in-law, Valtteri Rótsa.^[6]

At about this time Pekka Uusitupa, a Finnish Latter-day Saint businessman and zealous member-missionary, was making visits to Tallinn, Estonia, for his company. Enn Lembit became acquainted with him and in November 1989 asked if he would speak to his group of Estonian investigators. Uusitupa happily accepted the invitation and soon became a key figure in a memorable meeting. The meeting was life-changing. When Uusitupa arrived at Lembit’s home that frosty winter evening, Lembit’s investigators had already been in session some two hours. When it came Uusitupa’s turn to speak, he simply but powerfully bore testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel and then invited everyone in the room to kneel down and ask the Lord if the Church were true. It became a time of decision for many of those present. For nearly all, the Spirit of the Lord bore an undeniable witness. “Everyone was kneeling down,” recalled investigator

Jaanus Silla, “and I remember the very peaceful feeling that I had and I had absolutely no doubt that this is true.”^[7] All

but one of the people in the meeting eventually joined the Church, but they all had to wait because, at the time, nobody had been authorized to baptize them. This would soon be remedied.

Meanwhile back in Finland, President Mecham had been making plans to formally open missionary work in the Soviet Union. On 19 October 1989, while at a mission presidents' conference in Budapest, Hungary, Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Twelve and President Hans B. Ringger of the Europe area Presidency informed President Mecham that the time had come to take the gospel to Russia and the Baltic States and gave him the responsibility to carry out the

work.^[8] (Coincidentally, the Berlin Wall came down three weeks later.) On 4 December 1989 President Mecham called Jussi Kemppainen, a Helsinki insurance agent, as his counselor with specific responsibility for the Soviet Union.^[9]

On 8 December 1989 President Mecham made his first trip to Estonia. He was accompanied by his wife, Donna, and his counselor Jussi Kemppainen. He also took Elders Kevin Dexter and David Reagan—the first young full-time

missionaries to serve in the Soviet Union.^[10] They traveled from Helsinki to Tallinn on an old Russian liner. After they passed through customs they were met by the only Latter-day Saint Estonian living in the country, the recently converted Valtteri Rótsa. He had brought with him some of the young investigators who had been studying with Enn Lembit. One was Jaanus Silla, who eventually became the first Church missionary to be called from the Soviet Union. Another was Alari Allik, an intelligent sixteen-year-old boy who spoke English, Finnish, Russian, and Estonian fluently. Alari said he had always known that he “would be able to use these languages in the Lord’s work” and asked if there

was some way he could help President Mecham.^[11] “You are a treasure from heaven,” Brother Mecham responded, hugging Alari as he spoke. “The Lord has brought you here at this time. It is no coincidence that we are together. In a very short period of time Brother Alari, you are going to be able to assist us in translation, and in assisting the Brethren,

even apostles and prophets here in this part of the Lord’s vineyard.”^[12] This promise was soon fulfilled. Within a half year he would interpret for Elder Nelson.

Soon after their arrival the missionaries taught some of Enn Lembit’s friends, including the Lass family. The elders spoke Russian, and Enn interpreted into Estonian.^[13] Pekka Uusitupa had previously arranged for them to also hold Church services at the Kadriorg Park Tennis Club on Sunday, 10 December 1989. On the way to the meeting President Mecham engaged the taxi driver in a conversation about the Church. He said they were going “to one of the most important meetings that will ever be held in this country,” and he invited the driver to come. The driver accepted the invitation and enjoyed the services so much that he asked to know more. President Mecham replied that they would not only teach him more about the Church but that they would also baptize him and one day he would serve as the

Church’s branch president.^[14] The man’s name was Peep Kivit, and he did become the first native branch president in Estonia.

About twenty people attended church that first Sunday. The services were conducted in Finnish with young Alari interpreting. President Mecham spoke about the future of the Church in Estonia, then he and his party returned to

Finland that evening.^[15] A few days later Enn Lembit traveled to Helsinki, Finland, where he was baptized and

confirmed by Jussi Kemppainen on 16 December 1989.^[16]

The following week, more precisely the weekend of 16—17 December, was a milestone in the history of the Church in Estonia as well as the entire Baltic region. On that occasion Elder Reagan returned to Tallinn from Helsinki and brought as his companion Elder Harri Aho, a Finnish missionary. They met at the home of Alari Allik for a sacrament meeting, but only four people came. The missionaries taught them the second, third, and fourth discussions. The elders spoke in Finnish and English while Alari interpreted. During the meeting they invited the four young people to be baptized. The investigators believed, but some had reservations about giving up tea. The elders resolved their concerns and then promptly set out to find a place to perform the baptisms. They finally persuaded the sauna attendants at their hotel to let them use the sauna facilities for the baptisms. The missionaries taught the investigators two more discussions at the hotel, and then on 17 December 1989 Elder Reagan baptized Alari Allik, Eve Reialu, Jaana Lass, and

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Kristi Lass. Elder Aho confirmed all of them at the hotel room. These were the first people to be baptized not only in Estonia but anywhere in the Soviet Union.^[18] Elder Reagan later described this as the most spiritual experience of his mission, even feeling that “angels were present.”^[19]

Three weeks later, the first weekend in January 1990, Elder Aho returned to Tallinn with Elder Dexter as his companion. On this visit they taught and baptized Jaanus Silla and Urmas Raavik. These two young converts proved to be exceptional part-time member-missionaries. In their spare time they worked during the week to line up investigators for the full-time elders who at first could only visit Estonia from Finland on the weekends. Even later, when the full-time missionaries moved to Estonia and worked all week long in the country, Jaanus and Urmas continued to be a great help to them.^[20] One of those missionaries, Elder Alan Johansen, later wrote: “It seemed as though a day didn’t pass that they weren’t out on the street talking to people and telling them about the Church. Throughout the day we would receive phone calls from them about someone they had found who was interested in the gospel. They would bring these

people to our hotel room and then help us teach them the discussions.”^[21] These two young men would one day have the opportunity to serve full-time missions for the Church—Jaanus in Utah and Urmas in Washington.

On 25—28 January 1990, Elder Hans B. Ringger made a notable visit to Estonia in the company of Presidents Meham and Kemppainen. On 26 January they met with Ants Liimets, the official in charge of religious affairs in Estonia, to discuss the requirements necessary for the Church to be granted official recognition by the government.^[22]

The next day, two more pioneer converts were baptized, both of whom would later serve as branch president in Tallinn. One was Enn Lembit’s brother, Aivar.^[23] The other was Peep Kivit, the taxi driver that President Meham had met on his first visit to the country, seven weeks earlier.^[24]

On this same day, while riding in a taxi, President Meham began to talk to still another cab driver about Mormonism. “Excuse me,” he said, “we are starting our church here in Estonia, and we would like you to be involved in what we are doing.” The driver replied: “If it has anything to do with God, forget it, because we do not believe in God.” However, later in the conversation the driver mentioned that his mother had always believed in God. To this the president responded that he would like to meet the driver’s mother. He told the taxi driver they were going to have a sacrament meeting at 9:00 the next morning and asked if the driver would bring his mother and pick them up for the meeting. The following morning the driver and his mother came to get President Meham and his party. On this occasion, the mother said: “My son came home last night and he couldn’t stop talking about his experience meeting you. . . . We couldn’t stop talking almost all night long. . . . I got so excited I couldn’t wait to come here to meet you today.” Then she asked, “How may I help you?” President Meham replied: “Well, to begin with we need to set up our chairs and our podium and our sacrament table. And as soon as we arrive, would you please do that for me because I have

some interviews.”^[25] The mothers name was Marina Saarik, and she faithfully followed through with her assignment.

During that sacrament meeting on 28 January 1990, the Tallinn Estonia Branch was organized—the first branch in the Soviet Union. Elder Harri Aho, a young Finnish missionary who was able to visit Estonia only on weekends, was called to be branch president. His first counselor was Peep Kivit, and his second counselor was Aivar Lembit, who had

just been baptized. The branch clerk was Alari Allik, and the Sunday School president was Enn Lembit.^[26]

Nobody was called as Relief Society president at the time, but that would soon be resolved. After the meeting, Marina Saarik, the cab driver’s mother, came to President Meham and commented: ‘I’ve never felt like this before. This has been a grand experience.’ The president told her that he would have the missionaries teach her the gospel and then said: “In our Church we have a sisterhood organization. As soon as we teach you the gospel and baptize you, I will lay my hands on your head. I’m going to set you apart as our first Relief Society president here.” Then she replied, “I

don’t know what that is, but I’ll be a good one.”^[27] Marina was baptized the following week and immediately became an extremely effective Relief Society president. On one occasion she brought between 20 and 25 ladies from her

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neighborhood to Relief Society and personally taught them from a Russian Book of Mormon. Her whole family also joined the Church, including her cab driver son who at one time was an atheist. Years later, Jussi Kemppainen singled out Marina as one of “the two greatest Mormon pioneers in the beginning of the Church in Estonia,” the other being Enn Lembit. ^[29]

From December 1989 to March 1990, the missionaries who served in Estonia were basically weekend warriors from Helsinki; they could only visit on short-term tourist visas and usually did not stay during the week. A handful of elders rotated their visits, and there was very little continuity. ^[30] Then, on the last week of March, President Mecham sent the first permanent full-time missionaries to Tallinn: Elders Wade Ashworth and Bryan Adamson. The next week, on 5 April, the President sent two more permanent elders: Alan Johansen and David Miller. ^[31] For the next several months there would usually be four permanent missionaries serving in Tallinn. Even then, however, they were required to return to Helsinki once a month to renew their visas.

Church leaders now began making preparations to submit an application to the Estonian government for the Church to be officially recognized. The law required that a new church have at least twenty members before it could apply for recognition. ^[32] It also stipulated that the president of a church in the nation be an Estonian citizen who was not a member of the branch presidency. ^[33] With the approval of the area Presidency, President Mecham asked Jaanus Silla to sign the document as the president of the Church in that country. ^[34] On this day Peep Kivit became branch president and one of the twenty Estonian Latter-day Saints to sign the document. ^[35] The event took place on 15 April 1990, prior to the Tallinn Branch sacrament meeting. ^[36]

Later that month Elder Nelson visited Tallinn in the company of Elder Ringger, President and Sister Mecham, and President Kemppainen. Arrangements had been made beforehand for them to speak with the Saints in a communist cultural building. In anticipation of the visit, the elders in Tallinn passed out flyers stating that an Apostle of Jesus Christ was coming to Estonia. ^[37] Somehow the press got a hold of the information, and it generated a great deal of interest.

When the visiting Church leaders arrived at the meeting, to their surprise they were met by national television reporters and cameramen. President Mecham turned to Elder Ringger and said, “I didn’t know this was going to happen.” Then Elder Ringger turned to Elder Nelson and asked, “What should we do?” Elder Nelson declared, “This is a marvelous opportunity,” and stepped forward to be interviewed. He gave a brief explanation of the Church, bore a powerful testimony, and then invited Elder Ringger to speak. Elder Ringger explained that he was born in Switzerland and was currently living in Germany. He expressed his love for the European people and told the reporters about the Church’s genealogy program, which could help them find their ancestors. Elder Nelson then introduced President Mecham and asked him to tell what he was doing in Estonia. President Mecham explained that they were enthusiastic about bringing young missionaries to the country to associate with the people. He said: “These young men also represent the Lord Jesus Christ. We would appreciate it if you would open your homes and your hearts for their messages.” The entire interview lasted about thirty minutes and was broadcast on national television. The reporters asked if they could follow the Church leaders into their meeting and were given permission. They walked into the assembly hall and it was completely full. Elder Nelson and his party spoke to an audience of over two hundred people. ^[38]

The next day, 25 April 1990, Elder Nelson formally dedicated Estonia for the preaching of the gospel. ^[39] It took place at 7:00 in the morning at the Laululava Amphitheater. This huge outdoor arena in Tallinn reportedly seats in excess of 300,000 people. Estonians gather there every five years to sing and dance to their favorite national folk songs. However, on this beautiful, peaceful morning only a small group of Latter-day Saints ascended the hill overlooking the amphitheater. Those who accompanied Elder Nelson were his wife, Dantzel, Elder Ringger, President and Sister Mecham, President Kemppainen, Peep Kivit (branch president), Marina Saarik (Relief Society president), Enn Lembit

(elders quorum president), and four full-time missionaries: Elders Bryan Adamson, Wade Ashworth, Alan Johansen, and David Miller.^[40]

Elder Nelson knelt and offered an extraordinary prayer: “We pray for a blessing upon the leaders of this land . . . that there may be peace and religious liberty that will enable the people of this land to come unto Thee. . . . Wilt Thou grant unto them the privileges of freedom as a republic and give them opportunity to be valiant unto Thee.” These blessings were remarkably fulfilled within the next year and a half. Elder Nelson also prayed: “May these people become a beacon of faith to this part of the [world], that from this point the gospel shall roll forth to the nations to the east, and the south, and to the neighboring areas even beyond. May that which is accomplished here be a great forerunner of the work in the eastern part of Europe.” These desired blessings would be realized in a miraculous way within the next few years.^[41]

After the dedication, Church leaders spent much of the day meeting with high-level government officials. At 10:00 A.M. they met with Ants Liimets, the minister of religion, and thanked him for the work he had done to help prepare the statutes necessary for the Church to receive formal recognition. Liimets assured the Church leaders that the statutes were ready to present to the Tallinn city council.^[42]

At 11:00 A.M. they met with Dr. Jaak Uibu, the head of the countrys Public Health Service, who declared it was “a special honor” to be in the presence of Elder Nelson, “a famous cardiologist and now an Apostle of the Lord.” Uibu indicated that he was working on the problem of physical pollution in Estonia but felt that “mental pollution” was just as bad and believed that this was an area where the Church “could be of great service to the people.” He also felt strongly that “there could be cooperative medical interest between our Church and the public health services of Estonia.” President Ringger said that he would ask Dr. Pekka Roto, a stake president in Finland, to get in contact with Dr. Uibu and work with him on the idea.^[43]

At noon they met with Rein Loik, the minister of education. Loik indicated there was a new hope that religion could “now be taught in all of the schools.” This was a dramatic change from the past. He said he “would welcome the opportunity of having our missionaries visit religion classes to explain more about our Church.” Elder Nelson explained “that we are a Church that believes the glory of God is intelligence and that education must play a dominant role in the development of all of our members.”^[44] In all three of these meetings Elder Nelson presented cassette tapes of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir to the dignitaries. In addition President Mecham gave them special information packets about the Church. Immediately afterward the visiting Church leaders left for Leningrad, Russia, where the following day they would rededicate that country for the preaching of the gospel. The country had been previously dedicated on 6 August 1903 by Elder Francis M. Lyman.^[45]

Even though the minister of religion, Ants Liimets, assured the Church leaders that their application for recognition would quickly be approved, nothing happened for several weeks. The General Authorities even called President Mecham to ask why the approval was taking so long. The president replied, “Bureaucracy, but I know the Lord will help us.” That evening he knelt in prayer and asked for divine guidance.

President Mecham received a phone call late that night. Minister Liimets was calling from Helsinki, where he had been attending a ministers conference. While Liimets was aboard a ship on his way back to Estonia, President Mikhail Gorbachev closed all the ports of the Baltic Republics, forcing Liimets’s ship to return to Helsinki. The minister told President Mecham that he was the only person in Helsinki that he knew and asked him for assistance. The Mechams promptly went to the harbor and picked him up. After thanking them, Liimets asked where they were going to take him. President Mecham responded, “You are going to the mission home.” The minister asked what a mission home was, and Mecham assured him it was “going to be the grandest experience of [his] life.”

He stayed with them for several days, during which time they surrounded him with the kind of activities that take place in mission homes. They “fed him Mormon food,” prayed, sang, and read out of the Book of Mormon and the Bible. According to President Mecham, the minister “didn’t want to leave.”

Before he returned to Estonia he told the president that he’d never had an experience like that before and asked, “Is there something I can do to help you?”^[46] President Mecham explained that they needed help to get the Church

officially recognized in Estonia. To that, Liimets promised, “I will personally go back and do all I can to walk those papers through and to be there when you receive that recognition.”^[47] With his help the Church was soon registered on 29 June 1990,^[48] the first registration of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the Soviet Union.

The next week a change of leadership and a restructuring of the mission took place. President and Sister Mecham honorably completed their historic mission and returned to their home. The Finland Helsinki East Mission was created with Gary Browning as president. Though headquartered in Helsinki, it had responsibility for the Church in the Baltic States and Russia. At that time the new mission had clusters of members in only four cities. By this time Tallinn, Estonia, had forty-one members. The other three cities were in Russia: Leningrad (sixty-two members), Vyborg (twelve members), and Moscow (two members).^[49]

Up to this point the infant Church in Estonia had been nurtured in a Finnish cradle. Now the time had come to mature on its own. One step was to make the transition from the Finnish language to Estonian. Even though missionaries had been serving fulltime in the country for several months, they had not received any formal instruction in Estonian. In July, Presidents Browning and Kemppainen came to Tallinn and held a district meeting in a hotel room with the four elders serving in Estonia—Elders Kevin Dexter, Alan Johansen, Ryan Rogers, and Christopher Gooch. President Browning admonished the elders to learn Estonian as quickly as possible. Fortunately, an American Latter-day Saint couple, Brad and Cheri Woodworth, were living in Tallinn and studying Estonian. Brad offered to teach the missionaries the language. Their classes began on 13 August 1990 and convened four hours a day, three days a week for about a month. By October the missionaries were teaching the discussions in Estonian.^[50] Another indication of the Church’s maturity in Estonia was the call of Jaanus Silla to serve as a missionary. He was the first fulltime missionary to be called from the Soviet Union. Jaanus received his call on 17 December 1990 and reported to the Mission Training

Center in Provo, Utah, on 16 January 1991. He served successfully in the Utah Salt Lake City Mission.^[51]

In truth, that Jaanus was even able to serve a mission is its own miracle. Several months before his call, Jaanus told President Mecham that he wanted to serve a foreign mission but wondered amid the existing bureaucratic realities, “How in the world will I ever procure a visa for two years from the Soviet Union?” President Mecham replied,

“Anything is possible with the Lord.”^[52] So when Jaanus finally received his call, it caused an unusual amount of excitement among the local members.

Epilogue

Many great pioneer movements have a vanguard company—a small group in the forefront that paves the way for the larger group to follow. For example, over sixty thousand Mormons migrated to the Salt Lake Valley between 1847 and 1869, before the transcontinental railroad was completed. We often refer to all of them as pioneers. However, the pioneers did have a vanguard company of only 148 people that entered the valley in July 1847.^[53] Likewise in Estonia, almost 100 people joined the Church between 17 December 1989 and 20 August 1991, before that country declared its independence from the Soviet Union. We could consider them all Mormon pioneers in communist Estonia. However this larger group also has a metaphorical vanguard company of about a dozen people that prepared the way for the rest. This essay has told the story of that small group.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century there were almost 11 million Church members throughout the world. The names of many vanguard pioneers of 1847 are familiar to most of the members of the Church: Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Willard Richards, Wilford Woodruff, and Orson Pratt, to name just a few. At the onset of the year 2000 there were only about three hundred members of the Church in Estonia. The pioneers of that country were also courageous, but their names are not as well known: names such as Valtteri Rótsa, Enn Lembit, Pekka Uusitupa, Steven and Donna Mecham, Jussi Kemppainen, Kevin Dexter, David Reagan, Harri Aho, Alari Allik, Eve Reialu, Jaana and Kristi Lass, Marina Saarik, and Jaanus Silla. This essay will help preserve the memory of these pioneering Latter-day Saints.

- [1] “President Steven R. Mecham, Chronology of Important Dates Prepared by His Wife, Donna Jean Mecham,” copy in author’s possession, used by permission, hereafter referred to as Chronology.
- [2] Steven R. Mecham, interviewed by Matthew K. Heiss, 30 September 1992, 30, transcript in author’s possession, used by permission, hereafter referred to as Heiss interview.
- [3] Telephone interview with Wade Ashworth, 15 June 2000.
- [4] Chronology.
- [5] Heiss interview, 40.
- [6] Jaanus Silla, interview by author, 15 December 1995, 3–5, hereafter referred to as Silla interview.
- [7] Silla interview, 7.
- [8] Chronology.
- [9] Chronology.
- [10] Jussi Kemppainen, interview by author, 5 June 2000, 2—3, hereafter referred to as Kemppainen interview; see also Chronology.
- [11] Steven Mecham, talk to CES Experienced Personnel, Finland Helsinki Mission, 10 May 1991, copy in author’s possession, hereafter referred to as CES talk.
- [12] Ibid.
- [13] David S. Reagan, interview by Kahlile Mehr, 17 February 1991, West Jordan, Utah, 2, copy in author’s possession, used by permission, hereafter referred to as Reagan interview.
- [14] CES talk.
- [15] Reagan interview, 2.
- [16] Chronology.
- [17] Reagan interview, 2; also telephone interview with David Reagan, 9 June 2000.
- [18] Kemppainen interview, 1.
- [19] Reagan interview, 2.
- [20] Kahlile Mehr, interview by Kevin Dexter, 29 March 1991, Orem, Utah, 1, copy in author’s possession, used by permission.
- [21] Quoted in Gary Browning, *Russia and the Restored Gospel* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 33.
- [22] Chronology; also telephone interview with Jussi Kemppainen, 12 June 2000.
- [23] See Browning, 33—34.
- [24] Chronology.

- [25] CES talk.
- [26] Chronology.
- [27] Heiss interview, 15.
- [28] CES talk.
- [29] Telephone conversation with Jussi Kemppainen, 8 June 2000.
- [30] Dexter interview; also telephone interview with Alan Johansen, 15 June 2000.
- [31] Telephone interview with Alan Johansen, 15 June 2000.
- [32] Kemppainen interview, 5.
- [33] Barbara Lewis, "Called to Testify: Opening the Church in Estonia," *New Era*, July 1994, 49.
- [34] Heiss interview.
- [35] Lewis, 49; also telephone interview with Alan Johansen, 15 June 2000; Johansen's journal entry indicates Peep Kivit was made branch president on this day.
- [36] Chronology.
- [37] Alan Johansen, telephone interview by author, 21 June 2000.
- [38] Heiss, 65–66; Browning, 37; telephone conversation with Steven Mecham, 13 June 2000; telephone conversation with Jussi Kemppainen, 13 June 2000.
- [39] Chronology.
- [40] Russell M. Nelson, dedicatory prayer for Estonia, Tallinn, Estonia, 25 April 1990, Laululava, copy in author's possession, used by permission, hereafter referred to as Dedicatory prayer.
- [41] Dedicatory prayer.
- [42] Minutes of the meeting with Ants Liimets, minister of religion, Tallinn, Estonia, 21 April 1990, copy in author's possession, used by permission.
- [43] Minutes of the meeting with Dr. Jaak Uibu, state head doctor of Public Health Service in Estonia, Tallinn, Estonia, 25 April 1990, copy in author's possession, used by permission.
- [44] Minutes of the meeting with Rein Loik, minister of education, Tallinn, Estonia, 25 April 1990.
- [45] Chronology; see also Russell M. Nelson, Rededicatory prayer for Russia, Leningrad, U.S.S.R., 26 April 1990, copy in author's possession, used by permission.
- [46] CES talk; see also Heiss interview, 46.
- [47] Heiss interview, 46.
- [48] Chronology.

[49] Browning, 51.

[50] Telephone interview with Elder Johansen, 15 June 1990; Dexter interview; see also Browning, 64–66.

[51] Browning, 116; Silla interview, 11; John L. Hart, “Lots of Opportunity to Share Gospel,” *Church News*, 28 December 1991, 3, 5.

[52] CES talk; see also Heiss interview, 7.

[53] *Deseret News 1997–1998 Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1996), 123–59.