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## PREFACE – IS THIS BOOK FOR YOU?

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In today's world, Russian is playing an increasingly important role. Since perestroika, even before the breakup of the Soviet Union, there has been a boom in Russian-American relations – political, business, scientific, social, and cultural (to say nothing of today's blogs and tweets). Diplomatic agreements, business and legal contracts, scientific and medical research papers, news and commentary, fiction, non-fiction, and reviews all require translation. However, a native speaker of Russian – particularly one with no training in translation – cannot always successfully render a text into a non-native language such as English. And though now there is access to dozens of excellent new dictionaries, general and specialized, as well as on-line sources, courses geared specifically to translation are few and far between. Exchange programs that send students to the USA for several months are beneficial for improving knowledge of the language, but they do not train translators. There is a very real need for translators with an excellent knowledge of both Russian and English, as well as for teachers of translation who can provide professional guidance and practice.

The present book came into being gradually, over some thirty years. Not a textbook in the usual sense, it is intended as one translator's informal guide to the fascinating possibilities of our profession, including some previously overlooked. In addition to the traditional areas usually covered in the classroom, there is a conscious emphasis on translating journalistic idiom and the conversational Russian of everyday life. But no textbook can ever replace a solid grounding in the two languages and cultures with which the translator is working, as well as constant exposure to the literature, both classical and modern, the media (print, audio, video, TV, online), and live discourse in those languages.

The method used in compiling this book was mostly empirical. Dozens of examples from the day-to-day work of teaching, writing, translating, and editing furnished the material found here. Translation theory, however, and socio-linguistics, as well as the experience of translating into both English and Russian have made us all increasingly aware of the complex issues involved in our efforts to provide more than a fuzzy reflection of what the author of the original meant to say. It is our hope that *Introduction to Russian-English Translation* will prove useful to the practicing as well as the aspiring translator, and that it may help to fill a gap in this field.