

# Brother Andrew



Andrew crept along the dark side of the hedge, stopping only long enough to look behind him into the night to listen for any sounds that would warn him he was being followed. All he heard was the hooting of an owl in the wood near the village. He crept on.

A shaft of light fell across the footpath where there was a break in the hedge. The boy edged towards the gap, pulling his balaclava down over his face so that anyone looking out of the window wouldn't see him. Slowly, so slowly, Andrew leant forward, glanced at the window and sighed with relief. Although the light was on, there didn't seem to be anyone in the room, at least not at the window end. He darted round the hedge and out of the shaft of light. Only a few more steps and he'd know if it was there. As he edged his way along the side of the house, Andrew kept his ears open for any sound from inside, and his hands out in front of him to feel for it. Suddenly it was there! First

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one hand then another came in touch with the cold metal of bicycle handlebars.

The boy knelt down, every bit of him as tense as a cat about to spring, and felt over the bike. Was it tied to a drainpipe? Was there a chain that would stop it moving? There didn't seem to be. Taking a long piece of string from his pocket, it had been put there specially for the purpose, Andrew passed it from side to side along the back of the bike until he was absolutely sure that it was not attached to anything. Then he sat down and leant against the wall. He knew what he had to do. But he was scared ... scared half out of his mind.

Anger suddenly filled every part of him. And the anger of a twelve year old can be terrifically powerful. 'What right has he to work for the Germans?!' he demanded of himself. 'How can a Dutchman work for the enemy?! He's a traitor! All of his family are traitors! Well, he'll find it harder to do his dirty work without his bike!' Stuffing his hankie into the bell so that it would be absolutely silent, and taking off the chain to prevent it click-clicking as it moved, Andrew retraced his steps, this time with the bike beside him. Through the shaft of light he went, knowing that if he was caught he might not see his family again, round the hedge into the blissful darkness, then down

the road to safety. Only when he was in the wood did Andrew replace the chain, take the hankie from the bell to wipe the sweat from his face, and mount the bicycle. There was not a sweeter moment in his life till then, when he braked at the school, ringing the bell for all he was worth. A member of the Dutch resistance opened the door to see what the noise was.

'Well done!' the man said, slapping the boy on the back. 'You're doing a man's job, Andrew. The war will be won by the likes of you.'

And that's what Andrew was in the middle of, a war, The Second World War.

Suddenly Andrew was surrounded by men and they were all talking.

'That traitor will be useless without his bike!' one said.

'And we can put it to good use for the cause,' added another.

But it was what the third man said that thrilled the boy. 'You're a natural for the underground, son, a natural!'

The kind of cleverness that Andrew used for the resistance he also used to get out of attending church. Because his father was deaf, the family sat in the short front seat. Sunday by Sunday he would lag behind so that he was the one for whom there was no room. 'I'll have to sit at the back again!'

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he'd moan, moving quickly to the rear of the church before anyone offered to swop with him. Then during the first hymn he was off, coming back only when he knew the service was about to end.

It probably didn't come as a surprise to anyone when Andrew decided to be a soldier, although it made his mother very sad. The Second World War was by then over, and he was posted not to the German border, but to Indonesia. As a boy he had been really scared when he was working for the resistance, but as a soldier he thought he was invincible. He came to believe that whoever was hit by a bullet it certainly wouldn't be him. But Andrew was wrong. And the bullet that went right through his ankle left him crippled. He was just twenty years old.

'Do you want this?' the nurse in the army hospital asked, when he had begun to recover from surgery. She had a Bible in her hand. 'It was in your kit.'

Andrew looked at the Bible his mother had given him when he joined the army. He hadn't opened it once, and he didn't want to look at it now. He was angry with God, if there was a God. But hospitals can be boring places, and eventually he was bored into reading his mother's Bible.

'I think you should sleep for a while,' a young doctor said, finding his patient still reading hours later.

'I'm not tired,' Andrew replied. 'Have you ever read this?' he asked. 'I'd no idea it was interesting. It's like an adventure.'

'I suppose it depends which bit you read,' suggested the doctor.

Andrew looked puzzled. 'I started at the beginning. That's where books usually start.'

Between reading his Bible and writing to his seventy two Dutch penpals, Andrew's time in hospital passed quite quickly. One of his penpals, a Christian girl called Thile, answered as best she could all his questions about the Bible.

In November 1949, Andrew left the army and was sent home. With part of his pay he bought a bicycle. 'I'd better buy one than steal one,' he thought, remembering back to his childhood.

'Is he all right?' his father asked over and over again after he returned home. 'He's either stuck in the Bible or he's cycling off to church services all over the place.'

Andrew's sister shook her head. 'I'm worried about him too. It's just not natural! Maybe the war has bent his mind.'

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'I don't know about that,' Father said. 'I think it's his way of coping with being crippled. But I hope he grows out of it. Nobody likes people who are too religious.'

Andrew didn't grow out of it. Not very long after coming back home from Indonesia, he discovered for himself that the Bible was true. The former underground boy and soldier found new life in Jesus. And as he wondered about his future, Andrew's prayer was, 'Lord, show me what you want me to do with my life.'

God did show Andrew what he wanted him to do, and he also showed him that his childhood experience of the Dutch resistance during wartime was good training for Christian service.

Brother Andrew (that's what he became known as) found himself working as a smuggler for God. After the Second World War many communist countries banned the Bible. It was as though a line - it was known as the Iron Curtain - was drawn across Europe. On the western side people were free to come and go, to be Christians or Muslims or nothing at all. On the eastern side, behind the Iron Curtain, men and women were not free to travel, not free to have Bibles, not even free to teach their own children about the Lord. It was for those people that Brother

Andrew became a smuggler, taking Bibles and other Christian books and tracts to people who could be put in prison if they were found in possession of them.

'I can hardly take in all that the Lord has done in the ten years since I became a Christian,' Brother Andrew said to his companion. 'Take this car, for example. Do you want to know how I got it?'

His friend nodded then listened to the story.

'A couple I knew heard about the work I was doing, smuggling Bibles and tracts behind the Iron Curtain. They realised that I could take much larger quantities if I had a car. And they know I don't walk well and thought it would make my job a whole lot easier. I was in West Berlin when I phoned to tell them my plans. "You'd better come right back here for the keys," my old friend told me. "What keys?" I asked. I remember him chuckling at the end of the phone. "We've got you a car," my friend said. "If you come for the keys you can drive it all the way to Moscow if you dare." I went right back, collected the car and tucked as many boxes of Bibles in it as I could!'

'Is that why you call it the miracle car?' the young man asked.

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Brother Andrew laughed. 'That's one reason. Another is that it keeps on going!'

It was that same car that Brother Andrew was driving when he reached the Yugoslavian border one day. Drawing up at the checkpoint he prayed, 'Lord, I have Bibles in the car. When you were on earth you made blind eyes see. Please make seeing eyes blind now so that the guards don't see the Bibles.'

'Anything to declare?' the guard asked.

'My watch, money, camera ... only small things.'

He was telling the truth because the Bibles were small.

'We don't need to bother about them,' the guard said, handing Brother Andrew's passport back.

'Thank you for making them blind to the boxes!' he prayed, as he drove into Yugoslavia with his precious load. For the next seven weeks he was there and he held eighty meetings, and gave out hundreds of Bibles and tracts.

Marta, a young Christian girl, was delighted to have a Bible of her own.

'Tell me about yourself,' Brother Andrew invited.

'I was brought up in a Christian home,' she said, 'and I became a Christian myself. At school I always said grace before my lunch. Because of that I was expelled from school by the Communists. I was told I couldn't go back because I was filling the other pupils' heads with nonsense. But I'm a Christian, and I can't pretend I'm not. That would be denying Jesus.'

Brother Andrew prayed with Marta, asking God to give her strength and courage for the future.

The road was dusty as he left Marta's town. 'It's amazing this car doesn't seize up,' Brother Andrew said to Nikola, a Yugoslav believer, as the dust blew all around. 'You'd think the dust would get into the engine. I'm sure God stops that happening because we pray about it each morning.'

Nikola smiled. 'I'd never heard anyone praying over a car before I met you!'

As they drove along, a small lorry approached them from the opposite direction. It also had foreign number plates. When the drivers saw each other they stopped to discuss the state of the road.

'You're Brother Andrew,' the other driver said. 'And this is the miracle car.'

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Nikola grinned. 'All the Christians know him,' he thought. 'It's amazing the Communists haven't found out about him!'

'May I have a look at your car?' the lorry driver said. 'I'm a mechanic and it wouldn't do any harm to give it a going over. You do so many miles.'

Having spent some time under the bonnet, the lorry driver scratched his head and looked puzzled.

'Is there anything wrong?' Brother Andrew asked.

'No,' the man answered, 'the car's going well. But I can't work out how it can go at all. The carburettor is clogged, so are the spark plugs. And the air filter is totally clogged up. This car should have ground to a standstill thousands of miles ago!'

Setting to, the mechanic unclogged the carburettor and spark plugs and did what he could about the air filter. Then he tuned the engine and changed the oil.

'Look after it,' he told the two men. 'It's a miracle car so don't abuse it.'

And it was just as big a miracle meeting a Christian mechanic on a lonely road in Yugoslavia, and one who knew Brother Andrew! God provided a mechanic for the car, he provided the car for Brother

Andrew, and through that Dutch Christian, the Lord provided Bibles and tracts to many thousands of people who would otherwise not have been able to read *God's Word* for themselves.



**Fact File:** *Communism.*

Communism was the form of government which existed on the eastern side of the Iron Curtain.

State control extended to all parts of society and individual freedom was restricted. Newspapers and books had to follow the communist line and religious beliefs were discouraged.

Communism in eastern Europe lasted until 1989, when it finally fell and brought the Berlin wall down with it. Movement across borders was no longer restricted and freedom of worship was restored.



**Keynote:** God miraculously provided Brother Andrew with a car, a mechanic who could fix it and thousands of Bibles and tracts. These were smuggled behind the Iron Curtain and given to people who would otherwise never have been able to read about Jesus.

Learn from how God amazingly provided for Brother Andrew. See God's hand in everything. Believe that he can bring about miracles in your life too.



**Think:** Have you ever thought about how wonderful it is to be free to read the Bible in your own language?

Pray for missionaries involved in translating the Bible and bringing it to people who have never been able to read it before.



**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, thank you for how wonderfully you have provided for me. Thank you for my Bible. Help me to treasure it more than I do.

Bless those who are trying to bring your Word to people who have never been able to have their own Bibles. Amen.