



Ivan Gumenyuk in his private office.

Photo courtesy of D.O. Yunak.

Gumenyuk, Ivan (1928–2009)

DMITRY O. YUNAK

Dmitry O. Yunak graduated in Finance and Economics from a Soviet secular educational institution and completed a six-year course of Theology at an underground SDA Theological Institute (Moldova, USSR). In the Soviet times, he served as a pastor, administrator, and bible/history professor in the underground Theological Institute. In 1990, he was appointed as Treasurer and Publishing Ministries Director for the USSR Division. After the Euro-Asia Division was organized in 1991, Dmitry O. Yunak served as ESD auditor and under treasurer. He was the author of a dozen of SDA history books and scores of other publications. He owns a major SDA history archive.

Ivan Afanasievich Gumenyuk was a pastor, author, and church administrator from Moldova.

Early Life

Ivan Afanasievich Gumenyuk was born in Hâtrești, in the district of Falești, Moldova, on August 29, 1928.¹ Ivan Gumenuk's grandparents from both sides moved to Moldova from Ukraine searching for a better land.² His parents were Afanasiy and Olga Gumenyuk. Olga was the second wife of Afanasiy, whose first wife, Tatyana, died while Afanasiy was serving in the army. Ivan was the second of the six sons of Afanasiy Gumenyuk and the first son of Olga. His older brother, Nikolay, was the son of Afanasiy's first wife. The other children were Ivan, Vasiliy, Alexander, Fyodor (died at one month), and Fyodor (died at seven years). Unfortunately, Afanasiy Gumenyuk was killed in battle in 1945, just a couple of days prior to the end of World War II.

Conversion

As a young man, Ivan showed astute leadership abilities. This characteristic was noticed by the communist administration. He was elected secretary of a *Komsomol* (Young Communist) unit. Broadminded and inquisitive, Ivan Gumenyuk pursued answers to questions of life and faith. He was searching for God. In 1945 he acquainted himself with Adventist doctrines when visiting his future bride's home.³ The new teaching influenced Ivan so much that he ceased going to work on Saturdays, at which point he was repeatedly subjected to disciplinary measures and arraigned before the bar of public opinion. Nevertheless, Ivan continued witnessing for the Lord to others even before his baptism. In 1947 he was baptized. His brother Alexander accepted the Adventist message as well. After serving in the army, Ivan Gumenyuk returned home and then moved to the city of Bălți where he got a job as a traffic controller.

Marriage and Military Service

On November 17, 1947, Gumenyuk married Vera Kristoforovna Gutsulyak, with whom he lived for nearly 62 years. In 1948 their daughter, Valentina, was born. Unfortunately, she died when she was only seven months old. In 1949, just a few days after the death of his daughter, Gumenyuk was called for military service. The service lasted nearly five years. He served in city of Borispol, near Kiev. He endeavored to be a witness of the gospel to his fellow countrymen from the adjacent villages of Moldoveanca and Celacovca Noi. Shortly thereafter, three of them accepted Christ. On returning home they joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Towards the end of his service, in the spring of 1953, Ivan Gumenyuk was transferred to a military unit of the Moscow Region. After concluding his service to the army, he decided to move to city of Bălți, where it seems he began pastoring.

Ministry in Moldova

In 1956 Gumenyuk was elected as an elder of an Adventist congregation in the village of Sângerăi Noi. He started a youth ministry and organized Sabbath School meetings. In addition, he started a small group initiative for members at various homes. That Gumenyuk became a mature pastor was due to the influence of Iosif Aleksandrovich Seniavski, an experienced pastor from Latvia, who was serving at the B Iti church.

At the end of 1957, Pastor Gumenyuk was transferred to serve at a large Gagauz church in Dezginzha (southern Moldova). Gumenyuk and his wife settled down in the small town of Basarabeasca. There he organized training courses for young ministers, educated children and youth, and facilitated the development of education in both the church and community.

While in Dezginzha he united two groups and saved the church from a split. He also had a special strategy to facilitate spiritual growth and unity among church members through a sermon series on Adventist doctrines. In Dezginzha, Gagauzia, he worked in a different cultural context but successfully overcame cultural barriers.

Between 1961 and 1965 the Gumenyuk family lived in the city of Comrát. In 1965 Gumenyuk was ordained to pastoral ministry and appointed as supervisor of the B Iti field after the church leadership divided Moldova into four regions.⁴ Officially he served as local elder in a church in Logănești, a small village, and then in a church in the city of Chisinau. During Gumenyuk's ministry in southern Moldova, his two additional daughters were born to the family: Larisa was born in 1959 in Bessarabka, and Ludmila was born in 1963 in Komrat.

Health Issues

In the late 1960s and the early 1970s, a number of Adventists in the region were practicing hunger therapy—an absolute diet by drinking mineral water (e.g. Borjom^P). Most Adventist pastors in Moldova also had such an experience. Gumenyuk practiced hunger therapy a number of times. His daughter Lyudmila remembers: "In 1970 my father went without food, at short intervals, during 75 days and weighed 45 kilograms." The last (and longest) period of starvation diet was 40 days. He usually returned to a normal diet very slowly and painfully. As the 1970s progressed, Gumenyuk's health deteriorated. In 1973 he had a serious form of asthma, and he was treated in Crimea and in Caucasus. In 1975 he was admitted to a hospital in Moscow to treat a stomach ulcer. His lower extremity veins were also operated on. Each time he recovered from an illness, Gumenyuk resumed his work with renewed vigor.

Administrator in the Euro-Asian Division

In 1976 the denomination's administration in Moldova changed. N. A. Yaruta retired from his position, and an unofficial session of the Adventist Church elected Gumenyuk as president of the Moldova Conference. In 1978 he was succeeded by S. N. Leahu. For the second time Gumenyuk served as president of the Moldova Conference from 1983 to 1987. From 1988 to 1989, he served as secretary of the Moldova Conference and as

director of the Sabbath School, Personal Ministries, and Youth Ministries departments.⁶

In 1989, when the Adventist Church in Moldova was reorganized into the Moldova Union Conference, headed by president Grigoriy V. Kochmar, Ivan Gumenyuk was elected president of the North-Moldavian Conference.⁷ The 1990 General Conference Session elected Grigoriy V. Kochmar as a Church Ministries Department director for the newly organized USSR Division.⁸ Gumenyuk consented to take the position instead, since Grigoriy V. Kochmar was not willing. Gumenyuk moved to Moscow while Grigoriy V. Kochmar remained in Moldova as leader of the Moldova Union Conference.⁹ Between 1990 and 1994, Gumenyuk remained director of the division's Church Ministries Department and his responsibilities included supervision of Sabbath School, Personal Ministries, and work with youth and children.¹⁰

In 1990 and 1995, Gumenyuk was a delegate to the General Conference Session. In 1995 Ivan Gumenyuk was elected president of the East Russia Union Mission,¹¹ which included a vast geographical territory with a severe climate, stretching from the Ural Mountains to Vladivostok. While in that position he also served as director of Family Ministries, and secretary of the Ministerial Association.¹² In 1998 Ivan Gumenyuk retired.

Later Years

Having returned to Moldova after retirement in 1998, Ivan Gumenyuk continued energetic efforts in the ministry to young people and taught classes at the Moldova Adventist Seminary. In 2008 he was invited to serve as a mentor for Adventist pastors in Georgia, where he worked for a year.

At least five times Ivan Gumenyuk had situations where he was hanging between life and death, but God miraculously saved him. In 2008 he underwent a complicated surgery but could not recover from his illness. He died on Sabbath, August 29, 2009, at sunset, on his 81st birthday.

Contribution

In Soviet times, Seventh-day Adventists, more often than not, carried out their ministry illegally. The Sabbath School and children's ministries, as well as the youth study groups, were banned. Such activities fell under the articles of the Criminal Code. In such tough times Ivan Gumenyuk did much to educate children and young people. He organized a church in Dezghingea to improve the cultural level of church members and the villagers. He trained quite a few young Adventist ministers, who then became experienced pastors and administrators. Among them were V. E. Gorbul, G. V. Kochmar, S. S. Bayraktar, N. A. Sadovoy, M. R. Kolesnik, A. I. Arabaji, and others.

Pastor Gumenyuk wrote a number of books such as *The Path to Know God*, *86 Lessons on Pastoral Ministry*, and *20 Educational Lessons for Young People* (all in Russian). He longed to write a book on the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Moldova, but he could not finish it. Nevertheless, such a book was completed and came

out under the title *The Unfinished Story*, due to the efforts of D. O. Yunak who had worked with Gumenyuk as a pastor and administrator for more than 20 years.

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NOTES

1. See Ivan A. Gumenyuk, Dmitry O. Yunak, *Neokonchennaya Povest [An Unfinished Tale]* (Chisinau: F.E.-P. Tipografia Centrală, 2016).

2. Ibid.

3. Interview with Ivan Gumenyuk, "The most pleasant moment in my life" (Russian), *Adventistskiy Vestnik*, 4: 2009, 15.

4. Gumenyuk and Yunak, *Neokonchennaya Povest*, 165.

5. "Borjomi (Georgian: ბორჯომი, often russified as Borzhomi) is a brand of naturally carbonated mineral water from springs in the Borjomi Gorge of central Georgia." See "Borjomi (Water)," *Wikipedia*, accessed October 4, 2018, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Borjomi_\(water\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Borjomi_(water)).

6. Louise Bartholomew, "Russian Church Worker Visits Bellevue Church," *North Pacific Union Conference Gleaner*, May 2, 1988, 17; Moldavian District," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1989), 337.
 7. "Moldavian Union Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1990), 348.
 8. See "General Conference/Division Officers and Departmental Directors Elected to Serve 1990-1995 (Consolidated Report)," *ARH*, July 26-August 2, 1990, 4.
 9. Gumenyuk and Yunak, *Neokonchennaya Povest*, 175-176.
 10. See "Texans Share Sabbath School Techniques," *ARH*, February 28, 1991, 20-21.
 11. "Euro Asia," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1995), 101.
 12. "East Russian Union Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1996), 150.
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