

Vasyukovich (Vasiukovič), Anton (b. 1902)

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Aleksey A. Oparin is head of the therapy and rheumatology department of the Kharkov Medical Academy of Postgraduate Education in Ukraine. Deeply interested in Adventist history, he is the editor of two Russian-language journals, a medical journal and a journal on world issues.

Anton Vasilievich Vasyukovich was a Seventh-day Adventist evangelist and martyr.

Early Life, Ministry, and Marriage

Anton Vasilievich Vasyukovich was born in 1902 in the village Otrubok in the Governorate of Minsk. His mother died when he was still a young boy.

Vasyukovich became an Adventist when he was a young man and soon decided to become a preacher. He began his ministry in the Kiev region, and he was arrested there on religious grounds for the first time in 1930.¹ Vasyukovich, like many others during that time, escaped with a short jail term that the authorities thought would be sufficient to repress any further religious activity. Upon his release, the church transferred Vasyukovich to Odessa to serve there as a licensed pastor. In 1931 Vasyukovich married Anna Sidorova and around that time he was ordained to the pastoral ministry. In the autumn of 1932, the couple was transferred to the city of Khar'kov,² where they served for four years.

Exile and Death

On September 4, 1936, Vasyukovich was arrested again, along with a fellow Adventist minister. The authorities charged him with discouraging young people from military service and with giving aid to families of political prisoners. On June 7, 1937, both ministers were convicted of “counter-revolutionary sectarian activity” and sentenced to five years in correctional labor camps the far east of Russia—a place from whence neither of them returned. As recounted to Vasyukovich’s family later by one of his former fellow prisoners, one day the guards took Vasyukovich into the forest, tied him to a tree there, and left him to the mercy of the mosquitos. He died some days later.

The last letter written by Vasyukovich survives to this day. He sent it secretly to his wife and little daughter Lea. It reads: “We [Vasyukovich, Gritz, Zadokhin, and Nikonov] are all sitting on the cement floor in the prison cell.

Through the split in the window, we can see that it is snowing outside. One of my cellmates coughs violently, another has an abscessed finger, and yet another complains of heart pain. Perhaps this letter will be the last one but that's a far cry from saying we are dead."³

Legacy

Anton Vasyukovich (Vasiukovič) was a Seventh-day Adventist martyr. Memory Statement by Tatyana Bondarenko, member of the Khar'kov Church during Anton Vasyukovich's ministry there:

In the early thirties my parents were strong Baptists. When they found out more about the Law of God, especially the Sabbath (it was the most bustling day for us like today's Friday), they were scared at first. Soon they managed to find Sabbath-keepers in our city and began to attend Adventist worship services. At the same time, they continued organizing Baptist meetings in our home. I was then eight years old, the eldest of four children in our family. All of us liked to sing spiritual songs and we had a home choir. The parents took us with them to Adventist meetings. I remember that I liked to listen to sermons preached by Brother Vasyukovich, who had a way with words like Apollos. One Sunday evening my father invited Brother Vasyukovich to the Baptist meeting at our home. He waited until the end of the meeting and then began to dispute with a Baptist preacher about the truth and the Sabbath. Even a child could see where the light and the darkness lay. On that day four people, including my parents, accepted the truth and took baptism before long.

Since that time, before his arrest, Brother Vasyukovich and his wife visited us regularly. We children were happy to see them, especially when they brought their little daughter Lea with them, whom we loved very much. Now, being late in life, I feel special affection remembering my childhood and particularly Pastor Vasyukovich, who nurtured so much the new converts. Our young pastors could learn a great deal from him. . . . When he and many of our members were arrested in 1936 and churches were closed, his wife stepped forth to fill his absence, and the light of truth continued shining in our city.⁴

SOURCES

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Oparin, A. A. *Yubileynyy god. Ocherki istorii adventizma v Khar'kove*. Khar'kov: Fakt, 2006.

NOTES

1. A. A. Oparin, *Yubileynyy god. Ocherki istorii adventizma v Khar'kovem* (Khar'kov: Fakt, 2006).
 2. Daniel Heinz, A. A. Oparin, D. O. Yunak, and Andris Pešelis, *Dushi pod zhertvennikom*. [*Souls Underneath the Altar*]. (Khar'kov: Fakt, 2010).
 3. Ibid.
 4. Oparin, *Yubileynyy god*.
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