

Azov Conference

JÓN HJÖRLEIFUR STEFÁNSSON

Jón Hjörleifur Stefánsson, M.A.,
is a Ph.D. candidate, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam

The Azov¹ Conference was a Russian church unit that covered the eastern part of Ukraine. It operated from 1912 to sometime after 1930, but after that year, the *Yearbook* did not report on the Russian church units until 1982.

Territory and Statistics

Period: 1912-c.1930

Territory: The Izyum, Kharkiv, Kremenchuk, Kupiansk, Luhansk, Mariupil, Melitopol, Pavlohrad, Poltava, Staline, Starobilsk, Sumy, and Zaporizhia Okruhas of the Ukrainian SSR² (and Crimea until at least 1917)

Membership: 869³

Churches: 56⁴

Organizational History

The earliest Adventist missionary work in Russia was in Crimea in the late nineteenth century. From there the work spread to more of Ukraine. As members multiplied and the work increased, church units continued to be subdivided. The immediately preceding church unit was the South Russian Conference.

At the Russian Union meeting in Riga, April 1912, the South Russian Conference was divided and its name changed. The Governorates of Bessarabia, Kherson, and Podolia (the last from the Little Russian Mission) were organized into the Black Sea Mission. The now smaller South Russian Conference was renamed Azov Conference.⁵ The Conference comprised the Governorates of Kharkov, Taurida, and Yekaterinoslav, and “that part of the Don between the Don and the Donetz.”⁶ No address is given for Conference headquarters for the first eleven years in the *Yearbook*. At its commencement, the Conference had around 400 members.⁷ Initial officers were President K. A. Reifschneider, Secretary P. Swiridow, M. Demidow, G. Sawatzky, T. Soloduchin, and G. Donner.⁸

Later that year, at the European Division Council at Budapest, commencing October 30, 1912, it was decided to divide the Russian Union into the East and West Russian Unions.⁹ The Azov Conference became part of the East Russian Union.¹⁰

Ukraine became a hotly disputed territory in the wake of World War I and the Russian Revolution. Both the powers to which its territory had mostly belonged—Austria-Hungary and the Russian Empire—had been abolished. After a series of wars and short-lived governments, Ukraine arose as a new state and a Soviet republic. During these years of chaos, church organization continued to adapt to changing political realities. In 1920, all Russian church units were brought together into the All-Russia Federation of Societies of Seventh-day Adventists. New unions were formed within this new semi-Division. Among these was the South Russian Union, to which the Azov Conference belonged.¹¹ In a few years this changed again, when the Ukrainian church units organized the All Ukrainian Union Conference in 1924, which included the Azov Conference.¹²

Another change was in respect to territory and its description. During the 1920s, the administrative division of Ukraine was overhauled several times. The territory description of the Azov Conference changed several times, though this may also have been due to new borders of the church unit. In 1923 the territory was listed as the Zaporizhia and Yekaterinoslav Governorates.¹³ The conference was then not listed for several years. Then, in 1927, its territory was nine Okruhas: Artjomowsk, Luhansk, Mariupil, Melitopol, Pavlohrad, Staline, Starobilsk, Zaporizhia, and Yekaterinoslav.¹⁴ In 1929 the Okruhas listed were fifteen, with the addition of Izyum, Kharkiv, Kremenchuk, Kupiansk, Poltava, and Sumy.¹⁵

Conference headquarters moved several times in the 1920s. In 1923, the address was a postbox in Yekaterinoslav,¹⁶ in 1927 a postbox in Kiev,¹⁷ and in 1929 the address was Serafimovskaia 17, Kharkiv-Ivanovka.¹⁸

After 1930, the Iron Curtain hid Ukrainian church units from view. They did not appear again in the *Yearbook* until decades later. As the Communist era drew to a close, church units resurfaced. The territory of the Azov Conference was covered by the Donetsk, Kharkov, and Kherson Districts, all organized in 1978.¹⁹

List of Presidents

K. A. Reifschneider, 1912–1917; no one listed, 1918–1922; K. A. Reifschneider, 1923–1924; no one listed, 1925–1926; J. W. Kraus, 1927–1929; W. G. Tarassovsky, 1930–?.

SOURCES

“Berichte der Russischen Union vom 1. Januar bis 31. März 1912.” *Zions-Wächter*, May 20, 1912.

“Berichte der Russischen Union vom 1. April bis 30. Juni 1912.” *Zions-Wächter*.

Conradi, Ludwig R. “European Division Council in Budapest.” *ARH*, December 18, 1913.

Conradi, Ludwig R. “The Meeting at Alexandrodar.” *ARH*, March 8, 1906.

Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook. Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1912–1930.

Turowski, H. “Sitzung des Russischen Union.” *Zions-Wächter*, December 16, 1907.

NOTES

1. Spelled variously in sources as Asov, Asow, Azof, Azov, or Azow.
2. "Asow Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1930), 273.
3. "Asow Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1930), 273.
4. "Asow Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1930), 273.
5. Ludwig R. Conradi, "The Meeting at Alexandrodar," *ARH*, March 8, 1906, 14–15; H. F. Schuberth, "The Meetings in Russia," *ARH*, December 27, 1906, 16.
6. "Azof Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1913), 110.
7. Azov Conference was already listed in anticipation of its organization in the first quarter of 1912, even though it was created early in the second quarter. At the end of the first quarter, the members of the territory were 393. At the end of its actual first quarter, members stood at 440. "Berichte der Russischen Union vom 1. Januar bis 31. März 1912," *Zions-Wächter*, May 20, 1912, 216; "Berichte der Russischen Union vom 1. April bis 30. Juni 1912," *Zions-Wächter*, 308.
8. "Azof Conference," *Yearbook* (1913), 110.
9. Ludwig R. Conradi, "European Division Council in Budapest," *ARH*, December 18, 1913, 12.
10. "East Russian Union Conference" and "Azof Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1914), 109.
11. "All-Russia Federation of Societies of Seventh-day Adventists," "South Russian Union Conference," and "Asov Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1923), 103, 106.
12. "All Ukrainian Union Conference" and "Asow Conference," *Yearbook* (1927), 139, 141.
13. "Asov Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1923), 106.
14. "Asow Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1927), 141.
15. "Asov Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1929), 167.
16. "Asov Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1923), 106.
17. "Asow Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1927), 141.

18. "Asov Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1929), 167.

19. See those church units and their territory description in the *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1982), 336. Better maps than those at my disposal are needed to determine the boundaries of the Azov Conference and to see whether more church units than those mentioned covered its territory in 1978.

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