

Arnhold (Arngold), Gusav Augustovich (1878–?)

DANIEL HEINZ, AND DMITRY O. YUNAK

Daniel Heinz, Ph.D., is director of the Historical Archives of Seventh-day Adventists in Europe located at Friedensau Adventist University, Germany. He did his ministerial studies at Bogenhofen Seminary and further studies at the Protestant Theological Faculty of the University in Vienna. His Ph.D. is in modern church history and Adventist studies from Andrews University. Some of his publications include *Church, State, and Religious Dissent: A History of Seventh-day Adventists in Austria, 1890–1975* (Frankfurt am Main, 1993) and *So komm noch diese Stunde. Luthers Reformation aus Sicht der Siebenten-Tags-Adventisten* (Lüneburg, 2016).

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.



Gustav Arnhold, 1918.

Photo courtesy of D.O Yunak.

Early Life

Gustav Augustovich Arnhold (Arngold) was born into a large and rather poor German family in the city Lodz, Poland,¹ on June 14, 1878, (old calendar). He was the youngest child of the family. His mother was a farmer who worked as a hired laborer during the day. He lost his father at the young age of two. Hence, young Gustav had a poor parental background, which might have been the cause of his leading a street life and becoming an alcoholic. He eventually found employment in a textile factory. His mother died soon after. Consequently, at the age of fifteen Arnhold took over all household duties. He became interested in social issues and hated those who profited from human suffering. When labor strikes erupted across the entire country, Arnhold took part in the industrial unrest and joined the Social Democrats. At that time, he was not religious. In fact, he was a staunch atheist.²

Marriage and Conversion

One evening, in Poland, Arnhold visited a Christian family who were friends with his brother. The family had five daughters. Arnhold fell in love with the eldest of them, Augusta, and made frequent visits to her house. They married in June 1904. In 1905, Arnhold joined the Adventist Church under the influence of his wife. At this time, Adventism had already gained a foothold in Lodz.

Ministry

After his conversion, Arnhold went into ministry. At first, he distributed Adventist literature, but he was later invited to serve as a Bible worker. Soon after, he was called to work in Russia by the church administration³. From 1910 onwards his family resided in Minsk, where he worked as a pastor while he made friends with H. J. Löbsack. Although the city of Minsk had a small Adventist congregation, Arnhold's ministry prospered. Later in 1913, his family moved to Antonovka, a German Lutheran community located in the Dechensky District. They stayed with a certain Baptist family. Soon after they settled down, a local woman became an Adventist. However, the Lutheran community of Antonovka opposed Adventism. Once, Arnhold was almost killed. Having escaped unscathed, his ministry continued with less opposition.

War and Incarceration

When the First World War broke out, Arnhold was conscripted into the army, leaving his wife alone with their five children. During the war, Arnhold was arrested and became a Russian prisoner in East Prussia. He was tortured for a period of four years and seven months. As a German, he later gained the confidence of the leaders of the prison camp.⁴ Shortly after, Arnhold's wife fell ill and was bedridden for about six months. On hearing this, H. J. Löbsack took Arnhold's wife and children to Kiev and lodged them with his relatives. This was in 1919, the year of famine. Meanwhile, Arnhold wrote a letter to Löbsack from Germany asking about his family. He wanted them to move to Germany rather than remain in Russia, but brother Löbsack persuaded him to return to Russia and continue ministry.

Ordination and Moldova

Subsequently, in 1920 Arnhold moved with his family to Kiev. That same year, he was ordained to the pastoral ministry in Kiev. He then took the advice of H. J. Löbsack to move to Moldova to serve there. It took Arnhold and his family about two months to get to Moldova by freight train because of the civil war. Moreover, as they approached the city of Tiraspol, their train was derailed. Only their wagon remained undamaged. When they finally arrived at the railway station, they were met by some church members, whom H. J. Löbsack had arranged to meet them. While in Moldova, from 1920 to 1925, Arnhold preached the gospel in the German settlements of

Neudorf and Glueckstal, as well as in city of Tiraspol.

Subsequently Arnhold was transferred to the city of Tashkent in Central Asia where he ministered in a church that had gone through dissolution and reorganization. From 1925 to 1926, Arnhold chaired the Central-Asia (Turkestan) Conference. In 1927, he was transferred to the Volga German Republic to serve in the city of Balzer (now Krasnoarmeisk, Saratov Region). That same year, Arnhold was elected a president of the Volga German Conference. He resided in the city of Engels until 1934. Arnhold simultaneously supervised the Central-Asia Conference.

Later Years: Martyrdom

Arnhold was arrested in 1930 and released after two months. Four years later, in 1934, he was again arrested in Engels, this time with Löbsack. They were sent to Moscow to face a trial along with other Adventist ministers under the Criminal Code article 58. Arnhold was sentenced to three years of imprisonment. In 1937, he was given an additional ten-year sentence at a remote forced labor camp without the right of correspondence. Surprisingly, he was able to send a letter, written in German, to his family. Arnhold never returned home from the camp. The letter was the last recorded activity of his life in which he wrote: "In eternity God Almighty will reward us all abundantly. This gives me a garland laurel on my grave in the whole of Siberia, if you do not miss me." Arnhold died as a result of his detention. The family received no official notice of his death even as his grave remains missing.

Contribution

Gustav Arnhold's ministry in the German communities of the former Soviet Union helped to consolidate Seventh-day Adventism in those regions. He was not deterred by persecution or challenges of opposition. He later died as an Adventist martyr leaving a legacy to remember.

SOURCES

Due to decades of persecution, historical sources were very often not preserved in the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and as a result, Adventist history in Russia and other successor states of the USSR is dependent on collective memory and oral traditions, on which this article draws.

Heinz, Daniel, A. Opari, Dmitry Yunak, and A. Peshelis. *Dushi pod zhertvennikom. Kniga Pamyati Tserkvi Adventistov Sed'mogo Dnia, posviashchennaya zhertvam religioznykh repressiy vo vremya Tsarskoi Rossii i Sovetskogo Soyuza (1886-1986)*. [The Souls Under the Altar. The Memorial Book of the Seventh-day Adventist Church Dedicated to the Victims of Religious Repressions in Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union (1886-1986)]. Kharkov: Fakt, 2010.

Löbsack, H. J. *The Great Adventist Movement and the Seventh-day Adventists in Russia* Rostov-on-Don: Altair, 2006.

Rudenko, E. Biography of Family Arnhold. Unpublished manuscript. Personal collection of Dmitry Yunak.

Schubert, H. F. "Reiseerfahrungen in Ostpreußen." *Zions-Wächter*, December 7, 1914.

Yunak, Dmitry O. "Oblako svidetelei. Rukovoditeli Tserkvi ASD v Rossii ot organizatsii ejo pervoi obshchiny do zakrytiya Vsesoyuznogo Soyuza ASD." [A Cloud of Witnesses. The Leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Russia from the Establishment of the First Adventist Congregation to the Dissolution of the All-Union Council of Seventh-day Adventists.] Unpublished Manuscript, 2013.

NOTES

1. At the time, the central and eastern regions of Poland where Lodz was located belonged to the Russian empire.
2. H. J. Löbsack, *The Great Adventist Movement and the Seventh-day Adventists in Russia* (Rostov-on-Don: Altair, 2006), 286.
3. H. J. Löbsack remembered: "In Lodz I took notice of book canvassing. Brethren G. A. Arnhold, S. Mager, K. Schmitz, and Stuika had sold books for an amount of several thousand Rubles and everywhere gained subscribers to our magazines." See H. J. Löbsack, *The Great Adventist Movement and the Seventh-day Adventists in Russia* (Rostov-on-Don: Altair, 2006), 286.
4. This was almost like "Daniel" in Babylon. See H. F. Schubert, "Reiseerfahrungen in Ostpreußen," *Zions-Wächter*, December 7, 1914, 529-530.

encyclopedia.adventist.org is an official website of the [Seventh-day Adventist World Church](#)

© 2020 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 12501 Old Columbia Pike Silver Spring , MD 20904 USA 301-680-6000