

Zozulina, Avgustina (Polyak) (1929–2002) and Zozulin Mikhail Semenovich (1928–2018)

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Avgustina Zozulina and Mikhail Zozulin served the Seventh-day Adventist church as pioneer missionaries, Bible worker/pastor, and publishers in Siberia.

Early Years and Marriage

Avgustina Ivanovna Zozulina (nee Polyak) was born June 9, 1929 in Czechoslovakia, into a family of a government official. Her family was wealthy, but her father's sudden death and the start of the Second World War took its toll. During the war, she heard the Adventist message in Mukachevo, and was baptized in 1944. After the war, she moved to the city of Rostov-on-Don, where she took an active part in the ministry of the local church.

On December 14, 1958, in the town of Labinsk, Avgustina married a young minister, Mikhail Semenovich Zozulin (born 1928), who became one of the leading Adventist pastors in the USSR. Avgustina became his lifelong companion and assistant until his death.

Pioneer Missionaries in Siberia

In 1959, the young couple moved to Kemerovo in Siberia. The couple had been secretly preaching and moving from place to place, until they were discovered by the government and forced to leave.¹ At that time there were few Adventists in Siberia.² There were "only seven believers in the large city of Novosibirsk. They found 10 believers in Omsk, and 11 in Tomsk. The largest congregation had only 34 members."³

When they arrived in Siberia, they focused their work on the cities around Novosibirsk [No-vo-sih-BIRSK] and Krasnoyarsk [Kraz-no-YARSK].⁴ The couple made it a line of duty to bring the Adventist message to all people in the region. In the Communist regime of that period, pastors had to take secular jobs, so they chose work that allowed them time to serve the church. Some worked as painters, farmers, and carpenters. Mikhail Zozulin

worked as a medic on an ambulance.⁵

Mikhail Semenovich became the president of the Siberian Missionary Field, the territory of which expanded beyond Siberia. Augustina Ivanovna assisted her husband as a Bible worker.⁶ Since Siberia was so vast, the mission needed workers, so the Zozlins started a secret seminary at their home with five students. The aim was to train and equip men and women to lead churches. The five students lived in the home of the Zozulins while taking an intensive six-month course covering biblical knowledge and practical pastoral skills, taught mostly by Zozulin.⁷

Publishing

In the late 1960s, the printing of church magazines gained ground as one of the most important parts of denominational work. Zozulina was involved in these efforts as editor-in-chief while Vladimir Semin was responsible for the design. The typists were O. Zhukova and L. Semina. This small team published several magazines: *Brosaemaya bureyu* ("Thrown to the Storm"), *Seyatel* ("The Sower"), *Tvoy trud – tvoyo blagoslovenie* ("Your Work is Your Blessing"), *Zhena – drug, pomoshchnik* ("The Wife – a Friend and Helper"), and *Khristos i Sem'ya* ("Christ and the Family").

Other magazines intended for family ministries, youth ministries, and musical ministry were also printed. The average circulation of typed magazines, having about 100 A4-sized pages, was 100 to 200 copies. For each copy of the magazine, the hand drawings, photographs, and figure captions were made separately, since they had no appropriate equipment for mass production.⁸

All involved in the magazines' publication did so as volunteers while working at their usual jobs. Almost all the spiritual stories published were real-life ones reflecting the experiences of people who had come to God at that time. The self-published magazines of the Siberian Missionary Field were printed from 1968 to 1975. They became an encouragement for believers and people seeking God in those years.

Imprisonment

Their active service brought them legal prosecution in 1970. Avgustina Zozulina was sentenced to one year and her husband to two years of imprisonment. Believers "caught with unauthorized printed material were imprisoned; children were taken from Christian parents; and young people were denied the right to higher education."⁹

Zozulina was released from prison before her husband. She continued active missionary work and coordinated the work of congregations in the Siberian Missionary Field until her husband was released. Over twenty years, Adventism entered many cities due to the work of the Zozulins. While the number of church members increased from 310 in 1959 to 2,861 in 1980, the number of churches increased from 8 to 46.

In view of harassment by government agencies, the Zozulin family moved a lot, planting Adventism at each new place. In this way, congregations were established in the cities of Kemerovo, Taiga, Novo-Altaysk, Barnaul, Novosibirsk, and Chelyabinsk. In 1976, the Zozulin family moved to the city of Kalinin, where an Adventist congregation soon appeared.

After communism fell, Zozulin became the secretary of the Ministerial Association for the West Russian Union, even as he continued active evangelist meetings.¹⁰ One of such meetings was held in Amursk, in Russia's easternmost republic, with only about \$20 for expenses, because the promised \$2,000 stipend had not come through. Zozulin claimed the promise that God's Word would not return without results. Excited by his plans for a stop-smoking program, city officials offered Zozulin free use of the city's culture hall. His hosts in Amursk found 16 posters with Jesus' picture on them, and space to hand-write information about the meetings. Zozulin prayed that God would bless the meetings with 50 new believers. Attendance grew night after night, and Zozulin found a swimming pool to conduct baptisms available to rent for \$20. Precisely 50 were baptized, and Zozulin regretted that he had not asked God for a higher number. Afterward, impressed to learn that 53 people had stopped smoking, the city donated an eight-flat apartment house and furnishings, including a pulpit.¹¹

Later Years and Contribution

Avgustina Zozulina and Mikhail Zozulin continued to serve the Seventh-day Adventist Church until Avgustina's death in 2002. Mikhail Zozulin died in 2018.

Avgustina Zozulina and Mikhail Zozulin served the Seventh-day Adventist church as pioneer missionaries in Siberia. Their contributions as Bible worker, pastor, and publishers saw the planting of Adventism in that region, while leaving a mark in the history of the Adventism in Siberia. As excellent organizers, preachers, and leaders, they trained future leaders for the propagation of the gospel in Siberia.

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NOTES

1. Augustina and Mickhail Zozulin, "Siberian Sunrise [sic]," *Mission*, second quarter, 1998, 5.
2. General Conference Committee, March 1, 1994, 94, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Archives, accessed April 18, 2019.
<http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Minutes/GCC/GCC1994-03.pdf>.
3. Augustina and Mickhail Zozulin, "Siberian Sunrise," 5.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. The magazines were printed most commonly on thick white paper of good quality. In order to have a good clear text, almost every copy had to be typed individually. The carbon paper allowed printing no more than 3-4 copies. In short, producing each copy with its text and drawings (and the magazines were very richly and talented illustrated!) was manual labor. It took hundreds of hours to type text or create drawings.
9. Ibid.
10. See Charles R. Taylor, "Making Up for Lost Time," *ARH*, December 22, 1994, 18.
11. As reported by Augustina and Mickhail Zozulin, "Siberian Sunrise," 6.

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